Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Training Guidance & Best Practices

In recent years, the United States has seen a number of individuals in the U.S. become involved in violent extremist activities, with particular activity by American residents and citizens inspired by al Qaeda and its ideology. We know that violent extremism is not confined to any single ideology, but we also know that the threat posed by al Qaeda and its adherents is the preeminent threat we face in the homeland. It is important for law enforcement personnel to be appropriately trained in understanding and detecting ideologically motivated criminal behavior, and in working with communities and local law enforcement to counter domestic violent extremism. Training must be accurate, based on current intelligence, and must include cultural competency training.

The Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with the National Counterterrorism Center, hosts an inter-agency working group to bring together best practices in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) training. The group has prepared this guidance for federal, state, and local government and law enforcement officials organizing CVE, cultural awareness, or counterterrorism training.

GOAL	GUIDANCE/BEST PRACTICE
1. Trainers and training should be expert and well-regarded.	a) Thoroughly review the prospective trainer's résumé to ensure he or she has subject matter expertise and subject-specific training experience. Contact other agencies who have received training to get feedback, check with knowledgeable community leaders, and research media coverage. Don't assume that because a trainer has a particular cultural background, or has law enforcement experience, that he or she is a qualified cultural competency trainer. b) Request student feedback when researching a training provider to determine whether the curriculum is relevant and effective for your particular objectives. Look for whether lessons have been operationally useful. c) If you have the opportunity, try it before you use it; observing the training in motion will provide you the opportunity to gather feedback from trainees/participants and observe reactions and participation levels. Most professional trainers will be open to outside observation and peer review. d) Interview each prospective instructor about his or her experience in the specified topic, which should include both education and work experience. Professional trainers/providers should have long-term grounding in the subject matter they are teaching. e) Ensure that all written materials are reviewed carefully by persons with an understanding of the relevant topics. f) Evaluate the prospective trainer during and after course delivery, and act on the evaluation.
2. Training should be sensitive to constitutional values.	a) Review the training program to ensure that it uses examples to demonstrate that terrorists and violent extremists vary in ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. b) Training should focus on behavior, not appearance or membership in particular ethnic or religious communities. c) Training should support the protection of civil rights and civil liberties as part of national security. Don't use training that equates religious expression, protests, or other constitutionally protected activity with criminal activity.
3. Training should facilitate further dialogue and learning.	a) A training provider whose organization has an existing productive relationship with local government and communities is likely to be more effective and to focus on educating rather than persuading. Trainers who are well regarded by communities and local government can help facilitate further dialogue and broader resources and connections. b) Training should promote opportunities for further learning and foster self-study. Complex topics require on-going learning.

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4. Training should adhere to government standards and efforts.	a) Ensure that the training aligns with the federal approach to CVE, including prioritizing civil rights and civil liberties and building partnerships with communities. (See the White House Approach to Countering Violent Extremism, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf.) The President, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Attorney General have all stated that communities are part of the solution, not part of the problem; be sure to follow that guidance. b) Countering violent extremism programs differ from counterterrorism (CT) programs, although CVE is a relevant component to the National CT Strategy. CVE programs focus on developing trust, enhancing community resiliency, prevention, intervention and protecting civil rights and civil liberties. Training objectives for CVE programs should reflect this approach. c) Reach out to existing sponsors of government training efforts for their input; DHS is working on various efforts concerning CVE, training, and engagement. To learn more about these efforts visit http://www.dhs.gov/hometownsecurity.
5. Training and objectives should be appropriately tailored, focused, and supported.	a) Match training content to the audience members' jobs. Material should be relevant and useful to those being trained. Training should meet your specific objectives and be clear. b) Ensure that training provides operational best practices for how to engage with diverse communities to maximize effectiveness. c) Choose training that is tailored to your audience, i.e. training for intelligence professionals will stress terminology, collection, and dissemination, whereas training for law enforcement will stress building community trust through interaction and engagement. d) Check whether the curriculum is in a standardized format with associated training materials. The training should include a summary, guides for instructors and participants, and evaluations.

For more information on best practices in CVE training and community policing efforts:

Federal Government
National Security Strategy
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf

Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf

Fact Sheet: The Department of Homeland Security's Approach to Countering Violent Extremism
http://www.dhs.gov/files/fact-sheet-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism.pdf

Remarks of Denis McDonough, Deputy National Security Advisor to the President, on "Partnering with Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism in America," http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/06/remarks-denis-mcdonough-deputy-national-security-advisor-president-prepa

Federal Interagency, "Guidance for Building Communities of Trust,"
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/RIC/Publications/e071021293_buildingcommtrust_revision.pdf

Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) CVE Working Group Recommendations,
http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_cve_working_group_recommendations.pdf

Local Law Enforcement
Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Muslim Community Affairs Unit, http://la-sheriff.org/sites/muslimoutreach_new/index.html

Academic
D.H. Schanzer, C. Kurzman, & E. Moosa, "Anti Terror Lessons of Muslim Americans." Duke University (2010), http://fds.duke.edu/db/attachment/1255

Non-Governmental Organization
Muslim Public Affairs Council's "Building Bridges to Strengthen America: Forging and Effective Counterterrorism Enterprise between Muslim Americans and Law Enforcement," http://www.mpac.org/publications/policy-papers/building-bridges.php

Questions? Email CRCLTraining@dhs.gov.