



Suspicious Activity Reporting Training for Hometown Security Partners

Background

The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) training strategy is a multifaceted approach designed to increase the effectiveness of state, local, and tribal law enforcement and public safety professionals and other frontline partners in identifying, reporting, evaluating, and sharing pre-incident terrorism indicators to prevent acts of terrorism. The overarching goal of the training strategy is to facilitate appropriate agency implementation of the SAR process and to enhance a nationwide SAR capability. To increase the effectiveness of this multifaceted approach, the NSI has developed training programs for frontline officers, analysts, and chief executives regarding the behaviors and indicators of terrorism-related criminal activity.

While continuing to provide high-quality training for the law enforcement community, the NSI has developed SAR awareness training for partners with similar missions, or “hometown security partners.” These partners include:

- Fire and emergency medical services (EMS) professionals
- Public safety telecommunications professionals (e.g., 9-1-1 operators)
- Emergency managers
- Corrections and probation and parole officers
- Private sector security personnel and those charged with protecting the nation’s critical infrastructure

The purpose of the training is not to empower public safety officials to act on behalf of law enforcement but to have them understand the critical role they play in identifying and reporting suspicious activity to state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement.

Outreach and Coordination

The success of the NSI largely depends on the ability to earn and maintain the public’s trust. As such, advocacy groups served an essential role in shaping the NSI Privacy Protection Framework and also assisted in the development and review of NSI products and resources. As the NSI moves forward, community outreach will help in addressing concerns of citizens and advocates by demonstrating that agencies engaged in the SAR process have adopted and maintain appropriate privacy and civil liberties safeguards.

The NSI is a critical aspect of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary’s “If You See Something, Say Something™” campaign, which is a simple and effective program to raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper local law enforcement authorities. Both the “If You See Something, Say Something™” campaign and the NSI underscore the concept that a secure homeland begins with hometown security, where an alert public plays a critical role in keeping our nation safe.



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These key foundational elements of the NSI are being administered within the development of the SAR awareness training products and processes for hometown security partners. As a part of this engagement effort, the NSI has also developed and participated in the Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) initiative. The BCOT initiative supports local law enforcement agencies and fusion centers as they interact with their various communities to explain the SAR process, the NSI, and the role of fusion centers. Additionally, agencies can use this opportunity to present their privacy policy and outline the safeguards built into the information sharing system.

Moving Forward

With the outreach of the NSI Program Management Office's (NSI PMO) training portfolio to other key constituencies, the NSI PMO is now working to identify gaps and develop necessary training to ensure that timely, relevant information is shared with and among law enforcement agencies and other public safety partners.

Because 9-1-1 is the number most people in the United States call to obtain help in a police, fire, or medical emergency, 9-1-1 call takers can play an important role in SAR awareness with their unique position of receiving calls for emergency services. The responsibilities of the emergency management community include working closely with operators and owners of critical infrastructure and key resources, responding to emergency situations, and gathering information about disasters. These responsibilities may place them in unique positions to observe suspicious activity-related behaviors and indicators that, when viewed within the totality of circumstances, may indicate preoperational planning of a terrorist-related incident. Firefighters and EMS professionals also have a significant reach into communities across America. In their efforts to prevent and respond to life and property losses, firefighters and EMS professionals enter homes, businesses, vehicles,

and other assets thousands of times each day and, as a result, may be exposed to behaviors and indicators of criminal activity. Community corrections professionals are also in a position to recognize criminal or potential terrorism activity, especially while this activity may be in the planning phase, due to their contact with offenders and families and friends of offenders. In addition, there are more than 2 million security officers who protect our nation's critical infrastructure, and these public safety and security professionals can be "force multipliers" to sworn law enforcement officers to help protect communities and to recognize and report suspicious activity.

Delivery of the five training models is in the form of short training programs that can be accessed via familiar sector-specific training portals and on the online SAR Training Web page at: http://nsi.ncirc.gov/training_online.aspx. These programs serve to educate those whose professions have a great potential of exposure to indicators and behaviors associated with criminal and/or terrorist activity.

For More Information

Visit <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/> for more information about the NSI and current training opportunities.



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