



PROMISING PRACTICES FOR USING COMMUNITY POLICING TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

How to Create and Implement a
Community Outreach Program

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**POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM**



Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security

PREFACE

Purpose of this guide

This publication is a guide for police professionals on how to conceptualize, create, and implement a community outreach program with the goal of building productive partnerships with community members to improve public safety and, in so doing, counter violent extremism and address other public safety concerns.

The basis for these recommendations

The basis for the recommendations included here is a two-year study that was conducted by Duke University, the Police Executive Research Forum, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill between June 2013 and April 2015. The purpose of the study was to:

- Measure the extent to which local police agencies across the country are attempting to implement community engagement programs as a means to address violent extremism;
- Identify the strategic and programmatic elements of these efforts;
- Catalogue promising practices;
- Identify barriers that inhibit engagement efforts; and
- Recommend policies and practices to improve the efficacy of these programs.

The study was conducted in four parts:

- **Survey:** We surveyed all 480 state, county, and municipal police agencies in the United States with more than 200 sworn officers, plus 63 additional county and municipal agencies with 200 or fewer sworn officers in selected jurisdictions that experienced an incident or prosecution for violent extremism in recent years. The survey yielded responses from 339 of the larger agencies and 43 of the smaller agencies. Of these, 35 were state agencies, 141 were county agencies, and 206 were municipal agencies. Taken together, their combined jurisdictions cover 86 percent of the U.S. population.
- **Telephone Interviews:** These survey results were reviewed, and 18 responding police agencies were selected for in-depth telephone interviews, based on criteria such as the threat posed by violent extremism (such as Al Qaeda-inspired, racist, environmentalist, and/or anti-government extremism) in responding

agencies' jurisdictions, and their use of community policing practices to counter violent extremism.

- **Site Visits:** From the 18 police agencies interviewed over the phone, eight were selected for site visits. These site visits included extensive interviews with outreach specialists (including sworn and non-sworn) and their community partners, review of materials produced as part of outreach efforts (e.g., flyers, PowerPoint presentations used in trainings, and videos), and observation of community meetings and events.
- **Focus Groups:** A separate team of researchers, traveling at different times than those meeting with police agencies and their partners, met with community organizations and focus groups of community members in these jurisdictions and several others. Our focus groups consisted entirely of Muslim Americans because, of all the communities with members at risk of recruitment to violent extremism, policing agencies had made the most progress building relationships with Muslim Americans. Participants were recruited to provide ethnic, gender, and generational diversity with a view toward generating conversations that would offer contrasting experiences and opinions of Muslim-Americans' interactions with the police and other law enforcement agencies. However, participants were not randomly selected and cannot be considered statistically representative of Muslim communities.

All participants in the study, including police and community members, were guaranteed anonymity to encourage candor.

The findings from this research project are contained in the report, "The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing to Prevent Violent Extremism," available at:

<http://sites.duke.edu/tcths/files/2013/06/2015-full-report-FINAL1.pdf>

How this guide is organized

This guide is divided into two parts. The first is geared toward police executives and/or police officials charged with creating their departments' outreach programs and provides recommendations on how to plan and implement an outreach program. The second part is geared toward outreach officers/civilian outreach team members and outlines best practices associated with building and maintaining relationships with community members, including common obstacles to engagement and how to overcome them.

INTRODUCTION

For police agencies and community members alike, violent extremism – which is ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals – is a serious and immediate public safety concern. For years, many policing agencies have been using principles of community-oriented policing to address violent extremism. This manual presents a compilation of many of the promising practices that these agencies have developed and implemented and recommendations informed by the views of experienced police chiefs and officers, as well as the community members they serve.

The core insight from this research is that police departments will be most effective in preventing violent extremism by treating it as one of many public safety problems that communities face and partnering with communities to develop effective prevention programs and strategies.

This broad-based approach is necessary because the threat of violent extremism is rarely the public safety issue that has the most immediate impact on people’s daily lives. Community members want to work with the police to address concerns ranging from violent crime to school safety and cyber bullying. Policing efforts that focus exclusively on violent extremism – a threat that many communities do not rank as a top concern – may inadvertently imply that the police are not interested in tackling the full spectrum of issues impacting their communities. A unidimensional approach may also be mistaken for a police effort to collect intelligence rather than a dedication to building strong relationships of trust.

Moreover, initiating a new outreach program dedicated exclusively to combatting violent extremism is a daunting task for police departments strapped for resources. A better approach would be to incorporate into existing community building and crime prevention efforts outreach programs that also enhance community resilience to violent extremism.

Our research suggests that using these well-established community policing strategies can build the type of trusted relationships that can serve as a platform for addressing the problem of violent extremism. Building trust between communities and policing agencies is important for many reasons, as research on community policing strategies over the past two decades has demonstrated. However, it is especially vital for tackling the problem of violent extremism. Our interviews with Muslim American community members documented that this particular community believes it has experienced widespread discrimination since 9/11 that has made its members deeply suspicious of virtually any governmental programs or initiatives that have a connection to “counter-terrorism.” Overcoming this source of distrust is a prerequisite to the development of meaningful preventative efforts.

Yet, policing agencies that have developed strong bonds with their Muslim American communities believe that these relationships can be used to address the problem of violent extremism. We saw examples of

Muslim American community members reaching out to police agencies for assistance when they had concerns about the direction in which their children were headed. They had established a trusting relationship and knew that officers could help them in getting the help their children needed. Police agencies can also provide education about violent extremism and serve as a catalyst for programs to build community resilience against violent extremist ideologies.

This guide provides recommendations on how to create outreach and engagement programs that include building communities' resilience to violent extremism among larger community-building and crime prevention efforts. This manual builds on common community policing strategies but highlights key concepts that are especially relevant to building the type of relationships that can serve as a platform for violent extremism prevention efforts.¹

The elements of such programs are:

- Engagement efforts that are broad-based and include all communities in a jurisdiction;
- Outreach officers who are transparent about who they are and what they hope to achieve through their engagement efforts;
- Police outreach activities and intelligence collection that are kept separate;
- An outreach team who reflects the makeup of the community as a whole and consists of officers with exceptional interpersonal skills;
- An outreach team that is adequately staffed, so that someone is always available to address community concerns;
- Members of the outreach program who work closely with other government agencies, social service providers, and community groups;
- An outreach team who collaborates with community members to create and deliver cultural awareness training for members of the department; and
- Outreach officers who understand that “social work” activities and attentiveness to quality-of-life issues are part of the work of policing.

Each of these elements will be expanded upon in the sections that follow. Section I is geared toward police executives and/or police officials charged with building their departments' outreach programs. Section II provides practical guidance for outreach officers themselves. Ideally, everyone involved in outreach and engagement should have a familiarity with all of the concepts (and challenges) discussed in this guide. This promotes understanding by the different members of the outreach team of their various roles.

¹ There is a vast literature on community policing strategies. Many publications and training program are available from the United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). Among the most relevant to this manual are: The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Final Report (2015); The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Implementation Guide: Moving From Recommendations to Action (2015); Caitlin Golkey and Susan Shah, Police Perspectives: Building Trust in a Diverse Nation – No. 1. How to Increase Cultural Understanding; No. 2. How to Serve Diverse Communities; No. 3 How to Support Trust Building in Your Agency (2016); Pradine Saint Fort, Noëlle Yasso, Susan Shah, Engaging Police in Immigrant Communities, (2012); Mary Beth Gordon, Making the Match: Law Enforcement, the Faith Community, and Value-Based Initiatives (2004).

SECTION I: PLANNING

Laying the groundwork for a successful outreach program

STEP I: Articulating your guiding philosophy

The first step in establishing an outreach program is laying out its overall approach or “guiding philosophy.” This approach should be directly informed by the program’s goals. Often, these goals are as simple as “building better relationships with the community” or “building trust with community members who are wary of the police department.”

Outreach programs should be grounded in a commitment to the “whole community” approach, transparency, and addressing all of the public safety and quality-of-life concerns of the community. The success of outreach programs is predicated on community members trusting outreach officers and feeling confident that these officers’ only motive is improving their relationships with the police department and their quality of life.

The goal of an outreach program should not be gathering intelligence for use in criminal investigations and prosecutions. An outreach program with an intelligence objective is almost certain to fail.

This does not mean that the outreach program will not result in community assistance to support law enforcement and national security objectives. Our research demonstrated that police agencies that build genuine trust with their communities will be viewed as trusted partners to whom sensitive information may be provided.

The whole community approach

What it is

Taking a “whole community” approach means that an outreach program consciously includes every segment of its community – including people of diverse faiths, races, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural traditions, gender, and sexual orientation – in its outreach efforts.

The goal is to create a sense of belonging so that everyone feels a part of the community. This means building – or in some places, rebuilding – trust between the police and the communities that they serve, as well as serving as a bridge among groups within the community who might otherwise be isolated from one another.

Why it works

Put simply, community members who feel a sense of belonging to the community as a larger whole are more invested in keeping their shared community safe.

Outreach programs that do not encompass the entire community, but rather concentrate on one or several groups, run the risk of alienating community members. Alienation may occur because singularly-focused engagement efforts may create the impression that the police agencies perceive a particular community to present a heightened public safety threat.

How to achieve the whole community approach

The whole community approach is not a “one size fits all” model of community engagement. The various segments of a given community have different needs and are best served by forms of outreach that are tailored to them.

What does this tailored outreach look like in practice?

To give one example, there might be members of your community for whom it is culturally taboo for women to socialize with men who are not their husbands or family members. It is important to understand such cultural practices when putting together your outreach program so that male officers are not tasked with reaching out to these women. Tasking women from your engagement team with reaching out to women in these communities in your jurisdiction demonstrates to the community as a whole that the police department understands and is respectful of its cultural norms.

Transparency

Transparency should be a stated goal of any community outreach program from the outset and should infuse every level of planning and implementation.

Outreach and engagement are about building relationships of trust. The implicit message of transparency is that the police have nothing to hide. Outreach programs, even those created with the best of intentions and with no hidden agenda, can fail if the goals and objectives of their efforts are unclear to the community.

In the initial stages of building an outreach program, being transparent means making community members aware of the fact that their police department is creating an outreach program that is meant to strengthen police-community relationships and not to provide a cover for intelligence-gathering.

Addressing all public safety concerns

Just as an outreach program should take a “whole community” approach, so too should it consider the full public safety picture of the community that it serves. This is especially important when a police agency is aiming to build its community’s resilience to violent extremism through community engagement.

Violent extremism should not be the only focus of those efforts. Successful engagement programs are those that demonstrate a concern for the community’s quality of life and safety in their totality, not just as they pertain to a narrow category of criminal behavior motivated by extremism. Extremism is one concern among many that might face a given community, and one that police agencies cannot effectively address without the buy-in of community members. Achieving buy-in requires demonstrating an investment in the community and its health through comprehensive attention to community members’ needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Articulating your guiding philosophy

1. **Outreach and engagement programs should be informed by a “whole community approach.”** This means that they should reach out to all segments of their communities in an effort to build a cohesive social identity.
2. **As part of their “whole community approach,” outreach programs should consider the specific social and cultural needs of the different members of their communities and tailor their outreach efforts to them.** This means recognizing that some community members might be more comfortable talking to female officers. Or some community members might prefer to work with officers on a neighborhood sporting event, rather than attending sit-down community meetings. Outreach programs should not adopt a “one size fits all” approach to community engagement.
3. **Outreach officers should be transparent about who they are, their intentions, and program goals.** Police agencies cannot leave any room for doubt about the intentions of their outreach programs. Information should be made readily accessible to the community to demonstrate that outreach officers have no hidden agenda.
4. **Outreach programs should never have an intelligence objective.** This is because the ultimate aim of community outreach should be building trust and collaborative partnerships between the police and the communities that they serve. If community engagement officers are tasked with intelligence gathering, the motives behind their outreach efforts will be called into question by community members. This jeopardizes the trust that those community members have in the police department.
5. **Outreach should focus on addressing all public safety and quality-of-life concerns in a given community, not just violent extremism.** Fortunately, violent extremism is a rare occurrence in the United States. Outreach efforts will be more effective if they focus on issues that have the greatest impact on people’s lives. Building resilience to violent extremism can be part of this effort, but should not be the primary focus.

STEP II: Determining the best organizational approach for your agency

The second step in creating an outreach and engagement program is determining how to organize it. This means determining where in your agency it should be located, and how the program should be built (i.e., who will lead it, how many officers will be assigned to it, etc.). Capacity and funding will have an impact on these determinations.

Ideally, outreach programs should be free-standing units that are kept entirely separate from intelligence-gathering units and are adequately staffed to guard against officer burnout and to ensure that outreach programs have enough resources to build and sustain their relationships with community members in the long term.

Benefits of a dedicated outreach unit

One of the benefits of having a dedicated outreach unit is that it sends a clear message to the community that the outreach program does not have an intelligence-gathering mandate.

Having a dedicated outreach unit also affirms that outreach work is a necessary and integral function of police work. Rather than treating outreach as a supplement to activities like criminal investigations, it instead invests community engagement with the same level of importance as traditional agency functions.

Doing so makes it clear that community outreach is vital to preserving public safety.

Many agencies fully embrace community policing as their standard for doing business. They expect all officers to engage in community outreach as part of their work, and make outreach activities part of officer assessments. Creating a free-standing outreach team enhances this “system-wide” approach and gives officers with an interest in and aptitude for community engagement an additional path for professional development.

Finally, creating an outreach unit ensures that the officers involved can fully dedicate themselves to outreach and engagement, making them much more accessible to the community and improving their outcomes as a result.

Separating outreach from intelligence-gathering

The success of an outreach program is dependent on the ability of outreach officers to build trusting relationships with community members, and community members will not trust outreach officers if they believe that those officers have ulterior motives.

In organizational terms, this means that **outreach and engagement teams should be kept separate from units that conduct intelligence-gathering**. This extends to information storage. All information that outreach officers collect so that they can do their jobs – such as the contact information of community members with whom they regularly communicate – should be stored separately from any intelligence-related databases related to investigations. Police agencies need to make absolutely sure that there is no “mission creep” between their outreach and intelligence-gathering efforts.

It is important to note that separating police outreach and intelligence functions would not preclude **community members from approaching outreach officers with information about behavior or activities in their neighborhoods that trouble them, or that outreach officers should discourage community members from doing so**. If community members feel comfortable having these types of conversations with outreach officers, it is an indication of the officers’ success in building trusting relationships.

In some instances, such as in the case of local teenagers shoplifting at a community-owned market, victims in the community might feel most comfortable reporting the crime to a sworn outreach officer – or an officer whose duties include outreach and engagement – and expect that that officer will take and follow up on their report rather than passing it along to someone else in the department. In these instances, follow-up is in fact part of the community outreach effort and can reinforce the community’s trust in outreach officers.

This being said, sworn outreach officers whose goals include preventing violent extremism should never be involved in investigating terrorism-related cases. **Police agencies should be clear with community members**

Promising Practices from the Field: A real-world example

When first creating its community outreach team, Agency X made one of its central tenets keeping outreach completely separate from investigations. Not only is the outreach team organized in a separate bureau, all of its information is kept in a separate database to which investigations does not have access. The opposite is also true: outreach does not have access to the investigation unit’s database either. The community outreach team and investigations worked together closely to craft a policy that would ensure that the missions of both units were clearly defined and did not overlap in any way. This was done because the success of the outreach program was predicated on the trust of the community, and the only way to secure that trust was for the outreach program to operate independent of investigations.

about how any information that they share will be handled, whether that means implementing an intervention plan or passing it along to federal law enforcement.

Capacity challenges and how to overcome them

In some agencies, keeping outreach teams entirely separate from investigative units is not feasible for reasons of capacity and funding.

In these cases, what matters most is separating all outreach and intelligence-gathering. **Even if outreach officers are not grouped into a separate unit, they should never participate in any intelligence-gathering activities in their community engagement capacity.**

How to organize your outreach team: Preventing officer burnout by ensuring appropriate staffing levels

Regardless of where an outreach program is organized within a police agency, it needs to be as well-staffed as is possible. Building and maintaining relationships with community members is time-intensive. Outreach teams that are understaffed run the risk of burning out their outreach officers and alienating community members who see engagement efforts as inconsistent or sporadic.

Ideally, departments would have enough available funding to have two outreach officers assigned to each of the major communities within their jurisdiction, so that assignments and responsibilities could be shared between them. This staffing level would demonstrate the agency's commitment to the long-term sustainability of its engagement efforts. It would also guard against officer burnout, which can lead to the loss of key team members. Finally, it would demonstrate to outreach officers that they are valued by their agencies and that their particular skill sets are considered crucial to the work of their organizations.

Given the constraints of funding, however, this commitment to outreach may not be possible, especially in smaller agencies. **If budgets permit, agencies should aim to have at least one or two full-time outreach officers who are able to build relationships with the various communities represented in a given jurisdiction. Departments without the resources necessary to have any dedicated outreach officers can instead assign officers to dedicate a percentage of their time to engagement with a given community.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Determining the best organizational approach for your agency

1. **Outreach and intelligence-gathering must be separated.** Community members are much less likely to trust outreach officers if intelligence-gathering is part of their mandate and if they are organized within intelligence units. This does not mean that community members cannot or should not approach outreach officers with information about things in their neighborhood that they find concerning. These types of conversations are evidence of successful relationship building. This being said, outreach officers should be clear with community members about how any information that they share will be handled, whether that means implementing an intervention plan or passing it along to federal law enforcement.
2. **Multiple outreach officers should be assigned to each major community within a given agency's jurisdiction.** This staffing plan will prevent officer burnout, demonstrate a commitment to the longevity of outreach initiatives, and ensure that the community members are not unintentionally alienated from the police department because outreach officers are not always available.

STEP III: Staffing your outreach team with the right people

Once a police agency has determined its outreach program's guiding philosophy, where in the department it will be organized, and how many people will staff it, the next step is finding the right people to do the job. The success of an outreach program is dependent upon the ability of its team members to form trusting and lasting relationships with community members.

There are three things to consider when recruiting officers for an outreach team: personality, how well the team reflects local demographics, and ensuring that the team has a diversity of background and engagement styles.

Personality: What to Look for in recruiting outreach program team members

Cultural competency is important to consider when recruiting outreach officers. Personality traits are also important.

Successful outreach officers are open-minded, outgoing, and eager to learn. They are able to put people at ease, genuine in the interest that they take in others, respectful of people from different cultural traditions or socio-economic circumstances, willing to admit mistakes, and determined.

Culturally competence is not a prerequisite for placement on an outreach team. According to a general consensus of police outreach experts consulted for this report, personality matters more to the success of an outreach team than pre-existing cultural competence. Cultural competence can be taught – and indeed the process of teaching cultural competence can be an effective way to build bridges with community members, if community members are involved in the process of educating officers.

Learning how to be an effective and agile communicator, however, is much more difficult. This is not to say that all successful team members are talkative extroverts. While some community members might respond positively to “large personalities,” others are more comfortable with officers who take a more subdued – but no less dedicated – approach.

Successful team members share a talent for listening to community members, a commitment to the outreach and engagement ethos, and an understanding of the importance of relationship-building to the safety and well-being of the entire community.

Although the personality of outreach team members matters far more than their cultural background, the ideal outreach team would have members who reflect the diversity of the community they serve.

Similarly, team members who are “locals” (people who grew up in or have spent many years in the community) are often able to more easily build relationships with community members. They have

Promising Practices from the Field: a real world example

Agency X credits much of its success in building strong relationships with the incredibly diverse community that it serves to three factors: first, its leadership is local; second, its ranks are representative of the community as a whole; third, the members of the department – from the executive level down – are accessible to community members. To give an example: the leader of Agency X received a letter from a community member who was concerned about the treatment of her granddaughter in custody. The leader of Agency X called the grandmother immediately using the number that she had provided in her letter. The grandmother was surprised that the Agency X executive was reaching out to her, but he viewed it as a necessary and important part of his job. This combination of accessibility and familiarity means that Agency X is seen as a department that is contained within the community rather than being set apart from it.

community touchstones in common, such as where they went to high school or the church that they attend.

This attention to diversity should extend to gender as well. Women in the community, for instance, are often more comfortable engaging with female outreach officers.

In order to put together a successful outreach team, a police department may need to recruit individuals from the community who are not sworn officers. Civilians can bring essential skills to the team – such as cultural competencies, language skills, and longstanding relationships with community members – that are critical to the success of outreach initiatives.

Strong outreach teams have members with diverse backgrounds and engagement styles. While some community members might respond more favorably to a high-energy outreach officer, others might be more comfortable with an officer with a more low-key approach who grew up in their neighborhood. These are equally valid approaches to community engagement. Ideally, an outreach team is able to deliver them both.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staffing your outreach team with the right people

1. **Outreach program team members should be open-minded, outgoing, and eager to learn.** Community members are responsive to those who demonstrate an interest – and investment – in their lives and their cultures.
2. **Outreach teams should reflect the diversity of the community with which they are engaging.** Team members who speak the same language (both literally and culturally) as the communities in which they are working are much more likely to be accepted by community members.
3. **Being local matters.** Community members are often more willing to trust the outreach efforts of officers whose personal backgrounds are tied to the community and who are therefore seen as having a sincere interest in its safety and well-being.
4. **Team members should be committed to the outreach and engagement ethos.** This means that they must understand the importance of building relationships of trust with the community to police work.
5. **Outreach teams should be diverse of background, engagement style, and gender.** Different community members respond to different things. Some feel more comfortable interacting with women, others might prefer to speak with someone who shares a background similar to their own, and others might be more receptive to team members who are low-key. A strong outreach team is built from both sworn and non-sworn members who have diverse – and complementary – traits, experiences, and expertise.

STEP IV: Developing a training program

Once an outreach team has been built, its members must be trained. Robust outreach programs have officers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge to forge productive partnerships with the community. This includes cultural awareness training, language training, and training on what radicalization to violence does – and does not – look like.

Cultural awareness training

Formal training on cultural awareness is a crucial part of fostering understanding between police officers and the communities that they serve.

What cultural awareness training is

Cultural awareness training focuses on building officer understanding of community members with diverse backgrounds. It covers topics like religious practices and holidays, forms of dress and adornment and what they mean, the history of a given community, and harmful stereotypes and the effects that they have.

Cultural awareness training, it should be noted, is not sensitivity training. Sensitivity training tends to focus things that officers “can’t” and “shouldn’t” say or do because they can cause offense. Such a focus on “don’ts” can make officers less inclined to engage with community members because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. Cultural awareness training, on the other hand, is about promoting positive interactions between officers and community members.

Why it matters

Having the knowledge that cultural awareness training provides makes officers more comfortable in engaging with community members. Mandating this training also demonstrates to the community that their local police agency understands the importance of learning about them, their customs, and their needs.

How to put a curriculum together

The best way to craft a cultural awareness training is to involve community members in its development and delivery.

First, using community members ensures that the training is effective: there is no better authority on the cultural mores and practices of a given community than the community itself.

Second, cultural awareness training builds a bridge between community members and their police department. It gives officers and community members the opportunity to get to know each other, and to ask questions of each other in a non-threatening environment, in order to build understanding and trust. Bringing the community into the training process underscores that the police are a part of and work for their communities.

Any officers who have a strong record of community engagement and an in-depth knowledge of the community should also be involved in the development and delivery of cultural awareness curricula, and should discuss best practices and lessons learned from their experience in the field. These officers can be used as a resource to educate their colleagues about topics such as:

- The historical relationships among different community groups and between those groups and the department;
- How to navigate any fault lines within the community so as to preserve their relationships with everyone involved; and
- Any existing outreach initiatives in which the department is currently engaged.

When and to whom this training should be offered

This training should be offered regularly, both in the academy and in-service. It should also be mandatory for all members of an agency, whether or not they are sworn officers.

Comprehensive training for officers and civilians is important for two reasons: 1) all members of a police department should be provided skills to effectively engage with the community; and 2) widespread training reinforces the importance of cultural competency and makes it a central feature of agency culture.

Training on recruitment to violent extremism

For officers to appropriately interact with citizens regarding violent extremism prevention, they must be trained on what violent extremism is, what it is not, and how outreach officers should handle any concerns that may exist in a community about radicalization and violent extremism.

What this training should cover

Any training program on violent extremism should address all forms of violent extremism, including extremism inspired by al Qaeda and ISIS, anti-government sentiment, and white supremacy. This training should cover topics such as the radicalization process; the role of the internet and online forums in facilitating extremism; the social and psychological factors that might make a community member vulnerable to extremists' recruitment efforts; and the behaviors that may indicate that a community member could be considering committing a violent crime. Comprehensive on-site and on-line training modules on many of these topics are available from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training.²

Materials that describe the violent extremist threat are available elsewhere.³ The key points that training on violent extremism should cover are:

- **There are many types of violent extremism.** Sovereign citizens, white supremacists, eco-terrorists, and individuals inspired by al Qaeda and ISIS are all serious concerns for the police, and should be examined in-depth as part of any training on extremism and radicalization.
- **There is no profile of a typical violent extremist.** Identifying extremism depends on a careful case-by-case assessment of a variety of factors.
- **“Different” does not equal “threatening.”** One of the best ways to learn how to identify a threat is to learn what does not indicate a threat. Carrying religious symbols and engaging in religious practices, for example, are not signs of radicalization to violence. For example: baptized Sikhs wear a religious symbol known as a “kirpan,” one of the five articles of faith which they are required to wear at all times. The kirpan may resemble a dagger or sword, but it is not intended to be used as a weapon. It is purely symbolic and is worn as a reminder to resist personal weaknesses.⁴
- **Police agencies and community members are partners** in preventing violence inspired by extremism, with the shared goal of keeping their communities safe.

When and to whom this training should be offered

As with cultural awareness training, training on violent extremism and the radicalization process should be offered regularly, both in the academy and through in-service training.

² <https://www.slatt.org/>

³ See, for example, the COPS/IACP publication “Using Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism,” p. 5-7. <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/outside.asp?http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P299>

⁴ <http://www.sikhs.org/art12.htm>

Also, in recognition of the public safety partnership between police agencies and their communities, **police should consider including community members in at least some of every local law enforcement agency's training and educational programming related to radicalization and violent extremism.**

Ideally, community members and police officers should experience this training together.

There are multiple benefits to joint training. Having police and community members trained together shows the community that the police consider them to be partners in preventing extremism, not potential extremist threats. Second, including the community in such training empowers them to help protect their community by identifying any individual that may be radicalizing to violence. Third, joint training enables police and community members to discuss how cases of possible radicalization to violence will be handled, who should be contacted, and the types of non-law enforcement interventions that may be available.

Language training

For some communities, such as newly-arrived refugee communities, English language proficiency is the exception rather than the rule. Outreach and engagement in these contexts can present communication challenges. Agencies may choose to use officers within the agency who possess the applicable language skills or neutral, certified interpreters from the community. Another available tool is a fee-based "language line," which is a call-center translation service.

However, the most effective outreach occurs when engagement officers are able to interact naturally with community members, without the intervention of an interpreter. As a result, training in the language (or languages) spoken in the communities is essential for engagement team members.

Goals of language training

It is unrealistic to expect that many officers will be able to achieve proficiency in the many languages present in their jurisdiction. Basic language training in whatever language is spoken by a significant number of community members should be provided to outreach officers. The goal is to equip all team members with a working knowledge of key words and phrases that will prove useful in their engagement efforts. Language training enables outreach officers to interact team members with their community members and demonstrates to the community the officers' sincere investment in building relationships with them.

How to develop a language training curriculum

As with cultural awareness training, **language training programs should be developed in collaboration with the community.** Police executives can invite community leaders with the appropriate language skills to assist the department with developing a training curriculum that equips outreach officers with basic vocabulary and phrases that will be most helpful to them in their outreach initiatives. This is productive both in terms of providing officers with important language skills and as a means of building relationships with community members.

Similarly, **officers who speak a language that outreach officers need to learn (whether or not they are outreach officers themselves) are a valuable resource** and can be drawn upon to provide some instruction to their colleagues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing a training program

1. **Develop and deliver cultural awareness training in cooperation with community members.** Cultural awareness training demonstrates that the agency is invested in and understands the importance of developing a nuanced understanding of the community that it serves and gives community members the opportunity to become personally invested in the work of the agency.
2. **Require that every member of the agency complete this training.** Outreach officers are not the only members of a police or sheriff's department who engage the community. Every member of a department – sworn and non-sworn – should be given the opportunity to develop the understanding that they need in order to be successful in their interactions with community members. Training all employees in cultural awareness also reinforces the importance of cultural competency in agency culture.
3. **Provide training on radicalization and violent extremism that addresses the full spectrum of extremist beliefs.** All forms of violent extremism are serious concerns for law enforcement and the community, and must be addressed in any training or educational programming centered on violent extremism and radicalization to violence.
4. **Provide educational programming on radicalization and violent extremism for community members and involve community members in law enforcement training on those topics.** Community members and law enforcement officers are partners in addressing the dangers posed by violent extremism and therefore both need to understand what it does – and does not – look like.
5. **Provide basic language training to outreach officers in the languages most commonly used by community members.** Language training can range from formal classes to “cheat sheets” such as laminated cards with common expressions for use during traffic stops or informal encounters with community members.

STEP V: Developing partnerships with other local agencies

Strengthening relationships with other local government agencies will improve the delivery of services to the community and the sense of community among service providers. A “whole government” approach is a necessary complement to the “whole community” approach to police outreach programs.

Outreach among government agencies

Police departments should aim to partner with local sheriffs' departments, school officials, mental health and social service providers, local representatives of federal agencies (such as the FBI and the local U.S. Attorney's Office), local government administrators, and others.

Why these partnerships matter

Efforts to build community resistance to violent extremism should not be separated from other community policing initiatives. Building partnerships with local agencies and social services providers helps police officers identify resources for community members they encounter in course of their outreach. Knowing where to send someone for food stamps, health care, transportation assistance, mental health counseling, and other services is a way to promote trust and demonstrate that police agencies are partners in ensuring the community's well-being.

Furthermore, individuals exhibiting signs of radicalization to violence may be experiencing problems that are appropriately addressed by social services and mental health officials. Building relationships between police outreach officers, local agencies, and other service providers can facilitate the process of getting people the help they may need.

How to build these partnerships

The first step in building bridges among different government agencies is often a simple request for help. Conversely, another effective way of reaching out is to offer services. For example, police outreach officers can provide cultural awareness training to other types of government agencies, as well as classes on violent extremism. Classes and informational sessions like these are also an opportunity to lay the groundwork for the creation of intervention programs, discussed in detail below.

An effective way to sustain interagency partnerships is by creating a working group. A representative from each agency then attends working group meetings to discuss issues, events and concerns; propose activities and initiatives; and coordinate community outreach efforts. The efficacy of working groups depends on how frequently they meet and how many agencies are consistently represented at every meeting.

Multiagency outreach to the community

Multiagency outreach is one way of building relationships among the various government agencies and between those agencies and their community.

Multiagency outreach in practice

Multiagency outreach can take any number of forms, such as shared participation in community-led events and groups, shared town halls and community meetings, and shared participation on community boards. These forums give community members the chance to see that these agencies all work together. It also gives them the opportunity to have the full range of their concerns heard – and met – by all of the police and governmental bodies that are tasked with ensuring their health and safety.

When conducting outreach, local police agencies should make clear that they are different from federal law enforcement agencies and have different functions. Federal agencies with immigration enforcement authority, for example, may be feared or the target of resentment in some immigrant communities, so outreach officers should clarify that they do not monitor immigration status of their constituents. It is equally important, however, to be up front about the fact that federal government agencies such as the U.S. Attorney's Office, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security are partners in ensuring the safety and well-being of local communities.

In this way, police and sheriffs' departments can serve as a bridge between federal law enforcement and community members, facilitating relationship-building between community members and their federal partners on the basis of their shared desire to secure the safety and well-being of their community.

Why it matters

Multiagency outreach is crucial for developing and maintaining relationships with community members for two reasons. First, community members might not know which government agency is best equipped to address their concerns. Being able to address all of them at once makes it easier and faster to identify the department with whom they should be speaking. Second, if collaboration among these various agencies is necessary to address a given community member's issue, that need can be identified and worked out immediately among the government representatives in the room.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing partnerships with other local agencies

1. **Reach out for assistance and advice from other government agencies.** For local police agencies, building relationships with other government agencies is often as simple as asking for help, or offering help.
2. **Form interagency working groups.** Interagency working groups are a productive model for addressing concerns in the community that extend beyond the authority of the police department.
3. **Participate in multi-agency outreach.** Local agencies should be as accessible as possible to the community and should also make it clear that they are all working in the service of that community. One of the most productive ways to do this is through multi-agency outreach, in which multiple agencies participate in community meetings, town halls, and other venues.

STEP VI: Developing an assessment and intervention plan

Community outreach is about addressing the entire range of concerns in various communities about crime, quality-of-life issues, and any other matters that involve the police.

However, when outreach programs are successful in building relationships of trust between community members and the police, community members may tell outreach officers if they have concerns about persons they suspect of criminal activity, or people who they believe are being drawn towards violent extremism.

This may not happen frequently, but nonetheless it is important for outreach programs to have a plan in place for handling situations in which community members tell outreach officers about concerns or suspicions regarding potential terrorist activity.

Why assessment and intervention plans matter

Policing agencies need to be prepared to decide how to address a situation when they receive information about individuals who may be radicalizing to violent extremism. Ideally, police will have a variety of options for dealing with such individuals, ranging from the initiation of a criminal investigation when warranted by the facts to counseling programs with clergy or community leaders for individuals that have not exhibited potentially unlawful behavior. Ensuring that this range of options exists as part of a formalized intervention plan is important for the success of a community outreach and engagement program.

Communities want to know, especially with respect to their youth, that efforts will be made to address destructive behaviors and turn individuals towards a productive path whenever possible. If the initiation of a criminal investigation is the only option available to the police in these situations, it is far less likely that communities will identify individuals who do not pose an imminent threat to public safety but whose behaviors are suspicious and troublesome. **However, if the police demonstrate concerted efforts to provide services that succeed in diverting troubled individuals off a path toward possible extremist violence, communities will embrace the effort and become invested in the success of the outreach and engagement program.**

Components of an assessment and intervention plan

When police departments receive information, they need a process to assess the community member in question, and, if appropriate, initiate an intervention plan.

Assessments take many forms. Our research suggested that sometimes outreach officers will interview the individual in question and his or her family and friends. If mental illness is an issue, departments that have crisis intervention teams may use that resource to assess the situation. Others may need to seek assistance from other mental health professionals. In some cases, outreach officers may also need to gather information from other sources, such as schools, to better understand the behaviors that vulnerable community members are exhibiting and challenges they may be facing.

When the assessment concludes that the individual may have committed or is likely to commit a violent crime, the outreach officer must refer the case to criminal investigation authorities in the police department and, when appropriate, the FBI. However, when assessments conclude that the person in question has not reached this stage and is open to receiving help, outreach officers can initiate an intervention.

The goal of an intervention is to identify and ameliorate the factors that can underlie an attraction to violent extremism – such as trauma, social isolation, unemployment, and mental illness – so that the extremism loses its appeal, and community members in crisis develop a sense of belonging to and investment in the well-being of their community as a whole.

Types of interventions

There are two kinds of interventions: formal and informal.

Informal interventions are relatively common. A pastor might notice that a young congregant is starting to exhibit disruptive, aggressive, or otherwise questionable behavior, step in to serve as a mentor, and help the young person move away from criminality. Police outreach officers who have built a strong relationship of trust within a community can also serve in this mentoring and counselor role.

Formalized intervention plans, on the other hand, involve an established, interdisciplinary network of stakeholders – including police officers, community leaders, governmental and non-governmental social service and mental health providers, subject matter experts in areas such as adolescent behavior; victims' advocates, and faith leaders – who have laid out a set plan for helping vulnerable community members who appear to be headed down a path to violence. Ideally, this should include creating an intervention program which is tailored to these individuals' needs and coordinates their care so that the underlying issues that put them at risk of recruitment to violent extremism are addressed in their totality.

While the police are a key part of interventions in the sense that they are partners in creating intervention plans and in make referrals to direct service providers, they are not typically service providers themselves. The actual work of interventions – such as counseling and employment assistance – are handled by the other stakeholders.

Each jurisdiction is different. In some locations, the best way to organize and operate an intervention program is by using the police – as the agency connecting all relevant stakeholders – to lead it. In other jurisdictions, i.e., those with robust health and human services departments or organized groups of clinicians and social service providers in the community, these other agencies might be better suited to spearheading intervention efforts. In this latter case, the police department is still a crucial partner and resource in providing intervention services and referring vulnerable community members to the program.

Importantly, intervention plans that involve clinicians must take into account and incorporate all legal restrictions on information sharing, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and include formalized cooperative agreements between police departments and non-governmental organizations that will be providing services as part of the program.

Examples of interventions

Interventions should be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the community member involved.

Components of an intervention might include:

- Providing the community member employment assistance;
- Providing educational assistance;
- Connecting the community member with appropriate social services;
- If the community member is a young person, involving him or her in activities organized as part of (or in partnership with) the intervention program, such as swimming nights, soccer programs, or book clubs;
- Having a faith leader mentor the community member;
- Providing mental health care with a culturally competent provider and coordinating transportation to and from the provider's office; or
- Sending an outreach team officer and a mental health clinician to speak to the individuals in question and ask them to voluntarily turn over any firearms that they might have in their possession.

The ideal intervention is holistic, taking into account and addressing the numerous factors that may contribute to a community member's attraction to violent extremism.

Developing an intervention plan

In addition to their partners in local government, police agencies should also involve non-governmental stakeholders in developing and refining an intervention plan. This includes community leaders, non-governmental social service and mental health providers, subject matter experts in areas such as adolescent behavior, victims' advocates, and faith leaders.

Including stakeholders in the development process is important for two reasons. First, the planning process will result in creation of a robust network of knowledgeable people in government and the community who are empowered to step in and provide guidance and services to community members in need. Second, widespread participation in the planning process will give members of the community and the local government the opportunity to shape the intervention plan, ensuring that it is comprehensive and culturally sensitive. They are also more likely to feel invested in the plan and its success if they are involved in its development. Involving communities in the development and implementation of an intervention program will also alleviate stigmatization that could be associated with those who participate in the program.

The importance of transparency

Police and sheriffs' departments need to be fully transparent with communities when they create intervention programs that they will be used whenever possible, but that in many cases, criminal investigations and other enforcement actions will be required.

Community members who provide information about individuals to the police may have a strong preference that the person be referred to an intervention program. It is very important, however, that

community members understand that a case-by-case determination will be made and that sometimes it may be appropriate to initiate a criminal investigation at the local or federal level.

The process that will be used to assess the course of action that will be used should be part of conversations between police and communities when outreach and engagement programs are initiated.

Community members are to be encouraged to bring to the attention to the police individuals that they believe may present a danger to public safety. But community members should not be given the false impression that all individuals that discussed with outreach and engagement officers will be placed in intervention programs. They should be told directly that outreach and engagement officers have a duty to pass information about potential criminal activity to investigative units in their department and, if appropriate, to federal authorities.

Even though community members may be disappointed in this reality, they are entitled to full transparency about the assessment and intervention process. It is far superior to discuss these issues with community leaders before an actual case arises than after the community is disappointed in actions that a police department has taken. Candor and transparency will increase community trust that police departments will make decisions in the best interests of the entire community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Developing an intervention plan

1. **Outreach and engagement programs should have the capacity to refer individuals who are suspected or at risk of heading down a path toward violent extremism or other criminal behavior to non-criminal interventions program.** Using non-criminal interventions, when appropriate, improves the resilience of the community and strengthens its relationship with local police.
2. **Intervention plans should include a process for assessing whether public safety is properly addressed by referral of individuals to intervention programs.** This process should consider the “larger picture” regarding a person who may need help – including behavioral changes, home life, and trauma history –to better understand community members and their particular needs.
3. **In order to do this, police agencies should develop formalized intervention plans in cooperation with government and community stakeholders.** Involving a range of stakeholders in developing an intervention plan will help create a robust network of knowledgeable people who can provide guidance and services to community members in need. It also helps to ensure that the intervention plan itself will be comprehensive and culturally sensitive.
4. **Intervention plans that have a clinical component should take into consideration all legal restrictions regarding the sharing of information, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).** This ensures that the rights of community members are protected and all partners involved in an intervention are aware and respectful of the laws around information-sharing that apply to the various stakeholders involved.
5. **While the police should be involved in developing an intervention plan, they do not have to lead it.** Organized groups of clinicians in the community, or members of health and human services departments, might be better suited to spearheading the daily work of intervention programs. This includes coordinating mental health care, job placement assistance, and other services. The police would serve as crucial partners in these intervention efforts, but do not have to be the lead agency.

6. **Outreach officers should be absolutely clear with community members about all of the possible outcomes when people share information with the police.** Sometimes the health and safety of the community are best protected through an intervention. Other times, information that community members share with outreach officers needs to be passed along for investigation, including to federal authorities. Outreach officers should explain this policy to the community. Ideally, the police will establish strong relationships with the community that will result in public trust that the police will make good decisions to protect the community.

SECTION II: IMPLEMENTATION

Practical steps for building and sustaining relationships with community members

STEP I: Reaching out to community members to establish relationships

When first establishing relationships with the community, outreach team members should adhere to these six key principles:

- Be transparent;
- Focus on fulfilling the needs of the community – as the community members see them;
- Be persistent;
- Partner with community leaders;
- Demonstrate a willingness to learn; and
- Reach out in the language preferred by community members whenever possible.

Be transparent

Outreach team members should be candid about who they are and what their intentions are. This can be accomplished in two ways:

- **Wearing a uniform, especially at the outset.** That way, there can be no perception that officers are attempting to “spy” on community members or misrepresent who they are.⁵
- **Clearly communicating that your intention is to build relationships between community members and the police and improve the quality of life in the community.** Indeed, outreach officers should seek opportunities to discuss who they are and the mission of the outreach program with community members.

⁵ The outreach officers at the agencies we researched used either their full uniform or a “soft” uniform. An example of a soft uniform is a polo shirt or a pullover with the police department’s logo on it and khaki pants. There are benefits and drawbacks to each. The full uniform makes it explicitly clear that outreach officers are police and that their activities are not intended to be covert. In the experiences of some outreach officers, however, some community members found the full uniform intimidating. In these instances, outreach officers chose to wear their soft uniforms instead. The potential pitfall of the soft uniform, however, is that it is not always as immediately apparent that outreach officers are police. This can leave room for misinterpretations of their intentions. We recommend that when first starting an outreach program, officers wear their full uniforms and only transition to soft uniforms after they become better known in the community with which they are engaging.

The need for transparency also extends to managing the flow of information about incidents in the community.

Community members want to know about what is going on in their neighborhoods. They want prompt notifications about crimes in the neighborhood and the progress and outcomes of investigations; they want to know what steps are being taken to make their neighborhoods safer; and they want to know whom to contact if they see or hear something concerning. Part of building and maintaining relationships with community members is keeping them well-informed about crime and policing activities that affect them.

A corollary of this is **ensuring that community members are absolutely clear about the numerous ways that any information that they share with an outreach officer might be handled.** Officers must be candid with community members that, for instance, information pertaining to national security will be forwarded to the FBI. Community members often desire that non-law enforcement interventions be attempted to address individuals who are or appear to be at-risk of engaging in criminal behavior. Police should discuss with communities when these types of interventions are appropriate and may be attempted and when criminal investigations will be initiated.

Outreach programs should aim to build a deep-seated trust, so that community members are confident that whatever the outcome, officers acted in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Focus on fulfilling needs identified by the community

To earn the trust of your community members, initial outreach should include an essential phrase: “What can we do for you?”

Often, community members are concerned about quality-of-life issues that police officers might not expect to be their greatest concerns, or which might not even be police matters. For example, many police chiefs have said that they go to community meetings expecting to talk about crime patterns in the neighborhood, but often find that community members seem more concerned about issues like abandoned cars on their streets or problems with trash pick-up.

Taking the time to listen to the community’s concerns, and helping to resolve those issues, demonstrates officers’ investment in improving the community’s quality-of-life and building a trusting relationship with them. For example, police officers might contact the Public Works Department and elected officials to relay

Promising Practices from the Field: A real-world example

When Agency X piloted its outreach program several years ago, the community members to whom they most wanted to reach out were those without a strong relationship with the police. In order to build bridges with these community members, outreach officers felt that they needed to be upfront about who they were and what their intentions were from the first moment that they made contact. They began by ensuring that they were visible in the community in uniform, saying hello to people and getting community members used to seeing them around. The outreach officers would approach community members to explain exactly who they were and that their goal was to provide assistance however they could. The core of their approach was asking community members, “What can we do for you?” When a community leader mentioned that an abandoned lot in his neighborhood had become a magnet for crime and explained that he had tried for some time to get the city government to clean it up, the outreach officers reached out through the police department and cleared out the lot in a matter of weeks. Being transparent about who they were and demonstrating their commitment to the community through their actions gave the outreach officers the opportunity to earn a tremendous amount of trust that laid the groundwork for building an enduring relationship with the community that continues to the present.

the community's concerns about trash pick-up.

When quality-of-life issues cannot be addressed by the police agency alone, intergovernmental partnerships play an important role. Other examples of issues that are often brought to the attention of the police include:

- Houses that contribute to neighborhood blight and become magnets for crime, such as selling drugs;
- Excessive speeding in their neighborhoods;
- Insufficient lighting in parking lots; or
- Inability to obtain permits for events in public spaces.

Be persistent

Some community members are initially resistant to speaking or associating with police officers. Sometimes they are suspicious of these officers' motives; other times they have had negative experiences with police forces in their home countries; others are wary because they associate local police agencies with federal law enforcement agencies. Police must be persistent in their engagement efforts to break down these barriers by proving they care about and are invested in these communities.

Taking the time to attend events like open houses, fairs, and picnics organized by community members is helpful. This demonstrates a genuine interest in getting to know and better understand the community's culture.

Partner with community leaders

Partnerships with community leaders and organizations are especially important in the early stages of developing an outreach program, because community leaders have a wealth of knowledge about issues in the community and past efforts to solve problems, as well as knowledge about cultural issues and sensitivities.

Community leaders can facilitate introductions between outreach team members and the wider community, advise officers on the best ways to share information, and educate officers about cultural mores that are important to understand. Building relationships with community leaders is a gateway to deeper levels of engagement with the community as a whole, which is the ultimate goal of outreach programs.

Demonstrate a willingness to learn

Outreach team members should be open and willing to learn from the community. One outreach expert described this as "getting comfortable with being uncomfortable." It is not uncommon for outreach team members to be unfamiliar the customs of a particular community or with certain turns of phrase that community members use. Instead of seeing this as a barrier to engagement, outreach team members should use this as an opportunity to ask questions. Doing so demonstrates their interest in the lives of community members and their openness to cultures that are different from their own.

Reach out in the language preferred by community members whenever possible

Outreach initiatives should also include direct communication with community contacts and leaders, utilizing social media as well as in-person outreach and engagement.

Police agency open houses, roundtables, community forums, and similar events need to be well-publicized so that community members know about all of the opportunities that they have to engage with their police and sheriffs' departments.

English is not the first language of all community members, so outreach officers should produce multi-lingual versions of any notifications distributed in the community. Officers should coordinate with community members to ensure the translations are accurate. Also, many community members may have limited literacy, so written materials (e.g., flyers about an upcoming town hall meeting) should be only one part of a multi-pronged approach to sharing information about an event. Making direct contacts with community leaders, and using videos via social media, are other options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reaching out to community members to establish relationships

1. **Wear a uniform.** Outreach officers must be candid with community members about who they are, so that there is no sense that they are “spying” on the community or trying to obscure their identities.
2. **Be persistent.** Many community members might be wary of engaging with officers. In these situations, officers should be respectfully persistent in their attempts at outreach and engagement. Some community leaders may be more receptive than others.
3. **Ask the community what they need, and then deliver.** Crucial to successful outreach efforts is the ability of officers to listen to community members' concerns. Do not assume that you know what a community's concerns are. Then, try to do whatever you can to solve problems, such as working with other government agencies to get speed bumps installed in front of a neighborhood school.
4. **Be willing to learn from the community.** The best resource for knowledge about the community is community members themselves. Outreach officers ask community members about their histories, their cultural mores, their relationships with one another, their concerns.
5. **Partner with community leaders.**
6. **Produce materials in all of the major languages used by community members.** Many members of the community that outreach teams serve might not be fluent in English. Additionally, some might not be fully literate in their native language. Any information that outreach officers distribute should be available in all of the major languages represented in the community, and should be distributed in various ways, including written handouts or flyers, videos posted on police Facebook pages or other social media, and verbal communication to community members and leaders.

STEP II: Understanding and overcoming barriers to engagement

The primary barrier to successful community engagement is usually an underlying mistrust of police agencies in general. Mistrust is not always based on conflicts community members have had with their local police; it may stem from negative experiences that immigrant communities have had with police officers in their countries of origin, or with other agencies in the United States, including federal agencies. Outreach team members should work to understand the barriers to communities building relationships with local police, so they can take steps to address them.

Mistrust resulting from community members' experiences abroad

Recent immigrants and refugees are sometimes apprehensive about police officers because of experiences with the police in their home countries. **In these instances, police agencies should work with resettlement agencies and other organizations that provide services to new arrivals.**

By partnering with these agencies and organizations, the police can develop and offer classes to these community members when they first arrive, which can be an important step toward building trust and collaborative relationships. Such classes should include at least the following three instructional topics:

- The role of the police in the United States;
- The laws that new arrivals to their community most need to know; and
- The differences among the various police agencies that they might encounter (including uniforms, jurisdictions, and responsibilities of municipal police as well as county, state, and federal agencies.)

These classes should be collaborative and should include topics that refugees and other recent immigrants have identified as important. These educational programs demonstrates the differences between police in the United States and the police that new arrivals might have known in their countries of origin, and aids in recent immigrants' acclimation to their new home.

It is crucial that police be sensitive to the trauma that refugees and others fleeing conflict in their home countries have experienced, and that police respond with sensitivity and, when appropriate, referrals to social services. Doing so reinforces their role as partners with the community, and creates a strong foundation on which they can build a trusting relationship with refugee groups.

Mistrust resulting from community members' experiences in the U.S.

Community distrust of the police can also be the result of their experiences with police or other government agencies in this country. This is a reality that outreach team members must recognize and address. **They must be willing to engage in difficult conversations about any negative interactions with police officers that community members have had, such as interactions in which they believe that they were discriminated against, unfairly targeted, or treated improperly.** Outreach team members should not discount or minimize these experiences. Instead, they should focus on ensuring that their interactions with these community members do not reinforce mistakes of the past.

For example, in some Muslim communities across the United States, negative experiences with the police often have some nexus to counterterrorism efforts or a lack of knowledge among police officers about Islam. During this study, we encountered Muslims who said they were stopped for a minor

Promising Practices from the Field: a real world example

Agency X's jurisdiction is home to a large and diverse refugee population with needs that are often different from the city's more well-established communities. Not only are these immigrants new to the United States, they often fear the police because of their experiences with oppressive domestic security agencies in their countries of origin. Recognizing that there was a gap between these new community members and the police department that desperately needed to be bridged, Agency X's outreach team forged a partnership with area refugee resettlement agencies and began offering classes to new arrivals. The topics they cover include: employment assistance, domestic violence laws, the role of their agency in law enforcement, the various uniforms worn by local law enforcement officers that these refugees might encounter, and so on. Importantly, outreach officers also ask those who participate in these classes what they would most like to discuss and then address those topics accordingly.

traffic violation and then questioned after officers noticed a Qur'an in the car. Many Muslims said they have been consistently chosen for in-depth screening and interviewing at airport security checkpoints. Incidents like these are deeply alienating, and this alienation can be compounded if police agencies conduct outreach efforts that focus only on countering violent extremism and not on the full range of community concerns.

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the primary means of avoiding mistrust of community outreach efforts is to ensure that the outreach addresses **all** concerns of the community. A broad-based approach to community engagement demonstrates to communities that the police are not unduly focusing on them or attempting to build a relationship focused exclusively on investigating terrorism threats. To the extent that outreach programs include discussions with communities about preventing violent extremism, police should explicitly state that they are interested in threats resulting from all types of extremism and deliver this message consistently to all communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding and overcoming barriers to engagement

1. **Take the time to understand sources of mistrust of the police in different communities, and work to address them.** In immigrant and refugee communities, mistrust is sometimes the result of experiences that community members had with law enforcement agents in their countries of origin. Other times, community distrust stems from negative experiences that community members have had in this country. It is crucial for outreach officers to acknowledge and address all sources of mistrust.
2. **Address the needs of the community.** Addressing the needs of the community, as community members have identified them, is crucial in building relationships with community members and overcoming any distrust of law enforcement that they might have.

STEP III: Broadening your reach beyond community leaders

One of the challenges facing outreach team members is how to build relationships with all community members, not just community leaders. The goal of outreach work is for all community members to feel that they “belong” to and are invested in the safety and well-being of their shared community.

How to engage with the larger community

Establishing relationships directly with community members can be a challenge. Sometimes this is a question of personnel and resources: outreach officers have a finite capacity to engage with community members in a meaningful way, since these relationships take time and effort to build and maintain. Equally often, however, this is a question of engagement style and activities. There is no one-size-fits-all approach that will be effective with every member of a given community. Instead, outreach teams should create engagement initiatives that are tailored to the community members in question and take into account their particular interests and needs.

Young people, for example, are often difficult to access through traditional outreach efforts. They do not attend town hall meetings or community forums, and typically do not participate even in informal activities like coffee shop sit-downs with outreach officers. In order to engage with young people, outreach team members need to think beyond the typical engagement approach. Some successful strategies have included

challenging a group of teenagers on a basketball court to a friendly game or letting kids play with officers' handcuffs and squad car sirens at community festivals. These interactions make young people (and their families) more comfortable seeing outreach team members in a social setting and interacting with them as community partners.

To give another example, some Muslim women may be uncomfortable interacting directly with members of the opposite sex when a male from the family or community is not present. Community engagement teams should be sensitive to this and ensure that women on the team are responsible for outreach to these community members so that they feel at ease. Tailored engagement programs that have proven successful include female-only gym nights, "salon socials" (female outreach team members arrange for a salon to host a women-only event where women can get their hair and nails done), and movie nights. Many women and girls might also require transport to and from these events, which departments should provide to ensure that everyone who wants to participate has the opportunity to do so.

Promising Practices from the Field: a real world example

Agency X's jurisdiction has a large immigrant population. When first beginning their formalized community outreach efforts, Agency X realized that in order to best engage with many of the women in this community, its outreach team would need to create programs that were specific to them. This resulted in one of their most successful and popular programs to date: an athletic program run by women from Agency X and held only for women and girls from the immigrant community. The officers from Agency X found a facility that agreed to host them free of charge and ensure that only women staff members were on duty when Agency X was using the space. The officers in charge of the program pick up the women and girls (who can number up to 60 on any given day), drive them to the athletic facility, and take them home again at the end of the day.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Broadening your reach beyond community leaders

1. **Broadening your outreach beyond community leaders is critical to building meaningful relationships with the community.** While engaging with community leaders is crucial for any outreach initiative, the community is more than just its leadership. Outreach teams should reach deeper into communities and engage with other community members.
2. **Outreach teams should tailor outreach initiatives to different segments of the community, based on those community members' particular needs and mores.** There is no single approach to outreach or single outreach initiative that will work for every segment of the community. It is incumbent upon outreach officers to discover what the diverse groups who make up their communities need, and how to best meet those needs so that their relationships with the police are strengthened.

STEP IV: Sustaining the relationships that you have built

In order to maintain relationships over time, outreach team members must remain in regular contact with the community, follow up with the community about its concerns, and ensure that new outreach team members are carefully transitioned into their roles, so that existing relationships with the community are not compromised.

Maintain consistent contact

While telephone calls and emails are an easy and efficient way to check in with community members, outreach officers should also strive to be a reliable physical presence in community members' lives. Maintaining in-person contact reaffirms a police department's commitment to and investment in its community.

Successful outreach officers indicate that there are many ways they have learned to sustain strong relationships, such as: attending events after hours several nights a week; going to weddings, funerals, and family parties to which they are invited; attending community meetings; regularly stopping by the local coffee shops or other businesses where people congregate; and doing regular check-ins with local business owners. Outreach officers must be comfortable with the idea of working irregular hours to accomplish their goals.

Assistance follow-through

When community members raise concerns with their police department's outreach team, these issues should be taken seriously and addressed to the best of the department's ability. Good policing often involves "social work" types of activities and consideration for quality-of-life issues that might otherwise be considered low priorities by the department, but which can be important to community members. Outreach officers should connect community members to employees of other government agencies if necessary to address the issue, and should remain involved themselves, to ensure that further assistance is not needed. This is an effective way to demonstrate true concern for the welfare of the community and its members.

Establish a succession plan

Outreach and engagement teams are not static; officers come and go as they are promoted and reassigned. This presents a challenge for outreach programs, because their success is predicated on outreach team members' personal relationships with community members. Departments should create a succession plan that ensures a seamless transition when officers leave and new team members are brought onto the engagement team. **Departing outreach team members should share their knowledge of the community with their replacements, introduce new officers to their contacts within the community, and facilitate the formation of relationships between community members and new members of the outreach team.** Following a succession plan ensures that existing relationships are not compromised and community members are included in the transition process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustaining the relationships that you have built

1. **Once you have built relationships with community members, take the time to sustain them through consistent contact and follow-up.** Community members who build relationships with outreach officers, especially in those communities that lack a history of close relationships with the police, are sometimes “sticking their necks out” and taking a chance. Outreach officers should show them, through consistent and meaningful involvement in their communities, that their trust in the police was justified.
2. **Establish a succession plan to ensure that transitions between outreach officers who are moving to other positions and new members of the team are seamless.** Outreach teams, as with any unit in a law enforcement agency, are not static. There should be a succession plan for every outreach officer. Officers who are leaving should help transition their replacements into the job and the community, so that the relationships that they have built with community members can be sustained, and so that community members feel they are a part of the process.

SECTION III: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A productive community engagement program is one that addresses the needs of the community in their totality. These needs may include building community resiliency to violent extremism, but community outreach should never be limited to one issue. Police officers should strive to see themselves as part of the communities that they serve, sharing in the multitude of concerns that community members have about their neighborhoods. Outreach team members must address all of these concerns in order to effectively address any of them. By demonstrating the depth of their investment in the community, police can prove the sincerity of their outreach efforts and build strong relationships of trust between community members and the police.

PLANNING

Articulating Your Guiding Philosophy

1. **Outreach and engagement programs should be informed by a “whole community approach.”** This means that they should reach out to all segments of their communities in an effort to build a cohesive social identity.
2. **As part of their “whole community approach,” outreach programs should consider the specific social and cultural needs of the different members of their communities and tailor their outreach efforts to them.** This means recognizing that some community members might be more comfortable talking to female officers. Or some community members might prefer to work with officers on a neighborhood sporting event, rather than attending sit-down community meetings. Outreach programs should not adopt a “one size fits all” approach to community engagement.
3. **Outreach officers should be transparent about who they are, their intentions, and program goals.** Police agencies cannot leave any room for doubt about the intentions of their outreach programs. Information should be made readily accessible to the community to demonstrate that outreach officers have no hidden agenda.

4. **Outreach programs should never have an intelligence objective.** Outreach officers should not be tasked with both relationship-building and intelligence gathering. This is because the ultimate aim of community outreach should be building trust and collaborative partnerships between the police and the communities that they serve. If community engagement officers also participate in intelligence gathering, the motives behind their outreach efforts will be called into question by community members. This jeopardizes the trust that those community members have in the police department.
5. **Outreach should focus on addressing all public safety and quality-of-life concerns in a given community, not just violent extremism.** Fortunately, violent extremism is a rare occurrence in the United States. Outreach efforts will be more effective if they focus on issues that have the greatest impact on people's lives. Building resilience to violent extremism can be part of this effort, but should not be the primary focus.

Determining the Best Organizational Approach for Your Agency

1. **Outreach and intelligence-gathering must be separated.** Community members are much less likely to trust outreach officers if intelligence-gathering is part of their mandate and if they are organized within intelligence units. This does not mean that community members cannot or should not approach outreach officers with information about things in their neighborhood that they find concerning. These types of conversations are evidence of successful relationship building. This being said, outreach officers should be clear with community members about how any information that they share will be handled, whether that means implementing an intervention plan or passing it along to federal law enforcement.
2. **Multiple outreach officers should be assigned to each major community within a given agency's jurisdiction.** This staffing plan will prevent officer burnout, demonstrate a commitment to the longevity of outreach initiatives, and ensure that the community members are not unintentionally alienated from the police department because outreach officers are not always available.

Staffing Your Outreach Team with the Right People

1. **Outreach program team members should be open-minded, outgoing, and eager to learn.** Community members are responsive to those who demonstrate an interest – and investment – in their lives and their cultures.
2. **Outreach teams should reflect the diversity of the community with which they are engaging.** Team members who speak the same language (both literally and culturally) as the communities in which they are working are much more likely to be accepted by community members.
3. **Being local matters.** Community members are often more willing to trust the outreach efforts of officers whose personal backgrounds are tied to the community and who are therefore seen as having a sincere interest in its safety and well-being.
4. **Team members should be committed to the outreach and engagement ethos.** This means that they must understand the importance of building relationships of trust with the community to police work.
5. **Outreach teams should be diverse of background, engagement style, and gender.** Different community members respond to different things. Some feel more comfortable interacting with women, others might prefer to speak with someone who shares a background similar to their own, and others might be more receptive to team members who are low-key. A strong outreach team is built from both sworn and non-sworn members who have diverse – and complementary – traits, experiences, and expertise.

Developing a Training Program

1. **Develop and deliver cultural awareness training in cooperation with community members.** Cultural awareness training demonstrates that the agency is invested in and understands the importance of developing a nuanced understanding of the community that it serves and gives community members the opportunity to become personally invested in the work of the agency.
2. **Require that every member of the agency complete this training.** Outreach officers are not the only members of a police or sheriff's department who engage the community. Every member of a department – sworn and non-sworn – should be given the opportunity to develop the understanding that they need in order to be successful in their interactions with community members. Training all employees in cultural awareness also reinforces the importance of cultural competency in agency culture.
3. **Provide training on radicalization and violent extremism that addresses the full spectrum of extremist beliefs.** All forms of violent extremism are serious concerns for law enforcement and the community, and must be addressed in any training or educational programming centered on violent extremism and radicalization to violence.
4. **Provide educational programming on radicalization and violent extremism for community members and involve community members in law enforcement training on those topics.** Community members and law enforcement officers are partners in addressing the dangers posed by violent extremism and therefore both need to understand what it does – and does not – look like.
5. **Provide basic language training to outreach officers in the languages most commonly used by community members.** Language training can range from formal classes to “cheat sheets” such as laminated cards with common expressions for use during traffic stops or informal encounters with community members.

Developing Partnerships with Other Local Agencies

1. **Reach out for assistance and advice from other government agencies.** For local police agencies, building relationships with other government agencies is often as simple as asking for help, or offering help.
2. **Form interagency working groups.** Interagency working groups are a productive model for addressing concerns in the community that extend beyond the authority of the police department.
3. **Participate in multi-agency outreach.** Local agencies should be as accessible as possible to the community and should also make it clear that they are all working in the service of that community. One of the most productive ways to do this is through multi-agency outreach, in which multiple agencies participate in community meetings, town halls, and other venues.

Developing an Intervention Plan

1. **Outreach and engagement programs should have the capacity to refer individuals who are suspected or at risk of heading down a path toward violent extremism or other criminal behavior to non-criminal interventions program.** Using non-criminal interventions, when appropriate, improves the resilience of the community and strengthens its relationship with local police.
2. **Intervention plans should include a process for assessing whether public safety is properly addressed by referral of individuals to intervention programs.** This process should consider the “larger picture” regarding a person who may need help – including behavioral changes, home life, and trauma history – to better understand community members and their particular needs.

3. **In order to do this, police agencies should develop formalized intervention plans in cooperation with government and community stakeholders.** Involving a range of stakeholders in developing an intervention plan will help create a robust network of knowledgeable people who can provide guidance and services to community members in need. It also helps to ensure that the intervention plan itself will be comprehensive and culturally sensitive.
4. **Intervention plans that have a clinical component should take into consideration all legal restrictions regarding the sharing of information, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).** This ensures that the rights of community members are protected and all partners involved in an intervention are aware and respectful of the laws around information-sharing that apply to the various stakeholders involved.
5. **While the police should be involved in developing an intervention plan, they do not have to lead it.** Organized groups of clinicians in the community, or members of health and human services departments, might be better suited to spearheading the daily work of intervention programs. This includes coordinating mental health care, job placement assistance, and other services. The police would serve as crucial partners in these intervention efforts, but do not have to be the lead agency.
6. **Outreach officers should be absolutely clear with community members about all of the possible outcomes when people share information with the police.** Sometimes the health and safety of the community are best protected through an intervention. Other times, information that community members share with outreach officers needs to be passed along for investigation, including to federal authorities. Outreach officers should explain this policy to the community. Ideally, the police will establish strong relationships with the community that will result in public trust that the police will make good decisions to protect the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Reaching Out to Community Members to Establish Relationships

1. **Wear a uniform.** Outreach officers must be candid with community members about who they are, so that there is no sense that they are “spying” on the community or trying to obscure their identities.
2. **Be persistent.** Many community members might be wary of engaging with officers. In these situations, officers should be respectfully persistent in their attempts at outreach and engagement. Some community leaders may be more receptive than others.
3. **Ask the community what they need, and then deliver.** Crucial to successful outreach efforts is the ability of officers to listen to community members’ concerns. Do not assume that you know what a community’s concerns are. Then, try to do whatever you can to solve problems, such as working with other government agencies to get speed bumps installed in front of a neighborhood school.
4. **Be willing to learn from the community.** The best resource for knowledge about the community is community members themselves. Outreach officers ask community members about their histories, their cultural mores, their relationships with one another, their concerns.
5. **Partner with community leaders.**

6. **Produce materials in all of the major languages used by community members.** Many members of the community that outreach teams serve might not be fluent in English. Additionally, some might not be fully literate in their native language. Any information that outreach officers distribute should be available in all of the major languages represented in the community, and should be distributed in various ways, including written handouts or flyers, videos posted on police Facebook pages or other social media, and verbal communication to community members and leaders.

Understanding and Overcoming Barriers to Engagement

1. **Take the time to understand sources of mistrust of the police in different communities, and work to address them.** In immigrant and refugee communities, mistrust is sometimes the result of experiences that community members had with law enforcement agents in their countries of origin. Other times, community distrust stems from negative experiences that community members have had in this country. It is crucial for outreach officers to acknowledge and address all sources of mistrust.
2. **Address the needs of the community.** Addressing the needs of the community, as community members have identified them, is crucial in building relationships with community members and overcoming any distrust of law enforcement that they might have.

Broadening Your Reach Beyond Community Leaders

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