Supporting A Multidisciplinary Approach to Violent Extremism:
The Integration of Mental Health in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and What Law Enforcement Needs to Know

TAKEAWAY. Law enforcement professionals can help individuals who may be radicalizing to violence, but who have not engaged in criminal acts, by connecting them to mental health services.

THE NEED. Although there is no indication that violent extremists act out of mental illness, there is increasing evidence that in many cases youth who are radicalizing to violence experience poor psychological adjustment.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES? Mental health services may help to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism. Mental health services may also help connect alienated youth to different social supports, and/or re-engage these youth with their families. In addition, some mental health services can also help support families in learning how to reach out to, or stay connected with their children.

WHAT ROLES CAN LAW ENFORCEMENT PLAY IN INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH INTO CVE?

Law enforcement professionals **CAN…**
    Recognize that mental health services are a way of reducing the likelihood that an individual will cross-over into the criminal space and require law enforcement intervention.
    Provide initial contact for youth that helps them, and their families, connect to mental health services.
    Learn techniques about how to talk to youth and/or families about the value of mental health services.
    Understand the barriers to obtaining mental health services.
    Provide access to a directory of local mental health providers.
    Offer referrals.

Law enforcement professionals **SHOULD NOT …**
    Provide mental health services directly.
    View engaging a mental health provider as enlisting an "informant."

TALKING TO FAMILIES ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES. The topic of mental health services can be a very difficult and confusing topic to navigate with families for many reasons including:

- **Stigma.** For many people, and in many cultures, mental illness is highly stigmatized. As such, it is important to use language that is not stigmatized or shaming.
- **Lack of knowledge.** Some youth and families may not understand what mental health services are or how they could be helpful to them or their situation.
- **Lack of understanding how mental health services matter.** Some youth and families may not see how mental health services could support their goals or provide a solution to their problems.
- **Fear.** Some families may fear that their child will be 'taken away' by child protection services if they use mental health services.
- **Distrust.** Some youth and families may be worried that mental health services are another form of surveillance.
- **Logistical barriers.** Families may be hesitant to discuss the option of mental health services due to concerns about how to pay the costs of services, transportation, childcare, etc.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TALKING TO YOUTH AND FAMILIES

USE NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE
Say something like, "Kids who are going through a lot of stress often really benefit from some additional support. Can I suggest some ways of getting more support for both your son and your family during this time?"

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Say something like, "The goal of mental health services is to provide support or help to those who are feeling stressed and having a hard time. I know you don't want to see your son end up in trouble. With some additional support I think he can get things back on track."

ACKNOWLEDGE UP FRONT WHAT MATTERS TO THE FAMILY
Say something like, "It's not uncommon for immigrant families to feel like their children are drifting away from them –that they are "losing" them. For some families, having some additional support for the kids and family can be helpful to feel connected again. "

EXPLAIN AND CLARIFY WHY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ARE BEING RECOMMENDED
Say something like, "Some of the things you've told me your son is doing are concerning and could be early warning signs that he is getting off track and into trouble. We don't want to wait for things to go wrong. Working with a mental health professional could be a good way to understand what's going on before there's a real problem"

ACKNOWLEDGE FEAR OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
Say something like, "Some families are afraid that if they seek help for a problem with their children that their children may be taken away from them. In fact, mental health professional are there to help families be stronger. They are not the same as Children Protection Services."

EDUCATE ABOUT MANDATED REPORTING
Say something like, "Sometimes people worry that what they say to a mental health professional will be shared with others like parents, other family members, teachers, or even other community members. Mental health professionals need to abide by the laws of confidentiality, which means that they cannot tell anyone what you say unless they are concerned you are about to be hurt or hurt someone else."

DETERMINE BARRIERS TO OBTAINING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Say something like, "Sometimes families really want help but don't think they can't afford it or think they don't have enough time or aren't sure how they would get there. Mental health services vary and there may be one that is affordable, has evening hours, and is reachable by bus. Do you have any of these concerns? What do you think might stand in the way of you getting the help we've talked about for you and your child?"

PRACTICAL WAYS TO FACILITATE A REFERRAL FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO FAMILIES

Referral for mental health services vary by provider and agency. It is useful to have a general understanding of the referral process for your local services providers and agencies.

HAVE A DIRECTORY: Have a directory of local mental health agencies and providers.

KNOW THE QUESTIONS: Provide families with a list of questions to ask mental health agencies and providers**.**
Costs: *Do they take insurance? What kind of insurance? Sliding scale?*
Location: *Where services are located? Accessible by public transportation?*
Hours: *Days? Nights? Weekends?*
Clientele: *Accepting new clients? Waitlist? Criteria to obtain services?*
Services: *What types of services do you offer?*
Referrals: *What is the process for referrals? Who do I contact?*
Cultural/Linguistics Issues: *Any specialties? Interpretation available?*

KNOW THE ANSWERS: Generally know the answers to the questions listed above for your local mental health agencies.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS: Build partnerships with local community mental health agencies now –before you need their services. This will enable that your referrals will be readily accepted.

TRAIN OTHERS: Educate providers about the intersection of targeted violence and law enforcement as well as behavioral warning signs that may be of particular concern.

COMMUNICATE: Provide as much information as you legally and ethically can to a provider. The more information he/she has, the more he/she can help.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO BE A LEADER IN THE INTEGRATION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

    EMBED mental health professionals in your department.

    CREATE explicit and co-located partnerships.

    CROSS-TRAIN law enforcement and mental health professionals in pertinent topics and relevant practices of each discipline.

    HOLD joint case conferences.

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The research team would like to thank the 25 experts from education, mental health, law enforcement, federal agencies and Muslim communities who contributed to this research.

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