

# Community-Focused Best Practices to Prevent Violent Extremism

## OVERVIEW

These findings come from the Report on the National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism. In August 2014, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) partnered with START to coordinate a National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism. The recommendations included in the full report reflect the major themes that emerged, focusing on those that the participants appeared to support through debate and dialogue across the two-day event.

## FINDINGS

Participants debated whether, or in what circumstances, communities leading these efforts should involve law enforcement. They recognized that there were both advantages and disadvantages of having law enforcement involved. Advantages include protecting the community from legal risks or assuming liability when dealing with an at-risk individual. Disadvantages including creating a "chilling effect" on communities' willingness to conduct an intervention in the first place, for fear it may result in an unnecessary investigation or arrest.

Five major recommendations from summit participants regarding law-enforcement focused practices are listed below:

1. Communities should advocate for a multicultural approach to working with law enforcement and other government agencies which includes not just one ethnic or religious group and which aims to build capacities and increase civic engagement.
2. Community leaders and organizations should advocate for partnerships with law enforcement that address a range of public safety issues including but not limited to CVE, such as domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking, and gang violence.
3. Communities should advocate for the use of community policing approaches for law enforcement to engage with communities on matters of CVE and other pertinent issues.
4. Community leaders and organizations should work with law enforcement to develop procedures for non-punitive ways of helping people who are in the pre-criminal space of radicalization and recruitment.
5. Community organizations should build community-led CVE efforts either independently or in partnership with law enforcement, government, and/or private institutions.

### Discussion Points:

Communities can perceive the very use of the term violent extremism as a derisive label. Some community advocates argue that the media is exaggerating the actual risk of extremism, and more importantly the movement from extreme beliefs to violent extremist behavior. For CVE practitioners these disagreements about the term violent extremism have come to mean that in their discourse with community partners they tend to avoid using the terms "violent extremism" and "CVE," so as not to put off community members and potential partners.

## RESEARCHERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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For a copy of the full report on this topic, please see the COPS website at <http://ric-zai-inc.com/Publications/cops-p326-pub.pdf>.



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