



SAFE SPACES:

*An Updated Toolkit for Empowering Communities
and Addressing Ideological Violence*

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This toolkit is the culmination of more than two and a half decades of the Muslim Public Affairs Council's (MPAC) policy advocacy and engagement in the sphere of public affairs and public policy. The core of MPAC's mission is to boost the voice of American Muslims regarding the critical issues facing our community and country, and in advocating policies that uphold the faith and security of all Americans.

Its contents are based on a deep examination of the research literature across many disciplines including psychology and counseling, public health, community psychology, criminology, law, and public policy. Sources include peer-reviewed academic articles, mainstream media stories, court documents, empirical studies, and government and non-government reports.

On the one hand, MPAC works with policymakers, think tanks and media outlets to provide a mainstream American Muslim perspective on timely issues. On the other hand, they work with Muslim communities around the country – particularly youth – to empower them to engage directly with elected officials and local community groups for mutual benefit. In the last decade, MPAC has doubled its efforts to both understand what drives people to commit acts of violence in the name of Islam, and also to spread Islam's message of equality, mercy, and justice.

In addition, our toolkit reflects the collective insight and wisdom of a diverse set of perspectives and voices who were interviewed for this project. In total, 20 individuals were interviewed, in addition to several others. We give thanks to all participants involved, including Jonathan Birdwell, John Horgan, Yasir Fazaga, Yasir Qadhi, Asma Rehman, Pete Simi, Rabia Chaudry, William Modzeleski, Gary Margolis, Ali Soufan, Jarret Brachman, William Braniff, Daryle Lamont Jenkins, and Bryon Widner. Thanks also go to those individuals who were willing to be interviewed on a not-for-attribution basis. Their insights and voices were critical to making this project complete.

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This updated version of Safe Spaces reflects the feedback that we have received from community leaders, civil libertarians and experts in national security. Previously, Safe Spaces was modeled on a PIE (Prevention – Intervention – Ejection) approach. This new version maintains the Prevention and Intervention aspects of the framework while leaving criminal behavior to be addressed by those in law enforcement.



INTRODUCTION

American Muslims, like all Americans, are concerned with intrusive government policies that infringe on civil liberties. The community is also concerned about our national security and the impact ISIS-inspired extremism has on our nation's safety. The rise in ISIS-inspired violence, however, is just one of the many types of extremism growing in our country, including right-wing extremism, which has been shown to be a larger threat in terms of the number of cases.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) has a 20-year track record of examining the threat of violent extremism. MPAC considers the most effective strategies that law enforcement and American Muslim communities can utilize in working together to promote strong communities and prevent violence.

MPAC published its first policy memo in 1993 entitled the “Counterterrorism Chronicles”, and produced its first policy paper on counterterrorism policy in 1999. In September 2003, MPAC published its second counterterrorism policy paper titled, “A Review of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy: American Muslim Critiques and Recommendations.”

In 2005, MPAC launched its “National Grassroots Campaign to Fight Terrorism,” which was borne out of concerns, both nationally and within local communities, about how to deal with extremist intrusion into American Muslim mosques and other community institutions.

Endorsed by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Department of Justice, the campaign was one of a small number of community-led initiatives intended to take a proactive stand against violent extremism. Dozens of mosques and community institutions adopted the campaign and implemented its recommendations in their institutional bylaws.

Our work has shown us that effective national security requires partnered solutions that draw from the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors. Continuous engagement on policy and law enforcement issues is essential to the safety and security of our nation, while also preserving American values of civil liberties and religious freedom.

Indeed, American Muslim leaders have shown a willingness to openly tackle tough issues facing their communities, including condemnations of terrorism; moreover, many leaders have invested in the substantive work needed to raise the voice of the mainstream Muslim community.

At MPAC, our years of experience have shown us that grassroots leaders more often lack the support to properly address any possible cases of dangerous extremists.

Unfortunately, since 9/11 there have been at least 314 U.S.-based militants associated with Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and their affiliated groups and movements.^a In the past decade, we have learned a number of important lessons from on-going research and advocacy. First, law enforcement must primarily focus on criminal activities, while the jurisdiction of local communities and leaders lies in the realm of theology and community/social issues.

The need to reexamine our approach to countering violent extremism has become abundantly clear, with the success of ISIS in attracting vulnerable youth who travel to the Middle East to join the group.

Could more have been done to possibly intercept these individuals before they went down a violent path?

At this point, it is important to state that this is where the framework of this project

^a Taken from: “Homegrown Extremism.” New America Foundation International Security Program, 2015, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/extremists/analysis.html>



lies. It is designed for an American Muslim grassroots leadership audience, by acting as a practical resource to help deal with the possibility of seemingly minor but troubling incidents of extremism and violence. This framework doesn't claim to have all the answers to our communities' challenges; that would be naïve and misleading.

We do, however, provide a viable set of alternative options and strategies for communities without the consequences or being arrested or having someone getting hurt. Our framework's content is based on insights from current and rigorous research conducted across many disciplines including psychology and counseling, terrorism studies, criminology, law and public policy. Its findings are also based on interviews with experienced imams, counselors, academic experts, ex-members of extremist movements and others.

This updated version of Safe Spaces reflects the feedback that we have received from community leaders, civil libertarians and experts in national security. Previously, Safe Spaces was modeled on a PIE (Prevention – Intervention – Ejection) approach. This new version maintains the Prevention and Intervention aspects of the framework while leaving criminal behavior to be addressed by those in law enforcement.



RESOURCES IN THIS TOOLKIT:

- Suggestions for building strong communities
- Steps for communities to take in rehabilitating a person from a path toward violence
- A list of social services and other resources to help your community institution
- Specific advice for college/university Muslim student organizations

FAQs: WHY THIS TOOLKIT MATTERS TO MY COMMUNITY

Why should this matter to me as an American Muslim? Are we talking about strengthening our communities because the government is concerned?

The Quran says that if anyone murders a person, it is as though he has murdered all of humanity; and if anyone has saved a life, it is as though he has saved all of humanity. We are talking about this issue because this is what God commands us to do- to save lives and to prevent any harm to families, communities and society.

Our communities are made up of hardworking, contributing members of society, whose historical connection to our country dates back to the time of the establishment of the early colonies, before America became an independent nation.

Unfortunately, there is a very small but dangerous minority of violent individuals who falsely claim to act on behalf of the interests and aspirations of all Muslims. The numbers we are talking about are small, but the impact on our community is large.

In order to lure people to their backward ideology, ideologically violent recruiters often prey on vulnerable and misguided members of our communities. It is an ideology that has come from overseas, and is not indigenous to American Muslim communities. So, our duty is to establish a community-led and community-driven initiative in order to protect our communities.

What is “Ideological Violence” exactly?

Ideological violence is basically another term for terrorism. Ideological extremists can range from domestic U.S.-based groups, such as far-right militias and violent Neo-Nazis, to foreign groups the likes of the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) and al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups. As our short list of examples indicate, it is clear that groups claiming to act in the name of Islam aren't the only ones threatening our nation.

Is this a real problem or is the FBI just “setting us up”?

There's no doubt there have been controversial court cases involving the use of FBI informants, who also known as “agent provocateurs.” As a result, some have claimed that most arrests of suspects alleged to support Al-Qaeda, ISIS or other groups in our country were the result of informants entrapping defendants.

However, acknowledging that there are indeed good reasons to be skeptical of some the FBI's actions does not mean that all of these cases are manufactured. A 2013 study directed by Ohio State University professor John Mueller, a national security expert and widely noted critic of the “War on Terror,” found that 26 out of 53 (49%) post-9/11 Al-Qaeda-affiliated violent plots involved an informant.¹ This means that slightly more than half of the plots studied did not involve an informant.

What this points to is the need to have two conversations at the same time. One conversation is to continue fighting for our rights and liberties by standing up to excessive surveillance policies and practices. The other conversation is to strengthen our communities in ways that protect its most vulnerable members from being tempted into making harmful decisions – whether that temptation comes from paid informants or actual violent criminals.



What is MPAC's approach to this issue?

Despite the growing discomfort towards law enforcement, common sense also tells us that we need them to keep our communities safe from other criminal threats such as homicide, hate crimes, robberies, etc. It is our belief that situations involving American Muslims who happen to believe in hateful ideas do not always need to end in an arrest or someone getting hurt. *Our solution to this issue is a bottom-up community-strengthening and public health approach, as opposed to a top-down government-led national security approach.*

Our strategy is similar to how public schools and universities seek to prevent tragedies like Columbine and Virginia Tech. In fact, research suggests the paths to violence taken by school attackers, rampage shooters, and ideological extremists are actually very similar.²

To combat situations similar to those above, schools formed teams of teachers, psychologists, and other staff to identify problems and see if there are alternatives to arrest, such as counseling. This method of intervention has subsequently been proved effective, preventing 120 incidents of violence in the past decade.³ Similarly, we believe our communities can establish processes to identify and properly intervene in situations where a person may be heading down a path of violence.

What is the purpose of this framework?

This toolkit looks to provide communities with practical advice on what those intervention processes can look like. It also gives a brief background on why some people adopt divisive ideologies, and also the reasons why others go a step further by outright committing acts of violence.

Even so, the toolkit goes further than that. Unfortunately, in some cases, despite the help and assistance being offered, some may choose to continue down a path of destruction. In those cases, we provide information to help communities decide when it is appropriate to involve law enforcement, versus when intervention assistance should be offered.

The best solution, however, is to prevent a crisis from happening in the first place. In this regard, our toolkit also provides suggestions that offer healthy outlets and guidance on issues ranging from increasing religious knowledge and political activism training, to discussing “hot topic” issues like foreign policy, gender relations, and alcohol/drug abuse.

We call these two different types of community-based assistance the Prevention and Intervention model, or PI.

Is Safe Spaces part of the federal government's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program?

No. Safe Spaces is an alternative to heavy-handed law enforcement counterterrorism tactics. According to the White House's fact sheet on countering violent extremism, ramping up social media as a vehicle for a counter-message to ideological violence and supporting communities in maintaining our collective security are two features of CVE we support.

Additionally, we vehemently oppose any measure that singles out our community, or any other policy that promotes radicalization theory.

Other parts of the federal government's countering violent extremism program are vague and could potentially erode our important constitutional values, such as the separation of church and state. MPAC frequently calls upon the government to clarify and explain its CVE programming in order for it to be examined.

**Why aren't you talking about violence
from groups like the KKK or Nazis?
Don't they need to be addressed?**

Organizations including the Southern Poverty Law Center, Life After Hate, and the One People's Project have dealt with those groups and their ideologies for many years. The fight against racist hatred and violence has been, and continues to be, openly discussed, debated, and debunked largely due to these organizations' efforts over the past several decades.

We focus on American Muslims because it is the community we are the most familiar with and the one upon which our organization was founded to serve and advocate for. That said, we don't shy away from discussing other misguided ideologies. In fact, we draw upon some of the successes against those other groups in order to help inform our communities about effective prevention and intervention.

How can I help?

We invite you to check out our toolkit! In it, there are suggestions for leaders of mosques/community centers, as well as Muslim college student organizations. If you're not a leader in your community, you can still help by providing your local institution/organization with a copy of our toolkit and request to start putting its ideas into action.



WHAT IS THE PI MODEL?

MPAC's approach to tackling violence is based on two assumptions: 1) A person's path to violence is unique, gradual, and involves many factors. 2) The path to violence can be slowed, stopped, reversed, and/or prevented with proper community support to parents, siblings, friends and mentors. Our solution rests on two foundations – Prevention and Intervention.

PREVENTION

As the famous proverb says, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” The ideal solution is to prevent a crisis from happening in the first place. In this regard, our toolkit provides suggestions that offer communities healthy outlets and guidance on issues ranging from increasing religious knowledge and political activism training to discussing “hot topic” issues like foreign policy, gender relations, alcohol/drug abuse, etc.



INTERVENTION

In some cases, there are individuals “at the edge” of committing violent acts. However not every American Muslim case of misguidance with an intent toward violence has to end in an arrest or someone getting hurt. We believe the best approach in these situations, based on the best research, is similar to how schools and universities across our nation prevent acts of targeted violence like Columbine and Virginia Tech.



In those situations, schools formed teams of teachers, mental health professionals, and other staff to identify problems and see if there are alternatives to arrest, such as counseling. That method of intervention has been effective, preventing 120 incidents of violence in the past decade. *Our toolkit provides communities with practical advice on creating and implementing those intervention processes.*



PURPOSE & STRUCTURE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit seeks to serve two purposes:

- 1) *Provide tips and tools* to deal with delicate situations that may arise in one's community center or Muslim college student groups.
- 2) Provide alternatives to heavy-handed law enforcement tactics in our community in dealing with violent extremism
- 3) Develop a process in healthy conversations, possible interventions, and partnerships with non-Muslims in addressing violent extremism.

We recognize that no two communities are necessarily alike, and neither are the contexts and individuals they engage with. **This toolkit, like other MPAC publications, is a resource for communities. It is ultimately up to local leaders and congregants to decide how they respond to a given situation.**

While our community's lack of centralized leadership can sometimes be a challenge, particularly when it comes to coordinating a unified response to strengthening communities, the rich diversity of its many voices is also a blessing. Throughout this document we provide examples of model programs and organizations that have been developed by American Muslims. We highlight these examples so that other communities have solid examples to emulate or at least draw inspiration from.

Finally, a short note on resources and methodology used to develop this toolkit. Concerning our sources of funding, we are proud to point out and emphasize that this is entirely a community-funded project. **No money from any government, whether abroad or in the United States, was used to develop this publication; this project was developed for American Muslims, by American Muslims.**

Regarding the actual research behind this toolkit, given the high stakes involved, we developed a set of criteria to carefully select the best studies currently available, particularly with regard to understanding what motivates people to engage in acts of targeted violence.

As a general rule of thumb, wherever possible, we try to rely on scientific and peer-reviewed studies as much as possible. (For more details, see Appendix A.) Furthermore, where possible and appropriate, we also examine research on other misguided ideas, such as U.S. Far-Right hate and violence, in order to reduce any analytical bias, as well as to better identify and emphasize important lessons that can be applied to *ideological* violence.

In addition, we formally conducted several interviews with a variety of highly regarded community leaders and experts. They include imams, certified counselors, current and former law enforcement officials, American Muslim community activists, and academic experts. Their unique and cutting-edge insights have been incorporated throughout this publication.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

It is important that we define terms upfront to the reader. No definition is going to be agreed upon by everyone; nonetheless, it is necessary for us to define the words we are using and the ideas we seek to convey. Precise terminology is key to achieving a clearer, more accurate, and more nuanced understanding of these concepts.

- **Radical** – Although the term “radical” (particularly in the context of the problematic term “radicalization”) has conveyed a negative meaning among many people in recent years, our toolkit defines a radical *as someone who simply holds views that are unconventional or outside the majority’s opinions and/or behaviors*. Radicals are not necessarily violent, and neither are they negative. For instance, during his time, the views held and actions undertaken by Dr. Martin Luther King were considered to be “radical,” even though his civil rights views are mainstream by today’s standards.

This toolkit does not use the terms “radical,” “radicalism,” or “radicalization” at all. We find them to be a set of hotly disputed and often ill-defined terms that are “a source of confusion”⁴ which tend to conflate lawful beliefs with illegal and violent behaviors.

- **Misguided Ideas** – *In the context of this toolkit, it is defined as the result of a process where individuals or groups come to intellectually approve of the use of violence against innocent bystanders or property.* Individuals with misguided ideas engage in lawful, constitutionally-protected free speech and other non-violent and legal activities, but nonetheless hold distasteful beliefs.

- **Violent Action** – In the context of this toolkit, it is an attempt by one individual to commit physical harm to other people (and possibly oneself in the process), or other peoples’ property. Violent action differs from misguided ideas in that violent actors intentionally physically harm others (and possibly oneself), incite people to physically harm others, or provide material assistance to those who seek to physically harm others.

These acts shift from the realm of activities protected by the Constitution and other U.S. laws into outright criminal behavior.

- **Takfir** – The act of one Muslim excommunicating another Muslim by declaring his/her beliefs or behaviors to be outside the pale of Islam. Some troubled individuals with misguided beliefs have used *takfir* as a means to dehumanize and legitimate violent crime against others they disagree with. An individual who regularly imposes *takfir* on others are often referred to as a *takfiri*. (For more on the choice and use of this term, see Appendix B.)

- **Disengagement** – *Refers to a series of efforts seeking to facilitate an individual’s movement away from committing acts of violence.* Disengagement focuses on one’s *behaviors* and the factors that facilitate their movement toward violence. Sometimes this may involve directly addressing and changing certain misguided ideas, but sometimes people who are disengaged still have *ideas* that are violent, though they do not act on them.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COMMUNITIES?

The motivation for joining misguided groups and engaging in violent behavior varies from person to person. In many cases, they end up having less to do with certain ideas being intellectually convincing, and more to do with certain problems going on in a person's life. In other cases, some may be mainly motivated by rhetoric (such as misquoting the Qur'an or Hadith), as in many cases, those who get recruited into violent extremism (or terrorism) lack a basic understanding of Islam.

Just because someone may adopt problematic views, or flirt with getting involved in violent criminal activity does not mean it has to end with someone getting arrested or killed. There is hope because alternatives exist.

The most important "big picture" to take away from these findings is that there are multiple opportunities for communities to protect friends, family members, or brothers/sisters-in-Islam from going down a dangerous and destructive path.

Even if someone is involved in a hateful group or movement, this doesn't necessarily mean the person has their heart fully committed to what they're saying and doing. The same factors that may have driven someone to think and act one way can also make that same person later re-think what they're doing or planning to do. *The person we might think of as a "lost cause" may still have a chance for an exit out of their situation because they may be secretly questioning themselves and looking for a way out, despite not knowing which direction to take.*

Furthermore, we don't have to wait until someone is "at the edge" in order to protect our loved ones, our communities, and our youth from the perils of misguidance and violence. There are things we can do to better guard others against these dangers.

Nonetheless, despite our optimism, we have to remind and caution our readers that there will still be some cases where individuals have gone too far down their path to allow for a successful community intervention. Unfortunately, there will be times when the only option is to remove someone from a community gathering and notify law enforcement. We will also discuss when it may be necessary to let law enforcement take over when other options are simply not working.



PREVENTION

DEFINING “PREVENTION”

In the context of dealing with misguidance and violence, prevention is defined as dealing with the problem by “nipping it in the bud” through efforts that focus on developing communities or important parts of communities. Development is facilitated through a series of programs, policies, and procedures at local community institutions such as mosques, schools, and other community centers. (For the purposes of our toolkit, we also include Muslim college/university campus clubs, schools, and service organizations, as part of our definition of “community centers.”) In other words, prevention measures are **proactive** and don’t wait for a problem to grow; rather, *they seek, as much as possible, to stop hate and a pathway toward violence from arising in the first place.*

The area of focus is **broad**—it seeks to tackle the larger environmental conditions (i.e., civil liberties, personal identity issues, foreign policy, local governance, discrimination, etc.) that push a minority of individuals further toward the margins of society, thus alienating themselves from even their families and communities.

We also need to be very clear about the intent of preventive measures. The Prophet Muhammad once said, “deeds are only with intentions.”¹⁵

That said, we don’t downplay the likelihood that community development can also have other positive side effects. Moreover, community development reduces the factors that create a space for misguidance and violence to exist. To the extent that these measures deal with the focus of this toolkit, their broad nature tackles misguided ideas and the appeal of outright violent and illegal behavior in a broader sense. Just because someone may not be doing anything violent or illegal, strictly speaking, it doesn’t mean that misguidance and hate can’t cause problems for individuals and communities.

As one imam interviewed for this toolkit pointed out, hate-motivated misguidance runs the risk of “being spiritually and socially unsustainable.”¹⁶ When underlying issues drive a person’s misguidance, there is then a greater risk of the individual leaving Islam completely, as well as undermining their morale and self-esteem.



“The action items we recommend ultimately need to be implemented in order to build healthy, safe, and sustainable communities, and also because they are for the pleasure of God. They need to be taken irrespective of existing public concern—including within our own communities—about violent extremism.”

For example, when we recommend to increase efforts toward a greater interfaith understanding and harmony, it is simply the right thing to do as called for by our faith, as opposed to doing so for the purpose of fighting violent extremism or (anti-Muslim) hate.



SAFE SPACES: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR MOSQUES AND OTHER FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Since 9/11, American Muslims have been ready and willing to tackle issues of misguidance and violence in their communities. In our 25-plus years of experience in engaging American Muslims, we have consistently found the problem is more often than not a lack of awareness and capacity to effectively tackle these issues. Therefore, any section on recommendations for mosques and community centers needs to acknowledge the material realities they face.

Recent findings from the 2012 U.S. Mosque Survey Report illuminate the challenge in stark detail:¹⁷

- “Mosques are under-staffed. Only 44% of all Imams are full-time and paid. Half of all mosques have no full-time staff. Program staff, such as youth directors or outreach directors account for only 5% of all full-time staff.”
Elaborating upon these findings, the report also went on to note, “Mosques cannot continue to grow [by] depending on untrained volunteers. The professionalization of religious leadership is... a necessary step in the evolution of the American Mosque. Learning from... Christians and Jews in America, the professionalization of their clergy was an essential element in their development.”¹⁸
- “Mosques are under-funded. While mosque attendance is higher than other American religious congregations, mosque budgets are less than half the budget of other congregations. The median income for mosques is \$70,000, and the median income of all congregations is \$150,000...” Unfortunately, most of the fundraising is directed to building the mosque, rather than infusing program resources into it.
- “Two-thirds (66%) of Imams were born outside the United States. Among full-time, paid Imams, 85% were born outside America.” Regarding this latter finding, the report went on to further note, “Mosques need Imams who are trained in Islam, but who are also educated in the functions of an Imam in the American [cultural and political] setting.”¹⁹ So what is critical in our discussion in addressing alienation is for religious leaders to be fully engaged within our American cultural context.

These findings highlight a dire institutional gap within our communities that suggests, among other things, that some mosque and other community leaders may be disconnected from certain segments of their congregations, including youth and converts.²⁰ This further suggests some leaders are likely to be unaware of, or unable to constructively address contemporary issues affecting their communities, such as drug/alcohol use, gangs, non-marital sexual activity, internet safety, etc.²¹

If this is the case in some of our communities, then local leaders are probably ill-equipped to also deal with the burden of *ideological violence*. A detachment of community institutions and congregants has negative consequences.

At best, the institutional gap harms the health and sustainability of Islam in America. At worst, it can allow predatory elements, such as *ideological extremists* (or others), a more permissive environment to operate and recruit. Although challenges exist, even the most disadvantaged communities can find workable solutions. The case of American Somali communities in the Twin Cities area of Minneapolis is one model example. (See the case study below for more details.)



Case Study: “D.O.V.E.” & American Somalis In Minnesota

Although many American Muslims face resource challenges to creating and implementing preventive measures against violence, these limitations are not impossible to overcome. In the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) area of Minnesota, the local Somali community faces some of the toughest quality-of-life challenges in the country, including high unemployment rates, low household incomes, broken families, gangs, and discrimination. On top of all of this, community leaders have to contend with attempts by associates of the violent criminal organization, Al-Shabaab, to recruit youth.

Despite this situation, American Somalis of the Twin Cities area engaged in a unique partnership between local community advocates and academic researchers to identify a community-based approach to preventing hate-based violence. Out of this partnership came a blueprint for action, *Diminishing Opportunities for Violent Extremism (DOVE)*.²²

The DOVE framework seeks to incorporate community voices into building a capacity to counter the ideologies and environmental factors that facilitate entry into violent forms of hate. Beyond identifying weaknesses and areas that require further institutional growth, which have largely characterized the study of Somali-Americans in Minnesota, the DOVE model also identifies existing community strengths that in turn have helped identify community-based solutions to recruitment into violent extremism.

1. Create a Safe Space

It is critical for mosques and community centers to develop “safe spaces” to constructively discuss taboo or sensitive issues. A “safe space” can be defined as a *supportive environment where community members can comfortably and constructively discuss sensitive topics among peers, mentors, and community leaders without the fear of shame, stigma, or some other negative repercussion*, such as government interference. Based on the experiences of MPAC staff, as well as findings from American Muslim researchers, important topics that frequently come up include pre-marital sex, sectarian differences, generational differences, intra-community racial tensions, domestic violence, inter-cultural marriage, religious vs. civic identity, discrimination, and civil liberties.²³

CREATING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY-RELEVANT PROGRAMMING

To address issues of separation between community institutions and their congregants, we recommend creating and sustaining community-relevant programming. MPAC’s experience engaging with communities, our interviews with imams and youth leaders, and findings from current research suggest at least three types of essential community-relevant programs.



What Does a Safe Space Look Like?

Below, we offer some core principles we believe generally define a safe space discussion.²⁴ Keep in mind that these rules aren't set in stone; group facilitators and participants can change them as they see fit. Also, these rules can just as easily apply to a college club or study group of friends as they can to a mosque, school, or other faith-based community center.

- No topic is taboo- The Prophet (PBUH) had open discussions in the mosque on sexuality, personal matters, and even affairs involving his own family.
- Respect everyone in the group—with our body language, words, actions, and appropriate eye contact.
- Everything said remains in the room. All conversations remain 100% confidential. Don't use this as an opportunity to gather information on people and then engage in backbiting!
- Feel free to pass—Not everyone present always has to feel compelled to participate. People can also feel free to enter or leave the conversation whenever they want.
- Active listening—This isn't just about paying attention to what people say; it's thinking about and reflecting upon what the person said and how that can enrich the discussion (even if you don't agree).
- Use "I" Statements—This is about telling your story or your viewpoint without thinking that everyone agrees or feels the same way. For example, say "When this happens, I feel...", rather than "You know, when this happens you feel..."
- Affirm each other—Add to each other's viewpoints or experiences, even if you may disagree.
- A "no judgment zone". Part of affirming each other is also making sure not to put down someone else's views or experiences. Be open-minded. Your experiences and opinions, as well as those of the other participants, are valuable.

- Five second rule. Between each person speaking, there should be a five-second-wait period in order to give people time to form their thoughts. It also helps ensure peoples' views were heard.
- All questions are welcome. However, just keep in mind that not all questions will have answers!

Let's be Honest: An Example of a Faith-Based "Safe Space"-Style Program

One example of a safe space-style program is MPAC's "Let's Be Honest." Identifying the need to create a program to discuss controversial and taboo topics in an open and supportive environment, MPAC started Let's Be Honest (LBH) in 2011. Subjects covered in LBH sessions have included foreign policy, civil liberties, mental disorders, racism, sexism and domestic violence.²⁵ Since then, the program has been held in American Muslim communities around the country. The discussions are open to the entire community and are led by a combination of MPAC staff as well as local religious leaders and professionals including family and mental health counselors.

Why Do Safe Spaces Matter?

In recent years, a number of grassroots organizations that were largely developed by young American Muslims and converts have emerged to provide a forum outside of a typical community center context to address specific needs and concerns. These organizations run the gamut from being faith-based, and focus on increasing religious literacy to others that are more “secular” in their programming and targeted at specific ethnic communities. Alternatively, others take a middle approach, offering a mix of explicitly religious and non-religious programming.

(For a list of these groups, see Appendix A. You can also directly contact MPAC’s staff, listed on our website at www.mpac.org/about, and we can help you with ideas for putting on events and programs.)

The Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center offers a wide array of services including mental health counseling, legal assistance, and programming geared toward converts, teenage and college youth and young professionals.²⁶ Other model institutions offering a similar range of services include the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (DC region) and the Orange County Islamic Foundation (Mission Viejo, CA).²⁸

Specifically relating to the issue of misguidance and violent crime, Safe Spaces and other programming in community centers will need to openly and constructively address “hot button” issues including foreign policy and concepts like *jihad*.

Of course, this is easier said than done. In the past, some local institutions seeking to protect themselves against intrusive government surveillance, recruitment attempts by violent extremists, and public misinformation campaigns by anti-Muslim bigots, have responded by banning any discussion of politics in sermons and other community programs. While understandable, this measure is not only ineffective but also stifling.

Academic experts, imams, and former members of hate movements we interviewed all agreed that shutting down debates and discussions is the wrong answer. They unanimously pointed out that open debate and discussion, which cannot take place without Safe Spaces, is among the best preventive measures a community can take to protect itself against individuals contemplating violence.

One only has to look at experiences faced in the U.K. where mosques and other community institutions have repeatedly tried to censor themselves, only to see it backfire. Some Muslim organizations there have already acknowledged that a different course of action is needed.

Citing the case of a local community member arrested for planning a violent attack, one British Muslim organization explains why banning talk of politics and other related issues is a bad idea:²⁹

It is clear... that this young man had a burning desire to know about Islam and as opposed to nurturing his desire so he could be productive towards humanity, the Mosques didn't address the identity crisis this man was suffering, and totally failed to empower him politically, combined with the fact that he seemed to be at odds with his elders; the result is that as opposed to learning how to take part in the democratic system of this nation to remove those who oppress, he took his own route, which was dangerous and his passion for Islam was fuelled by extremists such as Al Mubajiroun. [sic.]

There is already some evidence indicating similar efforts were attempted and subsequently failed in the United States. For instance, in November 2009, five American Muslim college students left the Washington, DC area and were arrested in Pakistan on charges of intending to join a violent criminal organization.

In trying to figure out what made these individuals want to join such a group, press accounts noted that the youth director of the mosque where three of the five students grew up (including the leader of group, Ramy Zamzam) never discussed issues related to jihad (in this context, the rules of warfare), or politics in general.³⁰ Similarly, there is some evidence to suggest a lack of healthy discussion on social and political issues in Jose Padilla's early years, as a convert to Islam may have contributed to his recruitment into Al-Qaeda.³¹

If congregants, including youth and converts, don't have a space at their local community center to comfortably discuss issues that matter to them, they will find somewhere else to go. That "other place" could be with a dangerous group of people—be they Internet predators, drug dealers, or misguided hate recruiters—who will exploit individuals looking to be heard and given guidance.

What to expect, at least in the beginning

Community leaders seeking to develop safe spaces at their local institutions should expect in advance that the process will be dynamic and bumpy. Several religious leaders and ex-members of hate movements who were interviewed for our toolkit noted that leaders will have to address perceptions held by some, particularly among youth, that nothing is being done to change the problems of the *ummah*, because leaders are seen as "sellouts" and "tools of the government."³²

A former follower of ideological extremism during his youth put it a little differently, noting that "there's a sound bite culture among imams" which needs to be overcome through more substantive conversations with members of their congregations.³³

Deceased Al-Qaeda propagandist Samir Khan is a stark example of why addressing these perceptions is critical. According to one news report looking at Khan's life, his distrust and criticism of local mosque.

leaders seemed to feed into his misguided worldview and gradual move into participating in a violent organization. As one local community member who talked with Khan recounted, "I thought he was a little overzealous. He kept asking questions about our local mosque, and he was critical — why don't they talk more about injustices going on around the world and stuff like that".³⁴



2. “Walking the Walk”: Action-Oriented Civic and Political Training

A necessary extension of safe spaces is developing civic engagement and political training. For many individuals, it is not enough to simply vent grievances; concrete solutions must be found and implemented in order to affect change in policies. In other words, grassroots leaders not only need to “talk the talk”, but also to develop programs that can help their communities “walk the walk.”

To be truly effective, such programs must go beyond encouraging community members to participate in an occasional protest or voting once every four years (if at all). Training is required to develop a set of knowledge and skills that will help a person become an informed and effective advocate. In 2010, MPAC developed a faith-based leadership program called “I Am Change” (<http://www.mpac.org/programs/i-am-change/>) for precisely this purpose. Designed around an interactive community workshop, it provides:

- Knowledge on how to promote civic engagement from an Islamic foundation with members of your community
- An understanding of how local, state and federal government works and your role in advocating at each level
- Practical skills for talking about the issues you care about with public officials and the media
- Energizing examples of Americans Muslims who are successfully working for change every single day, and making a difference

3. Increasing Parental Involvement and Supportive Adult Mentorship for Youth

The third category of programming involves increasing parental involvement and supportive adult mentorship for youth. This is particularly important for strong community development, as well as the prevention of misguidance and violent actions that may be contemplated by a tiny minority of our communities’ next generation.

Happiness and health almost always starts at home. Unfortunately, many youth—of all backgrounds—often feel like their parents are “out of touch” with them. This is even more the case for children of immigrant parents who were born or raised here in the United States and see themselves as culturally “American.”

In other cases, there are some youth who have converted/reverted to Islam as teenagers, having come from broken homes.³⁵ Sometimes, elements from both situations are present, as is the case for some communities, such as American Somalis living in the Twin Cities area.³⁶

Regardless of the source of the problem, the result is a lack of constructive and consistent adult and parental guidance, which can contribute to an identity crisis for a handful of whom can be led astray by influences that glorify violence and criminality.

Like other ethnic and religious communities, our youth are also prey to a broader culture of violence³⁷ that makes it cool or acceptable to consume drugs and alcohol,³⁸ get involved in gang activities,³⁹ or engage in other exploitative behaviors.⁴⁰

Mosques, schools, and other community centers have an important role to play by providing a forum where parents and youth mentors can steer youth away from high-risk behaviors and unhealthy environments. For cases where parents are physically present but not actively engaged in their child’s life, mosques and schools, and other community centers can put on programming to

help them understand today's youth culture in order to be more active in their sons' and daughters' lives.

In cases where a teenager is dealing with a broken home, mentorship programs like "Big Brother/Big Sister" can be established. In Tennessee, local Muslim youth leaders and activists established a regional council called Muslim Youth Navigating Tennessee (MYNT), which is a network of seven mosques and four college/university organizations.⁴¹ Among the many other activities it hosts, MYNT has a monthly Islamic "Big Brother/Sister" program.⁴²

In addition to creating a supportive environment for disengaged and vulnerable youth, efforts to encourage constructive parental engagement and non-parental mentorship should stress education as a key component of programming. In particular, we recommend "media literacy" education on how the media works, and how to analyze messages and content in broadcast news, video games, and the Internet. This will help raise awareness among parents and youth about the various kinds of messages—commercial, social, sexual, political—that various outlets and websites try to show in our homes every day.

We also recommend regularly convening parenting groups which aim to strengthen: parents' knowledge and awareness of risks their children face; their ability to be the confidants of their children, and to talk about difficult-to-discuss topics and the support, monitoring, and supervision that parents provide their children. These groups should encompass issues of violence prevention, but also other more common threats facing American youth, such as drugs, crime, school problems and bullying. For more information, consult resources on effective parenting programs such as:

- <http://whatworks.uwex.edu/Pages/2parentsinpr ogrameb.html>
- <http://cultureandyouth.org/family/>

- <http://www.urbanministry.org/wiki/parenting-resources>

Some Basic Principles to Discuss Media Messages (Including Deliberate Misguidance)

What should you do if someone comes to you to talk about a YouTube video of a preacher who urges people to commit acts of violence against other people? This section briefly provides some basic tips for how community leaders and college students can de-construct propaganda and other media messages aimed at brainwashing people into supporting or committing acts of violence. For more information on creating conversations to deconstruct and understand media messages in general, check out resources such as the Youth Connections Coalition (<http://www.youthconnectionscoalition.org/content/media-literacy/media-literacy-discussion-guides/>), which contains detailed discussion guides and examples to talk about.

With respect to de-constructing and de-bunking hateful material, such as online propaganda videos, experts we interviewed suggested that rather than telling curious individuals simply to not watch the material, (which may make them more curious) **a better course of action is to watch and then discuss the material under mature and expert supervision, such as a religious scholar, parent, mentor, or some other respected community member.**

After watching the video, have a constructive conversation about what was seen in order to debunk and dismantle the false advertising propaganda behind the content. Holding these kinds of discussions means that the person or people putting on the event need to have a strong grasp of the kinds of messages and manipulative tactics used to recruit people.

As noted earlier, research suggests that watching ideological extremist propaganda in unsupervised group settings can deepen a person's misguided views and possibly move him/her toward violence. However, according to two experts interviewed for our toolkit, **the opposite is also true: watching such content in a group setting, but with expert supervision, is the "most potent" way of de-constructing the myths and misleading narratives of ideological extremists.**⁴³

The importance of having open conversations with youth about these kinds of everyday issues—and *making sure youth mentors and parents are actively involved*—cannot be emphasized enough. These challenges are neither new nor unique to American Muslims. Commenting on his research expertise on gang and Neo-Nazi recruitment dynamics, Dr. Pete Simi, notes:⁴⁴

...one of the reasons why youth mentors are so important is that we gain a sense of who we are from others, and when youth lack competent adult role models this creates instability in terms of identity (peers who are already extremely important become even more important; propaganda messages which could be discussed with an adult the young person trusts must be figured out by him/herself or with the help of less competent others)

In addition to having expert supervision (whenever possible), according to the Center for Media Literacy (CML), there are "Five Key Questions" and "Five Core Concepts" that should guide any serious discussion on media messages—whether or not that conversation takes place at home, in a community institution, college campus or with a trusted circle of friends:⁴⁵

CML's Five Key Questions (Deconstruction)

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are being represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

CML's Five Core Concepts

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.



Safe Spaces... In Cyberspace?

In addition to creating safe spaces for discussions inside and outside of community centers, there have been a number of web-based initiatives to fulfill similar outreach needs. Here, we briefly highlight two examples.

First is a video series produced by MPAC called, “Islam: Questions You Were Afraid to Ask.” (<http://www.mpac.org/speaktruth/>) A collection of question and answer sessions featuring MPAC’s Co-Founder and former Senior Advisor, Dr. Maher Hathout, this 17-part series addresses a variety of controversial topics that range from abortion and dating to homosexuality. While not a safe space in the strictest sense of the term, the series can be seen as a foundation for starting open conversations and dialogues on issues that are otherwise rarely discussed, but often encountered in daily life.

The second example is the website of Imam Suhaib Webb (www.suhaibwebb.com). Broad in terms of its outreach activities, SuhaibWebb.com aims to be “Your Virtual Mosque.” Featuring commentary from diverse perspectives, the website acts as a forum for lively discussion on a wide range of social and political topics, but also has sections focusing on religious knowledge and *fatawa* (religious edicts). Furthermore, there are regular columns by its “WebbCounselors” who are trained therapists and social workers writing regular columns and responses to specific questions about mental health, marriage, and divorce.



Dangers in Cyberspace: Misguidance and Violence (Online)

Some researchers note that violent criminals are exploiting the Internet for their own purposes. Experts have identified at least three “problematic” aspects to how the Internet gets abused to promote misguidance and violence:⁵

- Illustrate and reinforce troubling messages. As a less filtered means of communication than other types of media, the Internet allows potential recruits to easily gain access to vivid imagery and texts that support a misguided worldview.
- Joining problematic movements. The anonymity of the Internet allows recruits a relatively low-risk means of linking up with other people with hateful ideas and hurtful behaviors. Without the Internet, these individuals might otherwise be isolated and less able to spread their messages of hate.
- Establishes a supportive environment for misguided views. Surrounded by other misguided individuals, the Internet becomes an “echo-chamber” for hateful viewpoints that glorify and encourage violent behaviors. They establish a virtual arena where such distasteful views and dangerous behaviors become normal.

Though the Internet certainly has its problematic aspects, it also has its limitations. According to the ICSR report, “... self-recruitment via the Internet with little or no relation to the outside world rarely happens, and there is no reason to suppose that this will change in the near future.”⁶ The reason for this conclusion is due to the importance of real-world relationships. Individuals deliberately seeking to promote misguidance see that the Internet does not “provide face-to-face human interaction, [thus] nullify[ing] many of its advantages.”⁷

Other research finds the number of consistent users tends to be small. According to one British study of the web traffic on one widely viewed hate site, “the vast majority of messages posted on the Mujahedon.net forums originated with a very small core group of active users: 99 percent were passive or casual users.”⁸ Put differently, one expert we interviewed observed that, “some people consume [propaganda] videos as a form of porn” in which the consumption acts “as a barrier to [violent] action.”⁹

While these findings may be somewhat reassuring, they do not negate the important role Internet-based propaganda and recruiting efforts has played. If nothing else, the Internet serves a very important role in sustaining the ideology among people it has already won over, albeit without having to resort to face-to-face meetings with other misguided individuals.

Furthermore, like consuming pornography, particularly among young adult males, watching violent extremist videos online isn’t entirely harmless; evidence suggests that what kind of material is being watched and under what conditions it’s being watched matters significantly. In fact, scientific studies on the impact pornography has on male college fraternity beliefs and violent behavior toward women seems to parallel recent research on the role violent ideological cyber-propaganda plays in moving young men from misguided ideas into violence.

A 2011 U.S. study looked at the relationship between college fraternity men (a sub-demographic found to be more likely to commit a rape on campus and hold misogynistic views of women compared to other college men)¹⁰ and their use of pornography. They found that, “[fraternity] men who view pornography are significantly less likely to intervene as a bystander [to prevent a rape], report an increased behavioral intent to rape, and are more likely to believe rape myths.”¹¹ The study found the effects were the most robust among those fraternity members who reported they watched rape and sadomasochistic porn.¹²

Meanwhile, a 2010 study on ideological violence and misguidance in Europe and Canada found that one of the warning signs of young men moving from hateful ideas into violent action was watching videos of war footage with groups of other people. Graphic videos were noted by researchers to be particularly favored by violent recruiters to push viewers into violent action: “The gorier [the footage] the better, often with beheadings.”¹³

Similar to how college fraternities’ use of porn reinforces a culture of sexual violence against women, for violent extremists, “Creating a culture of violence, where it is acceptable to use violence as a means to social or personal advancement, is clearly important, and group viewings of jihadist videos can encourage this.”¹⁴

Promoting Digital Literacy and Internet Safety

Nowadays, many individuals, especially youth, get a lot of their information from the Internet. It is also a popular way to socialize, make friends, as well as purchase items. While the Internet has many benefits, it also has its dangers that people need to be aware of. Therefore, it is important to also teach communities digital literacy and cyber safety.

iKeepSafe.org, an Internet safety non-profit coalition that was founded in partnership with Google, has an excellent online curriculum specifically for faith-based organizations.⁴⁶ The teaching materials include downloadable Power Point presentations, conversation scripts, and videos that can be modified to the specific needs of any congregation.^b They also have a general digital literacy curriculum that teaches Internet users how to detect lies, maintain a safe and clean online reputation, and avoid tricks and scams designed to steal your personal information.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, we want to provide a short summary and tips from recognized experts on practical ways of teaching Internet safety. **Teaching digital literacy and Internet safety involves both technical and non-technical actions.**

Technical actions are things such as downloading protection software and filters to prevent kids from accessing pornographic or hateful sites. An easy one-stop resource for downloading free and easy-to-use filters can be found here: <https://internet-filters.net/>

Non-technical actions are rules and behaviors to promote safer Internet browsing and use. Reproduced below are twelve non-technical steps recommended by Enough-is-Enough, a widely-recognized non-profit dedicated to promoting youth Internet safety:⁴⁸

Rule 1. Establish an ongoing dialogue and keep lines of communication open.

Rule 2. Supervise use of all Internet-enabled devices

Rule 3. Know your child's online activities and friends.

Rule 4. Regularly check the online communities your children use, such as social networking and gaming sites, to see what information they are posting

Rule 5. Supervise the photos and videos your kids post and send online

Rule 6. Discourage the use of webcams and mobile video devices

Rule 7. Teach your children how to protect personal information posted online and to follow the same rules with respect to the personal information of others.

Rule 8. Be sure your children use privacy settings

Rule 9. Instruct your children to avoid meeting face-to-face with someone they only know online or through their mobile device

Rule 10. Teach your children how to respond to cyberbullies^c

Rule 11. Establish an agreement with your children about Internet use at home and outside of the home (see Rules 'N Tools® Youth Pledge)^d

Rule 12. Teach your teens by words, and example not to read or write texts or emails while driving



^b The materials often contain Biblical passages; however, they can be changed with Qur'anic passages and hadith that emphasize the importance of safety and promoting good.

^c For more information, see: <http://www.internetsafety101.org/cyberbullyingsafety.htm>.

^d Accessible at: <http://www.internetsafety101.org/upload/file/Rules%20%27N%20Tools%20Youth%20Pledge.pdf>.

Securing the Integrity of Your Community Institutions

Beyond parental concern for where your children are and what they're up to, there are many other valid safety reasons to ensure that centers of worship and community life are securely managed. They range from preventing hate crimes and vandalism, to guarding against theft and armed robbery.⁴⁹

Already aware of many of these challenges, and with specific regard to misguidance and violence, MPAC released a set of guidelines on basic mosque management as part of its National Anti-Terrorism Campaign (NATC) in 2005. The idea was simple: *one of the best ways communities can play their part to secure their institutions against any number of possible safety risks—including violent criminal activity—is to simply ensure mosques and other faith-based community centers are run professionally, transparently, and are actively visible within their communities.*

The 2005 NATC guidelines are reproduced below:^c

1. Mosques and Islamic centers should accurately maintain their financial records, with specific attention to sources of income and expenditures with accurate, professional and transparent bookkeeping and financial statements easily available to its members.
2. All activities within mosques and Islamic centers should be authorized by legitimate, acknowledged leaders. Unauthorized, private group meetings and speeches should be prohibited.
3. Most of our mosques do not have permits to allow overnight lodging facilities. It is therefore important that strict regulations about the opening and closing of the mosque be maintained.
4. Traffic inside the mosque should be directed and managed. Designated people should be given the responsibility of providing specific services people need, such as information about prayer, classes, councils, cafeteria, etc.

6. In case of guest speakers, it is prudent to know who the guest is and the content of the talk they are about to deliver.

7. Lectures should focus on harmony, emphasizing the fact that we are Muslims and Americans. We need to represent the great values of our religion and constructively engage our country in dialogues leading to improved life for all people. Irresponsible rhetoric should be avoided.

8. Mosque leaders should build relationships with local public officials and law enforcement in order to have a presence and role in the affairs of the broader community. (NOTE: *Building relationships with law enforcement agencies needs to be done with great care for many reasons, including the protection of civil liberties, see page 35 for tips on establishing and building relations with local law enforcement agencies.*)

9. Special programs should be arranged to educate and train the community on how to spot criminal activities.

10. A spokesperson should be responsible for issuing statements and giving interviews that represent the authentic opinion of the legitimate authority of the institution.

11. Meetings and other programs should be held in cooperation with civil rights organizations for awareness and education.

12. It is highly recommended that the mosque participate in interfaith dialogue and civic alliances and activities.



^c With some slight modifications made.

Expand Your Community Institution's Network of Trusted Contacts

Another step community centers can take is to build up their list of contacts. Particularly in cases where local institutions lack capacity (e.g., money, personnel, or knowledge of a particular issue or program) it is very important to have diverse networks of trusted contacts that can be called on for partnership and assistance, especially in a time of crisis. This can be as easy as:

1. Making a list of important resources your institution is lacking.
2. Gathering information and reaching out—whether by attending events and gathering business cards, or conducting Google searches for resources and information. Once you have the information, make sure to reach out and get to know the people behind the resources. A one-time meeting won't be sufficient. Building sustained, long-term relationships is key!
3. Creating and maintaining a filing system for all of your contacts. If possible, it is best to store the information on a computer owned by and located within the institution, as well saved on an extra flash disk that is stored in a secure but easily-remembered location.

Typically, one person within the mosque has all the contact information for outside groups. It is critical to centralize all the contacts of all board members, staff, and volunteers of any organizer in a shared electronic file.

It's important to point out that one's information database should also identify faith-based and faith-sensitive resources and services, including those provided by American Muslims. Knowing what resources are available to your community will be extremely important, not just for long-term prevention-type measures, but also in times of crisis, such as an intervention. (We'll discuss this more in the section on intervention.)

If you don't know where to begin looking for sources of information, in the back of this toolkit, under Appendix D, we have gathered a list of primary resources to be used as a starting point for further research.

One very important set of contacts should be the phone numbers and emails of key individuals within one's local and federal law enforcement agencies. It is not sufficient to simply dial 911 in emergency situations. A board member of the Maryland Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and an expert in training law enforcement on Islamic religious practices noted that many communities need to go beyond receiving only "Know Your Rights" trainings. While recognizing the necessity of such trainings, she felt they were insufficient by themselves. Based on her extensive experience of engaging both communities and law enforcement, she felt that an adversarial relationship between both sides harms everyone, especially communities.⁵⁰

This is one very important reason why proactively building relations with law enforcement agencies can help communities improve their security practices and expand their network of resources. As we will discuss later in the toolkit, having trusted working relationships with law enforcement is extremely important in crisis situations where a community leader may feel the need to engage in an intervention.



Building Relationships with your Local Law Enforcement Agency

Creating and sustaining partnerships with local law enforcement agencies takes time and effort. For more details, we suggest downloading free copies of toolkits such as this one (http://ojp.gov/fbnp/pdfs/Collaboration_Toolkit.pdf) provided by the Community-Oriented Policing Services office of the U.S. Department of Justice. In the meanwhile, we want to provide you with some quick and simple pointers for starting and sustaining a partnership with law enforcement.

For those communities looking to start a relationship with their local agency or department, there two important steps that need to be taken. **First, is to pick a person or group of people who will be directly responsible for communicating with law enforcement.** A good candidate for managing relationships with law enforcement should be someone who has: ⁵¹

- Passion for solving community problems
- Commitment to serve the community's needs
- Vision for achieving results
- Knowledge and respect of the community
- Ability to keep the community focused on solving problems and managing the steps necessary to achieve the project's goals
- Communication with the community on a regular basis
- Ability to create additional opportunities for collaboration with partners.

Second, is to directly reach out to your local law enforcement agency. In some places, the agency doing most of the everyday policing will be a town/city police department; in other cases it may be a county sheriff. To know which agency or agencies are responsible for public safety in your neighborhood, you can check out the official website of your city or county.⁵² From there you can find the webpages, or a separate website for your local law enforcement agency.

When making initial contact with an agency, it's best to seek out a mid-level manager such as a Lieutenant, Commander, or Senior Lead Officer rather than a high-level official, such as a police chief or sheriff. These individuals are almost always in charge of public safety for a specific geographic area or neighborhood.⁵³ (As the relationship with your local law enforcement agency develops, you should eventually request meetings with higher-level officials, such as Captains, Deputy Chiefs/Deputy Sheriffs and eventually Chiefs/Sheriffs.)

To identify who is immediately responsible for safety in your neighborhood/community, refer to your local agency's website. If the information is not immediately available online, call their non-emergency telephone number and request further information.

When looking to connect with the right person or people, the information you receive should be able to answer the following questions:⁵⁴

- “Is there a police station near my neighborhood?
 - o *“If so, who is in charge?”*
 - o *“What is his/her name and rank?”*
 - o *“What is the [officer's] telephone number and address?”*

Once establishing contact, **it's important to have professional and effective meetings with your law enforcement officials.** To the best extent possible, one of the most important developments from a relationship between communities and local law enforcement agencies is to *establish a common vision that can help guide further conversations.* This common vision should be documented and address questions such as: ⁵⁵

- What perceptions do we (community members and this local law enforcement agency) have of each other?
- Where did these perceptions come from?
- Are some of these perceptions inaccurate or based on myths rather than facts?

- How do we approach solving community problems?
- What results/outcomes we BOTH want for our community?
- What is in the best interests of BOTH of sides to achieve?
- What can we agree upon?
- What responsibility does each side have for solving community problems?

Some tips to facilitate and effectively participate in a meeting include:⁵⁶

- Have some ground rules established before starting the meeting, including:
 - o Being respectful toward all participants.
 - o Allowing everyone to get a fair hearing.
 - o Make sure that everyone has time to speak.
 - o One person speaks at a time—don't interrupt or speak to others while someone is talking. Also, speak for yourself, not others in the meeting.
 - o If you are offended or upset, say so, and why.
 - o Everyone is allowed to disagree, just don't make it personal. Stick to the issue.
 - o Everyone helps the facilitator keep the meeting moving on track.
- At beginning of the meeting, ask all participants to say their name, where they are from, and why they decided to come today.
- At the end of the meeting, summarize all the points made and write out all of the actions items for future meetings.

If you don't feel comfortable facilitating an initial meeting or feel that a neutral third party is more appropriate, you can request assistance from the Community Relations Service (CRS) within the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Part of CRS' activities includes acting as a neutral arbiter and observer in meetings between communities and law enforcement.⁵⁷ (*For more on CRS, including contact information and its field office locations, see Appendix E.*)

After each meeting, it is important to follow up in order to build trust. Relationships and trust are neither built overnight, nor from one meeting.

Follow-up contact can be established through an official letter, but is also good to make sure it is also backed up by personal contact. One-on-one contact between community and law enforcement representatives is extremely important because it is a sign of openness and provides an opportunity to address any further questions either side may have. Follow-up and trust is also built upon perceptions of dependability. For example, don't promise more than can be delivered—otherwise you may be seen as an unreliable partner.⁵⁸

Finally, a word about civil liberties. Since 9/11, there has been an understandable concern about unchecked intelligence gathering in American Muslim communities.⁵⁹ If communities feel uncomfortable meeting with law enforcement officials at their mosque, school, or community center, *community representatives may want to consider a neutral location to hold a meeting, such as a restaurant, coffee shop, or private reserved meeting room at a town/county building such as a library or civic center.*

For those who are willing to allow law enforcement officials, including federal agents, to visit their mosque or other community center, we recommend establishing some clear ground rules in a firm, but friendly manner. In general, ground rules should take a middle path approach that is neither hostile toward your law enforcement guests, nor so open that confidential information is freely being volunteered.

Information such as congregation membership lists and other institutional knowledge should NOT be given to law enforcement, unless instructed by your legal counsel, or if you are the recipient of a legal document, such as a subpoena or warrant, which can demonstrate that the information sought is specifically tied to a criminal investigation.

Officials entering the premises of the mosque/community center should be asked, in advance, to notify management of their presence. They should also be asked, in advance, to provide the names of all official personnel attending the meeting, and to have business cards ready to distribute. Finally community officials should make it clear that any such visits to these premises will be for the purpose of outreach and dialogue, as opposed to intelligence gathering.⁶⁰

Interfaith Partners

It is important to have partners to rely on and whom to be able to turn to for help. Mosque leadership should be engaged in collaboration with other religious leaders, including those at churches and synagogues. Religious groups face many of the same challenges, and by partnering with other groups, mosques are in a better position to respond to those challenges.

Recommended Actions for Muslim Student Groups

Preventive measures are not limited to traditional mosques and community centers, but also include campus clubs and organizations that focus on spiritual growth and faith-based activism for Muslims, such as Muslim Students Associations (MSAs). Obviously no two clubs are alike. As one former MSA National official interviewed for our toolkit stated that local MSAs “are all over the map” when it comes to their size, level of activism, and type of programming they put on.⁶¹

Create a Safe Space for Discussion and Activism

Similar to mosques and other community centers, one of the most important steps for a Muslim student group to take is ensuring that it can provide a safe space (see above for more information) to have a healthy discussion on many issues. College is a time to develop oneself spiritually, socially, and intellectually. In this respect, student groups operate as a spiritual and social “third space” to grow—outside of the home and one’s local mosque or other community center.⁶² However, such growth can only happen if people are allowed to engage each other’s ideas freely—including those on questions of faith, identity, etc.

Without a doubt, not everyone will be interested in discussing or grappling with these issues; some people are too busy with school, while others may be apathetic. While not every Muslim college student will want to become a political or civic activist, it is important that opportunities are made available for those who are interested in activism, or at least interested in talking about it and exploring it as an option.

(Again, for those who want to learn more, MPAC offers its “I Am Change” political and civic activism-training program. See page 26 to learn more.)

Some students report having been discouraged or demotivated from becoming more civically and politically engaged. In some cases, the level of MSA activism is tied to the broader campus political culture. Places like Georgetown University and the University of California Berkeley have historically had very politically active campuses—including Muslim student groups. Other campuses are less-politically aware, and so too are the Muslim student groups in turn.⁶³ In other cases, parents have often discouraged their children from being politically active on campus, in part, because they fear repercussions.

An MSA National interviewee noted that in her experience, as a president of her local MSA and as a former Chair of the MSA National’s Political Action Task Force, American-born and raised Muslims tended to be more active than their overseas counterparts. However, she also noted, consistent with other research, that some American Muslim students have also been weary to discuss political issues in their campus clubs due to concerns over surveillance.⁶⁴

Another MSA interviewee, a former leader in the Washington, DC area noted that there was hesitation to discuss political views when he was a student several years ago. During his time as a student activist, the apprehension many students felt was exacerbated by the media fanfare that surrounded the arrest of Ramy Zamzam and four other Muslim college students from the DC area.⁶⁵

Both MSA interviewees felt that this hesitation to discuss hot button topics has become even more pronounced since the news broke out about the New York Police Department’s widespread spying on Muslim students across the east coast.⁶⁶ Other former MSA and Muslim student activists from across the country have also shared this concern.⁶⁷

As one former Muslim college student points out, at best this fear of openly engaging in the academic marketplace of ideas could “prevent the next generation of Muslim students from engaging in a vibrant, meaningful and constructive part of their college lives.”⁶⁸ Many students will also have to carry the burden of “retracing their every step, always looking over their shoulder and being distrustful and wary of those around them.”⁶⁹

At worst, this can feed into the very type of isolation and alienation that authorities and communities are concerned about. Jeanne Theoharis, a widely-noted civil rights historian and political activist who teaches at Hunter College in New York City bluntly stated why this is a problem:⁷⁰

College is a place where you try ideas out. It’s the first time you get to choose your classes and think for yourself. Part of that process has to be about trying out ideas, and kind of seeing how ideas work. One of the most important aspects of colleges is lost without a comfortable place in class to discuss, share and try out ideas, say what might be considered “radical” things, draw parallels, and achieve a deeper grasp of ideas. This is devastating both in terms of Muslim students being able to think through things, but also because the range of discussion in class is diminished. I also think it’s going to tend towards the extremes if you don’t have a space to work this out. As a result, most people end up not being very political.

On the other hand, I also think that the landscape where extreme ideas grow requires consideration, because there’s not enough space to think about things together and have a sounding board. If you don’t take your political idea with you to school, the ideas cannot become sufficiently refined and thoughtful. I think 18 year olds are particularly gutsy, though not always mature. Nevertheless, I would rather have them taking their political ideas to school to articulate them and refine them so we can think about them all together.

Self-censorship, due to fears of unwarranted government surveillance, is ultimately harmful to all students, including Muslims.

Concerns about surveillance must not deter students from having the most rewarding campus experience possible. In response, we suggest students empower themselves by knowing their free speech and academic freedom rights. This is done two ways:

- **Consult your campus student handbook.**

Each university has its own set of rules in terms of how they expect students to conduct themselves on campus. These handbooks will often provide information on students’ rights, including free speech and academic freedom.

- **Connect with organizations dedicated to defending free speech, privacy and civil liberties.** They offer a range of services helpful to students, including educational brochures and pamphlets, legal experts, and “Know Your Rights” events that raise awareness about the legal protections and resources students have at their disposal. (*A list of recommended organizations’ and their contact information is located in Appendix E.*)

Get Training on Strong Management and Leadership

When discussing safe spaces on campus, we need to also recognize that sometimes there are also internal issues that must be dealt with. Beyond safe spaces, we recommend Muslim student leaders have strong management and leadership training. How MSAs are managed and what skills their leaders have will invariably impact upon how well they can make their club a comfortable and inclusive space for different Muslims.

Strong leadership and management skills are important for handling crisis situations that may arise. In the aftermath of the arrests of five DC-area students in late 2009, MPAC received requests from some local MSA leaders to help them obtain training on how to address media requests for comments. In addition to the training that MPAC offers on media interactions and civic/political activism, MSA National has its COMPASS training that helps local campus chapters with leadership training and management skills.



Yes to Muslim Unity, No to Sectarian Fitna (Conflict)!

In other cases, this exclusivity goes beyond particular cliques and sometimes involves outright sectarian animosity. Although uncomfortable to discuss, this issue needs to be raised and dealt with forthrightly to ensure our Muslim student groups are as inclusive as possible. While we are unaware of sectarianism currently affecting local Muslim student groups, we do know that it has affected student campuses in the past⁷¹—an unfortunate reflection of political events that have taken place in other parts of the world.

It is a clear form of *fitna* (conflict) that is against Islamic values and drains our communities of the talent and energies needed to train the next generation of leaders across our nation's campuses. Even in places where there is no prior history of sectarian tension, *we believe it is necessary that campus clubs adopt an explicit "No Sectarianism" policy as part of their club's bylaws and make sure it is fully enforced.*

Lessons from School Shooter Cases

Before concluding our section on Prevention, one of the key purposes of the recommendations we have offered so far is create an atmosphere where people can comfortably discuss sensitive issues so that if a crisis occurs, people know they have an appropriate place or group of people they can turn to. This is key to growing and sustaining any healthy and vibrant community that can address a list of issues and situations, such as mental health crises, combating domestic violence, preventing gang recruitment, stopping sexual abuse, etc.

We add hate-driven violent crime to that list.

With respect to that latter issue, there have been times when friends, family members and other community members, in retrospect, knew someone who went down a path of violence and noticed that they had raised some "red flags" that caused suspicion along the way. Even so, people failed

to report their concerns either because they did not know whom to turn to, or did not want to stigmatize the person they were concerned for.

Although this is understandable, it is also preventable. For years, schools across America have had to deal with similar situations in order to prevent school shootings like Columbine or Virginia Tech. Experts have noted that a lack of trust and an environment of silence may actually encourage troubled people to go down a path of violence because they will be less likely to get help, such as mental health counseling. Those with the ability to provide help are also less likely to be aware of those who may need it.⁷²

As a result, schools across the nation have responded with a firm, but caring stance against silence among students by working hard to raise awareness among youth and faculty, while also fostering an environment of trust that encourages communication. Taking cues from their successes, trust-building and communication for the purpose of violence prevention needs to emphasize the following points:⁷³

- Violence prevention is everyone's responsibility. [NOTE: This is about raising awareness and encouraging families and neighbors to contribute to community safety, and not about blaming an entire community for the actions of a few.]
- The community institution has a process in place to assess possible threats of violence
- Knowing how the process works and who is involved
- All information will be handled discreetly
- The purpose is to protect both the potential victim(s) and perpetrator(s)

Community leaders seeking to foster a climate of trust and communication must emphasize and reinforce these principles. They can do so in a number of ways, such as by sending out emails on their congregational listservs, talking about the importance of communication in Friday sermons, and stressing to parents and youth peers the confidential and discreet way information about a concern is handled.

INTERVENTION

DEFINING INTERVENTION PUBLIC SAFETY

In this context, intervention refers to dealing with the problem of misguidance and violence by helping someone who is “at the edge” of going down a path of violence, or moving dangerously close to it. Compared to prevention, the area of focus for intervention is **specific**, focusing on a particular identified *individual*, rather than addressing community-wide conditions.

It is important to note that the behavior requiring an intervention is **not** criminal and therefore requires a community response *without* the involvement of law enforcement.

Intervention measures are both **proactive and reactive**. They are proactive insofar as they seek to stop a person’s movement toward violence by using alternative means to arrest. However, interventions are reactive in the sense that they only spring into action after a person has begun to develop and express troubling worldviews, and has been specifically identified by community members as at-risk for engaging in violence or other criminal activity.

At the beginning of this publication, we defined a term that is particularly relevant for intervention measures: *disengagement*. To recap the definition of the term:

• **Disengagement – Refers to a series of efforts seeking to facilitate an individual’s movement away from committing acts of violence.** Rather than directly focusing on a person’s ideas, disengagement initially focuses on an individual’s misguidance or violent behaviors, and the factors that facilitate their movement toward violence. A deeper effort to change someone’s underlying worldview comes after immediately ensuring the person of concern will not engage in violent or other criminal actions.

For the purposes of immediate intervention, our toolkit emphasizes the immediate importance and prioritization of *disengagement* over changing someone’s worldviews for two reasons.

Words and ideas don’t kill, no matter how misguided or hateful they may be; however, violence-supporting words and ideas *put into action* can be very destructive.^f Therefore, irrespective of the finer points of an individual’s worldview, there needs to be a clear understanding and commitment to not engage in violence no matter what an individual’s views are with regards to religious, politics, personal life, etc.

This is not to suggest that discussing a person’s views won’t be important in engaging an at-risk individual. As we will discuss shortly, our interviews with practitioners who have dealt with cases of at-risk individuals show that deeper intellectual engagement is very important. However, solely arguing over the specific details of a person’s ideology is insufficient.

THE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

As a concept, de-radicalization primarily focuses on changing a person’s ideas and worldviews in order to change their behaviors. Currently, de-radicalization programs have been used as an approach to dealing with ideological violence. Disengagement focuses on changing a person’s behaviors, namely staying away from violent and criminal behavior while largely avoiding questions about a person’s worldviews. Some have disputed the effectiveness of these programs. Dr. John Horgan, one of the world’s leading researchers and evaluators of so-called de-radicalization programs, points out that these initiatives lack solid evidence to prove they work:⁷⁴

Terrorist de-radicalization. What an intriguing idea for a quick fix if ever there was one. Yet never in the history of counter-terrorism has any short-term solution ultimately proven to be more than a naïve pipedream. That is not to suggest that what are commonly called “de-radicalization programs” would see themselves as representing a quick fix. But the allure surrounding these creative approaches to counterterrorism has been

^f This is not to suggest there are unlimited Free Speech rights in America. There are a few, but very important exceptions to this Constitutional liberty, such as incitement to violence and scaring people into a violent stampede. For a practical overview of the Right to Free Speech (and its limitations), see: “Know Your Rights:

so powerful that a seeming failure to deliver on the implicit (and vague) promise of “revers[ing] radicalism” has apparently led to a loss of popularity. That may not be a bad thing, but a critical question lingers around whether or not these programs are effective.

Instead, our toolkit is pointing communities toward “what works” rather than “what’s fashionable.”⁷⁵

In addition to interviews we conducted with imams and ex-members of hateful movements, the information and advice we offer in this part of the toolkit largely draws from scientific and peer-reviewed research that examines and seeks to prevent targeted violence, such as rampage and school shootings (like Aurora, Colorado, Columbine High School, or Virginia Tech).

Our purpose is not to draw moral equivalences or raise larger political questions about terrorism and other forms of violence. Rather, our concern is about the safety and security of our community and all Americans.

We draw on this body of research, as this is the direction in which the evidence has led us. Recent studies have shown strong similarities, in terms of pathway directions toward violence among suicide terrorists, assassins, workplaces, and school shooters.⁷⁶ The findings of these studies are consistent with the conclusions and recommendations taken from *Predicting Violent Behavior*, a 28-person Department of Defense (DoD) task force report produced in August 2012 as a scientific evidence-based response to the 2009 Fort Hood attack. The DoD report’s findings were based on a review of the relevant research literature, as well as from 54 presentations given by 58 subject matter experts over an eight-month period from April 2011 to November 2011.⁷⁷

Therefore, we closely examine, and modify where appropriate, those intervention mechanisms and processes that have already been proven effective at preventing 120 attempted acts of targeted violence at schools within the past decade.⁷⁸

WHY CONDUCT AN INTERVENTION?

“Saving All of Humanity”

First and foremost, interventions have the possibility of saving lives—including both the person at risk of engaging in violence and those people who are the potential targets of that violence. To quote the Holy Qur’an, “...*if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people*” (5:32).⁷⁹ Even if the intervention fails, assuming law enforcement is also notified of the situation, there is a “safety net” in place to preserve public safety.

Sparing Families Grief and Pain

Second, assuming the intervention is “successful” (i.e., making a clearly stated and demonstrated commitment to avoid violence and other criminality), it avoids having the person arrested (or killed), facing the likely possibility of being convicted (an 87% chance)⁸⁰ and imprisoned for a long time (on average, 25 years).⁸¹ All of this does not take into account the potential pain, embarrassment, and humiliation that family, friends, and loved ones are spared.

Reducing the Risk of Pretexts for Hate Crimes to Occur

A successful intervention also prevents a potential problem from arising without the negative media-fueled public fanfare that is associated with an arrest or attack. This particular benefit cannot be emphasized enough. In one particularly dramatic example, two days after the arrest of Portland-based suspect Mohamed Osman Mohamud—which involved his own father calling law enforcement on him—an anti-Muslim extremist firebombed the local mosque where Mohamud had occasionally prayed.⁸²

This is not to suggest that somehow a mosque is always going to be vulnerable to hate crime violence due to negative attention after an arrest (or attack), but these kinds of events, in addition to recent

research, suggest it is reasonable to assume that negative publicity directed at a community or institution does raise the risk of a violent backlash.⁸³ A recent study by the University of Maryland revealed a strong statistical relationship between terrorist attacks believed to be religiously motivated and anti-minority hate crimes, including attacks against Arab and Muslim institutions. *Specifically, a minority institution or house of worship was significantly more likely to be hit with a hate crime within the first four weeks after a terrorist attack was attempted—especially if the attack is merely believed to be perpetrated by a “religious” actor (i.e., Muslim).*⁸⁴

UNDERSTANDING THE ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES BEHIND AN INTERVENTION

According to one imam with prior experience conducting at-risk interventions,⁸⁵ an imam who considers an intervention for a troubled individual must understand he has two competing sets of ethical responsibilities. The first is the obligation to the larger society in which he and his congregation reside. This has to do with Islam’s message as a universal faith that seeks to improve the condition of *all* people, not just one’s particular congregation.

The second is an obligation to provide proper pastoral care, satisfying a specific individual’s needs within a congregation.

In situations that involve the safety and sanctity of human life, one’s ethical obligations to protect the physical safety of all people within the larger society come before that of the specific individual.⁸⁶ He went so far as to declare that one’s obligation to specific individuals within the congregation can’t be truly satisfied, Islamically speaking, unless the safety of the broader society is ensured first.⁸⁷

Although the aforementioned comments were directed at imams, the ethical obligations are equally applicable to others who play a leadership role in their respective communities, including Muslim student leaders. (NOTE: Although the ethics are the same among various leadership roles, it does not mean that each person in their respective roles should respond to a crisis the same way. Later in this section we

provide tips that are specific and unique to Muslim college students, as opposed to imams and other community leaders.)

Beyond the spiritual pastoral context there is a clinical responsibility to help prevent individual community members from doing harm to others and themselves. This particular point was strongly emphasized by another imam who is also formally trained and certified as a mental health counselor in California.⁸⁸ The nature of professional and volunteer-based religious work—such as imams or faith-based youth and social workers hired by a community center—tends to involve special relationships and counseling activities similar to mental health therapists.⁸⁹ As a result, we believe these extra responsibilities should be treated in the same ethical fashion as other mental health work, that is, a “duty to warn” and “duty to protect” third parties. If they have reason to believe one of their congregants poses a violent threat to either themselves or others, only then should proper action be taken to notify law enforcement.⁹⁰ In addition, law enforcement should be involved only if the intervention is unsuccessful and a criminal intent is clear.

Finally, another religious leader we interviewed, Yasir Qadhi, Dean of Academics at the Al-Maghrib Institute, referenced more traditional religious frameworks, noting that all Muslims living in a particular country “are in a legally binding contract” and must satisfy the legal requirements of the land, so long as they do not directly convene one’s right to practice their faith. Therefore, the Muslim community needs to do its part to ensure it collectively abides by that contract, including upholding public safety.⁹¹

NECESSARY PREPARATIONS FOR AN INTERVENTION

Given the ethical obligations and various risks involved in an intervention, efforts cannot be done haphazardly. Advance preparation is needed to have the best chance of success. We recommend that steps be proactively taken as soon as possible, rather than once a crisis starts.

1. Acquire Legal Counsel Beforehand

For leaders who wish to be directly involved in an intervention, it is important to acquire legal counsel beforehand. As noted earlier, there are many legal risks involved in an intervention that could potentially put individuals in harms way. Therefore, it is important that community leaders contact a lawyer and, if possible, develop a relationship with that person beforehand so that less time will be spent on relationship-building, allowing more time to be spent working with the person of concern. *MPAC recommends that community leaders consider engaging an individual only if they have first consulted expert legal advice, and if leaders feel comfortable enough with the situation. Otherwise, we do not recommend engaging in an intervention.*

Why Legal Preparation Matters: The Case of Former NYC Imam Ahmad Afzali

In September 2009, an Afghan-born legal resident named Najibullah Zazi was arrested in the Denver, CO area after being under federal and New York City Police Department (NYPD) surveillance for suspicion of seeking to bomb the NYC subway system. Zazi and two other associates later pled guilty to the charges.

Prior to his arrest, Ahmad Wais Afzali, a Queens-based Imam, had been asked by the NYPD, in a voluntary capacity, to talk to Zazi and get some information from him to further determine whether or not he posed a threat to New York. Prior to the NYPD request to reach out to Zazi, Afzali had been a community liaison to the police for several years, motivated by a desire to protect the country against another 9/11-style attack.

Although Imam Afzali got involved in the situation to keep the city safe and keep Zazi out of trouble (the Imam was not made fully aware of what was taking place), he soon found himself in trouble. Along with Zazi and his other associates, Imam Afzali was also arrested—initially accused by the FBI of tipping off Zazi about being under surveillance.

Although the Imam was never formally charged with obstructing justice (the penalty for tipping off a suspected criminal, like Zazi)—information from various press outlets such as the *Associated Press*⁹² (citing the FBI's 9-page criminal complaint),⁹³ *Wall Street Journal*,⁹⁴ and *Newsweek*⁹⁵ actually suggest Zazi was already tipped off that he was under surveillance after being screened at a roadway checkpoint specifically set up for him. Imam Afzali was charged with—and pled guilty to—lying to federal law enforcement officials. According a *New York Times* story about his arrest and guilty plea,⁹⁶

The issue, it turned out, was not that Mr. Afzali had tipped off the targets of an investigation, but that he had repeatedly lied about the conversations during his interviews with the F.B.I., denying he had told the men about the law enforcement investigation.

Mr. Afzali talked and talked to investigators, believing that he could explain away their interest in him. "I got scared for myself," he said. "I was hungry, thirsty, tired and scared."

There is no evidence, based on publicly available sources, to indicate that Imam Afzali had ever sought any legal advice or counsel throughout this entire ordeal—from the time of his initial interaction with Zazi to his later interview with FBI officials.

The example of Imam Ahmad Wais Afzali is not meant to scare away community leaders from considering the option of intervention with troubled individuals. Ultimately, Afzali had valid reasons for trying to help all parties—even if he wasn't fully aware of the gravity of the situation. The overwhelming weight of evidence, as displayed in an open court, proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Zazi and his associates sought to kill hundreds of innocent men, women, and children.⁹⁷

Nonetheless, Afzali's case serves to demonstrate that interventions cannot be done without careful preparation. Had he sought proper legal advice and counsel from the very beginning, the Imam may have been able to at least avoid the troubles he faced.

Furthermore, to the extent that a particular situation may allow for it, it is also good to have multiple witnesses present for confidential discussions with law enforcement. A veteran FBI counterterrorism agent we interviewed, had this personal advice to offer about community-law enforcement interactions in general: ⁹⁸

Personally, I would not mind if an attorney was present to provide legal counsel to a community leader sharing information with me. At minimum, and drawing on past experiences and attorneys, I would suggest that two or more community members and law enforcement officials be present for such meetings, to ensure there are multiple witnesses to what was discussed.

2. Develop an Evaluation Team ⁹⁹

(This advice is not applicable to college organizations. See “Advice Specifically for Muslim Student Organizations” on page 54.) Ideally, your mosque, school, or other community center should have a team developed by this point. *If you have to build your team from scratch and “cold call” potential resources during a crisis, you and your community are already at a significant disadvantage.*

Core Membership

An effective Evaluation Team should be composed of individuals from many backgrounds within the community. At minimum, core membership should include: ¹⁰⁰

- Mosque, school, or community center administrator(s)
- A religious leader, who can authoritatively provide scriptural guidance
- A religiously/culturally-sensitive social worker
- A religiously/cultural-sensitive psychiatrist or psychologist
- A lawyer who is formally certified to offer legal counsel in your state, and has a very strong knowledge of the various legal

issues that impact an intervention. (For more on possible legal issues surrounding interventions, see “Legal Liabilities” on page 67)

We do **NOT** advocate that a community safety team be composed solely or predominantly of imams or community leaders who are experts in one area, but lack proficiency in other critical subject matter areas. Doing so can significantly raise the risk of coming to inaccurate and possibly dangerous conclusions about an individual. In *Appendix A*, we offer a list of different faith-based and faith-sensitive social service organizations that your community can look at as a starting point for further research and assistance.

Communications Manager

While not a “core” member of the Team, we very strongly recommend also having a communications manager. Your communications manager is someone who will be in charge of information being disseminated between the safety team and outsiders. They will be the central point of contact for the safety team. The role of a Communications Manager, in this capacity, would be to ensure a very well-managed and controlled dissemination of information that appropriately balances out the competing needs of making public statements if and when necessary, and the privacy of the intervention processes. They are also in charge of taking notes of team proceedings, and ensuring that case management files are properly maintained.

It is highly recommended that information only be disseminated in consultation with the expert advice of the other team members. The communications manager should **NOT** decide on to notify outside third parties (i.e. media, family, friends, other community members, etc.) independently, especially in a situation that may affect public safety. **Any and all information gathered and discussed should be treated as confidential, unless team protocols and decisions dictate otherwise.**

Beyond the Core Team – Bringing on Others “As Needed”

Beyond your core team, experts like Modzeleski also suggest being open to bringing on “as-needed” people whose role(s) serves a very limited and specific function. For instance, if the person of concern happens to be a high school student, the core team may want to pull in one or two teachers who may know the student fairly well.¹⁰¹

We would add that team members should be open to the possibility of inviting anyone who is a role model-type figure and commands the respect of the particular person of concern. This person may play an important role in convincing the person of concern to enter into intervention assistance and stick with it. Our own research, based on a review of prior studies, interviews with ex-members of hate movements and respected imams found that building trust and having the respect of the person of concern were important to raising the chances of success in an intervention. (For more information, see “*What an Intervention Can Look Like—Some Basic Principles*.”)

The Evaluation Team may seek advice from an off-duty law enforcement officer, preferably a Muslim. This is strictly optional if the team needs to determine clarifications on criminal law. Our view is that it is inappropriate, counterproductive, and un-Constitutional to have a law enforcement officer conduct an intervention (if one is needed), especially in cases where religious and political ideology guidance are determined to be an important factor in fueling a person’s path to violence.

Building Team Cohesion and Formalizing Relationships – Team Training, Exercises, Regular Meetings and Documents

Evaluation Teams are not guaranteed to work simply because the right people with the proper resources are gathered in one place. In order to increase the probability of a team’s effectiveness, it should also meet at regularly planned intervals, regardless of whether an intervention is occurring.

For instance, teams that deal with similar situations in other contexts, such as mass-casualty attacks on college campuses, meet at regular intervals. How often teams decide to meet is ultimately up to their discretion.

However, what’s important is that the meetings are consistent and not too far apart in time.

Moreover, we strongly suggest that a team appoint a leader who is in charge of convening the team and directing its proceedings. The individual should be chosen through some sort of consensus-based process. Suggested criteria for a team leader should include the candidate’s ability to work well in a team setting, availability to dedicate time to the team, and ability to facilitate group discussions and decision-making. This helps to provide additional team direction, structure and cohesion.

In addition to meeting regularly, team members should routinely practice “tabletop” style exercises that simulate the kinds of crises the team is designed to address. *Tabletop exercises are small group discussions that simulate a scenario based on real events and help to identify the particular actions members of the team would take before, during, and after a crisis situation.* The exercises will act as an opportunity for individuals to learn how their other teammates would react to certain situations and pieces of information. It will also be an opportunity to identify and work out any kinks that may arise in advance, rather than during an actual crisis.

The outreach division of the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with the National Counterterrorism Center, offers tabletop exercise training on crisis intervention scenarios that are free of charge and conducted at the request of communities. Similarly, MPAC is currently developing its own independent tabletop exercise training material and will offer it as a service to communities. (Both sets of curricula are independent of each other, though they both happen to be suitable complements to the material presented in this toolkit.)

Beyond building team cohesion and effectiveness, a long-term goal of an Evaluation Team should be to formalize the relationships a community has built with other private and public agencies. We suggest formalizing relationships through written documents such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is more structured than an informal handshake agreement, but not as restricting as a contract.

For reasons of confidentiality, and because MOUs are often tailored to each community's local situation, we believe it would be an ill-advised decision to provide a template that would be openly available to the public. As a starting point, we suggest engaging your local town or county school board to see what MOUs they have created to prevent school shooter situations like Columbine, CO or Virginia Tech. (Local school boards may call these "Threat Assessment Team" MOUs. Despite the title, these processes are not as scary as they sound. See page 45 for more information.)

Addressing a Lack of Resources

Although Evaluation Teams are not meant to be very expensive, many mosques and community centers operate on a tight budget with few resources to spare. This situation is understandably difficult, but not impossible to overcome. This is another reason why developing your community institution's list of resources will be important.

The D.O.V.E. framework, as discussed earlier in this toolkit (see page 18), was the result of a joint partnership between local American Somali community advocates/leaders and local, civic society and government organizations.

Furthermore the burden of finding and spending resources can be shared among more than one institution, if they are willing to do so. For instance, rather than developing a Evaluation Team at each mosque, school or other community center in a particular area, each organization can be asked to pool together the time, money, personnel, and other resources needed to form a regional shura-level task force. That task force can then collectively, in a united community voice, engage their local government and civil society partners to develop a coordinated and properly-resourced Evaluation Team.

Advice Specifically for Muslim College Student Organizations

For Muslim college students in particular, your main task is to build relations with the following individuals/campus institutions and reach out to them in the event of something suspicious, disruptive, or if an immediate threat:

- Campus chaplain (if applicable)
- Club faculty advisor
- Student counseling services
- The campus threat assessment team (see below for more information)

What Is A "Campus Threat Assessment Team"? And Why Engage Them?

The Campus Threat Assessment Team is a resource that's actually a lot less scary and intimidating than it sounds. Although they have been around for many years, it wasn't until after the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting that these teams were drastically expanded to college campuses around the country. Their purpose is to detect and prevent acts of violence from happening on campuses and surrounding communities.

The teams are "multidisciplinary" in nature, and include members of public safety, student life, faculty members, human resources, legal counsel, mental health professionals, etc. In some ways, they're similar to the idea of Evaluation Teams we've talked about so far, though more specific to the needs of your particular college/university campus.

The diverse membership of these groups is indicative of a comprehensive attempt to de-escalate a person's potential movement toward violence. In this approach, law enforcement arrests are typically used as a last option, with team members often opting to use alternative approaches such as counseling (if applicable), to defuse and resolve a potentially dangerous situation.

In an interview with Dr. Gary Margolis, one of the nation's top experts on college campus safety, he highlighted the importance of context and cultural appropriateness when analyzing particular cases of concern. In situations that may involve American Muslims, he noted that campus threat assessment teams would likely be open to outside help, particularly if specific religious or cultural needs will impact the

analysis and responses to the situation. As he noted, “It might well be that someone is invited into that conversation... who has a background in the context in which we need to make the assessment.”¹⁰²

Rather than waiting for a potential problem to arise, we strongly encourage Muslim student groups to proactively engage their student counseling services and point of contact for the campus threat assessment team to point them toward credible resources on Islamic religious practices. This should include pointing them toward the campus Muslim chaplain (if applicable) and/or the academic advisor/sponsor for the student organization (if appropriate). *If you do not feel comfortable or are unable to connect a campus chaplain or academic advisor, you can also refer to the list of resources in the back of this toolkit that specialize in faith-based mental counseling, law enforcement training, and crisis management. (See Appendix A for more information.)*

If a campus threat assessment team has to analyze a case that involves a Muslim student, but lacks a proper awareness of Islamic religious practices and concepts, they could potentially misdiagnose the situation, leading to negative consequences for the individual and campus safety. This is one more reason why it is important to engage these groups before any crisis presents itself.

Assessing Situations

The following guidance **is intended for mosques and other Muslim faith-based institutions:**

Step 1: Convene Your Evaluation Team & Determine Level of Threat

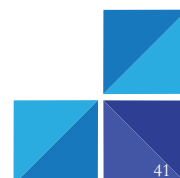
When notified of a suspicious or threatening statement, obviously the first thing to do is convene with your Evaluation Team. Once the team has convened, they need to make a preliminary judgment based on the facts and circumstances at hand, to determine if the person’s behaviors or statements indicate a serious and immediate threat.¹⁰³ Threats can be examined and rated according to at least three different risk levels: “Low,” “Medium” and “High”.

High-risk threats typically “pose an imminent and serious danger to others.”¹⁰⁴ Their characteristics include:¹⁰⁵

- Words that are direct, specific, and plausible. This identifies a specific act of violence against a specific target and describes in a straightforward, clear, and plausible manner how that act will be carried out. Specific and plausible details include: “the identity of the [target(s)]; the reason for making the threat; the means, weapon, and method by which it is to be carried out; the date, time, and place where the threatened act will occur; and concrete information about plans or preparations that have already been made.”¹⁰⁶
- Suggests concrete steps have been taken. For instance, the person has obtained, built, and/or practiced with weapons such as guns or explosives.

An example of a high-risk threat that needs to be immediately and directly reported to law enforcement authorities would be: “I’m going to rally with some bombs I made so that this country will pay for its criminal foreign policies against the *ummah*!”

High-risk threats should be reported immediately to law enforcement authorities. If not a high-risk threat, the Evaluation Team can and should immediately begin gathering other facts to determine what is going on and how to best remedy the situation.¹⁰⁷



KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *MAKING* A THREAT AND *POSING* A THREAT

The above criteria also point to an important observation that intervention experts constantly emphasize – **there is a difference between making a threat and posing a threat.** Making a threat is telling a potential target that they may or will be harmed (i.e., menacing speech). Posing a threat refers to engaging in behavior that indicates furthering a plan or building the capacity for a violent act.⁸

The purpose of the Evaluation Team is to determine whether or not reported abnormal behaviors and statements, including menacing-sounding ones, are indicative of a credible threat. In other words, the Evaluation Team is there to figure out whether or not a person's actions or words suggests they are willing and able to carry out a physically harmful action to themselves or those around them.

Prior research on school shootings showed that while attackers did not directly threaten their targets in almost 80 percent of the cases studied, they did however communicate their intent to carry out violent action. According to one study, a typical attacker “told a friend, schoolmate, or sibling about his idea for a possible attack before taking action.... Some of the conversations were long enough that peers conveyed detailed information about the plans, including the date it would happen.”¹⁰⁸ Similar findings have found individual actors carrying out acts of targeted violence motivated by hate also frequently detailed their plans to others.¹⁰⁹

Open threats of violence at a direct target should not be dismissed as idle talk or the rants of a “crazy” person. All threats should receive prompt attention from an Evaluation Team’s snap assessment, while also understanding that it should not be the only or primary factor in making a judgment about the likelihood of an act of violence.

Step 2: If Not an Immediate Threat, Start Gathering Facts

In situations where the reported threat does not readily appear to be “high risk,” the Evaluation Team should begin to immediately gather relevant facts and circumstances surrounding the person of concern and any incidents that triggered the concern.

For instance, this could be a situation where a person stands up in the middle of a *khutba* (Friday sermon) and condemns the preacher as a *kafir*. Depending on the situation, although this may not immediately justify calling law enforcement due to the lack of an explicit threat, it would warrant the attention of community center officials to begin an inquiry to either determine if the person poses a serious threat of harm to themselves or others in the congregation. (For a discussion of Boston bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s disruptions during Friday sermons, see page 54.)

From there, community leaders can make a better judgment as to whether or not they need to contact law enforcement, opt for a community-based intervention, or dismiss the issue altogether.

The information you and your team gather should cover five areas:¹¹⁰

1. What drew attention to the person in the first place? Where there any behaviors and/or communications reported, and if so, by whom? What was the situation? Did anyone else witness the behaviors/communications? What was the context in which the behaviors/communications took place?
2. Basic information on the person of concern. There are three types of basic information your team should gather.
 - a. Identifiers, such as:
 - Name
 - Physical description
 - Date of birth
 - If possible, any official identification

⁸ Threatening behaviors can also include telling individuals, other than the potential target of their intent to carry out an attack.

b. Background information, including:

- Residence
- Family/home situation
- Academic performance [if relevant, i.e. an uncharacteristic change in grades or attendance]
- Social networks [i.e. who the individual “hangs out” with]
- History of relationships and any possible conflicts within them
- History of harassing or being harassed by others
- History of violence toward self or others
- History of being a victim of violence or bullying
- Known attitudes toward violence [this can include support for *ideological extremist ideology*]
- Criminal behavior [history of theft, assault, property damage, domestic violence, etc.]
- Mental health/substance abuse history
- Access to and use of weapons
- History of grievances and grudges

c. Current life information, including:

- Present stability of living and home situations
- Nature and quality of current relationships and personal support
- Recent losses or losses of status [shame, humiliation, recent breakup or loss of significant relationship]
- Current grievances or grudges
- Perceptions of being treated unfairly
- Known difficulty coping with a stressful event
- Any “downward” progression in social, academic, behavioral, or psychological functioning
- Recent hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair such as suicidal thoughts, gestures, actions, or attempts
- Pending crises or changes in circumstances

3. Information on “attack-related behaviors”. These are actions, observable to an outsider, which may strongly suggest a person is preparing to commit an act of violence. Such behaviors include:

- Ideas or plans about harming themselves or attacking an event/location, or people at an event/location
- Communication or writings that suggest the person has an unusual interest in committing an act of violence
- Comments that express or imply the student is considering mounting an attack at an event/location
- Recent weapons-seeking behavior, especially if such behavior is linked to ideas or interests in an attack
- Communications or writings that suggest the person condones or is considering violence to solving a problem
- Performs rehearsals of attacks

4. Motives to directly carry out an attack.

- Revenge for a perceived injury or grievance
- Yearning for attention, recognition, or notoriety
- A wish to solve a problem seen as unbearable
- A desire to die or be killed

5. Target Selection.

Has the person in question identified a potential target or set of targets to attack? In many cases, individuals going down a path of deliberate targeted violence (including those motivated by an ideology) often identify people, places or events they wish to attack and let those around them know about their intentions.¹¹¹

When gathering information, your team will want to collect facts from various sources. These sources include teachers, friends, family, co-workers, people who observed or witnessed questionable behavior/communications, or had a neutral, non-confrontational discussion with the person in question.¹¹² (This last part is especially important because the individual should not be pushed away, thus causing a resistance to participate in an intervention, if needed.)

Who your team decides to interview and in what order of progression will largely depend on the situation. For instance, if there were multiple people who witnessed a person make a troubling and violent sound outburst, it may be best to interview those witnesses first, followed by the close friends and family, and finally the individual who made the outburst. However, this may not always be the case. Ultimately this will be up to your team's collective discretion based on their technical expertise, as well as their understanding and relationship with the community.

Analyze Your Information with the “11 Key Questions” Assessment Tool

Analyze the information gathered to better assess the situation. The information should be evaluated based on the answers to “11 key questions”.¹¹³

1. What are the person's motive(s) and goals?
 - a. What motivated the student to make the statements or take the actions that caused them to come to attention?
 - b. Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
 - c. Does the student have a major grievance or grudge? If so, against whom?
 - d. What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result? Does the potential attacker see any alternatives, or feel that any part of the problem has been resolved?
2. Have there been any communications or statements that suggest ideas or intent to carry out an act of violence?
3. Has the person shown an inappropriate interest in any of the following?
 - a. Previous attacks or attackers
 - b. Weapons [including any weapon they may have recently obtained or built]
 - c. Incidents of mass violence [shooting sprees, mass murders, bombings, etc.]
4. Has the person engaged in any attack-related behaviors? As a quick review, some of these behaviors may include:
 - a. Developing an attack idea or plan. [The more detailed the plan, the more this suggests the person is committed to engaging in violence.]
 - b. Making efforts to obtain or practice with weapons
 - c. Surveying possible sites and areas for attack
 - d. Rehearsing attacks and/or ambushes
5. Does the person have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence? [This not only includes access to weaponry, but also the technical know-how and physical capability to perpetrate an attack of violence.]
6. Is the subject experiencing hopelessness, desperation and/or despair?
7. Does the subject have a trusting relationship with at least one respected and responsible figure?¹¹⁴[i.e., Can the individual confide in this person?]
8. Does the person see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or “the only way” to resolve their problems/grievances?
9. Is the person's conversation and “story” consistent with their actions? [Does the information gathered from other sources confirm or dispute what the person is saying?]
10. Are other people concerned about the person's potential for violence?
 - a. Are these people concerned they might take action based on violent ideas/plans?
 - b. Are they concerned about a specific target or set of targets?
 - c. Have friends, family, acquaintances witnessed any recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?¹¹⁵
11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?



Throughout the process, every step that team members take to gather information and address the situation should be recorded in writing. This will help keep track of the information and assist team members in making the best analysis possible.

At the same time, given the sensitive nature of the facts being collected, it is imperative that whatever is being collected should be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Furthermore, the process in which facts are gathered should be done as discreetly as possible. Discretion is extremely important so as to neither jeopardize the integrity of the information gathering process (which might impact public safety), nor bring unwanted attention to the situation, especially if it turns out that things turn out not to be a crisis.

For a sample template of Evaluation Team process checklist and record-keeping documents, see Appendix F.

Step 3: Analyze the Results of Your Team's Findings

A careful, objective, and well-thought examination of the responses to these 11 questions based on the information gathered will help your Evaluation Team determine if the situation poses a concrete threat of violence. As team members gather and analyze information throughout the process, they should keep in mind the following tips and best practices:

1. Recognize that violence is a dynamic process. It stems from an interaction between a person, their situation, the potential target, and the individual's own environment.

2. Avoid relying on over-simplistic explanations. There is no single factor, nor a single pathway into violence. Each person will have different factors and contexts that facilitate their entry into violent behavior.

3. Utilize multiple collateral data sources that are credible and possess first-hand knowledge. (Second-hand knowledge is at best a starting point for leading to better sources of information.) As you gather the credible information, evaluate it with a critical mindset, and be conscious of the impact of bias.

4. Assess the impact of the investigative process on the person in question and their situation.

5. Focus on the facts specific to the case.

6. Focus on the person's behavior rather than the person's traits (i.e. their race, gender, etc).

7. Focus on understanding the context of the behavior. In isolation, a piece of information may be misleading or seem innocuous, but in greater context it can either be useful or sign of something serious.

8. Examine the progression of the behavior over time.

9. Corroborate information that you think may be central to getting an accurate understanding of the individual's behavior. Don't rely on a single source of information (i.e.. one friend's testimony, or one Facebook/Twitter post). Gather facts from multiple sources and cross check them.

10. Every team member's opinion matters and should be shared. The strengths of a multi-disciplinary team lie in collaborative analysis and decision-making, as well as the collective ability to dissect a potential problem from multiple professional perspectives.

11. Focus on prevention not prediction. Providing the necessary services to help an individual takes precedence over being "right" about whether or not a given person will commit an act of violence. The focus on intervention allows for less punitive measures (e.g., counseling, mentorship, or education) rather than viewing the individual as a potential threat to others (which is the implicit emphasis of prediction).

12. The goal is the safety of the community and of the person in question. If the circumstances warrant it, that may mean notifying law enforcement.¹¹⁶

Based on your team's gathering and analysis of the facts, if they conclude that:¹¹⁷

- There is enough reliable information to answer the 11 questions AND
- The evidence is convincing enough that the person does not pose a threat of violence, then the team can reasonably conclude their inquiry without having to notify law enforcement.

It is also important for us to stress that all the information gathered, in context, must be weighed carefully. One or two pieces of information should not be taken out of context to affirm or dismiss a possible threat. Doing so significantly raises the risk of coming to an inaccurate conclusion.

Concluding an inquiry does not mean there isn't anything to worry about—it just means an immediate law enforcement response is not required at that point in time. However, the inquiry could reveal underlying issues and problems, which if not adequately and immediately addressed could lead to problems later on. If this is the case, then your team should consider developing an intervention plan to provide the necessary assistance to the person in question.

In some cases, based on the information already gathered, an intervention can and must be handled directly by community leaders, especially in cases where political ideology and religious misguidance play the primary role. The next section, *What an Intervention Can Look Like—Some Basic Principles*, provides some advice, based on the insights of experienced individuals, for how to provide help in this regard.

However, in cases where other factors such as mental health or social services may play an important role in a person's movement toward violence, communities may not have the capacity to address these needs, and therefore assistance from outside partners may be needed.

If your team's assessment concludes that there is a likelihood the person of concern is going to engage in criminal activity, the team should immediately notify law enforcement officials and let them take over with an investigation.¹¹⁸ *Under these circumstances, the information gathered from the inquiry should be shared with law enforcement so they can do their jobs as quickly and efficiently as possible.*

The person of concern may also need to be temporarily prohibited from entering the premises of your institution at least until they have been determined by authorities to no longer pose a threat of violence. However, this decision needs to be balanced out with a desire to keep community institutions as open and welcoming to as many people as possible.¹¹⁹

Passing the Baton to Others When Needed

As we described in the first section of this publication, more often than not, there are many factors that may motivate a person to embark on a path toward violence. An appropriate response will require a carefully planned and sustained intervention involving various kinds of assistance and/or counseling.¹²⁰

For instance, if an inquiry reveals that a person is driven primarily by a misguided interpretation of Islam, or grievances over foreign policy, they may be required to take religious classes and/or receive one-on-one guidance from a respected community figure, such as an imam or another other leader, for example, a youth guidance counselor. However, if the inquiry reveals that the person also has anger management issues or significant family problems, assistance from a trained social worker or mental health professional may also be required.

Yet, community institutions may not always have the direct capacity to address a person's specific need(s). To use the example of mental health assistance, a 2012 study in the *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* found less than half of the imams it surveyed (45%) found they had not received any formal training in a counseling and mental health-related subject.¹²¹ *Community leaders should take the lead on an actual intervention only if they have the relevant capacity and skills required to address that particular individual's needs. Otherwise they should refer the person to the appropriate services and assistance.*

For instance, if an inquiry discovers that a person's disturbing behaviors are largely driven by some sort of personal crisis and stress, but a community institution is unable to directly offer professional mental health counseling, then they should to refer the person to their local department of mental health. **Possessing a developed and trusted list of contacts ready will be extremely important in case your community needs to hand off care of an individual to someone with greater capacity and expertise.**

Furthermore, leaders that play a pastoral care role in their communities, such as imams, should receive basic training on mental health and counseling if they have not yet done so. The Clergy Outreach and Professional Outreach (COPE) framework developed by CUNY Professor Glen Milstein, is an excellent resource for imams and other Muslim pastoral leaders.¹²² (See Appendix A for more information.)



WHAT AN INTERVENTION CAN LOOK LIKE—SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

Assuming your community has the specific capacities and capabilities required to address a person's particular needs, this section provides basic principles on what a community-based intervention might look like. **No two interventions will be alike; they are an art, not a science.**

The specifics of engagement are often dependent upon the mindset and contexts of the person being engaged, including what role, if any, the individual plays in a violent criminal organization or movement.¹²³

Therefore, we offer a broad framework based on four basic principles we extracted from a series of interviews we conducted with imams, community activists, subject matter experts, and ex-members of hate groups and movements, all of whom have decades of experience living in and engaging with Muslim communities in the United States. Some of these interviews included talking to a former Neo-Nazi skinhead, a prominent national-level anti-racist activist, and one of the nation's top experts on Neo-Nazi and gang recruitment. We then compared the information we gathered with what they had to say in order to uncover further lessons that may be learned and applied in dealing with *violent extremism*.¹²⁴ Our findings are further strengthened by a review of the research literature on preventing targeted violence.

1. Listen

The first thing our interviewees recommended was to listen in a non-judgmental fashion and give the person an opportunity to express themselves in an appropriate venue and comfortable environment. In a context where many Muslims often feel they do not have safe spaces to talk about issues they care about, allowing a person to open up and express themselves is important to building trust and respect with the individual. This may be the first time that a person feels like they have had an opportunity to openly talk about issues they care about to someone in a position of leadership.¹²⁵

Our respondents who have dealt with Neo-Nazi extremism in various ways echoed this insight. Former Skinhead figure Bryon Widner vividly recalled his first conversation with Daryle Jenkins, a prominent anti-racist activist (also interviewed). He noted how the open and non-judgmental conversation with Jenkins paved the way for him to eventually leave the violent racist scene altogether. "He never outed me," Widner recalled.¹²⁶ Neo-Nazi and gang expert Pete Simi similarly noted, "I've talked with former neo-Nazis and former members of Crips, Bloods etc., who say how important it is to have someone outside of the gang who is willing to talk in a nonjudgmental fashion as opposed to making them feel like community pariahs."¹²⁷

2. Understand the Person's References and Sources

There is an ideological and pseudo-religious dimension to individuals' movements toward *ideological violence*. Therefore, it is important to know both beforehand for general knowledge, and as part of the learning process specific to that particular individual as to what their sources of information are (i.e., religious, political, social, etc.), and how those sources are likely to be used.

Knowing what sources are out there and how they are being read by and marketed to individuals is important to build trust and also to address the person's issues or grievances. A prominent American Muslim scholar noted that the people who did the most damage to the *ideological extremist* movement were those who engaged with individuals in both social and religious circles, but have been severely critical of *ideological extremists'* indiscriminate violence.¹²⁸

This is not to suggest that only former *ideological extremists* can successfully perform interventions—although this may increase the likelihood of successful disengagement from violence.¹²⁹ It does mean, at a minimum, that community leaders need to understand the intellectual and social contexts the person is coming from in order to build trust. Having a person's trust is one of the most important factors that will determine the success

of an intervention.¹³⁰ As one imam put it, “You can’t use Sufi frames and references to address a Salafi.”¹³¹

In addition to interviewing various community members, we also spoke to academic researchers and a former FBI agent who is Muslim and has extensive experience studying and investigating Al-Qaeda and other *ideological extremists* to get an understanding of:

- How Islamic scripture (Qur’an and Hadith) is used and abused
- Which personalities—modern and classical writers—are most frequently cited
- What are the common sources of *ideological extremist* information, i.e., websites and publications
- Which religious concepts are abused to recruit and indoctrinate people into hate and violence

(For more information, see Appendices E & F.)

Occasionally, the frames of reference and sources of information may not necessarily be religious or ideological in nature. Recall earlier in our toolkit that gang and gun-culture flashiness also seemed to be present in some young men’s decisions to move toward violence. Although Daryle Jenkins is African-American, he skillfully used his shared love of punk rock music with former Neo-Nazi skinhead Bryon Widner to establish a dialogue, build trust, and eventually help him leave his racist activities.¹³²

3. Provide the Person Comfort

Giving the person comfort does not mean condoning violent actions, although it does involve acknowledging that they may have legitimate grievances and feelings. This was a point not only acknowledged by all our imams interviewed, but was echoed by the academic experts on violent extremism we talked to.¹³³ This is largely about breaking down emotional barriers to enable a more thoughtful and nuanced discussion.

As one imam passionately noted, “Sometimes you have to go to the heart first before you go to the brain.”¹³⁴

As part of the process of trust-building, community leaders and the individual need to establish a set of shared goals and objectives in order to go about discussing the means by which those goals and objectives are achieved.

For example, a community leader and an individual of concern can hypothetically start their series of conversations off on a foundation of agreement that it is important to “end the injustices against the Palestinians” or “change U.S. foreign policy toward Afghanistan.” Once this basic level of agreement is established, the question and focus of the discussion then shifts to *how* those goals are accomplished: Is violence against your American neighbors or running away to fight in a foreign country the right answer? Is this even something supported by Islam? Why are you considering violence as the solution?

Building rapport and credibility is important to this kind of conversation because this often affects the likelihood of successfully keeping a person away from engaging in violence. Recalling his successes in helping prevent youth violence and motivating people to exit from racism, activist Daryle Jenkins noted that when reaching out to someone, “You have to [show you] care about them.”¹³⁵

In contrast, a more unfortunate case regards Samir Khan. As noted earlier, repeated attempts by family members and local mosque leaders to intervene and keep Khan disengaged from violence failed. Our review of Khan’s case, based on media reports as well an interview with a person close to him, suggests that part of the reason why interventions failed was because he had little respect for most people who tried to engage him.

One interviewee, a former follower of *violent extremist* ideology himself, and who regularly talked with Khan online, strongly emphasized this point.¹³⁶ In fact, while family and community members in the real world were engaging Khan, the interviewee was having his own conversations with Khan in the cyber world at the same time. Although the interviewee described his own discussions as a back and forth process, he felt he was beginning to make progress in getting Khan to reconsider his views—at least enough to keep him disengaged from resorting to violence.¹³⁷ The interviewee largely attributes his inroads with Khan to the fact that he had **credibility** as someone who was extremely vocal about articulating concerns over foreign policy and not shying away from questions related to concepts such as jihad and how they may or may not apply in current situations.¹³⁸

4. Give Alternatives and Consistently Follow Up

Over the course of one or more conversations, one may learn that there are other factors driving or significantly contributing to the person's thinking and gravitation toward violence. Sometimes this may be mostly about politics or religion, while not in other cases. In some instances, the person may be dealing with underlying identity issues due to troubles at home, or experiencing some form of discrimination. In other cases, one's misguidance may be driven by a desire to look "cool" among a group of ideologically like-minded friends and peers.

Whatever the factor or factors, once the problem is identified and the person has made an initial commitment to not resort to violence, relevant alternatives need to be provided. For instance, if the main issue is a lack of exposure to other religious or political viewpoints, then either enrolling them in a class on civics education or religious studies may be one solution. If the issue is largely family driven, then if feasible, at some point it may be necessary to reach out to the parents or legal guardians,

build a relationship with them, and discuss how to resolve the disconnect with their child.¹³⁹

However, it is not enough to simply provide alternatives or have one sit-down conversation; consistent follow-up is extremely important. As our earlier discussion noted, the movement to into violence doesn't happen overnight. Likewise, research has found that a person's firm movement away from violence isn't a one-time deal; rather, it is often a gradual process that may take months or years.¹⁴⁰

Borrowing from research on other forms of targeted violence, one of the most prominent indicators of a person's dedication, or lack thereof, to harming others is "his or her interest and willingness to participate in interventions to reduce or mitigate risk."¹⁴¹ **How much and how well a person sticks to the assistance and guidance instructions of intervention personnel will provide an insight into whether a person continues to pose a threat of violence, and also whether law enforcement attention will be required at a later point.**

Therefore, as part of following up, members of your safety team and any other relevant actors, such as external non-team service providers, should draw up a formal plan to evaluate the individual's progress and level of risk they pose. The plan should be routinely and closely monitored to ensure nothing is overlooked. Any progress and problems should be documented in writing and confidentially stored with your Evaluation Team. Close and consistent monitoring may uncover other influences and factors moving a person on a path toward violence that may not have been initially apparent.

It may even reveal the influence and involvement of other people. Our review of the best available evidence suggests that the movement into violence isn't something that happens alone—it tends to involve other people, even if only one person decides to carry out an attack. (Experts on violent hate point out that behind

cases of so-called “lone wolf” attacks is “a pack mentality.”¹⁴² If that turns out to be the case, extra caution is needed both to ensure a greater likelihood of intervention success and to protect against any possible legal liabilities. (On legal issues, see: “Avoiding Legal Liabilities” on page 67).

4a. Why Follow-Up and Consistency Matter: Two Examples

Two examples of the dangers of failing to follow-up and maintain consistency are worth briefly mentioning. First is the example of Boston bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev who interrupted religious services on two separate occasions before the attack. After Tsarnaev had disrupted Friday prayer services for the second time, mosque authorities reportedly had a discussion with him to stop his public outbursts. According to an official press statement by the mosque, “...a few volunteer leaders of the mosque sat down with the older suspect and gave him a clear choice: either he stopped interrupting sermons and remained silent or he would not be welcomed.”¹⁴³

It’s unclear what was specifically mentioned in the discussion beyond Tsarnaev’s outbursts. Information in the official mosque statement, as well as media interviews with local community leaders,¹⁴⁴ indicate that officials were aware of his pattern of behavior, had spoken to him about it once, gave him a warning, and left it at that. He was not brought to the attention of law enforcement after being kicked out twice, nor was there any information to suggest they attempted to have a follow-up conversation to get to know him and see if there were deeper issues that might require further community help, such as religious or mental health counseling.

The second example is Samir Khan. Earlier, we mentioned that one of our interviewees, a former *ideological extremist* sympathizer who knew Khan through online chats, had been engaged in a series of conversations with Khan and had made some modest progress in getting him to reconsider his views on violence.

Unfortunately, we know our interviewee failed because Khan’s story ends not with a promise to stay away from violence; instead his life violently concludes with a drone strike that took his life in Yemen.

With sadness, the interviewee noted that he stopped talking to Khan just as he began to see signs of what he felt to be progress, because he was busy with law school. Eventually he lost touch altogether with Khan for a few years. The next time he heard about Khan was when media reports noted that he had traveled to Yemen to join Al-Qaeda. Faced with countless thoughts of “what-if”, the interviewee regretted not staying in touch with Khan and pondered what the future might have been had he stayed in communication.¹⁴⁵

As part of the training curriculum that complements this handbook, template documents and further educational materials are provided that discuss the art of case management—how to monitor the individuals’ well-being and measure their compliance with a long-term intervention plan developed by the Evaluation Team.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Beyond the ethical responsibilities, material preparations, and effort required to give an intervention the greatest chance of success, there are a few other things that need to be kept in mind.

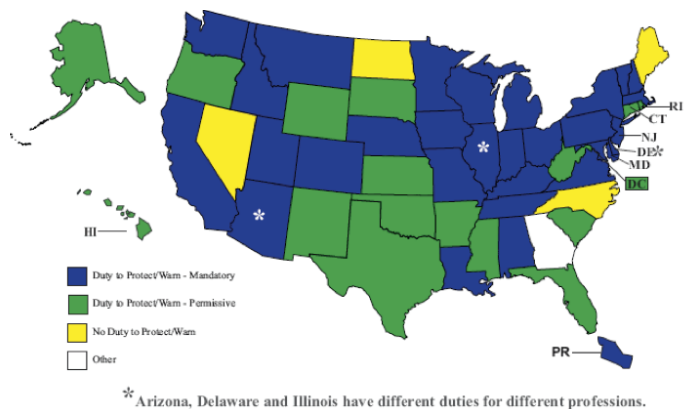
Avoiding Legal Liabilities

There are potential legal liabilities community leaders must be aware of before undertaking any possible intervention with someone contemplating violence. The movement from ideas into violence often relies on group dynamics. As a cautionary rule of thumb, community leaders should assume that they may be dealing with more than one person. Even if an intervention only directly involves one individual, this does not mean that others may be influencing the person to move toward violence. Two of the biggest factors that move some people from misguided thoughts into outright violence are peer pressure and status seeking—which imply there are multiple people influencing an individual’s decision to commit an act of aggression.

This assumption holds a number of legal ramifications (which underscores why legal preparations are so important). In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a series of laws relating to “material support for terrorism” in a pair of cases brought before the court. Among the provisions that were upheld under the decision were prohibitions against “advice” and “training” to terrorist organizations. *These two provisions have been interpreted to include non-governmental organizations attempting to teach conflict-resolution skills to actors involved in regional conflicts.*¹⁴⁶

For those community leaders who are formally trained as clinicians or other mental health professionals, there are additional legal medical obligations to remember, particularly if counseling assistance is provided. This is specifically referring to “Duty to Warn/Duty to Protect” laws (also called “*Tarasoff* laws”, named after the California Supreme Court cases they’re based on). These laws vary state by state.¹⁴⁷ Below is a color-coded map from the National Conference of State

Legislatures (NCSL), which provides an overview of the legal obligations, or lack thereof, in all fifty U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.



Taken from: (<http://bit.ly/100WND1>)

Given the constantly changing nature of *Tarasoff* laws, we strongly advise the reader to regularly check with the NCSL website (<http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/mental-health-professionals-duty-to-warn.aspx>), as well as professional associations such as the American Psychological Association to have the most up-to-date information.

In other cases, if a community leader is observed by law enforcement to be communicating with someone who turns out to be suspected of criminal activity, that community leader may run the risk of also becoming the subject of an investigation. This concern is particularly relevant in light of the fact that many successful disengagement efforts involve building rapport with at-risk individuals, through discussions and messaging that are similar in content (at least initially) to those they are seeking to dissuade from a path of violence.¹⁴⁸

Finally, there are cases where community members might be asked by law enforcement to be interviewed in the course of a criminal investigation regarding a particular individual. The example of the former New York City-based Imam, Ahmad Awais Afzali who appears to have attempted an informal intervention with convicted criminal Najibullah Zazi, is worth pointing out. (SEE: “Why Legal Preparation Matters: the Case of Former NYC Imam Ahmad Afzali”, on page 48 for more information.)

Potential Damage to Reputation and Associated Harms

Beyond one's ethical obligations and legal risks, there are other factors to consider, namely, questions of public perception and its impact on one's community. Protecting the reputation of one's institution is extremely important for community members to feel safe and comfortable.

Understandably, some leaders and congregants may wish to handle these kinds of matters internally so as not to make the community "look bad." However, interventions are not guaranteed to work every time. Should community leaders attempt an intervention, yet fail to prevent a person's movement toward violence and not notify law enforcement, this creates a number of harms, including those that have already been discussed.

At best, such a scenario will no doubt make one's particular community (and other American Muslims) look bad in the public spotlight. At its worst, this could endanger other congregants. Public backlash under such a scenario could fuel hate crime attacks against property and people. Most likely, this will also lead to further investigations and the possible surveillance of other community leadership and congregants in the near term, in order for law enforcement to determine whether there are other possible threats they need to be aware of.

Some leaders may also be hesitant to notify law enforcement because it could potentially scare or otherwise push away the very individuals they seek to engage. No doubt this is a very real possibility, and was also a point raised by at least one of our interviewees.¹⁴⁹ Ultimately, regardless of what we say, communities will end up doing what they think is best. We at MPAC can only provide what we feel to be the best advice possible, based on the best research—which includes the insights of multiple experts, community activists, and respected imams.

Nonetheless, given the ethical responsibilities, the potential legal liabilities and possible risks to public safety due to a failed intervention, the decision regarding whether to notify law enforcement must be carefully weighed up.

Understanding the Risks and Consequences of Failure

Finally we wish to again remind our readers that interventions may not always work. In some cases, the person of concern may have hardened their mind and heart, making it impossible to dissuade them from choosing a path of violence. Deceased Al-Qaeda propagandist Samir Khan is a good example.

According to media reports, friends, family members, and religious leaders had tried to counsel and dissuade Khan from his misguidance for several years. On at least three separate occasions while living in North Carolina, his family and local community members had tried to conduct intervention sessions, only to fail.ⁱ

What this discussion serves to highlight is not just the importance of the message, but also the importance of the *messenger*, in order for an intervention to have the greatest likelihood of success.

ⁱ We wish to point out that in Khan's particular case, law enforcement officials were already aware of his activities for several years. We only cite his example to clearly raise awareness about the limitations of community interventions.

WHEN DO I REPORT DISTURBING COMMUNICATIONS OR BEHAVIORS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT?

To summarize the previous sections, community members should immediately report any disturbing communications or behaviors that:

1. Find the statements or behaviors from the individual of concern to pose a “high-risk” threat. A person makes a specific threat identifying a specific act against a specific target and describes it in a straightforward, clear, and plausible manner as to how that act will be carried out. The threat must come from someone who appears to have taken concrete steps toward carrying out an attack such as obtaining, building, and/or practicing with weapons.

An example of a reportable “high-risk” threat would be someone saying:

“I’m going to conduct a ‘martyrdom operation’ against the kuffar (non-believers) at the upcoming rally with some bombs I made so that this country will pay for its criminal foreign policies against the ummah!”

2. The findings of a full fact-gathering inquiry indicate a threat. After conducting research and assessing the information collected based on the “11 Key Questions,” if your team concludes the person of concern who made threatening statements or suspicious behaviors either:

- o Is on a path toward violence, OR
- o Finds there isn’t enough reliable information to be reasonably sure the person of concern doesn’t pose a threat...

...then law enforcement should be immediately notified about the person and his/her behaviors or threats.

3. The person of concern is non-responsive or non-compliant to post-intervention assistance. Follow-up after an initial intervention is extremely important because if the person is non-compliant with measures to reduce the risk of turning to violence, it is probably an indicator of their enduring commitment to harm others—making it necessary to notify law enforcement.

CONCLUSION

The risk of doing nothing is higher than the risk of an intervention.

Safe Spaces is about empowering communities in order to secure the sanctity of the mosque and Muslim communities in promoting Islamic values of civic engagement, public safety and healthy identity formation.

We realize that violent extremism is a small problem in number, but incalculable in impact, especially when it comes to American Muslim communities. Safe Spaces is an alternative to both heavy-handed law enforcement tactics and government-led CVE programs. Rather than accepting the notion that the only way to deal with terrorism is through tactics such as widespread surveillance and the use of informants, Safe Spaces relies on community-led and community-driven programs that communities and mosques will benefit from beyond the national security context.

In fact, Safe Spaces is a framework that can be used for issues other than violent extremism, and will most likely be used for those other issues. For example, having a safe space that openly and honestly discusses relevant issues with community members provides a healthy environment for people to deal with issues of addiction, family issues, domestic violence, political grievances, among many more. It also serves as a safe environment for individuals to access the necessary resources they need. Safe Spaces is about empowering communities in a way that promotes healthy vibrant communities, and the public interest for all people.

Investing in our communities requires unity, honesty and determination, which in turn will foster resilient, vibrant and healthy communities.



NOTES





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APPENDICES

A: Resource List for Your Community

Social Services from an Islamic Faith-Based Perspective:

NOTE: These links also contain a variety of information, including resources on secular mental health resources.

- MuslimMentalHealth.com – Clinical Directory
http://www.muslimmentalhealth.com/index.php?option=com_sobi2&Itemid=39.
 - MentalHealth4Muslims.com – Directory <http://mentalhealth4muslims.com/mental-health-directory/#&panel1-2>.
 - Potomac Muslim Counseling Links (Washington, D.C. Area; includes national resources)
<http://www.muslimcounselors.org/PMCL/Links.html>.
 - American Muslim Health Professionals – Muslim Mental Health Resource Guide <http://amhp.us/MHGuide.pdf>.
 - Journal of Muslim Mental Health (academic peer-reviewed journal).
<http://www.journalofmuslimmentalhealth.org/>.
 - Islamic Social Services Association – Resources
http://www.issausa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=58.
 - Institute for Social Policy and Understanding – Center for Global Health (scholarly research and findings)
<http://www.ispu.org/portal/39/CGH.aspx>.
 - WellMuslims.org – Islamic Social Services in the United States (drug and alcohol addiction resource center)
<http://wellmuslims.org/resourcesmen/social-services>.
 - Muslim Chaplain Services of Virginia – (ex-offender services)
<http://www.muslim-chaplains.org/>
 - SuhaibWebb.com – (includes many articles written by certified counselors and directly addresses many social and political issues)
<http://www.suhaibwebb.com/aboutus/>.
 - MuslimMatters.org – (directly addresses many social and political issues, often through commentary and analysis from Salafi perspective)
<http://muslimmatters.org/about/authors/>.
 - Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) – (Chicago-based; involved in youth programming, anti-gang initiatives, and ex-offender services). <http://www.imancentral.org/>.
- Chaplains (for hospitals, universities, and prisons)
- Muslim Chaplains' Association. A non-profit dedicated to promoting “the professional development of Muslims who provide spiritual care and counsel as chaplains and/or religious counselors in Muslim communities and in public and private institutions in the United States.”
<http://associationofmuslimchaplains.com/>.



Anti-Domestic Violence Resources

- Peaceful Families Project (Washington, D.C. Area; focuses on domestic violence awareness and prevention). <http://www.peacefulfamilies.org/>
- Project Sakinah (New Mexico-based; focuses on domestic violence awareness and prevention). <http://projectsakinah.org/>
- Muslimat Al-Nisaa (Baltimore, M.D. and Washington, D.C.-based; provides culturally sensitive health, education and social services to Muslim community women and children). <http://mnisaa.org/about>

Organizations Geared Toward “Safe Space” and Development Programming for Youth and Converts

- MakeSpace (Washington, D.C. Area). <http://www.imakespace.com/>
- Ta’leef Collective (San Francisco Bay Area). <http://www.taleefcollective.org/>
- Yaro Collective (Washington, D.C. Area). <http://www.yarocollective.com/>
- Ka Joog (Minnesota-based; primarily focused on Somali youth). <http://www.kajoog.org/>
- Inner-City Muslim Action Network (Chicago-based; involved in youth programming, anti-gang initiatives, and ex-offender services). <http://www.imancentral.org/>

Islamic Religious Literacy Organizations

- American Learning Institute for Muslims. <http://www.alimprogram.org/>
- Al-Madina Institute. <http://almadinainstitute.org/>
- Al-Maghrib Institute. <http://almaghrib.org/>

Faith-Based and Faith-Inspired Anti-Gang/Urban Violence Resources

- Inner-City Muslim Action Network (Chicago-based; involved in youth programming, anti-gang initiatives, and ex-offender services). <http://www.imancentral.org/>
- Safe Streets (Baltimore-based program, several Muslim staff involved). <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/safestreets.html>
- Cure Violence (Chicago-based program, several Muslim staff). <http://cureviolence.org/>

Media Literacy

- New Mexico Media Literacy Project – Introduction to Media Literacy. http://medialiteracyproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/Intro_to_Media_Literacy.pdf
- Center for Media Literacy – Reading Room: Media Literacy in the Home. <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/media-literacy-home>

Mental Health Training for Imams and Other Muslim Pastoral Leaders

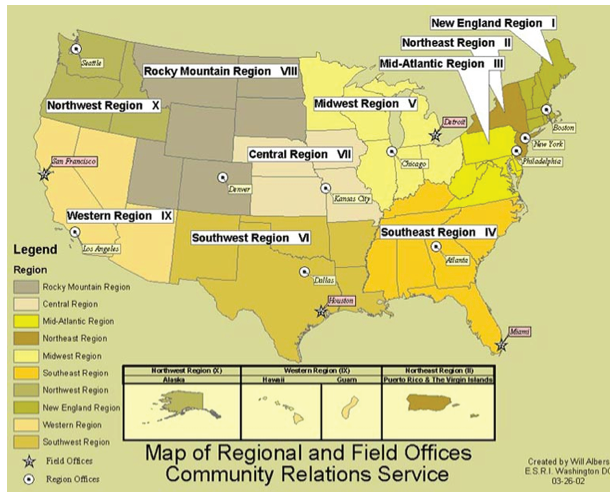
- Clergy Outreach and Professional Engagement (COPE). Designed by CUNY Psychology Professor Glen Milstein in 1998, COPE is a multidisciplinary, multi-faith, and research-focused program that facilitates reciprocal collaboration between clinicians and community clergy, regardless of their religious traditions. An overview of the program can be found here (<http://bit.ly/19RaS8v>). The faculty page of Dr. Milstein can be found here (<http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/profiles/glen-milstein.cfm>).



B: Resources for Building Relationships With Law Enforcement

Mediation Services

• Community Relations Service – An office within the U.S. Department of Justice created under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Among the many services it provides, its mandate includes acting as an impartial mediator to improve the “lines of communication between parties experiencing tension or conflict, including Federal, State, and local officials, community leaders and residents.” <http://www.justice.gov/crs/map.htm>.



(Map image taken from www.justice.gov/crs/map.htm.)

Community Relations Service -- Regional Offices

New England Regional Office (Region I) (ME, VT, NH, MA, CT, RI)
408 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 222
Boston, MA 02110
617-424-5715

Northeast Regional Office (Region II) (NY, NJ, VI, PR)
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-331-6883

Midwest Regional Office (Region V) (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)
230 South Dearborn Street, Room 2130
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353-4391

Southwest Regional Office (Region VI) (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)
1999 Bryan Street, Suite 2050
Dallas, TX 75201
214-655-8175

Central Regional Office (Region VII) (IA, KS, MO, NE)
601 E. 12th Street, Suite 0802
Kansas City, MO 64106
(816) 426-7434

Rocky Mountain Regional Office (Region VIII) (CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY)
1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 650
Denver, CO 80204-3584

26 Federal Plaza, Suite 36-118
New York, NY 10278
212-264-0700

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (Region III) (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)
200 2nd & Chestnut Street, Suite 208
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 597-2344
Southeast Regional Office (Region IV) (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN)
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Suite 7B65

Western Regional Office (Region IX) (AZ, CA, GU, HI, NV)
888 South Figueroa Street, Suite 2010
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213-894-2941

Northwest Regional Office (Region X) (AK, ID, OR, WA)
915 Second Avenue, Suite 1808
Seattle, WA 98174
206-220-6700

Community Relations Service -- Field Offices

51 SW First Ave, Suite 624
Miami, FL 33130
305-536-5206

211 W. Fort Street, Suite 1404
Detroit, MI 48226
313-226-4010

515 Rusk Avenue, Suite 12605
Houston, TX 77002
713-718-4861

90 Seventh Street, Suite 3-330
San Francisco, CA 94103

Publications

- The Collaboration Toolkit for Community Organizations: Effective Strategies to Partner with Law Enforcement. A practical manual designed for community leaders seeking to develop effective partnerships with their local law enforcement agency. http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fbnp/pdfs/Collaboration_Toolkit.pdf.
- Partnering with American Muslim Communities to Fight Crime. Written by two former MPAC staffers, this article summarizes the findings taken from interviewing community members around the country on what they saw as “best practices” for building successful partnerships with local law enforcement agencies. <http://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/11-2011/partnering-with-american-muslims.asp>.

Organizations

- The SafeNation Collaborative. Conducts cultural awareness training and basic instruction on Islam to law enforcement officers. <http://www.safenationcollaborative.com/>.

Combating Hate Crimes and Enhancing Community Safety

- Muslim American Homeland Security Congress – Security Tips for Places of Worship. MAHSC is a Los Angeles-based multi-member organization that includes MPAC, several local mosques, the Greater L.A. chapter of CAIR and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. <http://www.mpac.org/programs/government-relations/security-tips-for-places-of-worship.php> - .Ue18m1OxMmU.
- Muslim Public Affairs Council – Hate Crime Resources.
 - o “What is a Hate Crime/Incident?” <http://www.mpac.org/programs/hate-crime-prevention/what-is-a-hate-crime.php#.Ue2nXFOxMmU>.
 - o MPAC webpage to report a hate crime: <http://www.mpac.org/take-action/report-a-hate-crime.php#.Ue0WCFOxMmU>
 - o MPAC webpage with template hate crime form for local police: <http://www.mpac.org/assets/docs/MPAC-hate-crime-report-form.pdf>
- How to Assess the Safety and Security of Your Place of Worship –Tina Lewis Rowe. <http://bit.ly/1brS8eN>.
- Anti-Defamation League – Hate Crime Resources.
 - o State-by-State Comparison of Hate Crimes Laws. <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/ADL-hate-crime-state-laws-clickable-chart.pdf>.
 - o Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2010 (Latest major change to national hate crimes protections and law enforcement data collection). <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/What-you-need-to-know-about-HCPA.pdf>.

C: Common Religious References to Justify and Sustain Ideological Extremism

Qur'an

In 2012, a group of researchers from Arizona State University (ASU) conducted a lengthy study of *ideological extremist* websites to see how its supporters abuse the Qur'an to justify their wanton violence and misguided beliefs. Their study is based on an analysis of over 2,000 texts, which happen to originate mostly from the Middle East and North Africa and date from 1980 to 2011.

Below is a list of the 14 most-cited verses by ideological extremists. This list is important not only for what it contains, but what it also does not contain.

As you will notice in the table below, the so-called “Verses of the Sword” (9:5 and 9:29)—verses that when taken out of context, suggest aggressive warfare against people of different religions—are almost completely absent from this list. These particular verses have been controversial because a tiny minority of

medieval *Qur'an* commentators claimed these two verses overrode the 110-plus other verses emphasizing self-defense, peace, mercy and forgiveness. The existence of these verses and obscure opinions has also been used by fringe Muslim and anti-Muslim voices to claim that Islam is an inherently violent and aggressive religion.

Despite the controversy and attention generated by these verses and opinions, the ASU study's authors identified only three examples of 9:5 being used among 2,000 texts over a 31-year period. The study did not mention 9:29 being used at all during the same time period.

None of this is to suggest that arguments about the “Verses of the Sword” should not be prepared for, but it does indicate that the reality of *ideological extremists'* use of the *Qur'an* may be different from our perceptions of that reality.

Table Summary of Most Cited Qur'anic Verses by <i>Takfir</i> s		
#	English text ^k	Arabic text
1	12:21: <i>God has full power and control over His affairs, but most among mankind know not.</i> (Partial verse)	مَصْرَ مِنْ أَشْرَارِهِ الَّذِي وَقَالَ أَنْ عَسَىٰ مِنْ مِثْقَاتِ الْفَرَمِ لِأَمْرَاتِهِ وَلَكِنَّكَ وَلَدًا نَسْتَحْذَرُ أَوْ يَنْفَعُنَا الْأَرْضُ فِي لَيْلٍ وَسُفٍّ مَكِينًا الْأَحَادِيثُ تَأْوِيلُ مِنْ وَلَدِنَ عَلَيْهِ الْفُتْرَ وَلَكِنَّ أَمْرَهُ عَلَىٰ غَالِبٍ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُونَ هَٰ يَعْزِمُونَ لَ النَّاسِ بِأَيِّدِيكُمْ اللَّهُ يُغْنِيكُمْ قَاتِلُوهُمْ وَيُشْفِ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِمْ وَيُصْزِلْكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ قَوْمَ صُورَ
2	9:14: <i>Fight them and God will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, heal the breasts of believers.</i>	تَتَّخِذُوا لَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَهْلًا يَٰ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ وَالْأُخْرَىٰ أَرَىٰ الَّذِينَ مِنْكُمْ يَتَوَلَّوهُمْ وَمِنْ بَعْضِ أَوْلِيَاءِ الْقَوْمِ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ إِن مِّنْهُمْ فَالِقَةُ الظُّلُمِ
3	5:51: <i>Take not the Jews and Christians for your trusted guardians; they are but trusted guardians to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for aid) is one of them. Verily God does not guide unjust people.</i>	الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَىٰ رُجْعِنَا لَئِنْ يَقُولُونَ وَلَكِنَّهُ الْآخِلُ مِنْهُ الْآخِرُ لَئِنْ يُخْرِجَنَّ وَلَكِنَّهُ وَلَدُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَدُ الْوَلَدِ الْوَلَدُ يَعْلَمُونَ لَ النَّاسِ الْفَقِيرِينَ
4	63:8: <i>Honor belongs to God and His Messenger and to the believers; but the hypocrites know not.</i> (partial verse)	قَاتِلْهُمْ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنَّهُ تَتَّقِلُوهُمْ فَكَلِمَ رَمَى اللَّهُ وَلَكِنَّهُ رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَمَا بَدَأَ مِنْهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّهُ يَلْبَسُ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُ اللَّهِ إِن حَسَنًا
5	8:17: <i>It is not ye who slew them; it was God: When thou threw (dust), it was not thy act, but God's, in order that He might test the believers with a gracious trial from Himself.</i>	سَبِيلُ فِي سَبِيلِ الْوَلَدِ لَ لَكُمْ وَمَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَقُولُونَ الَّذِينَ وَالْوَلَدَانِ وَالنَّسَاءِ الظُّلُمِ الْقُرْآنِيَّةُ مَذُومٌ مِنْ أَخْرَجْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَكِنَّهُ لَكِنَّكَ مِنْ لَنَا وَأَجْعَلْ أَهْلًا رَأْسُ لَكِنَّكَ مِنْ لَنَا وَأَجْعَلْ
6	4:75: <i>And why should you not fight in the cause of God and [the cause] of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Thee one who will protect.'</i>	

• Abdul-Rahman Ibn Awf -may Allah be pleased with him- said: *I was at Badr where I noticed two youths, one to my right and the other to my left. One of them asked me quietly (so not to be heard by the other): 'O uncle, point out Aba-Jahl to me.' 'What do you want him for?', said Abdul Rahman. The boy answered: 'I have been informed that he - Aba-Jahl - abused the Messenger of Allah, I swear by Allah, who have my soul in His hand, that if I see Aba-Jahl I'll not let my shadow departs his shadow till one of us is dead.'* 'I was astonished,' said Abdul Rahman; then the other youth said the same thing as the first one. Subsequently I saw Aba-Jahl among the people; I said to the boys 'Do you see? This is the man you are asking me about.' The two youths hit Aba-Jahl with their swords till he was dead.

Bin Laden's commentary on this hadith was: Allah is the greatest, Praise be to Him: *Two youths of young age but with great perseverance, enthusiasm, courage and pride for the religion of Allah's, each one of them asking about the most important act of killing that should be induced on the enemy. That is the killing of the pharaoh of this Ummah - Aba Jahl-, the leader of the unbelievers (Mushrikeen) at the battle of Badr. The role of Abdul Rahman Ibn Awf, may Allah be pleased with him, was to direct the two youths toward Aba-Jahl. That was the perseverance and the enthusiasm of the youths of that time, and that was the perseverance and the enthusiasm of their fathers. It is this role that is now required from the people who have the expertise and knowledge in fighting the enemy. They should guide their brothers and sons in this matter; once that has been done, then our youths will repeat what their forefathers had said before: 'I swear by Allah if I see him I'll not let my shadow to depart from his shadow till one of us is dead'. (unknown source)*

• And the story of Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf about Ummayyah Ibn Khalaf shows the extent of Bilal's (may Allah be pleased with him) persistence in killing the head of the Kufr: *"the head of Kufr is Ummayyah Ibn Khalaf.... I shall live not if he survives," said Bilal.* (unknown source)

• "O boy, I teach a few words; guard (guard the cause of, keep the commandments of) Allah, then He guards you, guard (the cause of) Allah, then He will be with you; if you ask (for your need) ask Allah, if you seek assistance, seek Allah's; and know definitely that if the Whole World gathered to (bestow) profit on you they will not profit you except with what was determined for you by Allah, and if they gathered to harm you they will not harm you except with what has been determined for you by Allah; Pen lifted, papers dried, it is fixed nothing in these truths can be changed." (Saheeh Aljame' As-Sagheer of Al-Albani).

• His messenger (Allah's Blessings and Salutations may be on him) said: *"For those who strive in His cause Allah prepared hundred degrees (levels) in paradise; in-between two degrees as the in-between heaven and earth".* (Saheeh Aljame' As-Sagheer of Al-Albani).

• He (Allah's Blessings and Salutations may be on him) also said: *"the best of the martyrs are those who do NOT turn their faces away from the battle till they are killed. They are in the high level of Jannah (paradise). Their Lord laughs to them (in pleasure) and when your Lord laughs to a slave of His, He will not hold him to an account".* (Ahmad).

o And: *"a martyr will not feel the pain of death except like how you feel when you are pinched".* (Saheeh Aljame' As-Sagheer of Al-Albani).

• He also said: *"A martyr's privileges are guaranteed by Allah; forgiveness with the first gush of his blood, he will be shown his seat in paradise, he will be decorated with the jewels of belief (Imaan), married off to the beautiful ones, protected from the test in the grave, assured security in the day of judgement, crowned with the crown of dignity, a ruby of which is better than this whole world (Duniyah) and its' entire content, wedded to seventy two of the pure Houries (beautiful ones of Paradise) and his intercession on the behalf of seventy of his relatives will be accepted".* (Ahmad and At-Tirmithi).

In addition, experts on *violent extremists*, such as Ali Soufan, a former FBI agent who investigated Al-Qaeda (and also happens to be an American Muslim) notes that hadith mentioning a prophecy in which armies will emerge from Khorasan^m carrying “black banners” before the Day of Judgment, has been cited often by violent *ideological extremists* he encountered.

For instance, some evidence has emerged that suggests Boston bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev had a YouTube channel, which among other things, contained links to hateful materials, including a flashy video dedicated to the Khorasan prophecy.¹⁵¹

Religious Opinions

There are a variety of ideological extremists who propagate their messages of misguidance on the Internet, however some are more influential than others. According to a 2006 study of Arabic-language online texts by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a few violent extremist ideologues and authors stood out as being particularly influential at shaping doctrine and indoctrination:¹⁵²

Classical-Era Jurists:

- Ibn Taymiyyah
- Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi

Ibn Taymiyyah was seen as particularly influential by the study’s authors due to his writings against the invading Mongol rulers. As the study notes:¹⁵³

Fatwas by this 13/14th cent. AD jurist are by far the most popular texts for modern Jihadis, particularly his writings about the invading Mongols. These texts are important to the modern Jibadi movement because 1) Ibn Taymiyya is the most respected scholar among Salafis; 2) he crafted very good arguments to justify fighting a jihad against the foreign invades; and 3) he argued that Mongol rulers who converted to Islam were not really Muslims. The last two arguments resonate well today with the global Jibadi agenda.

Modern Writers/Thinkers:

• **Sayyid Qutb** – An Egyptian Muslim political theorist whose writings are believed to have influenced the ideologies and actions of various non-violent and violent Islamist movements around the world.

• **Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi** – Imprisoned by Jordanian authorities (as of the publication of this toolkit), he is believed to be the most influential living ideological extremist intellectual who is best known for being the main ideological influence over the notorious (and deceased) Iraq-based terrorist, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi.

• **Osama Bin Laden** – Arguably the most famous figure of the transnational ideological extremist (aka “jihadi”) movement, he was one of the founders and top leader of the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, which was responsible for the 9/11 attacks, among other violent incidents.

• **‘Abdullah ‘Azzam** – Often dubbed the “Godfather of Global Jihad,” he was an influential militant and theorist who fought in the anti-Soviet insurgency during the 1980s. During this time he worked closely with Osama Bin Laden before mysteriously dying in 1989 from a car bomb.

The CTC study also found that many of the modern writers’ texts were published in response to criticism of *ideological extremists*’ actions. They found that these writers’ responses sought to address five recurring criticisms of the *ideological extremist* movement:¹⁵⁴

1. Declaring other Muslims apostates (takfir)
2. Attacking other Muslims
3. Attacking women, children, and the elderly
4. Attacking the sources of a nation's wealth, such as tourism and the oil industry
5. Creating political and social chaos

It went on to observe that these writers felt the most damaging criticisms came from three categories of people: 1) “Influential religious leaders,” 2) “Former Jihadis” and 3) “Prominent current Jihadis.”

^m A historic region in present-day Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In addition to the Khorasan prophecy, hadiths, and the use of takfir upon Muslims, one of the other key ideological features of the ideological extremist movement is its discussion of jihad. There are two key facets to the common ideological extremist interpretation of jihad. First is seeing jihad, which is assumed in this twisted worldview to be mean violence (not necessarily spiritual). Second, this violence-centric understanding of jihad is considered to be an obligatory individual duty (*fard ‘ayn*) for all Muslim men. Writing the English-language Al-Qaeda publication, *Inspire Magazine*, deceased propagandist Samir Khan stated:¹⁵⁶

The central issue is that jihad is individually obligatory (fard ‘ayn) on all Muslims from East to West until all of our lands are freed. The issue of jihad being fard ‘ayn is the fulcrum of the modern jihad. The world is witnessing the rise of jihadis because of the very fact that Muslims are becoming more aware of the central issue, and thus their obligation towards God.

In addition to the Arabic-language texts written by the above-mentioned authors, the writings and speeches of the now-deceased English-language Al-Qaeda propagandist Anwar Al-Awlaki also appear to have influence on portions of the ideological extremist movement. A recent study by MPAC found that out of the 36 violent plots directed at the United States between November 2008 and July 2012, 18 of those plots (50 percent) involved individuals who watched/read Awlaki’s materials.¹⁵⁷ Much of his ideological writings can be found in an archival copy of his personal blog,¹⁵⁸ as well as in various articles in the English-language Al-Qaeda publication, *Inspire Magazine*.¹⁵⁹

D: Primary Source Material on Ideological extremist Ideology

There are many resources available on the Internet for people to read to learn more about *takfiri* propaganda and recruitment tactics. Below, we provide a select list of primary source material and trusted sites where individuals who are interested in doing further research can learn more to figure out ways of de-bunking misguided ideas.

Academic Websites

- **www.jihadology.net.** Jihadology is the personal website of Aaron Y. Zelin, an expert in studying violent and non-violent Islamist movements, including *takfiri* splinter groups, around the world. (Mr. Zelin has a Master's degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies from Brandeis University.)
- **The Haverford Global Terrorism Research Project's Al-Qaeda Statements Index (AQSI).** Sponsored by Haverford College, the Project's AQSI contains hundreds of statements from *takfiri* leaders around the globe. Graduate and undergraduate students maintain the Project, including the AQSI. It is considered to be one of the most comprehensive and widely-used resources for *takfiri* ideological material on the Internet. Link: <http://bit.ly/15Z97Su>.

Must-Read Documents

- **Editions of Inspire Magazine.** It would be an overstatement to say that this online English-language *takfiri* magazine is directly responsible for recruiting people into Al-Qaeda. However, it has played an undeniably important role in attempting to spread *takfiri* ideology among English-speakers on the Internet. Many misguided violent criminals who committed or attempted to commit attacks in the United States were readers of *Inspire*. Before they were killed in a drone strike, Samir Khan and Anwar Al-Awlaki frequently wrote articles and columns for that magazine. Safe-to-download editions of *Inspire* can be found at: <http://bit.ly/12mtX1P>.

- **Osama Bin Laden's 1996 Statement, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places."**

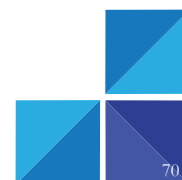
Sometimes inaccurately referred to as the "1996 Fatwa", this older text is an important read for those looking for an introduction into *takfiri* ideology. It provides a classic example of propaganda narratives produced by misguided violent criminals to legitimate violence against civilians and recruit people into *takfiri* organizations. An English translation of text can be found at: <http://to.pbs.org/12AQPsN>

- **A Course in the Art of Recruitment.** Written under the pen name of Abu Amr Al-Qaidi, this English language document has been characterized as "Al-Qaida's dumbed-down recruitment manual."¹⁶⁰ An academic study describes the document differently, noting, "[it] prescribes a highly structured recruitment process with multiple stages and clear, simple metrics to assess a recruit's progress—essentially, the bureaucratization of decentralized jihadist recruitment."¹⁶¹ Among other things, the manual emphasizes five concepts as part of the indoctrination and recruitment process:¹⁶²
 1. Adherence to the book (Qur'an) and the sunna.
 2. The religious duty of jihad and the necessity to be prepared.
 3. The acceptability of *takfiriyya*.
 4. Democracy is a religion and participation in elections is unacceptable.
 5. The concept of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal).

The entire document can be read online at: <http://bit.ly/19ylDse>. Understandably, not all community leaders may be comfortable reading an Al-Qaeda recruitment manual online. If that's the case, an academic summary and analysis of the document can be found here: <http://bit.ly/GLPuaB>. Another good summary, with a slightly humorous angle, can be read here: <http://slate.me/GFLDeC>.

English-Language Websites to Watch

- **Forums.islamicawakening.com.** The forums section of this website was consistently mentioned by the imams, academic experts, and former members of hate movements we interviewed as a hotspot for online *takfiri* propaganda outreach.¹⁶³



Although the site is not *takfiri*, per se, (its posts suggest a mostly Salafi and Deobandi audience, along with other types of Muslims) it does attract a number of misguided individuals, and many heated debates end up taking place in its forums, particularly on its popular “Politics, Jihad and Current Affairs” topic thread. It is also a good place to observe online attempts by *takfiris* to try to win over other Muslims to their ideology.

- **Comment posts on MuslimMatters.org.**

MuslimMatters is an American Muslim website that posts original content on a wide variety of social, political, and religious issues, largely from a Salafi perspective. The website’s comment posts are a valuable resource for community members, because they are a good place to observe how mainstream Muslim, particularly mainstream Salafi writers interact, respond, and counter posts from commenters that occasionally espouse *takfiri* views.

- **66 Top Takfiri Twitter accounts.** In recent years, Twitter has begun to displace website chat forums as the preferred online method of disseminating *takfiri* propaganda.¹⁶⁴ Unlike traditional search engine use and online chat forums, using twitter helps users to quickly become immersed in misguided ideology and virtually link up with people engaged in violence. As one expert explains, *“Twitter lets users skip right past that stage to find the sources that are most relevant and most deeply engaged in the ideology... It also creates quick paths to meet and interact with terrorists and foreign fighters who are already actively engaged in violence.”*¹⁶⁵ A recent academic analysis, based on content postings in takfiri chat forums, identified “66 Important Jihadis on Twitter”. (The two-part series can be read here (<http://bit.ly/10JpLsc>) and here (<http://bit.ly/14YjB9A>).

E: Sample Templates for Community Safety Team Record-Keeping Documents and Checklist of Steps Taken

Note: The templates in this section are merely suggested. Communities should feel free to modify these templates as they see fit.

Sample Template Form for Community Safety Team Interview and Assessment Records

Date(s): _____

Name of Person(s) of Interest: _____

Reported Threat(s)/Concerning Behavior(s): _____

Name(s) of Witnesses and/or Reporting Parties: _____

Warning Signs: _____

Risk Factors: _____

Potential Stabilizing Influences/Protective Factors: _____

Potential Triggering Events: _____



Suggested Process Checklist Template for Community Safety Team Process

☐ A. CONVENE AND ASSESS: Convene your Community Safety Team -- 1) Community Institution administrator 2) Religious leader (such as an imam) 3) Social worker 4) Psychologist or psychiatrist 5) Lawyer 6) Law enforcement officer 7) Communication manager 8) Anyone else on an “as-needed” basis.

☐ B. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT: Does the suspicious behavior or threatening behavior strongly suggest violence is imminent or very likely occur within a short period of time? Document all steps taken. Strict confidentiality about student information should be kept among team members and appropriate staff.

☐ C. GATHER INFORMATION: In assessing the validity of a potential threat/suspicion behavior, review the warning signs and all background information of the person in question and interview friends, family, and other witnesses. (USE CAREFUL JUDGEMENT WHEN DECIDING WHO TO INTERVIEW AND AT WHAT POINT IN THE PROCESS.) Categories of information to gather include:

- The facts and circumstances surrounding what statements/behaviors drew attention to the person of concern in the first place.
- Basic information on the person of concern, such as:
 - i. Identifiers (name, physical description, and date of birth).
 - ii. Background information (i.e. residence, family/home situation, who s/he hangs out with, history of violence toward self or others, access to weapons or acquired weapons, mental health history, etc.).
 - iii. Current life information (stability of home situation, recent losses or feeling shame/humiliation, current grievances/grudges, recent thoughts of hopelessness/desperation/despair, etc.)
- Attack-related behaviors. Does s/he have ideas or plans about harming him/herself, attacking a location, or people at an event/location? Has s/he made communications or writings that suggest the person has an unusual interest in committing an act of violence Has the person sought or acquire weapons, especially if linked to an idea for an attack? Has the person performed rehearsals of an attack?
- Information on motives to carry out an attack. For instance, does the person seek revenge for an injury/grievance, want attention, want to die, or be killed?
- Target selection. Has the person in question identified a potential target or set of targets to attack? In many cases, individuals going down a path of deliberate targeted violence (including those motivated by an ideology) often identify people, places or events they wish to attack and let those around them know about their intentions.

☐ D. ASSESS INFORMATION & DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF RISK. How well does the information gathered from Part C answer the “11 Key Questions”? What level of violence risk does the person pose?

☐ E. MAKE A TEAM RECOMMENDATION. (NO ONE PERSON SHOULD MAKE THE DECISION ALONE WITHOUT THE INPUT OF THE OTHER TEAM MEMBERS.)

- Implement an intervention plan and reconvene the team when necessary?
- Notify law enforcement?

ENDNOTES

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- 76 Adam Lankford, "A Comparative Analysis of Suicide Terrorists and Rampage, Workplace, and School Shooters in the United States From 1990 to 2010," *Homicide Studies*, Vol. 17, (3), August 2013: 255-274. DOI: 10.1177/1088767912462033. Jessica Stern, "The Suicidal Tendencies of Suicide Bombers," *Foreign Affairs*, August 28, 2013, accessed October 6, 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139883/jessica-stern/the-suicidal-tendencies-of-suicide-bombers>. Clark McCauley, Sophia Mosalenko, and Benjamin Van Son, "Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: a Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7, (1), 2013, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/240/html>. Clark McCauley, "Discussion Point: Is Aaron Alexis Part of a Larger Phenomenon of Lone-Actor Grievance-Based Violence?" National Consortium for Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, September 24, 2013, accessed October 16, 2013, <http://www.start.umd.edu/news/discussion-point-aaron-alexis-part-larger-phenomenon-lone-actor-grievance-based-violence>. Finally, in an interview email for this publication, Dr. Pete Simi, professor of Criminology at the University of Omaha and one of the nation's top experts on Far-Right extremism and gang violence, noted: "In terms of prevention, we have to spend more time thinking about why extremism is attractive to some but not others who are similarly situated - - when we do this we should also ask by way of comparison whether there are fundamental differences between jihadist violence and other types of ideologically-motivated violence such as neo-Nazism and more importantly how is ideologically-motivated violence different from non-ideologically motivated violence (my sense is that there is far less difference than we sometimes think) - - After the Boston bombing Philip Mudd had some interesting comments

comparing the Columbine shooters to the Boston bombers - - I think he is definitely on to something there - - so, if this is true then this has tremendous implications in terms of prevention and intervention - - namely, we can rely on best practices of addressing youth violence more broadly as opposed to needing something specifically designed for the ideological component of extremism". See: Simi Interview.

Although at the individual level there is a strong body of evidence to suggest that suicide terrorists may have mental illnesses similar to perpetrators of other forms of targeted violence, this does not suggest that political grievances do not play any simultaneous role in motivating individual attackers to carry out acts of violence. Different actors exercising different roles within the same terrorist organization may have different mental tendencies (and therefore different primary motivations for their actions). As one study notes, "Although terrorist leaders commonly claim that all members of their organization would be honored to and eager to blow themselves up for the cause, past research has shown that this appears to be propaganda, not fact..." The same study goes on to note, "...regular terrorists and organizers often admit that they would not intentionally kill themselves, even for the cause. Many reject the possibility, making statements such as 'I am incapable of doing it,' 'I simply am not interested,' 'I cannot see myself dead,' and 'This is no way to die,'". (emphasis added) What this potentially means is that leaders and those exercising different operational roles, such as handlers, may be more primarily motivated by the politics of "the cause", whereas the actual attackers themselves may be motivated by the cause, but also be motivated by underlying psychological issues that drive them to attack their targets by killing themselves rather than trying to escape and "live to fight another day". Meanwhile, McCauley, Mosalenko and Van Son's comparative study notes the co-existence of mental health issues and political grievances as motivating factors in the dataset of attackers they analyzed. See: Adam Lankford, "Mass Shooters in the USA, 1966-2010: Differences Between Attackers Who Live and Die," *Justice Quarterly*, (2013): 3, 4. McCauley, Mosalenko, and Van Son, "Characteristics of Lone-Wolf Violent Offenders: a Comparison of Assassins and School Attackers".

⁷⁷ Also see: Predicting Violent Behavior. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense – Defense Science Board, August 2012).

<http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/PredictingViolentBehavior.pdf>.

⁷⁸ For instance, school and university based "threat assessment" intervention teams have prevented at least 120 potential incidents of violence in the past decade see: "The Path to Violence," Public Broadcasting System, February 20, 2013. <http://to.pbs.org/1akjx47>.

⁷⁹ Using Yusuf Ali translation. See: "Verse (5:32) – English Translation," The Quranic Arabic Corpus, Language Research Group (University of Leeds), no date, accessed August 4, 2013, <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=5&verse=32>.

⁸⁰ Daniel Michaelson-Horowitz, "9/11 at 10: Inside the Terrorist Trial Report Card," *American Criminal Law Review*, September 24, 2011, accessed August 7, 2013, <http://www.americancriminallawreview.com/acrl-online/911-10-inside-terrorist-trial-report-card/>.

⁸¹ This is specifically in reference to individuals who are charged and convicted of violent terrorism and national security-related offenses. Center on Law and Security, "Terrorist Trial Report Card: September 11, 2001-September 11, 2011," New York University School of Law, (September 2011), accessed August 7, 2013, <http://www.lawandsecurity.org/Portals/0/Documents/TTRC%20Ten%20Year%20Issue.pdf>, 8.

⁸² Maxine Bernstein, "Man Accused of Hate Crime in Corvallis Mosque Arson," *The Oregonian*, August 25, 2011, August 7, 2013, http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2011/08/man_accused_of_hate_crime_in_corvallis_mosque_arson.html.

⁸³ For instance, see: Hansdeep Singh and Simran Jeet Singh, "The Rise of Hate Crimes Can Be Tied Directly to Hateful Speech," *The Daily Beast*, September 6, 2012, accessed August 7, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/06/the-rise-of-hate-crimes-can-be-tied-directly-to-hateful-speech.html>.

⁸⁴ Victor Asal, Kathleen Deloughery, and R. Karl Rethemeyer, "Analysis of Factors Related to Hate Crime and Terrorism," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, (December 2012), http://www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/START_AnalysisofFactorsRelatedtoHateCrimeandTerrorism.pdf

⁸⁵ Imam #1 interview.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Yassir Fazaga interview.

⁸⁹ Mark Herman, "The Liability of Clergy for the Acts of Their Congregants," *Georgetown Law Journal*, 98, (1), 2009: 153-184.

⁹⁰ Ibid. On the other hand, Imam Fazaga went so far as to declare that, "even if there is suspicion of violence, you must report it to the authorities." (emphasis added) Fazaga Interview.

⁹¹ Telephone interview, Dr. Yasir Qadhi, Dean of Academic Affairs for the Al-Maghrib Institute, July 19, 2013.

⁹² Eileen Sullivan, "FBI to Senators: Terror Case Wasn't Damaged," *The Staten Island Live*, September 30, 2009, http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/09/fbi_to_senators_terror_case_wa.html

, noting, "government court documents also suggest that the NYPD and FBI might have tipped off Zazi even before the imam's call by towing and searching a rental car Zazi was using on his September trip to New York City." (emphasis added) For the text of the government document mentioned, see the next endnote.

⁹³ Garrett Gumbinner, "Criminal Complaint United States v. Najibullah Zazi." United States Department of Justice, (September 19, 2009). Available at: <http://www.9news.com/pdfs/N.Zazi.pdf>, P. 5, noting, "The defendant ZAZI told Individual A [Imam Afzali] that his rental car had been stolen and that he feared he was being 'watched.'"

⁹⁴ Sean Gardiner, "Police Let Terrorist Slip Through," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2010, accessed August 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703441404575205954118455716.html>

⁹⁵ Christopher Dickey, "Ray Kelly's NYPD Battles with the FBI," *The Daily Beast*, June 11, 2012, <http://www.newsweek.com/ray-kellys-nypd-battles-fbi-65189>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

- 97 For instance, see: Tony Aiello, "Subway Terror Trial: Zazi Testifies Against Alleged Associate, Breaks Down on Stand," CBSNewYork, April 19, 2012, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/19/subway-terror-trial-zazi-testifies-against-alleged-associate-breaks-down-on-stand/>; John Miller, "Najibullah Zazi, Confessed Ring-Leader In NYC Subway Terror Plot, Testifies," CBSNewYork, April 17, 2012, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/17/accused-ring-leader-in-nyc-subway-terror-plot-expected-to-testify/>; Sean Hennessey, "Prosecutors: NYC Subway Terror Suspect Considered Times Square, Grand Central, Other Targets," CBSNewYork, April 16, 2012, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/16/federal-trial-begins-for-alleged-nyc-terror-suspect-adis-medunjanin/>; The Associated Press, "Admitted Subway Plotter Testifies at City Terror Trial," WNYC, April 17, 2012, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://www.wnyc.org/story/199866-blog-admitted-subway-plotter-testifies-nyc-trial/>; Carrie Johnson and Spencer Hsu, "Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty in New York Subway Bomb Plot," Washington Post, February 23, 2010, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/22/AR2010022201916.html>; A.G. Sulzberger, "Guilty Plea Made in Plot to Bomb New York Subway," New York Times, February 22, 2010, accessed September 24, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/23/nyregion/23terror.html?_r=0; Julian Cummings, "Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty in New York Terrorism Plot," CNN, February 23, 2010, accessed September 24, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/02/22/najibullah.zazi.plea/index.html>;
- 98 Email Communication, FBI Counterterrorism Special Supervisory Agent, November 5, 2013. Name withheld at request. Interviewee also noted that was not involved in the Zazi investigation and that his remarks are solely his personal views and do not represent the official position of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the United States government at-large.
- 99 We refer to this as a community safety team, as opposed to a "threat assessment team" because the latter term, in our view, a view also shared by William Modzeleski, a nationally-recognized threat assessment expert, "has the potential of turning a lot of people off." Telephone Interview, William Modzeleski, former Associate Assistant Deputy Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education and Senior Consultant for SIGMA Threat Management Associates, October 7, 2013.
- 100 With modifications made, based on contextual relevance. See: Shane R. Jimerson, Stephen E. Brock, Jennifer L. Greif, and Katherine C. Cowan, "Threat Assessment at School: A Primer for Educators," National Association of School Psychologists, (2004), http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/threatassess.pdf, P. S9-50.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Telephone Interview, Dr. Gary Margolis, former Chief of Police at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College and Managing Partner and Co-Founder of Margolis Healy & Associates, LLC, October 1, 2013.
- 103 For instance, see: Jeffrey J. Nolan, Marisa R. Randazzo, Gene Deisinger, "Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams: What Risk Managers Need to Know Now," University Risk Management and Insurance Association Journal, 2011, accessed October 15, 2013, http://www.margolishealy.com/files/resources/Campus_Threat_Assessment_and_Management_Teams_What_Risk_Managers_Need_to_Know_B0752105.pdf, 111.
- 104 Ibid., 9.
- 105 Ibid., 7, 9.
- 106 Ibid., 7.
- 107 Mary Ellen O'Toole, "The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective," Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/school-shooter>, 8-9.
- 108 "Preventing School Shootings: A Summary of the U.S. Secret Service Safe School Initiative Report." NIJ Journal, no. 248, (2002): 13.
- 109 Paul Gill, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert, "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists." Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, 59, no. 2, (March 2014): 429, noting, "In most cases, other individuals knew something concerning some aspect of the offender's grievance, intent, beliefs, or extremist ideology prior to the event or planned event. In 58.8% of cases, the offender produced letters or public statements prior to the event outlining his/her beliefs (but not necessarily his/her violent intent). This figure aggregates both virtual and printed statements in newspapers and leaflets, etc. In 82.4% of the cases, other people were aware of the individual's grievance that spurred the terrorist plot, and in 79%, other individuals were aware of the individual's commitment to a specific extremist ideology. In 63.9% of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them... In 65.5% of cases, the offenders expressed a desire to hurt others. This desire was communicated through either verbal or written statements."
- 110 With some modifications, taken from: Robert A. Fein, Bryan Vossekuil, William S. Pollack, Randy Borum, William Modzeleski, and Marisa Reddy, Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, July 2004), <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf>, 48-51.
- 111 For instance, see: Paul Gill, John Horgan and Paige Deckert, "Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorism," International Center for the Study of Terrorism, 2013, accessed September 29, 2013, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1556-4029.12312/epdf>.
- 112 Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, and Reddy, Threat Assessments in Schools, 51-55.
- 113 Unless directly noted elsewhere, information on the 11 Key Questions is taken from: Ibid., 68.
- 114 Given the diverse age differences among American Muslim ideological extremists at the time of their arrests, ranging from teenagers (such as Osman Mohamed Mohamud, 17) to adults (Faisal Shehzad, 31), we modified this to simply someone who is a respected and responsible figure, as opposed to the original language "a responsible adult", which would wrongly suggest that the issue is primarily a youth-based one.
- 115 Sometimes this can manifested through ideologically-based expressions. For instance, has s/he been making changes in his/her lifestyle based on a particular understanding of al-wala wa'l-bara that leads him/her to reject anything that is supposedly "kufr"? Braniff interview.
- 116 Taken and adapted from: Gary J. Margolis, Steven J. Healy, Jeffrey J. Nolan, Marisa Randazzo, and Annie Stevens, Campus Threat Assessment Case Studies: A Training Tool for Investigation, Evaluation, and Intervention. (Washington, D.C.: Office Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2012): 2.

- 117 Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, and Reddy, *Threat Assessments in Schools*, 57.
- 118 Ibid., 58.
- 119 Modzeleski interview.
- 120 Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, and Reddy, 57.
- 121 Osman M. Ali and Glen Milstein, "Mental Illness Recognition and Referral Practices Among Imams in the United States," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 6, (2), 2012, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jmmh/10381607.0006.202?rgn=main;view=fulltext>.
- 122 "Psychology Professor Develops New Model for Collaboration Between Clergy and Clinicians," *Science Daily*, June 2, 2008, accessed October 16, 2013, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/06/080602114653.htm>.
- 123 Horgan, "Fully Operational?"
- 124 We believe U.S. domestic violent Far-Right actors are a valid comparison group with U.S. domestic ideological extremist actors for three reasons. First, they share some broad operational and strategic similarities in terms of carrying out acts of violence, including: 1) a willingness to inflict civilian mass-casualties, 2) occasional attempts at suicide terrorist attacks, and their 3) adoption of cellular and/or lone-actor tactics and strategies. Second, the research literature on disengagement and "de-radicalization" does not suggest there are differences that demonstrate "effectiveness" (what little can be currently ascertained) corresponds to what ideology or ideological group a person identifies with and espouses. Rather "successful" disengagement appears to be strongly influenced by a set of psycho-social factors that differ based on the specific individual in question, irrespective of his/her ideology. On the attack and operational characteristics of U.S. domestic Far-Right ideological extremists, see: Arie Perliger, "Identifying Three Trends in Far Right Violence in the United States," *CTC Sentinel*, September 26, 2012. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/identifying-three-trends-in-far-right-violence-in-the-united-states>; Julie Bird, "Far-Right Extremists Build to More Violent Acts, Research Finds," *Fierce Homeland Security*, January 22, 2013. <http://www.fiercephomelandsecurity.com/story/far-right-extremists-build-more-violent-acts-research-finds/2013-01-22>. "Background Report: On the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, April 16, 2010. http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/2010April_OklahomaCityAnniversary.pdf. On the parallels between "Leaderless Resistance" and the lone-actor strategies currently advocated and employed by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, see: Alejandro J. Beutel, "Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism in Western Muslim Communities: Lessons Learned for America," *Minaret of Freedom Institute*, August 30, 2007. <http://www.minaret.org/MPAC/%20Background.pdf>; Michael German, *Thinking Like a Terrorist: Insights from a Former FBI Undercover Agent*. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007). P. 69; Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. (Philadelphia, P.A.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), P. 143-44. Also see: Louis Beam, "Leaderless Resistance," *The Seditiousist*, February 1992. <http://louisbeam.com/leaderless.htm>. For a concise overview of the research literature of disengagement and "de-radicalization" successes, see: "Tackling Extremism: De-Radicalization and Disengagement," *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2012. www.strategicdialogue.org/allnewmats/DeRadPaper2012.pdf.
- 125 Imam #1 interview, Qadhi Interview, Fazaga Interview.
- 126 Telephone Interview, Bryon Widner, former Neo-Nazi Skinhead and senior member of Hammerskins Nation, September 5, 2013.
- 127 Simi e-mail communication.
- 128 Yasir Qadhi interview. For instance, in reaction to anti-violence articles and lectures produced by Qadhi and other American Muslim scholars, particularly from the Salafi movement, there has been a lot of discussion generated on English-language forums that are frequently visited and commented on by takfiri sympathizers. See: Yasir Qadhi, "The Lure of Radicalism and Extremism Amongst Muslim Youth," *Muslim Matters*, October 18, 2010, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://muslimmatters.org/2010/10/18/yasir-qadhi-the-lure-of-radicalism-amongst-muslim-youth/>. Cf., "YQ [Yasir Qadhi] says: Jihadis have qualities of Khajirities," *Islamic Awakening*, March 18, 2011, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://forums.islamicawakening.com/f18/yq-says-jihadis-have-qualities-of-khajirities-43729/>; "Yasir Qadhi and Muslim Matters," *Ummah.com*, October 25, 2010, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://www.ummah.com/forum/archive/index.php/t-276260.html>; "The Batil Path of MuslimMatters," *Islamic Awakening*, October 10, 2011, accessed December 6, 2013, <http://forums.islamicawakening.com/f18/the-batil-path-of-muslimmatters-51945/>.
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- 131 Imam #1 interview.
- 132 Telephone Interview, Daryle Lamont Jenkins, co-founder and Executive Director of One People's Project, August 31, 2013.
- 133 Telephone Interview, Jonathan Birdwell, Head of the Citizens Programme at Demos UK and co-author of *The Edge of Violence*, May 16, 2013.
- 134 Imam #1 interview.
- 135 Daryle Lamont Jenkins Interview.
- 136 Interview with community counter-extremism practitioner #1.
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Imam #1 interview.
- 140 For instance, see: John Horgan, *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*. (New York, NY: 2009), P. 1-19, 139-162. Horgan and Altier, "The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs"
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- 142 For instance, see: Mike German, "Behind the Lone Terrorist, a Pack Mentality," *Washington Post*, June 5, 2005, accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/04/AR2005060400147.html>. For an overview of the academic research literature, see: Jason-Leigh Striegher, "Early Detection of the Lone Wolf: Advancement of Counter-Terrorism Investigations with an Absence or Abundance of Information and Intelligence," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence, and Counter Terrorism*, 8, (1), 2013: 45-47.
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- 147 For an overview of the legal responsibilities, see: Steven Granich, "Duty to Warn, Duty to Protect," *The New Social Worker*, 19, (1), http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Ethics/Duty_to_Warn_Duty_to_Protect/. For an overview of the state-by-state differences of the legal obligations to warn third parties about potential threats to safety from mental patients, see: "Mental Health Professionals' Duty to Warn/Protect," *National Conference of State Legislators*, January 2013, <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/mental-health-professionals-duty-to-warn.aspx>.
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- 163 Telephone Interview, Jarret Brachman, former Director of Research at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and former Counterterrorism and Security Program Coordinator at North Dakota State University, June 19, 2013. Also see: Qadhi interview and Muslim ex-extremist #2 interview.
- 164 Brachman interview.
- 165 Emphasis added. See: J.M. Berger, "Zero Degrees of al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy*, August 14, 2013, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/14/zero-degrees-of-al-qaeda/>.

