

Introduction to Community-based Efforts for Disrupting the Pathway to Violence

Key Points

Law enforcement and community members have distinct roles to play in disrupting the pathways to violence.

Because extreme beliefs and speech are constitutionally-protected and are not unlawful, it is not appropriate for law enforcement to apply intervention when an individual has not broken the law. In disrupting the pathways to violence, community members take the lead in addressing the pathways to violence when no unlawful activity is involved.

- Community members can and should take the lead in all areas except for interdiction—which is when law enforcement intervenes because a crime is occurring or is imminent.
- Community members must be empowered to decide what role they want law enforcement to play in different disrupting the pathways to violence efforts.
- While many aspects of disrupting the pathways to violence will not involve any law enforcement presence, a community's overall approach will be stronger if strong partnerships are made between community members and law enforcement.

There can be daunting challenges to building partnerships between law enforcement and communities.

Challenges for law enforcement include skepticism or suspicion from communities, time consuming nature of community engagement, the need to reach out to entire groups of people and not just one community, complications from prior strained relationships, and the fact that preventing violence is just one of many challenging issues. Challenges for communities include difficulty in understanding multiple jurisdictions, roles and responsibilities; skewed perceptions of law enforcement, which may influence ability to build positive relationships, difficulty in receiving critical mass from the general community.

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Adapted from the University of Maryland CARVE Modules. Module Two: Lesson Three.

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All disrupting the pathways to violence efforts must respect constitutionally-protected civil rights and civil liberties.

Disrupting the pathways to violence projects must be, at the end of the day, a community-led project that communities themselves are committed to. It is vital that law enforcement officers and community members work together to establish well-defined expectations for each other's roles in preventing violence, always keeping in mind both mutual respect and respect for communities' constitutional rights.

For law enforcement, good policing for disrupting the common pathways to violence:

- **Starts with expert knowledge and dedication to professional principles**
- **Relies on solid, personal relationships between the public and the police**
- **Involves dedication to continuous teaching and learning**

For communities, there are a number of activities that can be undertaken in order to maintain and sustain trusting relationships with law enforcement.

Communities can help control the tone of public discourse, demonstrate a willingness to work with law enforcement when there is an imminent threat to public safety, and follow through on agreed upon activities or actions, and engage law enforcement in positive ways.

More information:

There are many resources available online for community members, law enforcement, school personnel, public health and other professionals as they work together to create a more resilient, violent resistant community. Learn more about violence prevention by visiting our website at:

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