

The Montgomery County Model

The Montgomery County (Maryland) Model of CVE is the first community based and led CVE model in the country. The model was developed by the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE), which is a non-governmental organization (NGO). According to WORDE's director, Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, the Montgomery County Model (MCM) was designed to be a community-led, public-private partnership rooted in interfaith collaboration.¹ WORDE has partnered with the Montgomery County Police Department (MCP) and the Montgomery County Executive's Office of Community Partnerships. The MCM is tied to the Office of Community Partnerships' Faith Community Working Group (FCWG). The FCWG is composed of faith based community leaders, MCP, trauma-informed counselors, youth activists, and violence prevention experts. "The success of the program relies on a trusting relationship among local police, schools, health and human services agencies, and the faith community, whereby persons, who may be radicalized, regardless of the reason, are identified as possibly benefitting from an intervention."² The goal of the MCM is to educate the public and governmental organizations on the risk factors associated with violent extremism, and to then to refer appropriate resources to intervene with the at-risk individual before they progress down a path to radicalized violence.³

The MCM is composed of four segments;

- 1) Engagement
- 2) Education/Training
- 3) Referral
- 4) Intervention⁴

The MCM, and specifically the FCWG, are used to build relationships between the community, faith organizations, and the government. In contrast to other CVE models, which are led by law enforcement agencies, the MCM uses WORDE to act as an intermediary to bring county government and representatives from the community together. The goal of this method is to increase trust between segments of the community and the police, which may not have existed if the model was led by the police. Additionally, the FCWG brings together leaders from

¹ Selim, George, J. Thomas Manger, Hedieh Mirahmadi, and Matthew Levitt. "New Strategies for Countering Homegrown Violent Extremism." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, November 21, 2013. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-strategies-for-countering-homegrown-violent-extremism>.

² Mirahmadi, Hedieh. "An Innovative Approach to Countering Violent Extremism." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, October 9, 2013. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/an-innovative-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism1>.

³"The World Organization for Resource Development and Education: The Montgomery County Model." WORDE. Accessed July 27, 2015. <http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Montgomery%20County%20MD%20Community%20Partnership%20Model-WORDE%20Report.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid

different faith groups in an effort for the members to learn about the other faiths. The FCWG is co-chaired by Dr. Mirahmadi, who is Muslim, and a Rabbi from the Jewish faith.⁵ Shortly after the Boston Marathon Bombing, the FCWG co-chairs held a meeting at which “all of the faith communities displayed their solidarity with the Muslim community while also expressing a desire to collaborate to prevent future violence.”⁶

WORDE and the FCWG conduct training to educate law enforcement, faith and community groups, and other stakeholders on terrorism, the path to radicalization, and symptoms of individuals at risk of self-radicalization. Topics include internet safety for young adults, the threat of radicalization or political violence in respect to various faiths, and non-ideological influences that lead to violent extremism such as the trauma of war, domestic violence, or social alienation.⁷

As earlier referenced, the MCM is designed to develop trust in the community for government, and specifically law enforcement. An important part of the program also involves developing the trust of law enforcement in the other members of the program. This two-way trust is most readily evidenced by the potential situation in which interventions do not work, and individuals must be referred back to law enforcement.⁸

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Selim, George, J. Thomas Manger, Hedieh Mirahmadi, and Matthew Levitt. “New Strategies for Countering Homegrown Violent Extremism.” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, November 21, 2013. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-strategies-for-countering-homegrown-violent-extremism>.

⁷ “The Montgomery County Model,” 2015. <http://www.worde.org/programs/the-montgomery-county-model/>.

⁸ Mirahmadi, Hedieh. “An Innovative Approach to Countering Violent Extremism.” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, October 9, 2013. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/an-innovative-approach-to-countering-violent-extremism1>.