

Building Communities of Trust:

A GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS



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We especially appreciate the participation of people in each of the following locations who, through the Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) initiative, helped us create this second *Guidance*, designed to help community leaders become more engaged with their local law enforcement efforts. Thank you to the following:

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- ❖ San Jose, California, Police Department
- ❖ San Francisco, California, Police Department
- ❖ Oakland, California, Police Department
- ❖ Northern California Regional Intelligence Center

The information provided in this resource is a direct result of the meetings that were held in the above locations. The candid discussion and participation of those community representatives and law enforcement leaders who openly participated in these sessions were integral to the shaping of this document. We are also grateful to the people who worked so diligently behind the scenes to provide the recommendations within this report:

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II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) Initiative focuses on developing trust between law enforcement, fusion centers, and the communities they serve, particularly immigrant and minority communities, so that crime and terrorism can be addressed. This initiative has been administered primarily by the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI), a program that provides law enforcement with a capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing suspicious activity reports about behaviors that have a potential nexus to terrorism. The NSI recognizes that each community has one of the most important roles in the prevention of crime and terrorism, since law enforcement agencies are dependent on community members to report suspicious activity information to state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement officers. To help ensure that this reporting takes place, it is essential that law enforcement and community members have strong, trusting relationships. As these relationships are developed and maintained, members of the community are more likely to report crime and suspicious activities, which is why the NSI has worked with partners at the federal, state, and local levels—including U.S. Attorney’s Offices, privacy advocacy groups, faith leaders, and a diverse group of local community members—to implement the Building Communities of Trust initiative.

This document is a complementary piece to *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust*¹ and was developed to assist community leaders working with law enforcement agencies to facilitate dialogue and discuss ways to work together to prevent crime and terrorism. The strategies discussed here also complement national strategic goals to empower local partners to keep communities safe from threats of violent extremism.

Community leaders and local law enforcement share responsibility for addressing the prevention of crime and terrorism in their neighborhoods. This *Guidance* provides recommendations, resources, and tips on how you, as a community leader, can be more proactive in working with your law enforcement agencies to help keep your neighborhoods safe.

¹ Wasserman, Robert (2010) *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust*, U.S. Department of Justice, <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/resources.aspx>.

These recommendations are as follows:

- Meet with state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal law enforcement officials.
- Develop a regular dialogue with local law enforcement before problems arise.
- Take the initiative to learn more about suspicious activity reporting and reporting mechanisms such as the “If You See Something, Say Something™” public awareness campaign, as well as the privacy and civil rights protections built into the NSI process.
- Partner with law enforcement and/or U.S. Attorney offices to request assistance regarding BCOT forums to address questions and discuss community concerns regarding suspicious activity reporting and other issues relevant to the community.
- Inform law enforcement agencies on cultural awareness so they are able to differentiate between constitutionally protected cultural and religious behavior and customs versus legitimate criminal behavior. The community should also be made aware of the proper role and duties of law enforcement to avoid any misunderstandings.
- Host cultural awareness sessions so that law enforcement and community members can learn more about the various cultures and needs in the community in order to build trust and prevent misunderstandings.
- Participate in law enforcement volunteer programs, such as Volunteers in Police Service and USAonWatch/Neighborhood Watch.
- Share terrorism-related information with community members through meetings, presentations, Web sites, and community newsletters, as well as junior officers’ or citizens’ academy programs.
- Expand the discussion beyond terrorism, including other areas of concern that are community-specific.

III. INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement agencies have long recognized the need to develop trusting relationships with the communities they serve. The Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) initiative is designed to help develop these trusting relationships by bringing together local law enforcement leaders, U.S. Attorney's Offices, fusion centers, and community representatives to engage in open dialogue about how these groups can work together to help protect our communities against crime and terrorism. A particular focus has been working with immigrant and minority communities that have historically had negative or distrusting relationships with law enforcement, making it especially important to help these communities address any concerns the community members may have with law enforcement, so that everyone can work together to prevent criminal and terrorist activity. Information garnered from community members may provide key information to facilitate the prevention of a potential attack, and residents are more likely to report this activity to law enforcement if there is a positive, trustworthy relationship in place. One of the foundations of the BCOT initiative is making sure communities understand that law enforcement agencies will do what is right with the information provided to them and will protect the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of the people they serve. As these relationships continue to develop over time, law enforcement agencies will learn more about the community, making it possible for officers and analysts to more accurately distinguish between innocent behaviors and behaviors that show signs of criminal activity that could be indicative of terrorism.

Gangs, guns, violence, and other crimes affect communities daily. Likewise, terrorism or the threat of terrorism affects us all. While terrorist acts that occur within the United States may have national or even international impact, they are essentially local crimes that require the immediate response of state, local, tribal, or territorial (SLTT) authorities.² Local authorities have the primary responsibility for preventing, responding to, and recovering from terrorist attacks and providing support to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which takes the lead in investigating terrorism cases. Because of the nature of their jobs, SLTT

² International Association of Chiefs of Police (2005), *From Hometown Security to Homeland Security: IACP's Principles for Locally Designed and Nationally Coordinated Homeland Security Strategy*. <http://theiacp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=78X8uKjLa0U%3d&tabid=392>.

law enforcement officers have the ability to develop an intimate knowledge of their communities through daily efforts to prevent crime and violence. These close relationships with the residents they serve make law enforcement uniquely situated to identify, investigate, and apprehend suspected terrorists.

Members of the community also observe suspicious activity relating to crime and terrorism in their neighborhoods, and since residents typically know their neighborhoods best, they are more likely to notice when something seems out of place. Some suspicious activity, such as attempting to enter a restricted area, may be easy to identify, since trespassing is a criminal act. In other instances, activity which might not seem significant, for instance, taking a picture of a ferry during loading, may indicate the possibility of criminal—even terrorist—activity, irrespective of perceived ethnicity or religion, when combined with other actions and activity. Observed activities may turn out to have innocent and reasonable explanations, which is why law enforcement officers and analysts are trained to determine whether activities necessitate police investigation.

In today's policing, "connecting the dots" of suspicious activity before an incident occurs is an important job for America's law enforcement agencies, from the officer on the street to intelligence analysts.³

The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) was created to assist law enforcement in making the connection between reported suspicious behaviors and terrorist activity by providing a capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing suspicious activity reports that have a potential connection to terrorism. The NSI process provides a way for collecting such information in a manner that protects privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, and links the suspicious behavior with other circumstances which may indicate terrorist or other criminal activity. This process includes local law enforcement agencies maintaining control over information collection, sharing, analysis, and reporting to be in line with local privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties standards and policies. It is also designed to include full transparency of process, adherence to standards, and the implementation of audit and redress capabilities. (See Appendix A for a more in-depth overview of the SAR process.)

³ U.S. Department of Justice (2010), *National SAR Initiative Overview*, http://nsi.ncirc.gov/documents/NSI_Overview.pdf.

State and major urban area fusion centers are an important part of the NSI. Fusion centers effectively and efficiently exchange information, maximize resources, strengthen operations, and improve the ability to fight crime and terrorism by merging data from a variety of sources. These fusion centers located in state and major urban areas across the country are not investigative agencies; rather, they are analytical entities composed of SLTT law enforcement and federal representatives, as well as other homeland security partners. One of the common goals of fusion centers is to identify risks to community safety through criminal and homeland security-related information sharing and collaboration. Fusion centers receive, analyze, and distribute all-threats and all-crimes information and supplement the work of more than 800,000 law enforcement officers while serving as a primary focal point through which the federal government works with SLTT agencies to protect the nation from terrorism and other threats or hazards. Fusion centers provide significant value to crime and terrorism prevention by conducting analysis on what information might mean for a local jurisdiction and assessing potential risk to the community. Among other guidelines, fusion centers are expected to meet specific minimum capabilities to ensure that they protect data and adequately address privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections; security policies; and related issues.⁴

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *Fusion Center Guidelines*, http://it.ojp.gov/documents/fusion_center_guidelines_law_enforcement.pdf; U.S. Department of Justice, *Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers*, <http://it.ojp.gov/documents/baselinecapabilitiesa.pdf>.

IV. ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

To effectively perform their duties, law enforcement officers must understand the community's needs and concerns regarding the Nationwide SAR Initiative (NSI). Over the past two years, the NSI Program Management Office (NSI PMO) has helped local law enforcement agencies organize Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) roundtable discussions in several different locations around the country with a diverse group of representatives from the local community, law enforcement, and fusion center leadership to explore how to effectively engage in meaningful dialogue. The ideas and suggestions from these discussions were used to develop this document. At these sessions, each community identified the continued need for regular two-way communication between the law enforcement agency and the community. Specific concerns about the NSI included the following:

- **Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and Racial Profiling**—Participants voiced concern about the potential for collecting information inappropriately. In particular, they were concerned that information about constitutionally protected activities related to freedom of speech, assembly, and religion would be inappropriately collected. Participants feared that information collected and maintained would be based on their nationalities or religious beliefs without any connection to terrorist activities. They also feared that an officer's decisions or community reports might be biased or based on misunderstandings and/or physical characteristics, rather than behaviors. They were concerned that these biases could be triggers for racial profiling or result in unintentional discrimination. Finally, they expressed concern about being stopped and detained for reasons unrelated to criminal or terrorism activity, but instead related to their nationality or religion.
- **Privacy**—Participants also raised issues regarding privacy, addressing specifically concerns related to the collection of information regarding innocent behaviors and how, and with whom, that information is shared. They worried that information could be shared with others and used against them in the future and questioned whether that information may be in a database with no way to review it or have it removed. Finally, they worried that information would be shared with other federal agencies, which might result in more thorough checks of innocent persons, for example, at the airport.

- **Immigration/Deportation**—Participants voiced concern that cooperation with law enforcement might result in deportation of undocumented persons. High-profile media stories about immigration raids, detentions, and policy changes have created confusion within communities about local law enforcement’s role in immigration enforcement. Participants reported that even as victims of crime, immigrants are often hesitant to contact law enforcement. People may be afraid to report suspicious activity because of fear about their own or their family members’ immigration status.
- **Language and Cultural Misunderstandings**—Participants noted that language barriers may prevent people from knowing how to report information and being able to communicate their observations. Participants recognized that something thought to be suspicious by a person of one culture may be considered normal behavior by persons of another culture. They thought that understanding cultural issues would help interpret behaviors. For example, some immigrants may come from a country with a culture of fearing law enforcement. There may also be cultural implications of reporting information to law enforcement—seen as negative in some cultures where the government may have spied on its own citizens in the past. Community members may have developed a fear of law enforcement based on their previous experience. People also may avoid reporting to law enforcement out of fear that they could become a part of the investigation.
- **Priorities**—Participants expressed concern that many communities deal with daily drug, gang, and violent crime issues and that it will be difficult to motivate them about terrorism-related issues. In fact, participants feared that other priority issues in a community might be overlooked if officers spend significant time on SAR-related matters. An additional concern of participants was that law enforcement officials might be inconvenienced by something that is not worth their time.

The safeguards followed in the NSI program address many of these concerns and ensure that the focus of the program is on suspicious behaviors, not religion, race, or nationality of people. Following a thorough review of ten years of terrorist incidents and plots, the NSI in partnership with law enforcement leaders compiled

a list of specific criteria to define suspicious behaviors that may be indicative of preoperational terrorist planning. This Functional Standard is the guiding criterion by which suspicious activity reports submitted by law enforcement are vetted. (See Appendix B to view the criteria.) Not only does the NSI require that intelligence analysts participate in training regarding those behaviors, privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, but when fusion center officials receive a report submitted by law enforcement or residents, there are processes in place to ensure that the report is based on behavior, not the person. In addition, each fusion center is required to adopt a privacy policy which meets or exceeds national standards.⁵ (See Appendix C for more information on fusion center privacy guidelines.) Fusion centers are also encouraged to interact with the community to understand what is common in the community, to provide input into the development of privacy policies, and to conduct and attend cultural awareness training. Fusion centers do not enforce laws or immigration policies; rather, they facilitate information sharing to provide federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies with the information they need to conduct their own investigations. With a stronger information network, local agencies can not only keep their communities safe from terrorist threats, but they can also better address their communities' day-to-day public safety concerns.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, *Fusion Center Guidelines*, Fusion Center Privacy Policy Development—Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties Policy Template. The National Fusion Center Association also provides links to the privacy policies for many fusion centers at www.nfcausa.org.

V. THE COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN HOMELAND SECURITY AND SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING

Acts of crime and terrorism disrupt and destabilize life in the affected communities. Just as law enforcement has a role in the prevention of crime and terrorism, each resident also has a responsibility to contribute to community safety. The community can help support law enforcement in these efforts by being aware of and reporting suspicious activity, which can provide valuable information to local law enforcement. Since people who live and work in the community are more likely to notice changes in behavior or activity, such as changes in work patterns or acquiring potentially hazardous materials, it is important for them to share this information with local law enforcement officers who need this community perspective to work more effectively and efficiently.

Although we have made great strides to prevent and thwart terrorist attacks since September 11, 2001, terrorist groups continue to seek innovative ways to conduct attacks and circumvent security procedures. SLTT law enforcement and federal partners remain concerned that tourist attractions, malls, public transportation, and other critical infrastructure and key resources will remain attractive targets for terrorists and violent extremists. Our communities also face growing concerns over the threat to individuals who may be targeted by supporters of violent extremist philosophies, which can affect individuals, families, and communities. The BCOT initiative can help facilitate information sharing efforts between law enforcement and the community, helping to ensure that these concerns are addressed, and increasing the likelihood of intervention and prevention. Additionally, while information provided may not have a connection to terrorism, it may have a connection to other criminal activity in the community. Therefore, fusion centers can help ensure that information received regarding other crimes is first analyzed (if appropriate) and then referred to the responsible local law enforcement agency.

The community's role in both crime and terrorism prevention is enhanced by the development of trust between the community and law enforcement. A true community-law enforcement partnership addressing these issues cannot succeed without community input and leadership. Getting law enforcement agencies and community organizations to talk with each other is a good starting point, but the day-to-day relationships with law enforcement officers in the field are among

the most important factors for success. A cohesive community that has healthy relationships with law enforcement is usually based on individual interactions, such as officers meeting and talking with people on the streets. If residents do not trust law enforcement, they are less likely to report crime and suspicious activity or cooperate to address other problems in the community.

One step toward gaining trust is for the community to show an interest in and reach out to local law enforcement agencies in an effort to understand law enforcement processes. Law enforcement leaders realize that it is important for community members to understand how processes such as the NSI that are being implemented or institutionalized work, as well as how law enforcement will continue to protect residents' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties and address community members' public safety concerns using these new tools. In particular, because the success of the NSI largely depends on the ability of law enforcement to earn and maintain the public's trust, fusion centers and SLIT law enforcement agencies are encouraged to engage in outreach to members of the public, including faith and minority community leaders, privacy and civil liberties advocacy groups, and private sector partners, to specifically discuss suspicious activity reporting in their communities.⁶

⁶ For additional information on community policing, please visit www.cops.usdoj.gov.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BECOMING AN ACTIVE PARTNER

While trust building and community cooperation have been key components for public safety for a long time, the NSI, through the BCOT initiative, offers a new opportunity to solidify existing relationships and develop new ones, which is one of the core principles of community policing efforts. The goal is to create an ongoing dialogue between law enforcement and the community, which allows communities to raise awareness about crime, terrorism, and violent extremism concerns, build partnerships, and empower residents to play a role in the safety of their communities.

Each community is unique. There are many ways a community can work with law enforcement, U.S. Attorney's Offices, and other partners, and different methods of outreach may work under different circumstances. Waiting until a crisis occurs before engaging in dialogue with law enforcement can have negative outcomes. This is why trusting relationships need to be in place either to prevent issues in the first place or to efficiently address issues as they arise. In many communities, preexisting relationships can be used to further the dialogue about the role of the community when it comes to terrorism prevention, while in other communities, there may still be a need to develop those relationships to begin discussions. An ongoing dialogue is not just about educating the community on how and what types of information to report, but requires two-way discussions. Community members should use these opportunities to express their concerns and ask questions about the reporting process: how it works, and how their privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties are protected. These forums are also opportunities for community members to hold local law enforcement accountable and to share issues with law enforcement to make sure they are asking the right questions and addressing the right problems.

A. OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION METHODS SUGGESTED BY BCOT PARTICIPANTS

- **Meet your state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal law enforcement officials.** Community organizations, faith groups, business and civic associations, and other groups can organize public meetings that include local representatives from the FBI, law

enforcement, and the fusion center to describe their roles in crime and terrorism prevention and to talk about how the community and law enforcement can work together. This can include social, religious, or employment events as well.

- **Participate in regular law enforcement/community meetings.**

Many law enforcement agencies already conduct regular community meetings to discuss various issues in the community. Community members should take advantage of these opportunities to get to know their local officers and learn about the problems facing the community.

- **Conduct a BCOT roundtable meeting in your community.**

Community leaders and residents can reach out to their local law enforcement agencies or U.S. Attorney's Offices to conduct a forum to discuss suspicious activities, answer questions about the NSI, address community concerns, and jointly develop plans to bring the message farther into the community. It is important to involve a diverse group of people, including those who have differing opinions. Forums should include residents, community leaders, elected officials, law enforcement, faith leaders, students, fusion center representatives, and civil rights and civil liberties advocates. It is also important that people be allowed to engage in free and open discussions, expressing their thoughts and concerns about working with law enforcement and the NSI. It is often useful to have a neutral facilitator of discussion to ensure that every participant gets the chance to be heard. Next steps to address issues should be discussed and developed. Finally, a BCOT forum should be about more than building trust between law enforcement and the community. It should also address building trust and understanding among members of the community. The document *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust*, designed to assist in conducting a forum, provides a step-by-step outline for hosting a BCOT roundtable meeting.⁷

- **Host cultural diversity training in your community.** It is necessary for community members and law enforcement to be aware of changing demographics and community needs. Law enforcement

⁷ *Guidance for Building Communities of Trust.*

officers need to understand the various cultures and needs in the community, and community members need to understand law enforcement officers' perspectives and procedures. Having an appreciation and awareness of these different cultures will enable community members and law enforcement officers to have a better idea about what is typical and what may be suspicious in their community. Law enforcement officers and community members can both contribute to and benefit from describing the norm for their communities and conducting sessions to increase cultural awareness. Some local law enforcement agencies may have already developed cultural awareness materials. Examples of other resources that can assist in cultural awareness include the following:

- o The Chicago Police Department's *Diversity Series: Religion, Culture and Communities* explores some of the many religions and cultures with which law enforcement officials come into contact and was developed in cooperation with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.⁸
- o The Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties cultural competency and community engagement training improves the cultural competency and awareness of department personnel.⁹
- o The U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service facilitates the development of viable, mutual understandings and agreements as alternatives to coercion, violence, or litigation. It also assists communities in developing local mechanisms, conducting training, and implementing other proactive measures to prevent racial/ethnic tension and violent hate crimes committed on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

One of America's greatest strengths is the diversity of our communities. That diversity is something to be celebrated and reinforced. Bias is

⁸ For more information, visit <http://www.bja.gov/pubs/diversity.html>.

⁹ For more information, visit http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/structure/gc_1282160124874.shtm

reduced when community members come to know each other and law enforcement officers come to understand the cultures within which they provide public safety services.

B. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING AND HOMELAND SECURITY

In addition to working with local law enforcement agencies to engage in dialogue and to help build trust, community leaders can do some specific things to raise awareness of the signs of terrorism and of how to report suspicious activity.

- **Ask your local law enforcement agency how the community can help.** Many law enforcement agencies have already begun programs to involve the community in preventing terrorism. It is important for community leaders to reach out to their local agencies to find out what programs exist and how they can get involved.
- **Share training materials with community members.** In conjunction with their local law enforcement agencies, community leaders can distribute training materials throughout their communities and at events. In many cases, local law enforcement will already have developed or have access to appropriate training materials. Some examples of training and awareness material include the following:
 - ***If You See Something, Say Something*TM**—This public awareness campaign was created by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority and launched nationally by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2010. It is a simple and effective way to raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper state and local law enforcement authorities. DHS has partnered with many public and private entities to implement the campaign. Contact your local law enforcement for suggestions on how bring this campaign to your community.¹⁰

¹⁰ www.dhs.gov/IfYouSeeSomethingSaySomething.

- o ***Recognizing the 8 Signs of Terrorism video***—This video, developed by the Colorado Governors Office of Homeland Security, Colorado Information and Analysis Center, Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Counterterrorism Education Learning Lab in Colorado, describes the key warning signs associated with terrorism.
- o ***IACP/FEMA Resources***—The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), developed two publications to assist law enforcement and community partners in developing strategies to improve the public’s awareness and reporting of suspicious activity.

Improving the Public’s Awareness and Reporting of Suspicious Activity: Key Research Findings shares highlights from primary research conducted to better understand the motivations and barriers that affect community members’ awareness of and willingness to report suspicious activity. Building on these research findings, IACP and FEMA developed *A Resource Guide to Improve Your Community’s Awareness and Reporting of Suspicious Activity: For Law Enforcement and Community Partners*. This guide contains recommendations and resources to develop and maintain community-based education and awareness campaigns. Visit www.theiacp.org or www.fema.gov to download these publications.

- **Conduct information sharing sessions.** Law enforcement officers and community leaders can reach out to only a limited amount of people. Information sharing sessions will enable many more community members to spread the word about suspicious activity reporting to the rest of the community. Community members have the credibility and knowledge to make the subject matter relevant to their neighbors and can also work with local law enforcement agencies to develop a program through which residents can talk about reporting suspicious activities.

- **Invite local law enforcement officers to speak at community gatherings.** Officers can speak to neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, schools, and other community groups about a number of topics, including the community's role in homeland security, the signs of terrorism, how to report suspicious activity, and the role of the local law enforcement agency and fusion center. There should be time for questions and discussion from community members at these meetings.
- **Publicize ways to report information.** From large cities to small towns, many communities already have access to anonymous tip lines. An increasing number of agencies now offer the option to report information by text message, mobile phone application, and/or secure Web sites. In most cases, these methods can be used to report criminal and suspicious activity to law enforcement. Community members can contact their local law enforcement agencies to see if a tip line or other method of reporting is available in their communities or how to get one started.
- **Contact your local Volunteers in Police Service and USAonWatch/Neighborhood Watch programs.** Many communities have existing law enforcement volunteer and Neighborhood Watch programs. The message of suspicious activity reporting can be spread through these programs, rather than creating a brand-new program. Contact your local law enforcement agency or visit www.policevolunteers.org and www.usaonwatch.org to search for local programs and tools to start or enhance a program.
- **Promote programs through community newsletters.** Community newsletters are a good way to provide information to the community about fusion centers, the NSI, and the role of the community in crime prevention and homeland security. These newsletters may also contain specific information about suspicious activities and how to report them. A local law enforcement agency may be able to provide specific information for such a newsletter.
- **Use social media.** Community members can encourage their local law enforcement agencies to use social media to communicate with

the community regarding suspicious activity reporting. Community organizations may want to use their own social media tools as examples of how to address terrorism, such as the following:

- o The Department of Homeland Security's National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) communicates information about terrorist threats by providing timely information to the public, government agencies, first responders, airports and other transportation hubs, and the private sector. The NTAS sends its messages through a variety of outlets, including e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and its Web site. For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/alerts. The NTAS Twitter handle is @NTASAlerts.

- o The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Counter Terrorism Center uses Twitter and Facebook to share new trends and concerns that threaten the community and to develop new partnerships against terrorism. The center's Twitter handle is @LVMPDCTS, and its Facebook page can be found at facebook.com/LVMPDCTS.

VII. TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED AND MAINTAINING OUTREACH EFFORTS

As mentioned in earlier parts of this guidebook, the success of the NSI starts with you. Contacting a local law enforcement agency to ask how the community can help is a good first step, and a strong community leader can develop partnerships with the local law enforcement agencies to help address crime and terrorism issues at the local level. Keep in mind that a strong partnership is dependent on the following:

- **Shared vision and goals.** Start the partnership off right by developing a common vision and goal. For example, the community and law enforcement may want to have a goal of raising awareness in the community about suspicious activity reporting.
- **Communication.** Communication between partners needs to occur early and often. Regular, consistent, and honest communication between stakeholders before crime or a terrorist incident occurs is the key to a successful partnership. Often, issues arise or incidents occur which can create obstacles to effective communication between law enforcement agencies and the community. It is essential that those issues or incidents be dealt with promptly, rather than ignored until they become more serious.
- **Diversity.** Including a diverse group of community members who have different perspectives in the dialogue between law enforcement and the community can lead to a better outcome. Participants should make efforts to understand other's perspectives. As participants understand each other's perspectives, a solution that reflects those many views can be more easily produced.
- **Strong listening skills.** For a partnership or community dialogue to be successful, it is important that everyone has a chance to be heard.
- **Respect.** Meetings scheduled for soliciting input from community members should be conducted at convenient neutral locations. Meeting schedules should be sensitive to community members' work schedules, childcare needs, religious holidays, or other cultural events.

Cohesive communities are safer communities, and community cohesion starts with trust. The recommendations and resources in this guidebook can help you be more proactive in working with your law enforcement agencies and fellow community members to help build that trust. Through active communication and participation at the grassroots level, communities are better prepared to deal with and prevent threats of crime, violent extremism, and terrorism.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The *Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) Web site* includes more detailed information about the NSI as well as links to other resources and descriptions of training. See <http://nsi.ncirc.gov>.

Information Sharing Environment (ISE) Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Functional Standard Version 1.5 builds on, consolidates, and standardizes nationwide aspects of those ISE-relevant activities already occurring at the federal, state, and local levels with respect to the processing, sharing, and use of suspicious activity information. That document is available at http://nsi.ncirc.gov/documents/ISE-FS-200_ISE-SAR_Functional_Standard_V1_5_Issued_2009.pdf.

The *U.S. Department of Homeland Security* provides additional details about fusion centers at www.dhs.gov/fusioncenters.

Fusion Center Guidelines aid in the development and operation of fusion centers. The guidelines assist in addressing common obstacles in developing and operating a fusion center and guide administrators in developing policies, managing resources, and evaluating services. See http://it.ojp.gov/documents/fusion_center_guidelines_law_enforcement.pdf.

Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers identify the baseline capabilities for fusion centers and the operational standards necessary to achieve each of the capabilities. This document is located at <http://it.ojp.gov/documents/baselinecapabilitiesa.pdf>.

Guidance for Building Communities of Trust provides advice and recommendations on how to initiate and sustain trusting relationships that support meaningful sharing of information, responsiveness to community concerns and priorities, and the reporting of suspicious activities that appropriately distinguish

between innocent cultural behaviors and behavior that may legitimately reflect criminal enterprise or terrorism precursor activities. The guidance was developed in partnership with select sites that participated in the Nationwide SAR Initiative (NSI) Evaluation Environment. This document is located at <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/documents>.

“If You See Something, Say Something™” is a public awareness campaign, created by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority and launched nationally by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2010. This campaign is a simple and effective way to raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper state and local law enforcement authorities. For more information on the *“If You See Something, Say Something™”* campaign, visit <http://www.dhs.gov/IfYouSeeSomethingSaySomething>.

The *Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)* Web site, www.cops.usdoj.gov, can provide more information on community policing.

The *Community Policing Defined* guidebook provides a detailed description of the elements and subelements that comprise the community policing philosophy. The document describes the range of collaborative partnerships that exist between policing agencies and the individuals and organizations they serve; it outlines the process of how they go about engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop effective responses; and it illustrates how they align their organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem-solving. <http://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ResourceDetail.aspx?RID=513>.

The *U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service* works with communities to employ strategies to prevent and respond to alleged violent hate crimes committed on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

APPENDIX A. NSI Overview

NSI OVERVIEW

Every day, law enforcement officers at all levels of government—state, local, tribal, and federal—observe suspicious behaviors or receive reports of suspicious activity, either from concerned citizens or businesses. Although an action or activity reported may not seem significant, when combined with other similar actions or activities, it may become an essential element in preventing criminal or even terrorist activity.

The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) Program Management Office (PMO) initiated operations in March 2010 with the challenge of ensuring that regardless of where in the country suspicious activity is reported, these potential indicators of terrorist activity can be analyzed and compared to other SAR information nationwide. The NSI has worked hard to incorporate the informal processes that traditionally exist within law enforcement agencies into the standards, policies, and processes developed by the NSI that allow law enforcement agencies to easily share information with the critical partners that need it to help prevent terrorist attacks.

The NSI has developed a comprehensive program that includes community and law enforcement outreach, standardized processes, training, a privacy framework, and enabling technology, all of which are essential for successful implementation of the NSI. Through strong leadership and outreach, the NSI PMO has continued working with key partners at the state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal levels of government, as well as advocacy groups, to not only develop and update the policies and processes of the NSI but also help ensure that Americans' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties are protected throughout implementation and

TRAINING

The NSI training strategy is designed to increase the effectiveness of state, local, and tribal law enforcement professionals in identifying, reporting, evaluating, and sharing pre-incident terrorism indicators to prevent acts of terrorism. The training is broken down into focus areas for the Frontline Officer, Analyst, Executive, and Hometown Partners, with each training focusing on the various law enforcement professionals and their respective level of responsibilities and duties.

FRONTLINE OFFICER

The SAR Line Officer Training focuses on the critical role frontline officers have in the effective implementation of the SAR process by identifying and documenting suspicious activity. The NSI PMO, with support from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major County Sheriffs' Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and the National Sheriffs' Association, is working to deliver the 15-minute training video to all law enforcement and support personnel across the country.

ANALYST

The SAR Analytic Role Training is designed to increase the awareness of the NSI by enhancing fusion center analysts' understanding of behaviors and indicators indicative of terrorism activities while also highlighting the importance of protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties as information is documented, vetted, and shared nationwide.

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

The SAR Executive Briefings focus on executive leadership, policy development, privacy and civil liberties protections, agency training, and community outreach. Hometown Partners

HOMETOWN PARTNERS

The soon-to-be-released SAR Hometown Security Partners Training will provide SAR awareness for other key non-law enforcement constituencies, or "hometown security partners," such as public safety and those charged with protecting the nation's critical infrastructure, who are important to the SAR effort.

PRIVACY, CIVIL RIGHTS, CIVIL LIBERTIES

The protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties is paramount to the success of the NSI. Given this importance, the NSI has worked with various advocacy groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, to develop protections that, when consolidated, make up a comprehensive NSI Privacy Framework. The NSI requires each fusion center to consider privacy throughout the SAR process by fully adopting this framework prior to NSI participation. Working with these different advocacy groups and major stakeholders in states across the country has served an important role in successfully shaping NSI policies and processes.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

The Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) initiative focuses on developing relationships of trust between law enforcement, fusion centers, and the communities they serve—particularly immigrant and minority communities—to help prevent crime and/or terrorist-related activities and keep our communities safe.

In July 2010, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), at Secretary Janet Napolitano's direction, launched a national "If You See Something, Say Something™" public awareness campaign—a simple and effective program to raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and violent crime and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper state or local law enforcement authorities. This campaign is being launched in conjunction with NSI rollout sites, with both programs underscoring the concept that homeland security begins with hometown security, where an alert public plays a critical role in keeping our nation safe.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The NSI is a collaborative effort of federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, along with a number of law enforcement organizations across the country, working hand-in-hand to advocate the importance of the NSI. The efforts of these organizations—the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs' Association, and the National Sheriffs' Association—have provided ongoing support and input to the development and implementation of the NSI by promoting the SAR training and by inviting the NSI to participate in conferences where the NSI message can be delivered to state and local law enforcement agencies.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology plays a vital role in the NSI process. In order for the information to be shared across the country, each agency must have a process and a system in place to send and receive these suspicious activity reports (SARs). To support the operational mission, the NSI has leveraged the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM), which allows the interoperability and seamless exchange of SAR information.

There are two ways in which NSI participants can make their SARs available to the NSI Federated Search: by installing an NSI-provided server that leverages an existing legacy computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system or records management system (RMS) that is in line with NIEM standards or by creating an eGuardian account. NSI participants can access the NSI Federated Search through either RISSNET™ or Law Enforcement Online (LEO), and participants will be able to access the search through Homeland Security Information Network-Law Enforcement (HSIN LE) in the future. Regardless of what mechanism is used to receive the information, the NSI was developed to ensure that information received and vetted at a fusion center will be quickly reviewed by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) for possible investigation and shared with a host of analysts for the purpose of analytical pursuits.

QUESTIONS?

For more on the NSI, please visit nsi.ncirc.gov. Or, contact the NSI Program Management Office at nsipmo@usdoj.gov (202) 514-0617.

APPENDIX B. ISE-SAR Functional Standard 1.5

PART B- ISE SAR CRITERIA GUIDANCE CHART

Category	Description
DEFINED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND POTENTIAL TERRORISM NEXUS ACTIVITY	
Breach/Attempted Intrusion	Unauthorized personnel attempting to or actually entering a restricted area or protected site. Impersonation of authorized personnel (e.g. police/security, janitor).
Misrepresentation	Presenting false or misusing insignia, documents, and/or identification, to misrepresent one's affiliation to cover possible illicit activity.
Theft/Loss/Diversion	Stealing or diverting something associated with a facility/infrastructure (e.g., badges, uniforms, identification, emergency vehicles, technology or documents {classified or unclassified}, which are proprietary to the facility).
Sabotage/Tampering/ Vandalism	Damaging, manipulating, or defacing part of a facility/infrastructure or protected site.
Cyber Attack	Compromising, or attempting to compromise or disrupt an organization's information technology infrastructure.
Expressed or Implied Threat	Communicating a spoken or written threat to damage or compromise a facility/ infrastructure.
Aviation Activity	Operation of an aircraft in a manner that reasonably may be interpreted as suspicious, or posing a threat to people or property. Such operation may or may not be a violation of Federal Aviation Regulations.

POTENTIAL CRIMINAL OR NON-CRIMINAL ACTIVITY REQUIRING ADDITIONAL FACT INFORMATION DURING INVESTIGATION ¹¹	
Eliciting Information	Questioning individuals at a level beyond mere curiosity about particular facets of a facility's or building's purpose, operations, security procedures, etc., that would arouse suspicion in a reasonable person.
Testing or Probing of Security	Deliberate interactions with, or challenges to, installations, personnel, or systems that reveal physical, personnel or cyber security capabilities.
Recruiting	Building of operations teams and contacts, personnel data, banking data or travel data
Photography	Taking pictures or video of facilities, buildings, or infrastructure in a manner that would arouse suspicion in a reasonable person. Examples include taking pictures or video of infrequently used access points, personnel performing security functions (patrols, badge/vehicle checking), security-related equipment (perimeter fencing, security cameras), etc.

¹¹ Note: These activities are generally First Amendment-protected activities and should not be reported in a SAR or ISE-SAR absent articulable facts and circumstances that support the source agency's suspicion that the behavior observed is not innocent, but rather reasonably indicative of criminal activity associated with terrorism, including evidence of pre-operational planning related to terrorism. Race, ethnicity, national origin, or religious affiliation should not be considered as factors that create suspicion (although these factors may be used as specific suspect descriptions).

APPENDIX C. Privacy Guidelines

State and major urban area fusion centers serve as focal points within the state and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and sharing of threat-related information between the federal government and SLTT and private sector partners.

Located in states and major urban areas throughout the country, fusion centers are uniquely situated to empower front-line homeland security and law enforcement partners to understand local implications of national intelligence, thus enabling local officials to better protect their communities.

MILESTONE FOR PRIVACY, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Both fusion center directors and the federal government have identified the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties as a key priority and an important enabling capability to ensure that fusion centers protect the legal rights of Americans while supporting homeland security efforts. It is critical that fusion center personnel not only receive training to understand the need to protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, but also have a policy in place clearly outlining how this will be achieved.

To help with these efforts, the DHS Privacy Office, working in collaboration with the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, DOJ Privacy Office, and the Program Manager of the Information Sharing Environment, began an independent review in November 2009 of fusion center privacy policies. Today, all fusion centers have successfully completed this important step and received letters from the DHS Chief Privacy Officer stating that these policies have been determined to be at least as comprehensive as the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) Privacy Guidelines.

The completion of these privacy policies by all fusion centers is a milestone to support the sharing of terrorism and other homeland security information between the federal government and fusion centers during situations involving time-sensitive and emerging threats.

PROTECTING PRIVACY WHILE SHARING INFORMATION

Established by the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, the ISE provides analysts, operators, and investigators with integrated and synthesized terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and homeland security information needed to enhance national security and help keep our nation safe.

The law required the President to issue guidelines to protect privacy and civil liberties. From this, the *ISE Privacy Guidelines* were established to help ensure that ISE sharing partners sufficiently protect Americans' privacy and civil liberties while sharing important terrorism and homeland security information.

These guidelines require that ISE participants—such as the National Network of Fusion Centers—have a written privacy protection policy that is “at least as comprehensive” as the ISE Privacy Guidelines. For example, within each privacy policy, fusion centers must identify a privacy officer and clearly articulate the security measures in place to protect personally identifiable information.

NEXT STEPS

The DHS Privacy Office remains engaged with the fusion centers as they work to implement their privacy policies. In partnership with the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, I&A, and DOJ, the DHS Privacy Office will continue to provide support to the National Network of Fusion Centers to help ensure that these policies are adhered to, as well as to provide customized privacy, civil liberties, and civil rights training to those working in this arena, including the following:

1. DHS intelligence officers assigned to a fusion center.
2. State and major urban area fusion center personnel.
3. Individuals serving as privacy officers in fusion centers.

APPENDIX D. Communities' Frequently Asked Questions About NSI and Fusion Centers

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF TRUST

What is the Building Communities of Trust Initiative?

The Building Communities of Trust Initiative focuses on developing relationships of trust among law enforcement, fusion centers, and the communities they serve, particularly immigrant and minority communities, to address the challenges of crime and terrorism. By fostering relationships, involving the community in the course of privacy policy development and implementation, and building on the lessons of community policing, law enforcement agencies are able to learn more about the community, making it possible for officers and analysts to distinguish between innocent behaviors and behaviors that could indicate criminal activity. The Building Communities of Trust Initiative is an effort to reach out to various cities around the country to help clear up misunderstandings about law enforcement and community roles and also to give communities a chance to express their thoughts and concerns. This initiative included a series of facilitated sessions that convened privacy, civil rights and civil liberties groups, community leaders, and law enforcement officials for an intensive dialogue focused on developing understanding and trust.

What is the role of the U.S. Attorneys in working with their districts to help protect communities from violent crimes and terrorism?

U.S. Attorneys offices are the lead federal law enforcement representative with the mission of supporting engagement with communities. They are available to discuss issues such as civil rights, counterterrorism security measures, international events, foreign policy, and other community concerns; raise awareness about the threat of violent extremism; and also facilitate partnerships to help identify and prevent radicalization to violence. The types of communities involved in engagement differ depending on jurisdictions across the country. U. S. Attorneys, in consultation with local and Federal partners, are best positioned to make local determinations on how best to engage community leaders.

SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY REPORTING

What is the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI)?

The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) is an effort to establish a standardized nationwide capacity for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, storing, and sharing terrorism-related suspicious activity reports in a manner that rigorously protects the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of all Americans.¹²

What is a suspicious activity report?

A suspicious activity report is official documentation of observed behavior which reasonably indicates preoperational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity.

What are the suspicious activities that should be reported?

Examples of activity to be reported include, but are not limited to, surveillance, photography of facilities, site breach or physical intrusion, cyberattacks, possible testing of security or security response, indications of unusual public health sector activity, unauthorized attempts to obtain precursor chemicals or toxic materials, or other unusual behavior or incidents. Further details can be found in the ISE-SAR Criteria Guidance in Appendix B.

How does a person report a suspicious activity?

If a person observes a crime in progress or other emergency activity, he or she should call 9-1-1. There are numerous other ways to report suspicious activity, which is not an emergency by nature, and these vary by jurisdiction. Other methods include tip lines and Web sites, as well as something as informal as contacting a trusted law enforcement partner. Community members are encouraged to contact their local law enforcement agencies to find out the ways to report in their communities.

Where does a report of suspicious activity go when it is reported?

The information is reviewed within a local or federal agency by trained analysts for linkages to other suspicious or criminal activity. Although there is always some level of local review, the degree varies from agency to agency. Smaller agencies

¹² For detailed information about the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative, see <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/>.

may forward most SARs directly to the relevant state or major urban area fusion center or a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) with minimal local processing. Larger cities, on the other hand, may have trained counterterrorism experts on staff that apply a more rigorous, analytic review of the initial reports and filter out those that can be determined not to have a potential terrorism nexus.

After appropriate local processing, agencies make SAR information available to the relevant state or major urban area fusion center. Depending on the nature of the activity, the information could cross the threshold of “suspicious” and move immediately into law enforcement operations channels for follow-on action against the identified terrorist activity. In those cases where the local agency can determine that an activity has a direct connection to criminal activity associated with terrorism, it will provide the information directly to the responsible JTTF for use as the basis for an assessment or investigation of a terrorism-related crime as appropriate.

The fusion center or federal agency enters the SAR into its local information system and then performs an additional analytic review to establish or discount a potential terrorism nexus. Based on this review, the officer or analyst determines whether the information has a potential nexus to terrorism. If the officer or analyst cannot make this explicit determination, the report will not be accessible by other authorized law enforcement or homeland security personnel, although it may be retained in local fusion center or federal agency files in accordance with established retention policies.

Once the determination of a potential terrorism nexus is made, the suspicious activity report is stored where it can be accessed by authorized law enforcement and homeland security personnel in the state or major urban area fusion center’s area of responsibility. Although the information is accessible by other appropriate law enforcement and homeland security personnel, it remains under the control of the submitting organization.

Once these suspicious activity reports are accessible, they can be used to support a range of counterterrorism analytic and operational activities. This step involves the actions necessary to integrate this information into existing counterterrorism analytic and operational processes, including efforts to “connect the dots,” identify information gaps, and develop formal analytic products.

What happens to reports where an activity or a person is deemed not to be suspicious or is added maliciously to the SAR database?

Operational feedback on the status of suspicious activity reports is an essential element of an effective NSI process with important implications for privacy and civil liberties. The process supports notification of all participants when further evidence determines that a suspicious activity report was designated incorrectly so that the original information does not continue to be used as the basis for analysis or action.

What type of training do law enforcement agencies receive to implement the NSI?

There are currently three levels of training for agencies participating in the NSI.¹³

Executive Briefings—Law enforcement executives play a vital role in ensuring that the SAR process is not only successfully implemented but effectively supported. The SAR Executive Briefings focus on executive leadership, policy development, privacy and civil liberties protections, agency training, and community outreach. Fusion centers, law enforcement professional associations, and additional entities conduct these types of briefings in a variety of venues.

Analytic Training—Ensuring that suspicious activity reports are properly reviewed and vetted is critical to promoting the integrity of information submitted; protecting citizens' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties; and successfully implementing the SAR process. The SAR Analytic Role Training focuses on the evaluation of SAR to identify behaviors that may be associated with pre-incident terrorism planning and the process for sharing terrorism-related SAR nationwide. Through this curriculum, analysts and investigators are trained to recognize terrorism-related pre-incident indicators and to validate—based on a combination of knowledge, experience, and available information—whether the behavior has a potential nexus to terrorism and meets criteria for submission. The training is delivered in an eight-hour workshop format.

Line Officer Training—Front-line law enforcement personnel are trained to recognize behavior and incidents that may indicate criminal activity associated with terrorism. Their routine duties position them to observe and report suspicious behaviors or activities. The SAR Line Officer Training, which can be taken online, focuses on the critical role line officers have in the effective implementation of the SAR process by identifying and documenting suspicious activity.

¹³ <http://nsi.ncirc.gov/training.aspx>.

Our problem is violence, guns, gangs, and drugs. How does the NSI help us to address those issues?

While the NSI is focused on behaviors that may indicate terrorist activity, relationships developed by law enforcement and the community through the BCOT initiative can affect other information sharing efforts between law enforcement and the community. Additionally, information provided may not have a connection to terrorism but may have a connection to other crime in the community. Fusion centers help ensure that information received regarding other crimes is first analyzed (if appropriate), and then referred to the responsible local law enforcement agency.

What is the redress procedure if someone's name is wrongly included in a SAR?

Law enforcement agencies and fusion centers have redress procedures, which vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. If a person feels that his or her privacy, civil rights, or civil liberties were violated, he or she should contact the local law enforcement agency or fusion center.

How can this process be implemented in a manner which respects community values?

Privacy policies are customized by each fusion center in accordance with local and state laws. Fusion centers and local law enforcement agencies are also encouraged to involve the community in the development of privacy policies that reflect the community's values.

Is information about juveniles treated differently than information about adults?

The NSI focuses on behaviors, not on individuals, and does not distinguish between adults and minors.

STATE AND MAJOR URBAN AREA FUSION CENTERS

What is a fusion center?

State and major urban area fusion centers serve as focal points within states and local environment for the receipt, analysis, gathering, and dissemination of threat-related information among the federal government, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners. Fusion centers facilitate information sharing while assisting law enforcement and homeland security partners in preventing, protecting against, and responding to crime and terrorism.

What is the role of a fusion center in the NSI process?

Fusion centers play an integral role in the NSI process. Trained fusion center analysts review suspicious activity reports to determine whether they have a connection to criminal or terrorist activity. Analysts forward terrorism-related information, which is made accessible to other authorized law enforcement and homeland security personnel. They also forward criminal and terrorism-related information directly to law enforcement agencies, such as gang task forces or Joint Terrorism Task Forces, for investigation. Finally, fusion centers use these suspicious activity reports to develop local products that address the potential threat of crime groups or potential crime or terrorist activities in their areas.

Which agencies are represented at a fusion center?

There is no one model for fusion center representation. Each fusion center determines the makeup of its center based on local needs and available resources. Fusion centers generally include state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies, federal homeland security and law enforcement partners such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other public safety disciplines such as the fire service, as well as private sector partners.

Are there any standards with which fusion centers must comply?

Yes. The U.S. Department of Justice's Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative's Fusion Center Guidelines provide guidance to ensure that fusion centers are established and operated consistently across the country.¹⁴

The *Baseline Capabilities for Fusion Centers* are a supplement to the *Fusion Center Guidelines* and identify the capabilities and standards necessary for a fusion center to be considered capable of performing basic functions. By achieving this baseline level of capability, a fusion center will have the necessary structures, processes, and tools in place to support the gathering, processing, analysis, and dissemination of terrorism, homeland security, and law enforcement information. This baseline level of capability will support specific operational capabilities, such as Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR); alerts, warnings, and notifications; risk assessments; and situational awareness reporting.¹⁵

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *Fusion Center Guidelines*, http://it.ojp.gov/documents/fusion_center_guidelines_law_enforcement.pdf.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, *Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers*, <http://it.ojp.gov/documents/baselinecapabilitiesa.pdf>.

CIVIL RIGHTS, CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND PRIVACY

How is privacy protected by a fusion center?

Each fusion center is required to adopt a privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties policy (privacy policy), a written, published statement that articulates the center's position on how it handles the personally identifiable information and other personal, sensitive information it seeks or receives and uses in the normal course of business. The purpose of a privacy policy is to articulate within the center, to external agencies that access and share information with the center, to other entities, and publicly that the center will adhere to legal requirements and center policy and procedural provisions that enable gathering and sharing of information to occur in a manner that protects constitutional rights, including personal privacy and other civil liberties, and civil rights.

How are law enforcement officers trained on diversity issues?

Different agencies have their own standards and training protocols regarding cultural diversity. The NSI encourages the community to reach out to its local law enforcement agency to see what is offered in the community.

How do we ensure that communications about reporting suspicious activities are culturally sensitive and do not result in racial profiling?

The NSI focuses on behaviors, not on individuals. The functional standard outlines those behaviors that can serve as the basis for a suspicious activity report. Training reinforces the notion that suspicious activity reports should not be based on religions, race, or any other inappropriate factor.

Tips for Building Communities of Trust (BCOT) and Keeping Your Community Safe

- **Meet with state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal law enforcement officials.** Community organizations, faith groups, business and civic associations, and other groups can organize public meetings that include local representatives from the FBI, law enforcement, and the fusion center to describe their roles in crime and terrorism prevention and to talk about how the community and law enforcement can work together.
- **Participate in community meetings and develop a regular, consistent dialog with local law enforcement before problems arise.** Many law enforcement agencies already conduct regular community meetings to discuss various issues in the community. Community members should take advantage of these opportunities to get to know their local officers and understand the problems facing the community.
- **Take the initiative to learn more about suspicious activity reporting and reporting mechanisms, as well as the privacy and civil rights protections built into the NSI process.** In many cases, the local law enforcement agency will already have developed or have access to appropriate training materials, such as the “IfYou See Something, Say Something™” public awareness campaign which was created by the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority and launched nationally by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2010.
- **Partner with law enforcement to conduct BCOT forums to address questions and discuss community concerns regarding suspicious activity reporting and other issues relevant to the community.** Forums should include residents, community leaders, elected officials, law enforcement, faith leaders, fusion center representatives, and civil rights and civil liberties advocates. It is important to involve a diverse group of people, including those who have differing opinions. Next steps to address issues should be discussed and followed up on.

- **Share crime prevention and terrorism related information with community members through meetings, presentations, Web sites, community newsletters, and social media.** By sharing your knowledge and concern for public safety with your fellow community members, you can educate them on identifying suspicious activity and help build trust in law enforcement.
- **Host cultural awareness trainings and events.** These events will allow law enforcement and community members to learn more about the various cultures and needs in the community in order to build trust and prevent misunderstandings or biased reports.
- **Participate in law enforcement volunteer programs such as Volunteers in Police Service and Neighborhood Watch/USAonWatch.** Volunteer programs can enable you to be extra eyes and ears in your community and help you provide ongoing support to your local law enforcement agency.



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