

Xavier University - Close-Out Report

1. Project Overview

The original goal was to increase awareness of how Violent Extremism is targeting youth by appearing in social media, gaming platforms, and Extremism efforts targeting youth both overtly and through non-overt means. The activity we chose to utilize was delivering educational programming to 5 middle schools regarding Awareness of Violent Extremism Recruiting and Prevention of Violence and Violent Extremism. The challenges of COVID forced adaptation of the program to two classrooms per grade (6, 7, and 8) in the Evanston Academy and focused Community Awareness Briefings. There were approximately 60 sessions in the first iteration and the Community Awareness Briefings were presented independently and expanded into several Threat Assessment workshops for local schools. These workshops were further adapted to fit the programming schedule for the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and incorporated into the local 8-week summer camp and the National Jamboree, providing access to youth in 6th grade through 12th grade and their adult leadership participants.

The initial launch of the program was successful in the middle school and utilized a digital/cyber safety component on which we were able to expand for the collaboration with the BSA programming. We adapted the program to meet the collaborative requirements for Cyber Safety and Awareness for Countering Violent Extremism on-line. During the 7-week summer session for the local BSA Camp Friedlander, we conducted an average of 5-7 presentations for youth and a minimum of one Community Awareness Briefing for adult leadership each week. This fostered additional presentations beyond the campground in the local community and which are sustaining beyond the grant period. We were able to invite two national speakers to present to our local community and continued relationships with both of them, facilitating multiple presentations and extending their messages into the next phase of the programming. The second extension of the program was presenting variations of Countering Violent Extremism Awareness at the National Jamboree in West Virginia from July 18-28, 2023, presenting abbreviated programs 3-4 times per hour every day from 8:30 - 5:00 p.m. Approximately 3100 attendees of scouts, adults, and visitors received the messaging and awareness of the TVTP and DHS programming. We revised the Implementation and Measurement Plan (IMP) throughout the course of the grant period and were fortunate to receive extensions permitting the adaptation and shifting of delivery vectors. The final quarterly report included success measures but perhaps the sustainability of the program is the true measure.

2. Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

We were able to leverage relationships from Xavier University to partner with both Norwood Police Department and the Evanston Academy of World Languages on the initial launch of the program. We were initially set to utilize in-person and in-classroom messaging and facilitated dialogue by using police officers and staff from both police departments. The COVID Pandemic halted our initial efforts to get into the classroom, but we were able to adapt the content and finally carved out a morning session for in-class, in-person delivery combined with a digital resource from an established virtual educational resource contractor. We adapted our delivery to one middle school and focused on two classrooms in each grade level of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades for a total of six sessions during each visit. The weekly contact helped bolster the positive image of the police within the middle school population, but we also learned nearly 65-70% of their classmates were directly impacted by gun violence in their home or neighborhoods. Some of the discussions paralleled not only violent extremism but the similarities of

gang recruitment. The fundamental communication skills, problem solving, and awareness of resources resulting from the first 10-week program provided access for both the participating students and school faculty and administrators. Xavier University sustains a relationship with the school and now many of the student teachers and faculty are participating in the ongoing Threat Assessment training, sustaining the impact of the original messaging in hopes of them possessing resources and knowledge about identification, intervention, and disruption of individuals beginning a pathway toward violence. We had hoped to utilize the Vector Solutions digital portions of the weekly sessions as a means to amplify the message outside the classroom. Unfortunately, we learned quickly, since we were not part of the regular curriculum, there was a portion of students who would not participate unless directly engaged in the weekly class session. We adapted, and while encouraging the students to use the on-line access and videos, we condensed the key messages and content into the classroom time for our presenters.

The feedback from the faculty was positive, and they shared the message resonated with many students and generated discussions outside our session visits. We also learned our focus must include an internal analysis of the presentation content and the technique of instructors delivering the sessions. We determined from the first ten-week course understanding the audience and often limited attention spans would benefit by incorporating an aspect of digital technology either in the presentation or having students utilize it to participate. We were forced to adapt after understanding there were broader cyber access gaps, while many students had connectivity during the school day, not everyone had access to the internet or on-line capabilities or devices for their access at home. We used these lessons learned in adapting our plan for the second delivery.

The Community Awareness Briefings (CAB) helped us in the internal preparedness/awareness for the personnel delivering the messaging to the student populations. In addition, the CAB outreach and awareness within our local Xavier University community benefitted from the content of the presentation to better understand the purpose and focus of our grant.

Upon returning in the fall of the following academic year, 2022-2023, we were abruptly curtailed in August from returning to the Evanston Academy of World Languages. The daily block schedule previously used was changed and the time previously allotted to our visits was no longer available. We explored the viability of an after-school program or some other means to deliver the content but were unable to find a sustainable solution.

The original proposed activities successfully launched at the Evanston Academy of World Languages in Cincinnati, Ohio reaching approximately 6 classes of students ranging in age from 6th grade through 8th grade. However, upon returning the next fall the school restricted the availability of the “free period” or open study in the early mornings when our DHS Anti-Extremism / Anti-Violence program had been scheduled. Our efforts to expand the program to a local Montessori school were also delayed as the upper administration with whom we had been coordinating retired and were replaced by new personnel who did not want to pilot a new program during their first academic year. They delayed until the hiring and arrival of new administration who then further delayed until the Spring of 2023. We continued working with them on Threat Assessment and Behavioral Intervention teams, however it is not aligned with the original grant proposal. This resulted in another IMP revision which introduced two public facing featured speakers with an adapted curriculum tied to their messaging delivered in partnership with some regional and national youth programs through Scouts, BSA.

The first presenter spoke on April 20th, 2023. She is a realtor from Whitefish, Montana and she spoke about her experience being targeted by a Neo-Nazi white supremacist. This white supremacist is the founder of a major neo-Nazi website which orchestrated a harassment campaign that relentlessly terrorized the speaker and her family with anti-Semitic threats and messages. The Southern Poverty Law Center, along with its Montana co-counsel, filed suit in federal court on behalf of her, winning a more than \$14 million judgment against the neo-Nazi leader. We collaborated with the Cincinnati Jewish community and the University of Cincinnati, and her first stop was brunch with Cincinnati Hillel with their director, teaching team, and students. The next stop was focused on the federal law enforcement community, and the speaker presented to the entire Cincinnati field office including Dayton and Columbus Resident Agencies which were linked/networked in for remote viewing. Her presentation and Q&A period was from 2:00-3:30 pm and reached nearly 125 personnel. She then proceeded to a dinner and discussion with Xavier University Police command staff and university faculty in advance of the keynote presentation. From 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm in the Cintas Center, located on Xavier University's campus, in the Duff Conference Center she provided a keynote address to about 45 people present with others viewing remotely in the virtual space. The next morning, April 21st the speaker continued her engagement with our student population on campus at Xavier University conducting a meet and greet with a brief presentation and discussion during a program called Bagels and Beyond hosted by the Center for Faith and Justice in partnership with the Jewish student group. There were approximately 14 students and staff who participated.

The speaker was followed closely by the next visitor to campus and featured speaker Daryl Davis.

As a race relations expert, Daryl Davis has received acclaim for his book, *Klan-Destine Relationships* and his documentary *Accidental Courtesy* from many respected sources including CNN, NBC, Good Morning America, TLC, NPR, The Washington Post, and many others. Mr. Davis discussed his interactions with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and his messaging aligned with targeted violence and terrorism prevention during each of his interactions. Upon arrival Mr. Davis joined a luncheon and discussion with students from the Xavier *Take It On* program; hosted by the director of Xavier University's Community Engaged Learning Center. Later that evening, Mr. Davis spoke with the administrative and leadership team from the Xavier University Police Department at a dinner session in advance of his main speaking engagement. Once concluded, he proceeded to the Cintas Center, located on Xavier University's campus, where he delivered a keynote address in Duff Family Banquet and Conference Center for an hour and a half with an additional question and answer period thereafter. The attendance was approximately 60-70 people in person, and virtual simulcast had many others watching remotely. The following morning, Mr. Davis attended a Meet & Greet in Xavier University's Gallagher Student Center Arrupe Lounge and made 30 minutes of remarks to an audience of approximately 20 FBI Cincinnati leadership team and several local law enforcement leaders regarding the infiltration of white supremacy in many aspects of current society including military and policing.

During the summer of 2023, the Dan Beard Council of Scouts, BSA, hosted a weekly summer camp program for youth (male and female) ages 12-17. The lower extension camp, CubWorld, which serves a younger population accompanied by their parent or guardian, ages 6-11, also hosted a summer camp. We adapted abbreviated presentation content from the middle school programming utilized at the Evanston Academy of World Languages. There were also existing programs within the Scouts BSA Cyber Safety Programming and Citizenship which aligned well with the anti-violent extremism messaging. Understanding some of the challenges the middle school students encountered, we wanted to offer

solutions to any potential barriers including providing computers and Wi-Fi access. Xavier personnel were trained, registered, and assigned to this program and worked from approximately 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. / 2:00 p.m. daily Monday through Friday during the weeks of June 11 through July 28, 2023 and were a combination of Xavier University police, Xavier staff, and Xavier student employees. The campers who participated were in 3 sections of no more than 20-30 to allow interaction, questions, and discussion. Each session was approximately 35-45 minutes long with up to three sessions per day. The result was over a 7-week period we reached over 700 youth who attended the sessions. There was also a weekly one-hour session focused on the adult leadership including the CAB followed with a Q and A session. We averaged 20-30 adults per week at the CAB but this element of the program only ran 6 weeks but the CAB was used for Camp staff training as well reaching the teams for both summer camp facilities. There were approximately 385 adults who participated in this aspect of the program.

The final phase of the program included adapting the content of the Cyber Safety and Countering Violent Extremism messaging from the school and summer camp programs in combination with the messaging from both national speakers and the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3). Our team used Smartboards to utilize a combination of slide decks and YouTube videos to connect the participants with the content. This was a pilot program at the National Scout Jamboree hosted in the Rex Tillerson Leadership Pavilion at the Summit Bechtel Scout Reservation in West Virginia. As part of the programming team, our personnel worked to set up program content which ran daily throughout the National Jamboree. Sessions ran 2-3 times per hour from 8:00/8:30 AM until 5:00 PM every day for 10 days. The sessions would serve approximately 20 Scouts and adults and up to 40 during each session. The estimated outreach from those who attended was a minimum of 3,100 people who participated in the program.

The overall impact of the combined programs increased the awareness of youth and the adults participating in the program. It raised awareness of the actions from extremist groups and their efforts to recruit and spread misinformation and malinformation on a number of platforms. All of the adults who participated were either involved in law enforcement, education, or youth programming/development and enhancing their resources of where to find assistance, information, and collaboration to steer youth off of a path toward violence. It was a very impactful outcome from this grant project.

Each of the project phases had impactful moments or resonating interactions with participants. The first focus of our efforts was on the local Evanston Academy of World Languages middle school in the Cincinnati Public School system. The teachers and administrators with whom we worked shared that the majority, nearly 65% of their students, were impacted directly or their immediate families were impacted by gun violence. The basic coping and communication skills we were introducing in the classrooms may implant and provide an outlet to conflict resolution or problem solving to which they would not otherwise have experienced or witnessed as an alternative to violence.

The messages from both speakers demonstrated the fragility of our society and human nature. Othering” can lead to growing biases which often foster fear and hatred rather than curiosity, education, and community. Both shared stories provided examples of resiliency and how challenges may spur tremendous opportunities.

The Scouting programs in both the summer camp and National Jamboree have been instrumental in the sustainability of the message. Even post grant period we continue to provide information and field requests for visits to local troops and youth organizations.

The local scouting program is requesting our return for the next 8-week summer session, the National Scouts, BSA Program is requesting our return at the next National Jamboree, and the Threat Assessment program expanded a follow-on grant to continue delivering Threat Assessment training for middle school and high school staff, faculty, and administration.

3. Deliverables

We provided the original curriculum list and the initial 10-week programming schedule at the beginning of the grant. The majority of our content was discussion-based and topic-driven and adapted through the iterations and shifting IMP.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Overcoming COVID-19 and competing with state required instruction to carve out time in public schools proved to be our two greatest challenges. The third was introducing the subject matter of targeted violence and terrorism prevention as a topic of discussion and education without it becoming polarizing. The Community Awareness Briefing is a great resource for broaching the subject with adults, however even in an educational environment, both public school and higher education, the subject matter broached topics which often tested facilitators to keep discussions/questions on track to move through the content.

5. Sustainability

The local scouting program is requesting our return for the next 8-week summer session, the National Scouts, BSA Program is requesting our return at the next National Jamboree, and the Threat Assessment program expanded a follow-on grant to continue delivering Threat Assessment training for middle school and high school staff, faculty, and administration.

We will introduce an adapted awareness program for the Montessori middle school next to Xavier University's campus this year and hope to make it part of our sustained partnership.

One aspect of the grant also afforded several of our students and staff to attend the Eradicate Hate conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The long-term sustainability of the messaging will be carried through their increased awareness and activism in our community and throughout the future after their graduation dates. The messaging, collaboration, and networks which were fostered at the conference are still developing a sustained impact on our immediate community and where they move post commencement. We are also in the initial planning for future participation in the higher education competition for Invent2Prevent, and two of our local high schools have also expressed an interest, so we are hopeful the sustainability of the messaging, while not in the original program form, will continue to be broadcast and shared through the individuals and groups with whom we have made contact and established relationships.

Key contacts for the programs which may be shared publicly:

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