

Are you or your organization considering applying for Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services's (EOHHS) "PEACE Project" grant?



Here are some things you should know.

These grant monies are being provided under a program originating with the Department of Justice and US Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts, which prosecutes federal, terrorism-related crimes.

While EOHHS is a conduit for the money, a [Cooperative Agreement](#) between EOHHS and federal prosecutors shows the grant is designed to implement a federal law enforcement program called "countering violent extremism" (CVE) -- a controversial program that threatens human and civil rights and civil liberties.

Under CVE, there is a real danger some health and human services professionals may be recruited to share information with law enforcement about First Amendment protected behavior or beliefs of patients, students and clients they serve -- information which may be used to pressure individuals labeled "vulnerable to extremism" to undergo "interventions" to change their religious or political views.

"Countering violent extremism" (CVE) may at first sound like a positive initiative, but evidence shows that CVE programs:

- Have no scientific basis; they are based on junk science.
- Are fueled by an industry of self-appointed antiterrorism "experts" who put forward empirically unsupported theories about "radicalization."
- Have violated civil rights and civil liberties and further stigmatized Muslim communities.

Where CVE programs operate (for example in the U.K. where CVE is called "Prevent"), they have:

- Pushed health professionals, including mental health workers, to violate professional ethics regarding privacy and confidentiality, and deterred those in need from seeking treatment.
- Policed Muslim students' speech and conduct with a different standard from other students, and worsened bullying of Muslim youth.
- Damaged communities' trust in agencies that have received CVE funds or otherwise collaborated in the program, due to law enforcement pressures to participate in surveillance of those they serve and violate expectations of confidentiality.

Many American CVE tactics are modeled after the UK's Prevent — a program that has violated the rights of many British residents and driven public health and education workers into surveillance and law enforcement roles that undermine their professional duties. Examples of Prevent's many harms include:

- Nursery school staff threatened to refer a four-year-old Muslim pre-schooler to a deradicalization program after they questioned him about a picture he drew of his father preparing food and interpreted his pronunciation of the word "cucumber" as "cooker bomb."
- A fourteen-year-old British Muslim student was taken out of class and questioned about ISIS after, in the course of a class discussion on the environment, he mentioned that some environmental activists are described as "ecoterrorists."
- A seventeen-year-old British Muslim high school student faced interrogation at his home after sharing leaflets about water shortages in Gaza and wearing clothes indicating Palestine solidarity.

*Prevent was initially deployed in the U.K. through grants for community building, on the premise that social services for Muslims could help prevent "extremism" or terrorism. **Many agencies disagreed that their work was connected with counterterrorism but accepted funds to fund good programs** they were struggling to sustain. In the U.S., funding pressures are also very real. However, it is important to know that **Prevent money harmed British grantees by stigmatizing them and undermining their effectiveness.***