



## CELL Exhibit Post DVE Tour Lesson Plan

**Lesson Title:** *Post DVE Tour*

**Grade Level:** *Typically, 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; occasionally 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

**Duration:** *50-65 minutes*

**Content Area:** *Domestic Violent Extremism*

**Standards Areas:** *Civics, History, Reading, Writing and Communicating and Essential Skills*

### Overview:

The lesson provides students with the opportunity to discuss the impact of domestic violent extremism as they synthesize their own ideas and thoughts from the tour at the CELL exhibit. Additionally, this culminating lesson helps students identify action steps they can take individually and collectively as champions of change in an effort to keep communities safe.

### Learning Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Apply the FBI's Definition of Terrorism to the current threat landscape of DVE.
- Engage in civil discourse about why DVE undermines an inclusive democracy.
- Create an action plan to disrupt the DVE at levels seen in their communities.

### Essential Questions:

- Factual
  - Based on the FBI's definition of terrorism what is the current threat landscape of DVE?
- Conceptual
  - How can awareness and use of civil discourse tools help respect others civil liberties and minimize domestic violent extremism?
  - How can youth/students help make communities safer in the fight against domestic violent extremism?

### Key Terms:

- Domestic Violent Extremist: an individual based and operating primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States who seeks to further their ideological goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence. (DHS and FBI)
- Department of Homeland Security: U.S. federal executive department with a mission to secure the nation from the many threats, created in the aftermath of 9/11/2001.
- Government Accountability Office: an independent, non-partisan agency that works for Congress. [GAO](#) examines how taxpayer dollars are spent and provides Congress and federal agencies with objective, non-partisan, fact-based information to help the government save money and work more efficiently.



- Civil Discourse: Civil discourse is the practice of deliberating about matters of public concern in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and promote understanding.<sup>1</sup>

## Lesson Agenda:

### Activity 1: Understanding the Current Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism (10 minutes)

**Overview:** The threat landscape of national security is constantly changing and there are systems and organizations in place to mitigate the threat. This next exercise will help students gain a greater understanding of the rising threat of DVE and how the courts address DVE.

#### Directions:

Read article: "[Domestic terrorism-related cases increased by more than 350% over 8 years: Watchdog The number of plots foiled also increased, according to the statistics](#)" By Luke Barr, February 28, 2023, ABC news

#### Comprehension Questions:

1. Why has the Department of Homeland Security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, focused additional resources on addressing domestic violent extremism?  
*Considers it the most persistent and lethal threats in the U.S.*
2. What recommendation does the GAO make for local, state and federal agencies in their effort to combat domestic violent extremism?  
*Track and share information related to DVE*
3. While this article was written in February 2023, what is the current threat landscape of DVE is today?  
*It continues to increase and pose a significant threat to the U.S. through individuals acting on a personal grievance that may be aligned to a variety of ideologies.*
4. Why is the threat of DVE increasing?  
*Answers will vary*
5. Based on your understanding of DVE and the FBI's definition of terrorism, are there additional mechanisms/strategies that could be employed to address the threat of DVE?  
*Answers will vary*

### Activity 2: Analysis and Discussion of the Current Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism (15 minutes)

**Overview:** This activity will ground students in the current domestic violent extremism threat landscape of the United States, which reflects the international DVE threat landscape according to subject matter experts.

**Directions:** In preparation for the Socratic Seminar discussion, read the excerpt below as a class and answer the comprehension questions provided.

'Office of Intelligence and Analysis Homeland Threat Assessment 2024' authored by Department of Homeland Security, p.3

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cehv.osu.edu/civil-discourse-citizenship/rationale>



In 2024, we expect the threat of violence from **violent extremists radicalized in the United States will remain high** but largely unchanged from the threat as described in the May 2023 National Threat Advisory System (NTAS) bulletin. Over the past year, both domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) inspired by foreign terrorist organizations have engaged in violence in reaction to sociopolitical events. These actors will continue to be **inspired and motivated by a mix of conspiracy theories; personalized grievances; and enduring racial, ethnic, religious, and anti-government ideologies, often shared online.**

- Since January 2022, **DVEs have conducted three fatal attacks** in the Homeland resulting in 21 deaths and multiple non-lethal attacks. US law enforcement has disrupted over a half dozen other DVE plots. During the same period, only one attack was conducted by an individual inspired by a foreign terrorist organization. The individual—who is awaiting trial—was likely inspired by a spiritual mentor of al-Qa’ida and Taliban narratives and allegedly wounded three New York City Police Department officers on New Year’s Eve.
- Collectively, these incidents focused on a variety of **targets, including law enforcement, government, faith-based organizations, retail locations, ethnic and religious minorities, healthcare infrastructure, transportation, and the energy sector.** The most lethal attack this year occurred in May in Allen, Texas, where a now-deceased attacker killed eight people at a shopping mall. The attacker was fixated on mass violence and held views consistent with racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) and involuntary celibate violent extremist ideologies, judging from his writings and online activities.
- While violent extremists likely will **continue using accessible, easy-to-use weapons for attacks, they also will leverage online platforms and encrypted communications applications to share novel tactics and techniques.** Collaboration among violent extremists online likely will grow as they strive to spread their views, recruit followers, and inspire attacks. Some RMVEs have improved the quality of their video and magazine publications online, which could help them inspire more like-minded individuals to commit attacks.

### Activity 2 Comprehension Questions:

1. In referring to the Homeland Threat Assessment excerpt, what do these DVE incidents focus on primarily? And what are DVE actors using to gain support?
  - *law enforcement, government, faith-based organizations, retail locations, ethnic and religious minorities, healthcare infrastructure, transportation, and the energy sector*
  - *easy-to-use weapons for attacks and online platforms with improved video/audio quality*
2. What are these actors inspired or motivated by?
  - *a mix of conspiracy theories; personalized grievances; and enduring racial, ethnic, religious, and anti-government ideologies, often shared online.*



3. What are two or three things that are contributing to the current rise of domestic violent extremism? Consider the trends of international and national security over the course of history and how those trends impact local communities.
  - *Polarization of American population*
  - *Availability and accessibility of mis and dis information*
  - *Societies increased tolerance for violence*
  - *Increased social isolation and information silos*
  - *Lack of laws against the organization of domestic violent extremists*
4. How does domestic violent extremism move citizens of the U.S. away from the founding ideal of an inclusive democracy that the U.S. continues to work toward?
  - *Prevents civil discourse because people often gravitate toward conversation with similar beliefs*
  - *Undermines the efforts of national security*
  - *Polarization of ideas and values leading to seclusion*
  - *Reduces the resiliency of communities to radical ideologies*
5. Reflect on your everyday interactions and consider if you have been exposed to any acts or precursory acts of domestic violent extremism. How do you think this exposure impacts our society?
  - *Be sure to touch on the human element of what students share in their answer/discussion.*
  - *Feel free to tie in teacher notes from questions #2 and #3*
6. What ideologies do you think/feel are driving these extremist activities?
  - *Religious*
  - *Anti-Government/Anti-authority*
  - *Left-Wing*
  - *Right-Wing*
  - *REMVE (a government classified category that includes racially, ethnically motivated violent extremists)*

### **Activity 3: Socratic Seminar (25-30 minutes depending on how many questions are discussed)**

**Overview:** Using information from the past few lessons, including the tour at the CELL Exhibit and from our own experiences, this next activity will require participants to engage in civil discourse to help break down barriers, ask critical questions and understand different perspectives. It is important to establish some collective ground rules for civil discourse. Consider what civil discourse is and what civil discourse is not as we move into this Socratic Seminar.

**Exercise:** Socratic Seminars lead with open-ended questions that are intended to facilitate further thought. Helpful Socratic Seminar guidelines are listed below. Be sure to establish, post and commit to a set of guidelines before beginning.



- Guidelines:
  - Discuss, do not debate.
  - Be courteous, no putdowns.
  - Goal is the pursuit of deeper understanding.
  - Respect different thoughts and ideas.
- Questions or responses from participants that can help facilitate discussion include:
  - What do you mean by that?
  - How do you know?
  - Can you give me an example?
  - What are the consequences of that?
  - What is the counterargument?

Suggested questions to discuss:

1. How is DVE impacting you?
  - Hate speech is directly linked to acts of violence, as you experienced in the Vitriol and Violence gallery at the exhibit, what are some examples of hate speech linked to an ideology that caused the perpetrator to act violently?
  - How did it impact you or the situation and were there any consequences?
  - What do you think would be appropriate consequences in these situations? How should we handle hate speech at school or in school-based activities vs. out of school activities?
  - What has led people to become so extreme in their ideologies that they turn to violent acts?
  - And how does this turn toward violent acts undermine the principles of the founding of our nation?
2. What strategies do terrorist organizations use to recruit and how can you be more discerning when exposed to these materials?
3. Why do people remain radicalized (identify and recall push/pull factors)?
4. What are some vulnerabilities that you and your peers might face that cause greater risk for radicalization by an extremist group?
5. What are some resources, whether inside school or outside of school, that help address these vulnerabilities?
6. What are some actions you and your peers can take to reduce the vulnerabilities to radicalization?

If time permits, explore these questions:

1. Based on your experience at the exhibit, how do you think our communities arrived at this level of threat from DVE?
2. What is one step you can take today to make your school or community more resilient against DVE?
3. What piece(s) at the exhibit inspired you to help create a more constructive and safer community?
4. In reflecting on your experience, what did you take away from the tour and these lessons to help us create better civil discourse and prevent domestic violent extremism?
5. What can our society and/or communities do to prevent radicalization into extremist groups or ideologies?
6. What does an inclusive democracy look like to you?
7. What are some initiatives you have seen or experienced that build inclusive communities?



#### Activity 4: Action plan to Champion Change (25-30 minutes) (Optional/Extension)

**Overview:** This last activity will give you and your classmates an opportunity to create an action plan that helps your school and your community to Champion Change in the fight against domestic violent extremism.

**Directions:** Work in small groups to create an action plan that can help your community become champions of change in creating safer communities and minimizing domestic violent extremism. In this activity, you will consider the guiding questions below and then fill in the action plan based on your discussion.

Guiding questions to consider:

1. Discuss actions that you and your peers can take to mitigate vitriolic language and/or peers from being pushed into radicalization.
2. What are existing community organizations/programs that you could partner with or join to support these actions?
3. What could you and your peers create for your community to implement these actions (club, awareness assembly, ongoing educational initiatives on DVE might be some examples, school policy)?
4. What changes/updates would you propose to your school leaders that would support you and your classmates' schoolwide initiatives?
5. Here is a resource to help you ([PERIL](#)).

Group goal for action plan: \_\_\_\_\_

PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED	POTENTIAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS/ PROGRAMS	ACTION IDEAS	POTENTIAL OBSTACLES	INTENDED OUTCOME
<i>Hate speech in schools</i>	<i>Anti-Defamation League Blue Bench</i>	<i>Awareness campaign about the impact words have on adolescents</i>	<i>School admin not supporting  Lack of time</i>	<i>Community talks about why we don't want to tolerate hate speech. Hate speech is not heard as often.</i>
<i>Reducing recruitment of high school students to extremist groups</i>	<i>The CELL, PERIL, ADL, Alliance Clubs at schools</i>	<i>Guest speaker for specific classes (advisory, homeroom, English classes) that speaks to the real threat of extremist groups recruitment strategies, shares statistics and examples of recruitment into extremist groups</i>	<i>Too extreme for my school community (maybe go to a local library then.)</i>	<i>Community's aware of recruitment strategies by extremist groups and is aware of what to look for to prevent that radicalization process from starting.</i>

**Standards:***Colorado Academic Standards:*

- SS.HS.1.GLE.2: Analyze and evaluate key concepts of continuity and change, cause and effect, complexity, unity and diversity, and significant ideas in the United States from Reconstruction to the present.
- SS.HS.4.GLE.1: Research and formulate positions on government policies and on local, state, tribal, and national issues to be able to participate and engage in a civil society.
- SS.HS.4.GLE.2: Evaluate the purposes, roles, and limitations of the structures and functions of government.
- RW.HS.2.GLE.3: Utilize context, parts of speech, grammar, and word choice to understand narrative, argumentative, and informational texts.
- CH.HS.3.GLE.1: Advocate to improve or maintain positive mental, emotional well-being for self and others.
- CH.HS.3.GLE.3: Advocate to improve or maintain positive mental, emotional well-being for self and others.
- CH.HS.4.GLE.5: Analyze the factors that influence community and societal beliefs that underlie violence, and describe relationships, attitudes, behavior, and vulnerability to violence.
- CH.HS.4.GLE.6: Analyze the underlying causes of self-harming behavior and harming others, and identify strategies involved in seeking help.
- CH.HS.4.GLE.7: Identify the emotional and physical consequences of violence, and find strategies to deal with, prevent, and report them.
- CH.HS.4.GLE.10: Advocate for changes in the home, school, or community that would increase safety.

**Skills:**

- Creativity/Innovation: Synthesize ideas in original and surprising ways.
- Risk Taking: Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution.
- Adaptability/Flexibility: Demonstrate ways to adapt and reach workable solutions
- Collaboration/Teamwork: Use interpersonal skills to learn and work with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

**Materials:**

- *Student handout*