

Governor's Statewide Safety Council

Statewide Safety council Meeting Notes

Thursday, July 23, 2026

Meeting Outcomes

Rational objective:

- Learn about political and religious extremism and violence in Minnesota to inform potential Council recommendations that could improve safety in MN.

Experiential objective:

- Members feel confident they can weigh in on draft recommendations related to political and religious extremism violence and suggest enhancements unique to their agency/organization.

Member Attendance

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Bob Jacobson, DPS | • Christina Bogojevic, DPS |
| • Kate Weeks, DCYF | • Becky Rabb, MM OJP |
| • Dr. Macarre Traynham (alt), MDE | • Lon Thiele, MDS |
| • Catherine Diamond, MDH | • Brittany Haeg, AHA |
| • John Connolly, DHS | • Marcus Schmit, NAMI |
| • Jenn Super (alt), MN Supreme Court | • Jay Henthorne, MCPA |
| • Dana Gotz, BCA | |

Welcoming announcements

Chair Jacobson reminded members of the meeting objectives and the topical cadence of meetings. The final report is due early January.

Observers:

- Katie Holmgren and Craig Huelskoetter, Project Pathfinder

Tap In

Question: What stands out to you about MNs political and religious extremism after reviewing the various resources? A sample of observations include:

- The **sheer quantity of hate speech** across social media

- The power of **creating connections** to bridge differences
- **Victim resilience is remarkable** in the stories shared.
- It is too easy to point to a physical target (e.g. specific school, house of worship or certain religion) as cause for violence. **The reality of why violence occurs is much more complicated.**
- Watching conditions – it takes just a **small spark to ignite horrible situations**
- **Society has made it ok to say horrible things in public**
- We need to **redefine what it means to be a good neighbor** in Minnesota
- **Hate speech coming out of Federal gov triggers hate mail spikes in MN**
- State leaders (at all levels) must more **intentionally listen, hear, acknowledge, and the explain decisions**; connect!
- Minnesotans want safer communities (less guns vs. more protection)...**how do we get everyone on the same (new?) page?** One-sided propaganda isn't helping.

Presentations

- Dr. James Densley, The Violence Prevention Project Research Center provided an overview of **Political and Religious violence**. See slides 9-22 in the meeting slide deck.
- Colonel Christina Bogojevic and Lieutenant Nate Danley (Capitol Operations) presented information on the **Minnesota State Patrol's Political Threat Investigations**. See slides 23-31.
- Jessica Shryack, Assistant Director of Minnesota's Office of **Collaboration and Dispute Resolution (OCDR)** presented information about where their work may align and support recommendations emerging from the Safety Council. See slides 32-44

Small and whole group discussion

Question: How do the differences between political and religious extremism and violence inform recommendation development?

Small group responses:

- (The) root of violence seems different which impacts response. Religion and politics can be so ingrained. Biased conflict. Entrenched in religion and politics.
- Targeted threats need different interventions than general ones. When considering protection, what is appropriate and what is a threat? What is inflammatory and free speech? Political threats are often gauger than religious threats, much broader.

- There's a difference but (it's?) nuanced; they share many similarities like community and the attempt of a unifying message.
- More and more politics is becoming (its) own religion. Exp., Luigi M. – his willingness to be almost this martyr for the cause. Both start with (a) hate mindset and lack of understanding. Understanding what misinformation is out and redirecting false narratives.

Question: With those possible distinctions in mind what needs to be addressed through recommendations when considering political extremism and violence...

...prevention:

- Keeping people busy. E.g. youth development programs can impact kids and families
- Improve and increase use of public transportation
- Humanizing people being targeted using bridgebuilding organizations
- Education, broadening access and understanding through a global lens
- Speech; how do we address hateful speech and rhetoric to not be normalized. Language matters
- Redirecting false narratives
- Promoting community and connection

...intervention/response:

- How do agency leadership get trained to respond to threats at an agency level? How do law enforcement agencies respond in uniform ways?
- Education for elected officials – especially outside of the cities.
- Bridgebuilding programs
- Rhetoric training
- Accountability for one's own rhetoric
- Rely on leaders to model respectful behavior
- Embracing differences and encouraging interactions. Utilizing resources from OCDR.

...recovery:

- Accountability
- Support for victims and survivors
- Communication- redirecting false narratives

- People respond to an event by changing their behavior. Need leaders to model the behavior – need communications outlets to do so, too.
- Mental health support and recovery for officials receiving threats and recovering after violence. How do we maintain good people’s willingness to run for office? Need messaging on safety for prospective candidates for office.

Tap out

Question: If “othering” and over-emphasizing differences are root causes in schools, politics, religious settings, etc. what is within the state’s control to influence society toward a culture of civility?

- Focus on education – more curriculum on what it means to be a citizen and engage in civil discourse
- Make a big investment in social media campaigns that celebrate the good work in community being done in communities to push back on extremism and negativity - make the positive stories louder than the negative ones
- “Othering” is when people aren’t seen as part of your community. Not sure what the solution looks like outside educational settings.
- Need to figure out how leaders (political and agency) get better at modeling appropriate behavior. They need to be the calm in the storm.
- Need to figure out how to connect with those that are disengaged.
- Reach out to the municipal level and build engagements so that conversation can happen in a safe environment
- MDH – encourage building connections as an aspect of public health and prevention. Encourage all agency leaders to model community engagement e.g. attend “national night out” events.
- Sharing stories more deliberately
- Explore the benefits of year-round school.
- Look for ways to evolve programs to meet kid’s new needs (e.g. bike give away bust in Richfield)
- DHS – create more spaces to prevent violence, work on projects collaboratively, and show up in community - even when you might not be received well. Build the culture within agencies to be respectful even when we don’t get respect from the community.
- DCYF – we provide services to the most vulnerable in our state. We need to work harder to promote the humanity of those we serve to counter “othering”.

Program resources inventory concept

Commissioner Jacobson asked about agency appetite for developing an agency resource inventory of current programming for potential inclusion in the final report. This inventory could include:

- Program name
- Mission
- Customers served
- Funding sources and amounts (state or federal allocations and grants) per biennium
- Program services and any specific funding obligations

This inventory would be provide an initial step toward aligning funding structures with the recommendations and supporting effective implementation.

Council suggestion: Be thoughtful about what programs to count to avoid confusion (Diamond)