

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN VIRGINIA: A Practitioner's Guide

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This document is intended to be a resource for use by local government or community threat assessment teams in Virginia. It is not a legal document and does not establish a standard of care for behavioral threat assessment and management. It highlights key elements and considerations for practice but is not designed to be a comprehensive guide to behavioral threat assessment and management, nor a substitute for proper training in the field. The presentation of methods of threat assessment in this document does not imply that other methods cannot be effective. Although based upon scientific principles and research on past violent incidents, behavioral threat assessment and management is both an art and a science. The process of behavioral threat assessment and management may be constrained by lack of information, legal constraints, the openness of a subject of concern to intervention, the environment, and many other factors out of the control of institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia

This resource, *A Community Approach to Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia: A Practitioner's Guide* (hereafter referred to as *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide*), was developed in response to an initiative of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and was supported through a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Program. This document provides guidance to help Virginia's communities develop, implement, and operate Community Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (Community BTAM) Teams in accordance with contemporary standards of practice and relevant law.

The Community Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team program initiative is a continuation of the development of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) programs in Virginia that began in 2008, following the mass casualty incident at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. Following that incident, the Virginia Assembly passed legislation requiring BTAM Teams in all public institutions of higher education across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Recognizing the need for training to support those teams, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) developed and provided training programs to help establish and operate BTAM Teams at campuses across the Commonwealth. Since 2008, the Virginia General Assembly has updated the threat assessment statute and enacted other laws that relate to the safety and security of campuses and communities in the Commonwealth.

In July 2013, the Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation that required BTAM Teams in all Virginia public primary and secondary schools. As a result, Virginia was the first state in the nation to require threat assessment and management processes for all levels of public education. The General Assembly also allowed BTAM Teams at private institutions of higher education to obtain information from the same criminal history and medical records to which public institutions of higher education (IHEs) had been granted in 2010.

Since that time, laws related to BTAM in Virginia have continued to evolve, and the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety has been instrumental in providing training and guidance for Virginia schools, campuses, law enforcement agencies, government entities, and more recently, Community-based Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams.

In the years since the mass casualty incident at Virginia Tech, the field of behavioral threat assessment and management has seen significant developments that inform practice in educational settings. During this time, state and federal agencies, along with several professional associations, have provided guidance on issues related to behavioral threat assessment and management, violence prevention, suicide prevention and intervention, international and domestic violent extremism, prevention of sexual harassment and assault, information-sharing, privacy, case management, etc.

The *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide* provides a synthesis of peer-reviewed research and recognized standards of practice regarding threat assessment and management. The guidance provided in this document is based upon relevant federal statutes and regulations, such as the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) and the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPAA). The *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide* also draws from and synthesizes several key resources related to violence and threat assessment and management in communities and workplaces.

Although communicated or expressed threats of violence typically require assessment (and appropriate response), the *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide* emphasizes the identification and assessment of a broader range of concerning or threatening behaviors, including, but not limited to, communicated or expressed threats. The emphasis

is on a preventative approach facilitating early identification and intervention with developing concerns, i.e., addressing concerning behavior (where possible) before it becomes threatening or violent.

While incidents of mass targeted violence impacting communities, schools, campuses, and other settings have brought increased attention to issues of community safety in recent years, mass casualty events are not the only threats faced. The DCJS threat assessment model emphasizes an approach that is based on an understanding of the variety and breadth of violence impacting communities, including, but not limited to, mass casualty events. The threat assessment and management process is intended to help prevent and mitigate risks associated with all types of targeted violence, including bias, harassment, bullying, intimate partner violence (including domestic and dating violence, stalking, and predatory sexual assault), grievance-based acts against individuals or groups, suicide in public settings, lone actor terrorism and violent extremism.

The *Community BTAM Practitioner’s Guide* emphasizes that effective threat assessment and management best occurs in the community and within a climate and culture of safety, respect, and support—environments in which community members pay attention to the social and emotional needs of others and have access to assistance for addressing and resolving problems. The behavioral threat assessment and management process is only one component of an overall strategy to prevent and mitigate the risk of violence, and it is implemented within the larger context of strategies to ensure communities are healthy, safe, and secure.

Other strategies that may also be employed are:

- Effective and respectful communication between individuals, workplace members, staff, students, and, where appropriate, parents or guardians of youth
- Emphasis on community connectedness, inclusion, and engagement
- Community climate assessments and timely response to climate or safety concerns
- Physical security measures
- Support for reporting concerns and bystander engagement
- Bullying/Harassment prevention and intervention
- Fair and equitable approaches to discipline
- Community-based services for support, guidance, early identification, and intervention
- Trauma-informed approaches and programs that recognize the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma through the lifespan
- Proactive law enforcement efforts to develop and sustain engagement and collaboration with the community
- Collaborative relationships with mental health, social services, and other community-based resources
- Planning and preparation to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from potential crises

Overview of the Community BTAM Practitioner’s Guide

A Community Approach to Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia: A Practitioner’s Guide sets the standard for a comprehensive and holistic approach to preventing violence and mitigating harm. This is accomplished through the early identification, inquiry, assessment, and management of concerning, aberrant, or threatening behavior impacting communities. This is a care-oriented approach intended to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of communities in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The guidelines provided in this document are based not only on relevant Virginia statutes and regulations but also on relevant federal laws such as the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA), [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) (HIPAA), and [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA). The document also provides a synthesis of peer-reviewed research and recognized standards of practice regarding behavioral threat assessment and management in community, campus, and workplace settings. The *Community BTAM Practitioner’s Guide* draws from

and synthesizes several key resources related to violence and behavioral threat assessment and management in community and educational settings.

This document serves to supplement the training provided through the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS). All Community BTAM Team members should complete foundational training upon their appointment to the team and engage in ongoing professional development through VCSCS, the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP), or professional associations in their respective disciplines. The following *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide* is organized around the following sections:

[Overview of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management](#)

This section defines behavioral threat assessment and management and discusses core concepts.

[The Nature and Process of Violence](#)

This section discusses targeted and affective violence and provides a brief overview of a range of concerning, aberrant, or threatening behaviors that may be involved in cases.

[Guidelines for Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management](#)

This section provides step-by-step guidelines for a comprehensive approach to behavioral threat assessment and management. It discusses issues related to identifying concerning or threatening behaviors, conducting inquiries to support a holistic understanding of the situation, assessing cases in a structured manner based on the totality of the circumstances, and engaging in integrated and longitudinal management of concerns.

[About the Authors](#)

This section provides detailed professional biographies of the authors.

[Resource Materials](#)

Here you will find key resources and references regarding violence and behavioral threat assessment and management, a listing of key Virginia code sections related to threat assessment and management, and tools to facilitate BTAM processes such as a flowchart, summary of an approach to determining level of concern for cases, and sample threat assessment and management case forms. This document and other resources to community, school, and campus safety are available at the DCJS website at: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety.

Throughout this guide, there are hyperlinks to key resources, nearly all of which are free, open-source materials. These are provided to facilitate Community BTAM Team members' access to resources to inform and enhance their practices. The titles of resource materials are provided throughout so that, if links are broken, Community BTAM Team members can also easily search for the resource.

OVERVIEW OF BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Defining Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

Behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) is a systematic, evidence-based process to identify concerning, aberrant, or threatening behaviors; inquire and investigate to gather relevant information from lawfully, ethically, and reasonably available sources; assess the situation based on the totality of information available at the time; and develop and implement holistic and longitudinal approaches to prevent violence and to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the persons involved and the community as a whole.

For over 30 years, findings about the pre-incident behaviors of targeted violence perpetrators have validated the use of a fact-based behavioral threat assessment and management process relying on an appraisal of behaviors, rather than traits, as the basis for determining the nature and degree of any safety concerns and developing a strategic approach to reducing risk and improving the safety and well-being of communities.

“By far the most valuable prevention strategy identified was the threat assessment and management team.”

FBI (2017) [*Making Prevention of Violence a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks*](#)

Effective behavioral threat assessment and management processes are intended to be proactive and preventative approaches to facilitate early identification and intervention with developing concerns. This contrasts with crisis-oriented, incident-based approaches, which are primarily reactive in nature.

Members of the Community BTAM Team should also consider how their community members perceive the BTAM process, as those perceptions will affect their willingness to utilize the process. For example, if community members perceive that the BTAM process just creates “threat lists” or that persons on those lists get disadvantaged due to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc., these perceptions may greatly diminish community member’s willingness to share concerns with the Community BTAM program. It is important to operate and demonstrate that the BTAM process, where possible, is preventative and supportive, not solely or primarily punitive. The earlier that concerning or threatening behavior can be identified and addressed, the less likely that harm will occur or that disciplinary or criminal justice sanctions will be relevant or necessary.

A Systematic Process of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

An effective behavioral threat assessment and management program involves a systematic process emphasizing early identification of subjects and situations that may pose a threat of violence or harm to self or others, or that indicate a need for intervention and support. The process utilizes a comprehensive approach to understanding and assessing the situation and a holistic, collaborative approach to managing the concerns identified.

As reflected in Figure 1, there are four key components of the threat assessment and management process:

Identify

Identify subject(s)/situation(s) whose behavior or impact is concerning, aberrant, or threatening. Such behaviors may cause concern for the well-being of the subject, their impact on others, or both.

Most cases originate from information and observations that are provided to the threat assessment and management team by concerned members of the community. The team may also monitor for and identify patterns of behavior that may indicate a threat or concern that has not yet been reported.

Inquire

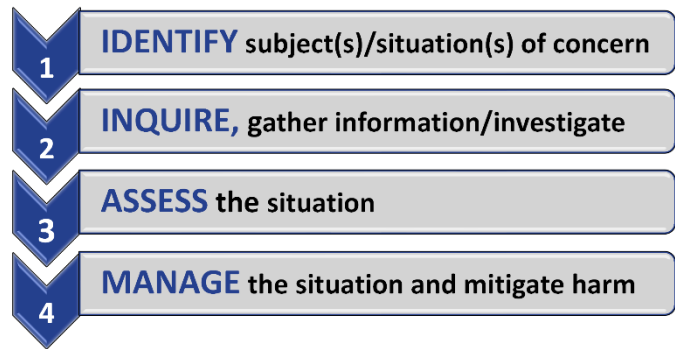
Upon identification of potentially concerning behavior, the Community BTAM Team inquires, investigates, and gathers additional relevant information that is lawfully, ethically, and reasonably available. Beyond the initial report, the team considers what else, if anything, may be known about the situation or those involved. In information technology, this is called “pinging the system.” This means checking what else is on the network, i.e., what else is happening or that may impact the subject of concern, those directly impacted by the subject’s behavior, or others in the broader community who may be indirectly impacted.

Note that the role of a Community BTAM Team is not solely (or even primarily) to investigate to prove a crime or policy violation, but rather to try to understand the situation and how best to address it and prevent harm. Threat assessment and management is different from a criminal or disciplinary investigative process and *should not replace those processes* when they are appropriate. However, information gained through the BTAM process may (where appropriate) supplement decision-making regarding criminal or disciplinary investigative processes, and those processes may inform the BTAM process.

Assess

The Community BTAM Team assesses the case comprehensively, considering the totality of information that is reasonably, lawfully, and ethically available at the time of each point of assessment. The assessment reflects a dynamic understanding of the nature and level of concern involved based on the information available, identifies what other information may be needed to better understand the situation, and informs efforts to manage those concerns.

Figure 1. Key Steps in the BTAM Process



Manage

Based on the assessment, the Community BTAM Team develops, implements, monitors, and adjusts strategies to manage the situation. The plans are developed to prevent violence and other harm where possible, reduce/mitigate the impact of the situation, decrease vulnerability and increase the safety of those targeted, provide relevant support and assistance to persons involved, minimize the future impact of any contributing factors that may stem from the relevant environment or systems, and consider contingencies for reasonably foreseeable events that may impact the case.

See the [Threat Assessment and Management Process Flowchart](#) provided in the ["Resource Materials"](#) section (Page 81) for an example of a systematic process for facilitating identification, inquiry, assessment, and management of a case.

A Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention

Behavioral threat assessment and management involves a public health approach to violence prevention, which has been a recommended practice since 1980, when the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued its report, *Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation*, establishing the first violence prevention objectives for the nation. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that a public health approach to violence prevention incorporates several key elements, including:

- Emphasizing prevention as a primary goal.
- Working to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the community. That is, the process focuses not only on addressing the behavior and needs of the identified subject of concern but also on balancing those with the needs of others who are impacted by the subject's behavior, seeking the maximum benefit for the community as a whole.
- Utilizing a multidisciplinary approach. BTAM draws from many disciplines, including, but not limited to, education, psychology, sociology, medicine, criminology, economics, and law.
- Engaging community and key stakeholders for input and action.
- Continuously evaluating and improving the relevant systems and processes involved.

Within a public health approach, prevention efforts can and do occur at different levels and target differing issues. Core levels of prevention include:

Primordial prevention: Addressing health/safety risk factors at the system level, minimizing risk for the whole population/community.

- This involves identifying social, political, and economic policies that affect health, safety, and well-being.
- Examples may involve implementing policies to support non-violent resolution of grievances, promote human rights, and reduce inequities that contribute to grievance and risk.

Primary prevention: Identifying and addressing risk factors that may put subjects/targets at risk.

- It involves reducing exposure to hazards, altering risky behaviors, and increasing resistance to health or injury should exposure occur.
- Examples: Preventing early childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (which are related to adverse health and behavioral outcomes), reducing social isolation and alienation, enhancing effective coping strategies, and improving access to and effectiveness of mental health services.

Secondary prevention: Early identification of and intervention with persons exhibiting indicators or effects of risk factors prior to escalation to harm.

- Examples: Engagement with youth who participate in gangs before escalation to violence, programs to break cycles of domestic/intimate partner violence, stalking intervention programs, etc.

- BTAM programs operate primarily in this space.

Tertiary prevention: Rehabilitating persons who have engaged in or attempted acts of violence.

- This involves reducing escalation and recidivism of violence and increasing recovery and resiliency efforts for those impacted by violence.
- Examples: Engagement with victims to prevent retaliation, programs to facilitate disengagement from violent extremist groups or beliefs.
- BTAM programs operate in this space as needed.

Recognizing Concerning, Aberrant, or Threatening Behavior

The behavioral threat assessment and management process is intended to facilitate early identification and intervention of concerning, aberrant, or threatening behaviors. To that end, Community BTAM Team members (and the communities they serve) must be able to recognize those behaviors, understand relevant reporting mechanisms, and use those mechanisms to share information about those concerns in a timely manner.

Concerning or Aberrant Behaviors

BTAM is a preventative and helping process (where possible), so Community BTAM Team members help the community identify behavior that is causing concern even before it may be perceived as threatening. Therefore, the BTAM process enhances early recognition and reporting of concerning and/or aberrant behaviors.

- **Concerning behaviors** involve actions, statements, communications, or responses that cause concern for the health, safety, or well-being of the subject exhibiting the behaviors, others, or both.
- **Aberrant behaviors** involve actions, statements, communications, or responses that are atypical for the person or situation *and* cause concern for the health, safety, or well-being of the subject, others, or both.

Note that not all aberrant or atypical behavior is concerning. Community BTAM Team members are careful not to put undue focus on unique, creative, eccentric, or atypical behavior that is not causing concern for the subject or others. The focus is on atypical behavior that causes concern.

Examples of Concerning or Aberrant Behaviors

The following are several examples of behaviors that may be concerning or aberrant. Concerning or aberrant behaviors are not limited to acts that a reasonable person would view as threatening or intimidating, but may also include:

- Withdrawal, isolation, or alienation from others
- Sudden changes to usual attire, behavior, or hygiene
- Changes in attendance/participation in work, campus, community, or social activities
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Sullen or depressed behavior
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Declining work/academic performance
- Fearful, anxious, depressed, tense, reactive, or suspicious
- Atypical outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration, or anger
- Heightened wariness and suspiciousness in dealing with others
- Confrontational, accusatory, or blaming behavior
- Consideration of or focus on violence as a means of addressing a grievance
- Fascination with other incidents or perpetrators of violence
- Atypical interest or fascination with weapons or violence

Note that these are not all necessarily associated with risk for violence but are frequently indicators of significant stressors and/or difficulty coping. The threat assessment and management process is intended to support the early identification of developing concerns to help the subject or those impacted by the subject's behavior to address and alleviate those concerns where possible.

Threatening Behaviors

For the purposes of the BTAM process, threatening behavior is defined as:

- Any concerning communication or behavior that indicates that a subject (person or group) *may* pose a risk for violence or other behaviors that would likely cause harm to self or others or that would likely result in serious disruption to the continuity of operations.

The threat may be expressed or communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means and is considered a threat regardless of whether:

- It is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat,
- It is observed by or communicated to a third party, or if
- The target of the threat is aware of the threat.

Note that this definition is intentionally broader than what would likely be considered a criminal threat because the Community BTAM Team strives to be proactive and to prevent criminal and harmful behavior where possible.

Examples of Threatening Behaviors

The following are several examples of behaviors that may be threatening. Such threatening behaviors may include (but are not limited to) any act that a reasonable person would view as threatening or intimidating, such as:

- Physical violence toward a person or property
- Weapons acquisition in conjunction with unresolved grievances or ideation for harm
- Possession of weapons in areas or at activities where they are prohibited
- Stalking
- Directly communicated threats
- Leakage: communication to a third party about any aspects of the subject's grievances, ideas of or intent for violence, planning, preparations, etc.
 - Research finds that leakage very frequently occurs and is one of the most common ways of identifying a person who may pose a threat.
 - Communication varies and may include planned or spontaneous utterances, letters, diaries, emails, journals, social media posts, text messages, video recordings, etc.
 - Leakage could be intentional (e.g., through veiled or ambiguous but ominous statements) or unintentional (e.g., others observing the subject's behaviors).
- Overt physical or verbal intimidation
- Throwing objects or other gestures intended to cause fear
- Making inappropriate statements about harming others
- Bullying or harassment, especially that persists after interventions to stop the behavior
- Statements or behaviors indicating suicidality or intent to harm oneself, especially with expressed grievances or hostility to others
- Research or planning related to carrying out violence
- Developing the capability to cause harm

The Goal of the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Process

The primary goal of the threat assessment and management process is to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the community, or the subset of the community that is affected by the situation. Everything that Community BTAM Team members may consider or do during a case is done in service of the health, safety, and well-being of *all* involved, including (but not solely for) the subject of concern.

It is important not to confuse tactics or tools (e.g., counseling, support, discipline, prosecution, dismissal, etc.) with goals or desired outcomes (i.e., enhance the safety and well-being of the situation). So, when we hear ourselves saying that “our goal is to get the subject to counseling,” we catch ourselves and re-focus: “Our goal is to improve the safety and well-being of the situation. What tools or resources may help us? How will a referral to counseling help us move toward that goal? If counseling is not sufficient in this case, what are other approaches that may work? What do we do if those do not appear to be working? In addition to intervening with the subject, what can we do to enhance the safety of others?”

Threat assessment and management is not approached as a primarily adversarial or punitive process and should not be equated with disciplinary processes. Rather, the threat assessment and management process is designed and intended to be a supportive process and is most effective when it is not framed or operationalized as adversarial or punitive.

Many subjects of concern are seeking to be heard and understood in their grievances. While some of the ways the subject may be trying to address a grievance may be inappropriate or threatening (and need to be addressed), some of the grievances may be legitimate or may help us understand environmental or systemic issues (such as bullying, harassment, or bias) that are fueling grievances. The Community BTAM Team uses a holistic approach to understand identified concerns, but also (where possible) the underlying factors that are causing or contributing to the concerns.

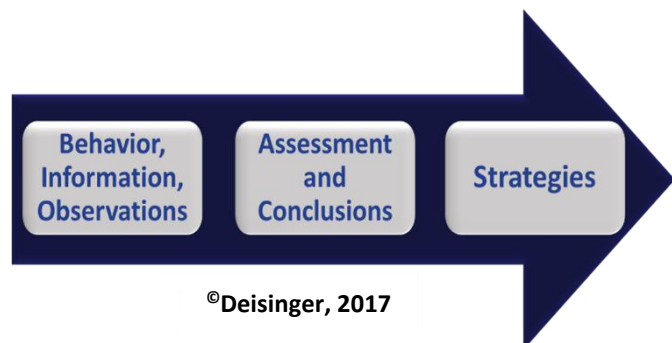
Improving Decision-Making and Articulate Reasonableness

Any conscientious Community BTAM Team member works diligently to be accurate and correct as much as possible. However, in the face of sometimes incomplete, inconsistent, or ambiguous information, it is not always possible to be right. The standard of practice, however, is not perfection, but reasonableness. That is, how would a person in a similar role, with comparable training, receiving similar information or observation, understand the situation, and what would they do based on that understanding?

Community BTAM Team members should be able to articulate that their strategies (e.g., case management interventions) were based on a systematic and structured professional judgment-based assessment, which was informed by the best available information and observations of behavior that were lawfully, ethically, and reasonably available to the Community BTAM Team member, at the time they had to make the assessment or case management intervention.

The ability to articulate the informed rationale for decision-making, especially when done in a consultative process with other well-trained Community BTAM Team members and key stakeholders, helps ensure reasonableness in decision-making and greatly diminishes bias and arbitrary or capricious acts. The following graphic (Figure 2) reflects the process for enhancing and articulating reasonableness.

Figure 2. Articulating Reasonableness in BTAM Processes



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Community BTAM Team members use the behavior, information, and observations gathered to inform the assessment and conclusions about the situation and, from that assessment, develop strategies to address the concern(s) that have been identified. Members of the Community BTAM Team engage in a collaborative and deliberative decision-making process in considering their inquiry, assessment, and interventions. This helps Community BTAM Team members to be reasonable, and to demonstrate reasonableness in their approach. Those are among the duties and standards of practice of Community BTAM Team members.

Enhancing Communication, Collaboration and Coordination

An effective threat assessment and management process relies on and, in turn, supports and enhances communication, collaboration, and coordination (Deisinger, Cychosz, & Jaeger, 1993/95) of efforts within the community.

Communication

The BTAM process requires active communication in a lawful, ethical, and effective manner and in all directions, including:

- From community members to the Community BTAM Team regarding concerning, aberrant, or threatening behaviors,
- Among participants in the threat assessment and management process, and
- From the Community BTAM Team to relevant community members, based on a legitimate need to know the information to support the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

Collaboration

There must be a shared sense of commitment and responsibility to work cooperatively to support the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

Coordination

Coordination entails engaging in planned and coordinated efforts, both within the Community BTAM Team and with external partners, to proactively, preventively, responsively, and reasonably support the health, safety, and well-being of Virginia's communities.

Community administrators and Community BTAM Team members must work diligently to ensure there are adequate processes for effective communication, collaboration, and coordination of efforts when cases cross areas of responsibility. This is critical to ensure that issues do not "fall between the cracks" and that resources are managed effectively and not duplicated unnecessarily.

There are also challenges and opportunities in sustaining effective communication, collaboration, and coordination with processes that exist outside of the organization or community or that may work within it to assist (e.g., local law enforcement, community mental health professionals providing services or supporting processes within the community, etc.). Effective teams work to identify key partnerships and continuously work to establish, sustain, and enhance working relationships between the team and those entities. This may include a variety of activities, such as:

- Liaising with local, state, and federal law enforcement partners
- Liaising with other threat assessment and management processes
- Liaising with community mental health treatment services
- Liaising with community crisis outreach/response services (e.g., Crisis Intervention Team [CIT], Mobile Crisis Response Team, Community Alternative Response Teams, Handle with Care Programs, etc.)
- Creating and updating contact lists for local/regional resources
- Establishing and sustaining relationships with key personnel through regular contact

- Collaborating with community task forces to address challenges impacting the community
- Establishing memoranda of agreement for collaborative services or referrals

Teams that engage in proactive efforts to develop and sustain relationships through ongoing communication, collaboration, and coordination are better prepared to deal with the range of threats they may face.

Why Develop a Community BTAM Team?

Organizations in different communities, such as schools, campuses, workplaces, law enforcement agencies, healthcare systems, etc., have developed and implemented behavioral threat assessment and management programs. In operating those programs, they soon encounter several challenges, such as:

- Subjects crossing roles and jurisdictions—a subject of concern may be engaged in threatening behavior in one jurisdiction, work in another, and live in another. This often creates challenges for organization-specific programs to have a comprehensive understanding of the subject's behavior and circumstances.
- Targets cross roles and jurisdictions—a target may be subjected to threatening behaviors in one jurisdiction or situation but live or work in another. This can create challenges in coordinating safety planning and access to resources.
- Individual Organizations:
 - May not understand each other's roles and resources and, therefore, don't incorporate those additional resources into the assessment or case management process.
 - May not communicate, collaborate, or coordinate efforts effectively due to real and perceived concerns about privacy and lawful information-sharing, a lack of experience in working collaboratively, or in coordinating approaches for maximum effectiveness.
 - May be under-resourced and not have the staff or expertise to deal with a given case.
 - May not recognize or understand the BTAM processes and, therefore, do not facilitate or take advantage of information gleaned from effective inquiry, assessment, and management actions of the organization's BTAM Team.
 - May not share investment in a preventative and collaborative approach to dealing with complex problems. Therefore, each entity may have an incident-based or crisis-based response that is not designed for effective preventative efforts or a longitudinal perspective on cases.
 - May fail to consider context and systems and focus only on the subject or the target, thus not developing a comprehensive understanding of the case to facilitate meaningful case management efforts.

To address these challenges, many communities across the nation have looked for ways to lawfully, ethically, and effectively build community-wide approaches that minimize gaps in understanding of cases and facilitate more effective management of cases.

Guiding Principles

Research and practical experience have helped identify several principles that guide the behavioral threat assessment and management process.

Effective Assessment Is Based on Observations of Behavior Rather Than on General Characteristics, Traits, or Profiles.

Perpetrator “profiles” do not provide a reliable basis for judging the threat posed by a particular individual. The threat assessment process examines the subject’s behavior in relation to the context, issues, challenges, and resources involved. This provides for an individualized, holistic, and contextually based assessment of and response to the situation.

Threat Assessment Is About Prevention, Not Prediction.

The threat assessment process is not intended to be used to predict whether a subject is a “violent person.” Instead, the Community BTAM Team is trying to determine under what circumstances the subject may become violent or engage in other harmful or significantly disruptive behaviors, what the impact of the situation is upon others (even when a subject poses no identifiable threat of violence), what environmental/systemic factors may be contributing to the situation, and whether there are any precipitating events on the foreseeable horizon. That comprehensive perspective helps prevent violence and assist those in need, even if they were never going to be violent.

An Inquisitive, Objective, and Diligent Mindset Is Critical to Successful Threat Assessment and Management.

Members of the Community BTAM Team strive to be thorough, diligent, accurate, and fair, to gather pieces of information, fit the pieces into a larger picture, and gain an understanding of the situation. One hallmark of a good inquiry or investigation is corroboration or fact-checking. Where possible, it is important to note where information from one source is corroborated by information from another source.

A Collaborative and Coordinated Approach Between Systems Within an Organization and the Community in which it Exists is Critical for an Effective Threat Assessment and Management Process.

Effective working relationships in the broader community (e.g., education, workplaces, mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, law enforcement, etc.) are critical to identifying, assessing, and managing individuals who may be on a path to carrying out an act of targeted violence.

A Multidisciplinary Approach Works Best in Preventing Violence and Enhancing the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of the Community.

A multidisciplinary approach brings the varied skills, resources, and abilities to prevent, identify, assess, manage, deter harm, and to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of communities.

Violence is a Dynamic Process.

No one is either always dangerous or never dangerous. The level of concern depends on the totality of the situation. An assessment is only as good as the quality of information on which it was based and at the time that it was made. The dynamics of the case can and will change as the team engages in interventions, as subjects, targets, and others interact, and as other life circumstances (including those outside the team’s control) impact the case and the level of danger posed. Threat assessment and management involves ongoing review, reassessment, and modification of intervention strategies until the point at which the case is adequately resolved.

Violence Stems from an Interaction Among the Subject(s), Target(s), Environment/Systems, and Precipitating Incidents. (*STEP Framework*; Deisinger, 1996; Deisinger & Nolan, 2021)

Identifying, assessing, and managing potential acts of violence or other harm requires a comprehensive and holistic perspective of the situation involving four key domains and their interactions. Effective approaches consider each of the four domains that may impact both the assessment and management of cases:

- S** Is the **Subject** engaging in behavior(s) that may pose a threat of harm to self or others, or significant disruption, or does the subject otherwise indicate a need for assistance or intervention?
- T** Are **Targets (or others impacted)** vulnerable to harm, in need of or taking protective actions, impacted by the situation, or otherwise indicating a need for support, assistance or intervention?
- E** Are there **Environmental/Systemic** issues contributing to or impacting the situation?
- P** Are there reasonably foreseeable **Precipitating Events** that may impact the situation (Subject, Target, and/or Environment)?

Figure 3. STEP Framework (Deisinger, 1996; Deisinger & Nolan, 2021)



Where there are concerns noted in any of the STEP domains, Community BTAM Team members should determine if there are actions or interventions that they can facilitate to address those concerns, beyond those already being effectively done.

A Key Area of Inquiry Is the Degree to which a Subject May Pose a Threat (i.e., Has or Is Developing the Capability and Intent to Harm), Not Solely Whether the Subject Has Made a Threat (i.e., Communicated or Expressed Intent to Harm).

Research on targeted violence has found that few perpetrators directly communicated a threat to their target before the violence, especially when there was no prior intimate relationship between the perpetrator and target. In most incidents of targeted violence, perpetrators did not directly threaten their targets, but they did communicate their intent, plans, or preparations to others before the violence. This indirect expression or third-party communication of intent to cause harm is often referred to as “leakage.” Individuals who are found to pose threats (i.e., have developed the capacity and are prepared to engage in violence) frequently do not make threats directly to their targets. Therefore, the absence of a directly communicated threat should not, by itself, lead to the conclusion that a subject poses no threat or danger to self or others.

The Relationship Between Mental Illness and Violence Is Complex.

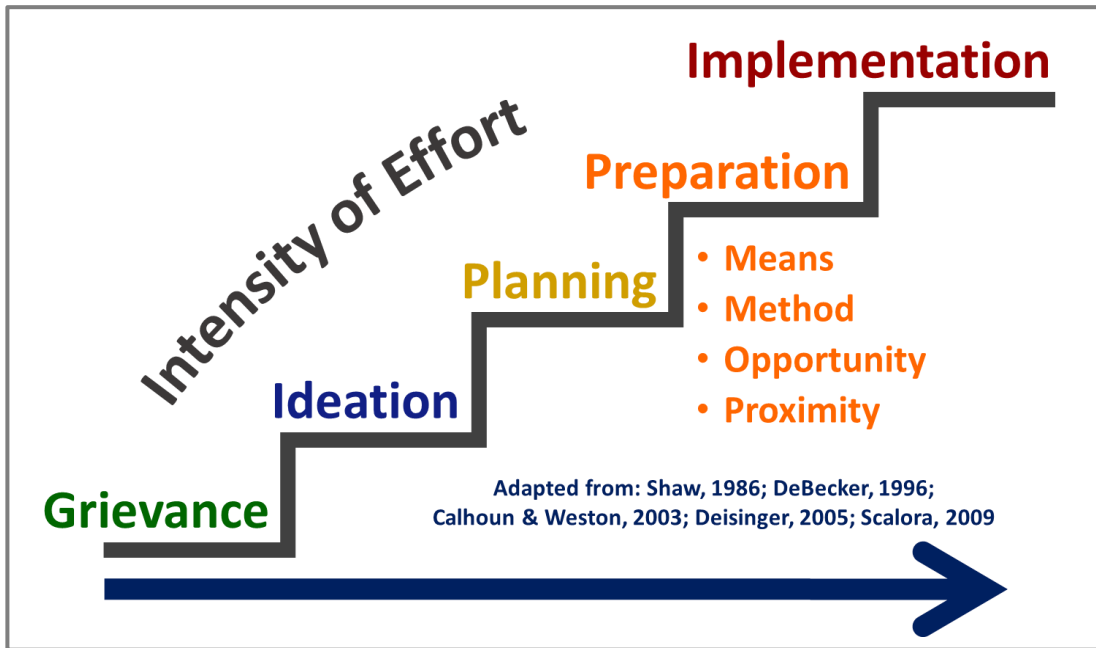
Most persons living with mental illness will not be violent toward others. Most people who are violent are not mentally ill. The presence of serious mental illness increases the general risk of violence, but it is rarely the sole or primary explanation for a violent act. Other risk factors, such as a history of violence, childhood exposure to violence, substance abuse or dependence, or difficulties coping with stress or challenges, have more significant correlations with violence overall.

Beyond the presence of diagnosed mental illnesses, Community BTAM Team members should monitor for symptoms or indicators of decreased well-being that may impact perceptions of grievance, diminished ability to cope with stressors, or decreased ability to engage in effective (and non-violent) problem-solving.

Targeted Violence Is the Result of an Understandable and Usually Discernible Process of Thinking and Behavior.

Individuals who committed acts of targeted violence rarely “just snapped.” Instead, they engaged in a process of thought and behavior that escalated over days, weeks, months, and even years. That process is often referred to as “The Pathway to Violence” and is represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The Pathway to Violence



The steps along the pathway include:

Grievance

A grievance may be a real or perceived sense of loss, mistreatment, or injustice, often fueling a feeling of being wronged. Most people will experience grievances throughout life, and the vast majority do not engage in acts of violence. However, for those who do engage in targeted violence, grievances (or other motivations) are common precursors. Factors that increase the risk of grievances leading to violence include a fixation upon the grievances with a co-occurring decrease in functioning and a strong sense of shame or humiliation related to the grievance.

Ideation

Ideation is when the subject expresses thoughts or fantasies regarding the use of violence to address a real or perceived grievance and may be perceived if the subject expresses those thoughts verbally or in written form, e.g., email, journal, or internet posting. Note that many people have occasional or fleeting thoughts of violence in response to perceived grievances. Most do not act on those thoughts or move forward along the Pathway. Therefore, knowledge that someone is thinking about violence does not confirm that a danger exists but should orient us to the possibility and the subject’s struggle with a grievance.

Planning

Planning involves giving thought and consideration not only to the idea and intent of committing violence, but also to the who, what, when, where, and how of doing so. Expressions here may begin to reference timing, location, targets, means, methods, etc. Subjects may seek out and gather information regarding their grievances, targets, means of causing harm, equipment, etc. They may research other incidents of targeted violence to learn from other perpetrators.

Preparation

Beyond just having or acquiring weapons, this stage involves attempts to prepare for the violence and to develop or acquire the capability to cause harm to the intended target(s)/victim(s). They obtain or try to obtain the means to fulfill their plans, which may be weapons, tools, or clothing to match their fantasies/role models, etc.

As they move forward in planning and preparation, they may adjust plans as they encounter barriers or opportunities to the original ideation and plans. They may seek or take advantage of circumstances that support their fantasy and plans. Finally, much targeted violence (though not all) occurs in relative proximity to targets. Subjects may conduct surveillance or probe boundaries or security systems to see if they can access areas where they do not belong or get close to people in inappropriate or atypical ways.

Implementation

Once subjects perceive that they have the capability to do so, they pose a significantly greater likelihood of implementing the intended act of violence. Capability is based on the subject's subjective belief in their ability to cause harm and their will to do so. As a subject moves to the right along the Pathway and more of the steps are present, the capability and risk for violence increase along the vertical dimension. The horizontal line at the bottom of the Pathway model represents time. As a subject moves to the right along the Pathway, there is often an escalation in the rate of movement or changes in the frequency or pattern of behaviors causing concern (e.g., a number of concerns over time). Conversely, where a subject has caused numerous concerns over time and suddenly there is no more information about concerns regarding the subject (i.e., they "go off the radar"), the Community BTAM Team should check whether the concerning behavior has stopped, the subject has become more covert in their actions, community members have stopped reporting concerns, or there are other reasons why the subject's behavior has "dropped off the radar".

Research indicates that while targeted violence incidents are rarely spontaneous and impulsive, they can escalate rapidly from ideation through implementation—that is, the time span between the subject's decision to cause harm and the actual incident may be short. This may be expedited by a sense of desperation for resolution, a lack of concern for consequences, or the influences of others encouraging escalation (e.g., through social media or direct communications). Consequently, when there are indications that a subject may pose a threat to the community, the Community BTAM Team will need to move quickly to inquire about and intervene in that planning or preparation.

As with any model, the Pathway reflects a general framework for understanding intentional actions. However, for a given case, the process is not necessarily as linear as the model depicts. Rather, the person may ebb and flow in their rate and direction of movement toward (or away from) violence and cycle between phases of the process (e.g., from preparatory behaviors back to planning, then more preparation). As the subject exerts or demonstrates increased "intensity of effort" (Scalora, 2021) around the ideation, planning, and preparation, e.g., more attention, time, energy, resources, etc., there is a greater risk for harm and likely a greater impact on others.

The steps along this path indicate opportunities to observe, identify, and intervene with threatening and/or aberrant behaviors that cause concern for the individual's well-being or violence by them. Frequently, information about an individual's ideas, plans, and preparations for violence can be observed before violence can occur. However, information is likely to be scattered and fragmented. For example, a teacher may see a certain set of behaviors of an individual in her class, a coach observes other behaviors or expressed thoughts by the individual, a campus police officer has other concerns, and a campus administrator is aware of certain conduct violations. The key is to act quickly upon initial reports of concern, gather other pieces of the puzzle, and assemble them to determine what picture emerges.

Social Media and Online Activity Are Critical Considerations in Many Cases.

The use of social media and internet-based communications is ubiquitous in our society. Subjects of concern, and those concerned about those subjects, often use social media or other internet-based communications to express such concerns. For those who may pose a threat, their expressions of grievances, violent intent, planning, and preparation can often be observed in online activities. This may occur as the subject expressing those elements in the subject's online activity or others commenting about the subject's behaviors or statements.

THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF VIOLENCE

Violence takes many forms, and it is critical that Community BTAM Team members understand the nature and process of how such violence may manifest. Community members may have opportunities to identify, prevent, and disrupt violence during the course of daily activities or events. Awareness of the different modes of violence and the indicators of mobilization to violence is important to proactively preventing violent outcomes and bringing criminal investigations to their logical conclusions.

Modes of Violence

Humans (and most, if not all, members of the animal kingdom) exhibit aggression and violence in two main modes: Affective (also called Emotional or Reactive) and Targeted (also referred to as Predatory, Proactive, or Instrumental) violence. Those modes are best understood as the ends of a continuum of behaviors expressing aggression and violence, from pure Affective violence at one end to pure Predatory violence at the other. In practice, few, if any, of us are always either affective or predatory across all situation, but exhibit different modes and degrees of expression depending on the context and our individual proclivities and capabilities.

Meloy (2000), in his book *Violence Risk and Threat Assessment*, contrasted the two modes across several dimensions, as seen in Figure 5:

Figure 5. Modes of Violence

Affective Violence:		Predatory Violence:
Intense emotion and expression	↔	Minimal emotion or expression
Violence is reactive and immediate	↔	Violence is planned and purposeful
Violence against perceived threats	↔	Violence against specified targets
Heightened and diffuse awareness	↔	Heightened and focused awareness
Goal is threat reduction	↔	Violence serves variable goals
Primarily emotional and defensive	↔	Primarily cognitive and attack-oriented
Rapid displacement of the target	↔	Minimal displacement of the target
Reactions are time-limited	↔	Not time-limited

Affective Violence

This is the most common form of human violence and is characterized on the left side of the behavioral continuum by intense emotionality and expressivity. Affective violence is reactive and relatively immediate in response to an acute perceived threat or provocation. The person, feeling threatened, exhibits significantly heightened and diffuse awareness to anticipate and detect other perceived threats that may impact the situation.

Driven by the heightened autonomic nervous system (e.g., fight, flight, freeze responses) and fueled by significant hormonal changes within the body, the purpose of affective violence is to reduce the perceived threat and return to a state of homeostasis or balance. Therefore, the violence is defensive in nature and, given the heightened awareness (and wariness), can result in rapid displacement or redirection of violence to any other perceived threats. Since affective violence is fueled by acute changes in hormone levels that cannot be sustained (in the absence of stimulant drugs or novel threats) for more than a few hours, the violence is time-limited; that is, the exhaustion resulting from the activated autonomic system will result in diminished agitation and violence over a relatively brief period.

Patterned Affective Violence

It is important to note that some subjects may engage in Patterned Affective Violence. While the acute violent incident may be more reactive and spontaneous to an immediate perceived threat or provocation, such subjects tend to express such threat reactions across similar situations or settings. In patterned affective violence, the risk level may not diminish as quickly or fully as with singular incidents of affective violence, but instead persist and recur over time.

Targeted Violence

In contrast to Affective Violence, Targeted Violence is characterized by minimal expressed emotionality as the subject's focus has changed to a cognitive, problem-solving process. This does not mean that a subject exhibits no emotion about grievances—just that it will be much less pronounced than with Affective Violence. Violence here is more targeted and premeditated and is characterized by a heightened but focused awareness, reflective of the goal-directed behavior. Motivations for Targeted Violence may be more complex and varied than the primary focus on threat reduction in Affective Violence. There may be multiple grievances that motivate violent intent, some of which may not be acutely present and may be more difficult to discern in the moment. The subject's primary energies are cognitive in nature and do not require activation of the autonomic system, so they are less bound by the effects of exhaustion. Therefore, the risk for violence is much less time-limited than observed with Affective Violence.

Definition of Targeted Violence:

Targeted Violence is defined as incident(s) of violence in which potential assailant(s) choose(s) particular target(s) prior to a violent/destructive act.

Adapted from FBI, 2017, Making Prevention of Violence a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks.

This form of violence is much less of an emotional reaction and more of a problem-solving process. It is more of a goal-oriented, cognitive process for considering, planning, and preparing ways to address unresolved grievances. Therefore, the behavior associated with targeted violence will be quite different from a purely or primarily affective driven reactivity to acutely perceived threats or provocations. Threat assessment and management teams (and the community they serve) need to be prepared to recognize and respond to behaviors across the continuum.

Examples of Targeted Violence:

There are several examples of types of Targeted Violence, or types of violence that may involve predatory behaviors. These include, but are not limited to:

- Public mass violence/active assailant incidents
- Terrorism/Violent extremism
- Grievance-based violence impacting:
 - Workplaces, schools, and campuses
 - Houses of worship/faith communities
 - Government agencies/military facilities
 - Public figures
- Espionage/Disruption/Sabotage
- Domestic/Dating/Intimate partner violence*
- Predatory sexual assault or sexual misconduct
- Stalking
- Human trafficking
- Gang violence*

- Harassment/Bullying/Mobbing
- Bias and hate incidents and crimes
- Suicidal behaviors in public locations*

NOTE: An asterisk * indicates that some, but not all, of these behaviors regularly involve predatory violence, while some may involve affective, patterned affective, or targeted violence.

The root causes of these different forms of violence are many and varied. However, the core behaviors that facilitate the development of capability and intent to cause harm are more similar than different across the different forms of targeted violence. Therefore, it is important for Community BTAM Team members (and the community they serve) to understand and recognize indicators of ideation, intent, planning, and preparation that enhance capability for any harm rather than try to make a priori determinations about specific intended acts of harm.

Key Findings About Targeted Violence

As noted above, this guide is informed by research and lessons learned from a wide range of sources. The BTAM field has benefited a great deal from this enhanced understanding of the nature and process of targeted violence. Some key findings are listed here:

There Is No Demographic Profile of a Perpetrator of Targeted Violence.

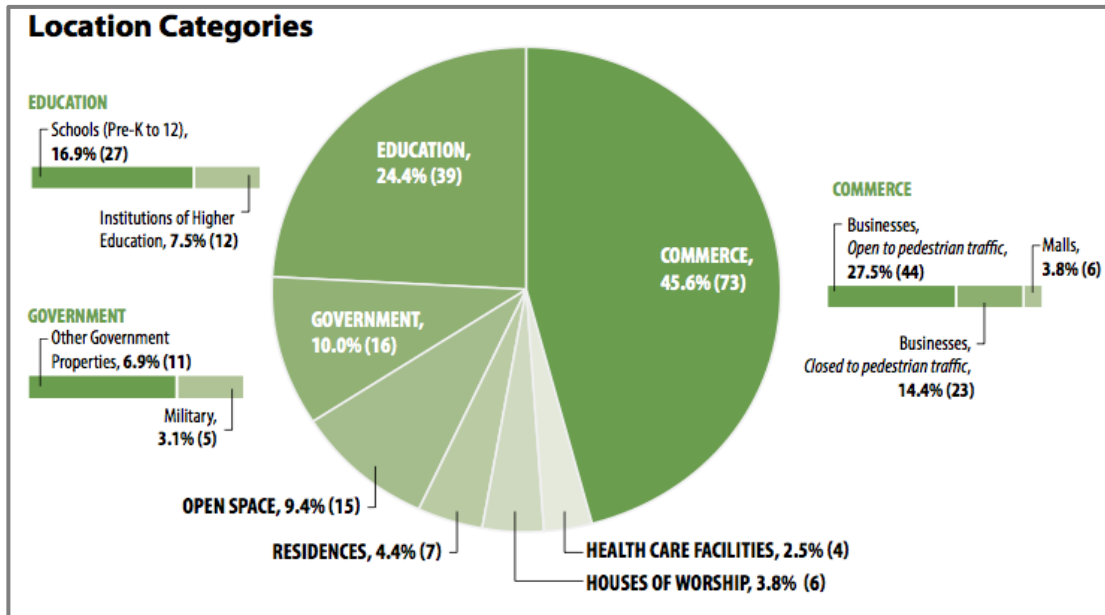
There is no useful set of traits or demographics that have described all—or even most—of the perpetrators. Instead, the demographic, personality, history, and social characteristics of the attackers have varied substantially. Knowing that a subject shares general characteristics, behaviors, features, or traits with prior perpetrators does not greatly help in determining whether that subject is thinking about or planning for a violent act. The use of profiles in this way is not an effective approach to identifying subjects who may pose a risk for targeted violence or for assessing the risk that a particular subject may pose.

Reliance on profiles to predict future violent acts carries two substantial risks: (1) the great majority of subjects who fit any given profile of a “workplace shooter/attacker” will not actually pose a risk of targeted violence, and (2) using profiles will fail to identify some subjects who in fact pose a risk of violence but share few, if any, characteristics with prior attackers. Rather than trying to determine the “type” of subject who may engage in targeted violence, an inquiry should focus instead on a subject’s behaviors and communications to determine if that subject appears to be planning or preparing to cause harm and, if so, how fast the subject is moving toward harm, and where intervention may be possible.

There Is No Profile for the Type of Organization or Place That Has Been Targeted.

Acts of targeted violence have occurred in a variety of organizations and a wide range of locations across the nation and around the world. In examining active shooter events, for example, the FBI found that they had occurred across nearly all types of public settings (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Locations of Active Shooter Events in the U.S.: 2000–2013



[FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. \(2018\). A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2013.](#)

Most Perpetrators of Targeted Violence Act Alone in the Commission of the Violent Act.

For all forms of targeted violence, most perpetrators act alone. It is important to recognize, however, that in some cases, perpetrators collaborate in teams with harmful intent. This is more common in cases involving violent extremism, gang violence, and predatory sexual misconduct. Outside of those contexts, when considering mass violence as an intended act, “killing teams” are more likely among adolescents rather than adults. Community BTAM Team members should be attentive to the possibility of perpetrator collaborations.

In Many Cases, Others Were Involved in Some Capacity.

In many cases, others influenced or encouraged the perpetrator to take violent action, aided in the planning or preparation of the violent act, or, despite knowledge of the violent intent of the perpetrator, chose not to report concerns or take other steps to intervene.

Any investigation of potential targeted violence should include attention to the role that the subject’s friends, peers, or social media contacts may be playing in that subject’s thinking about and preparations for an attack. It is possible that feedback from friends or others may help to move a subject from an unformed thought about attacking to developing and advancing a plan to carry out the attack.

Incidents of Targeted Violence Are Rarely Sudden or Impulsive Acts.

Perpetrators of targeted violence engage in a process of considering, planning, and preparing for acts of targeted violence. See discussion of the “Pathway to Violence” above.

Most Subjects Did Not Threaten the Targets Directly.

The majority of the attackers in targeted violence incidents did *not* communicate threats to their target(s) beforehand—whether through direct (“I will kill YOU”), indirect (“You won’t want to be here next Tuesday,” said to a third party), or conditional (“If you don’t give me a decent performance evaluation, I will_____”) language prior to the attack. However, many expressed their grievances and aspects of their thoughts or plans to others, often through social media or online activities. This finding underscores the importance of not waiting for a communicated threat

before beginning a protective criminal investigation; other alarming or troubling behavior can prompt Community BTAM Team members to gather more information and make an assessment, even if the person of concern does not threaten a target directly.

Perpetrators Often Had Multiple Grievances or Motives That Fueled Violent Intent.

The most common involve unresolved grievances with a peer (co-worker or classmate) or a romantic relationship. However, grievances may involve other unresolved personal issues, a desire to kill or harm, suicide, notoriety/fame, etc. Community BTAM Team members, upon identifying a likely grievance, should consider whether there are other grievances (perhaps known only to sources that have not yet been identified) that may be relevant to the case. This comprehensive approach will facilitate more effective problem-solving.

Many Subjects Felt Bullied, Persecuted, or Injured by Others Prior to Their Act of Violence.

Many of the cases studied take place in school settings. In those cases, almost three-quarters of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others prior to the incident. Some attackers described being harassed or bullied in terms that suggested that these experiences approached torment. These attackers told of behaviors that, if they occurred in the workplace, likely would meet legal definitions of harassment and/or assault. Research on both campus and workplace violence shows that patterns of bullying or harassment are often related to violence. Bullying was not a factor in every case, though, and clearly, not every person who is bullied in an organization will pose a risk for targeted violence in the organization.

Most Subjects Had Multiple Stressors and Difficulty Coping with Those Stressors.

In addition to the circumstances that were the basis for their grievances, many perpetrators had significant other stressors and/or difficulties with losses or failures. Many were suicidal. Most attackers appeared to have difficulty coping with losses, personal failures, or other difficult circumstances. Almost all the attackers had experienced or perceived some major loss prior to the attack. These losses included a perceived failure or loss of status; loss of a loved one or of a significant relationship, including a romantic relationship; and a major illness experienced by the attacker or someone significant to them. Although most attackers had not received a formal mental health evaluation or diagnosis, most attackers exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts at some point prior to their attack (78%). When considering case management approaches, there may be many things we can do to help someone who is having difficulty coping with stresses, losses, or failures—or who is desperate or even suicidal.

Most Subjects Had Access to Weapons and Had Used Weapons Prior to the Attack.

Access to weapons among some subjects may be common. However, when there are unresolved grievances along with consideration for the use of violence to address those grievances, any effort to acquire, prepare, or use a weapon or ammunition may be a significant move in the subject's progression from idea to action. Any inquiry should include investigation of and attention to weapon access, use, fascination with, or communications about weapons. A large proportion of subjects who have engaged in attacks with firearms acquired their guns from home, relatives, or friends. This points to the need for organizational staff and law enforcement officials to collaborate on policies and procedures for responding when a subject is thought to have or to be bringing a firearm into the organization.

Experience using weapons and access to them was common for many attackers. Nearly two-thirds of the attackers had a known history of weapons use, including knives, guns, and bombs (63%, n=26). Over half of the attackers had some experience specifically with a gun prior to the incident (59%, n=24), while others had experience with bombs or explosives (15%, n=6). Of course, many people (especially those in military or law enforcement roles or who engage in hunting or recreational target shooting) have experience with weapons and do not pose a threat based solely on that experience. Attention should also be given to indications of any efforts by a subject to build a bomb or acquire bomb-making components or any other means of harm to others. The critical consideration is the capability for harm (e.g., means of harm) in someone expressing intent to act violently regarding unresolved grievances.

Many Perpetrators Exhibited Psychological, Behavioral, or Developmental Symptoms.

Note that the emphasis is on having exhibited symptoms of mental health conditions rather than on meeting criteria for diagnosis. Approximately 30–40% of perpetrators had a known mental health diagnosis, which is significant given that the population base rate is around 20–25%. This does not necessarily mean that mental illness caused the violence, only that it was a co-occurring factor that may have impacted perpetrators' perceptions of grievances or ability to cope effectively with them. Perpetrators also often had significant histories of substance use or abuse, though were rarely under the influence of a recreational drug during the targeted violence incident.

Note that the greatest risk for violence is not solely the diagnosis of a mental health condition but the absence of effective treatment. When a person living with a mental health condition is effectively treated and remains engaged with and compliant with that treatment, violence risk drops to similar levels as those with no mental health conditions.

The three main categories of mental health symptoms displayed prior to acts of targeted violence include:

- Psychological (e.g., depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, anxiety, psychosis)
- Behavioral (e.g., defiance/misconduct, attention deficit disorder, aggression, anger, animal cruelty)
- Neurological/Developmental: (e.g., developmental delays, cognitive deficits, learning disabilities).

Again, the significance of any of these is largely the degree to which they impact perpetrators' perceptions of grievances or their ability to cope with grievances or other stressors.

Most Subjects Had Seriously Concerned Others Prior to Their Act of Violence.

Nearly all the subjects engaged in behaviors prior to their attacks that caused concern or alarm to at least one person, and most concerned more than one person. Most individuals who perpetrated violence engaged in multiple behaviors prior to the incident that caused others to have serious concerns about their behavior and/or well-being.

Almost all the perpetrators engaged in some behavior prior to the attack that caused others—supervisors, colleagues, peers, family members—to be concerned. The behaviors that led other individuals to be concerned about the attacker included both behaviors specifically related to the violent act, such as efforts to get a gun, as well as other disturbing behaviors not necessarily related to the subsequent violence, e.g., degree of fixation on the grievance, personalization of the grievance, difficulty coping with life events, etc.

- Many perpetrators were preoccupied with violent interests, incidents, or perpetrators.
- Many perpetrators had a history of violence.
- Most perpetrators of mass violence had a history of campus/work disciplinary actions.
- Many had prior contact with law enforcement. The contacts did not necessarily result in criminal/juvenile charges but included welfare checks or calls regarding suspicious or disruptive persons.
- Many perpetrators were suicidal in addition to their violent thoughts or acts toward others. Note that suicidal behaviors are a significant and growing concern across all genders and age groups.

Prior to Violent Acts, Others Usually Know Aspects of the Subject's Grievances, Ideas, Plans, or Preparations.

Peers are often the ones who observe those behaviors and can be an important part of prevention efforts. A friend, colleague, or teammate may be the first person to hear that a subject is thinking about or planning to harm someone. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, those who have information about a potential incident of targeted violence may not alert someone on their own. Organizations can and should encourage their members to report those concerns.

Communities also benefit from ensuring that they have a fair, thoughtful, and effective system to respond to concerns that are brought forward. If community members have concerns about how other community members will react to information that they bring forward (e.g., overreact or under-respond), they may be even less inclined to volunteer such information.

Many Bystanders Who Had Knowledge of Concerning Behaviors Did Not Report Them.

In the majority of incidents of completed acts of mass violence, others who had knowledge of violent intent, planning, or preparation of the perpetrators did not report their concerns prior to the violent act. Violence has been averted when bystanders reported and/or addressed concerning, aberrant, or threatening behaviors.

Despite Prompt Law Enforcement Response, Most Critical Incidents Were Brief in Duration and Were Stopped by Means Other Than Law Enforcement Intervention.

Even though law enforcement responded very quickly to these shootings once notified, most attacks were stopped through intervention by supervisors, mentors, and peers, or by the attackers stopping on their own. This largely appears to be a function of how brief most of these incidents were in duration. The short duration of most incidents of targeted violence argues for the importance of developing preventive measures in addition to any emergency planning for an organization. The preventive measures should include protocols and procedures for responding to and managing threats and other behaviors of concern.

Implications for Prevention

The key message in all of this is that many acts of targeted violence are preventable. Information about a subject's ideas, behaviors, plans, and preparations for violence can often be observed before harm can occur. The challenge is that, while there are usually pieces of the puzzle available, the information is likely to be scattered and fragmented.

This reality is represented in many of the incidents of targeted violence that have impacted organizations. This was true regarding the mass casualty incident that occurred at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007.

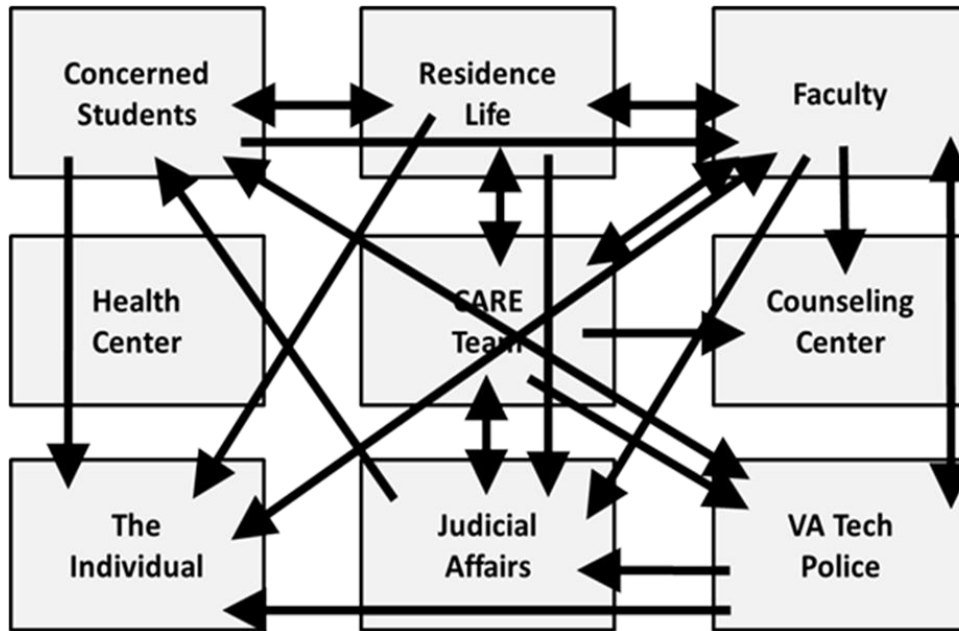
The graphic in Figure 7 summarizes key findings from an after-action review conducted by the Inspector General for (what is now) the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health Services for the Commonwealth of Virginia. This graphic captures the scattered and fragmented nature of the concerns regarding the subject (who ultimately engages in violence) and communication about those concerns.

The nine boxes in the graphic represent people, groups, or departments at Virginia Tech in the period leading up to the mass-casualty incident. The "Individual" at lower left is the person who will ultimately engage in the mass-casualty incident on April 16, 2007.

The arrows represent pathways of communication between the different entities represented.

All the communication represented in the arrows involves concerns regarding the "Individual." All of these are either concerns for his well-being, concerns regarding the impact he is having on others, or both. Importantly, all the concerns represented were significant enough that they were either documented or conveyed to a reliable source that could later verify the concern. Further, all the concerns represented occurred during a relatively brief period in the fall of 2005 (e.g., early October to mid-December 2005), approximately 1.5 years prior to the mass casualty incident at Virginia Tech.

Figure 7. Communication of Concerns Regarding the Subject of Concern at Virginia Tech



OIG Report #140-07: Investigation of the April 16, 2007, Critical Incident at Virginia Tech. Office of the Inspector General for Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services—Commonwealth of Virginia.

The graphic demonstrates several key points.

- First, there were many concerns regarding the individual. Each arrow represents a path of communications about concerns, and many of the arrows reflect multiple concerns about the subject expressed between groups.
- No individual or department on campus was aware of all the concerns.
- No individual or department was designated with the responsibility or authority to be aware of concerns occurring across departments, i.e., there was no centralized awareness of the breadth and depth of concerns regarding the individual or his impact on others.
- The institution did not know what it did not know about the situation.
- Therefore, there was no comprehensive or coordinated response to attempt to address the concerns.

While this graphic is about the situation at Virginia Tech at the time leading up to the mass casualty incident, the same problems have occurred across multiple incidents of targeted violence that have impacted organizations of various types across the nation.

Key findings from several reviews of critical incidents include:

- Failure to build an effective system to identify and detect developing concerns
- Failure to support effective communication to, with, and between elements of that system, based on trust and engagement with the community

There is often much discussion about the importance of “connecting the dots.” However, this fails to address what is necessary for the dots to be connected. BTAM expert Rich Wilson puts this rather succinctly in his work with organizations: “You can’t connect the dots if you don’t collect the dots.” That is, effective BTAM processes build processes for gathering information about developing concerns (“collect the dots”) so that they can better understand the situation (“connect the dots”) and better manage the situation.

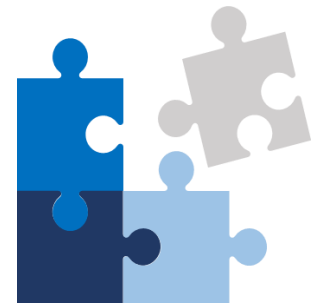
**You can’t connect the dots
if you don’t collect the dots.**
—Rich Wilson, CPP

In summary,

- Many acts of violence can be prevented.
- Information about a subject’s ideas, behaviors, plans, and preparations for violence can often be observed before harm can occur.
- Information about a subject’s ideas, behaviors, plans, or preparations tends to be scattered and fragmented.
- Keys for the community and the Community BTAM Team are to:
 - Recognize concerns.
 - Act quickly upon report of concerns.
 - Gather relevant information.
 - Enhance understanding of the situation.
 - Facilitate intervention.

Collect the dots so you can better connect the dots!

BTAM is somewhat like putting together a puzzle. The Community BTAM Team may not have all the pieces, but by working collaboratively with others, they can better find lost pieces, figure out how they go together, understand the emerging picture, and intervene appropriately.



GUIDELINES FOR BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

This section provides guidance for the development, implementation, and operation of comprehensive and effective behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) processes. This guidance is a synthesis of relevant research and recognized standards of practice. All guidance herein should be considered in conjunction with relevant state and federal laws, as well as applicable policies and procedures related to threat assessment and management. This “BTAM Guide” highlights key elements and considerations for practice but is not designed to be a comprehensive compendium. BTAM practitioners should also consult other relevant resources as appropriate.

Essential Elements of an Effective Threat Assessment and Management Process

Research and practice have shown that, to establish and sustain an effective BTAM process, organizations must have a systematic process that:

- Utilizes an effective and relevant multidisciplinary approach that enhances the team’s ability to address all threats,
- Enables coordinated and timely awareness of developing concerns through active community engagement,
- Conducts a thorough, holistic, and contextual assessment of the situation (e.g., using the STEP framework),
- Implements proactive and integrated case management strategies (e.g., using the STEP framework)
- Monitors and reassesses cases on a longitudinal basis so long as concerns continue,
- Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice, and
- Sustains a focus on continuous improvement of the process and adapts to challenges and changing needs.

©Deisinger (1998); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)

For each essential element, the focus is on implementing, operating, and sustaining a systematic approach to practice. Each element requires ongoing efforts to develop, refine, and enhance processes to facilitate high-quality BTAM practices. Effective teams work diligently and consistently to build capacity across all these elements. Throughout this section, the “Community BTAM Practitioner’s Guide” will address aspects of each essential element.

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Address All Threats

Professional standards of practice recommend using multidisciplinary approaches to behavioral threat assessment and management. Such an approach greatly enhances the organization’s ability to identify, assess, and manage all threats that may be posed to the organization, its members, its facilities, and its operations.

Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment and Management Process

Virginia DCJS is partnering with other federal, state, and local agencies to engage community members in helping to prevent targeted violence and terrorism through multidisciplinary and multi-agency behavioral threat assessment and management teams.

A well-developed multidisciplinary process helps maximize the knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources to address concerns and enhance the team’s ability to identify, inquire, assess, and manage cases. There are several considerations for establishing and operating a multidisciplinary approach to behavioral threat assessment and management.

Developing a Multidisciplinary Community BTAM Team

Community BTAM Teams should establish a mission, including the team’s purpose, scope, function, and authority. It is also necessary to provide a structure for the team that includes team membership (core and ad hoc), team leadership, and support resources. When developing the mission, executive and community support are essential.

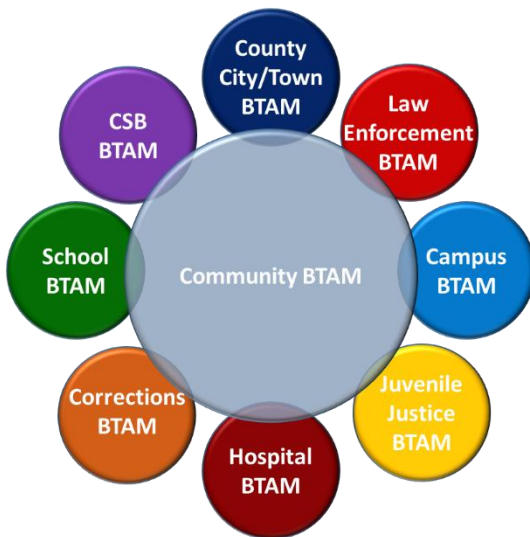
The principles of a Community BTAM Team should also include:

- Viewing violence as a community and public health concern, not solely a law enforcement or clinical issue
- “Do no harm”
- Enhancing the health, safety, and well-being of the community
- Building a lawful, collaborative, and comprehensive approach for the identification, assessment, and management of concerns
- Emphasizing prevention and early intervention
- Sustaining engagement and reintegration following release from intensive treatment or custodial environments

In developing the team’s mission, there are several key factors to consider.

- Understand and articulate the needs and challenges to be addressed. What is the need for and value of such a community-wide approach? What problems or challenges exist, and how will the Community BTAM Team help address those issues?
- Establish authority for the process. Authorization and support from key agency leaders and stakeholders are often essential for a team to be viewed as legitimate and to function effectively.
- Will the Community BTAM Team operate as a “team of teams”—that is, a collaborative effort joining together existing BTAM Teams or processes within the community, as in Figure 8?

Figure 8: A Team of Teams



- How will the Community BTAM Team enhance BTAM capabilities within and between organizations? In addition to building BTAM capabilities for the community team, how can the Community BTAM Team work to enhance capabilities within various community organizations to support and enhance the identification, assessment, and management of concerns?
- Implement effective structure and protocols. Based on the authorized mission, create a team structure, membership, policies, and procedures to support that mission. Build a Community BTAM Team that meets the needs of the community it serves. One-size-fits-all approaches have limited effectiveness.

- Engage and coordinate multidisciplinary resources. In addition to the core members of the Community BTAM Team, what are other key agencies or resources that may help maximize the effectiveness of the Community BTAM Team?
- Understand and apply relevant law and policy. At the time this document was written, there was no statutory requirement or statement of authority for Community BTAM Teams. This does not preclude the development, implementation, or operation of such teams, but it does raise important questions about which laws, regulations, and policies may apply. Community BTAM Teams will want to know what legal resources are available for guidance and consultation about team mission, roles, authorities, etc. It will also mean that team members will need to respect the laws, regulations, and policies under which each team member must operate, being an employee of their respective agency and in their respective profession.
- Respect boundaries, protect civil liberties and rights, and safeguard the confidentiality of those involved in cases. Effective BTAM approaches work to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the communities or organizations they serve. Respect and protection of rights and liberties is an essential component of that effective approach.
- Train Community BTAM Team members. Collaborative approaches initiated without consideration of and support for the training of team members have limited utility. Consider how team members from differing organizations can participate in at least foundational training in BTAM principles and practices.
- Community awareness. How will the mission and operation of the Community BTAM Team be shared with the community to facilitate awareness, engagement, and reasonable oversight of processes?

Additional considerations for establishing a Community BTAM Team include the role(s) of the team. Questions regarding the team's roles include, but are not limited to:

- Will the team manage cases directly or advise stakeholders on cases brought before the team?
- Will the team investigate cases or advise members and stakeholders on considerations for the case inquiry?
- Will the Community BTAM Team review cases handled by other BTAM Teams and provide feedback or advice on how cases could have been handled?
- Will the Community BTAM Team provide guidance for community organizations as those organizations develop and refine their own BTAM processes?
- Will the Community BTAM Team generate documentation or reports? If so, who creates those documents? Where will they be stored? How are the documents classified? Who has access to those documents under relevant freedom of information statutes? What is the retention and destruction schedule for the documents, and who ensures compliance with those standards?
- How will Community BTAM Team members maintain confidentiality and protect civil liberties?
- Will the Community BTAM Team (as an entity) provide outreach to the community, or will that be done as members of the constituent member agencies of the Team?
- What will be the role of law enforcement in the Community BTAM structure and operation?
 - Will the Community BTAM Team be law enforcement-based, with core members solely or mainly from law enforcement agencies?
 - Will the Community BTAM Team be law enforcement-facilitated, that is, will law enforcement lead the team operations with support from community stakeholders?
 - Will the Community BTAM Team be law enforcement-supported, that is, will community agencies lead the team operations with support from law enforcement?
 - Will the Community BTAM Team operate as a community collaboration, where all members have a core role and a seat at the table for decisions regarding the team's mission, role, and operations?

Each of these approaches may be valid for a given community with a particular law enforcement mission and staffing. Teams should carefully weigh the pros and cons of each of the above approaches, considering the relationship and trust between law enforcement and the community.

Community BTAM Team Membership

A multidisciplinary approach to threat assessment and management works best to identify and meet BTAM-related team goals, which are to:

- Facilitate early awareness of developing concerns/threats.
 - Maximize skills and resources to address concerns and manage and monitor outcomes.
 - Enhance:
 - Communication (to, from, and among the Community BTAM Team and the relevant community)
 - Collaboration (working together for the best awareness and outcomes)
 - Coordination (engaging in planning and orchestrating actions and interventions within the team and with outside partners)
 - Capitalization (build on what you have)
- ©G. Deisinger, C. Cychosz, L. Jaeger (1993/1995)
- A well-developed multidisciplinary approach helps maximize the knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources to address concerns and enhance the team's ability to identify, inquire, assess, and manage cases.

A multidisciplinary approach is important for the organization of Community BTAM Teams. While not required for practitioners of community-based BTAM Teams, the *Code of Virginia* makes specific requirements regarding BTAM Team membership for [public institutions of higher education](#) and [K-12 public schools](#). These include representatives from key areas of the institutions, such as law enforcement, mental health, student affairs, and human resources. While there are no statutory requirements for Community BTAM Teams, such teams benefit from similar multidisciplinary designs. The following are examples of members or partners that may be key to the successful design and functioning of these teams. Among these are:

- Local law enforcement
- Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney
- Education: school division(s), institutions of higher ed
- Community services boards/mental health agencies
- Local/State government BTAM Teams
- Community corrections/juvenile justice
- Human/Social services agencies
- Emergency medical services/fire service
- Healthcare systems

Beyond the above-noted key members or partners, there are other potential members or partners who may support Community BTAM teams. Among these are:

- Virginia State Police/Virginia Fusion Center
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Department of Homeland Security
- Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts
- Youth and Family Services
- Animal Control
- Domestic violence shelters or organizations

- Community Services Boards
- Social Services
- Veterans Affairs
- Houses of worship/Faith communities*
- Key business stakeholders/employers*

*Note: Where Community BTAM Teams choose to include or serve non-governmental agencies or organizations, there may be increased challenges with lawful information-sharing, creation of and access to documentation, etc. Teams are encouraged to consult with legal advisors so that relevant processes are implemented in compliance with relevant laws and the protection of civil rights and liberties.

Community BTAM Teams should identify core team members and (where resources allow) identify backup members, typically from the same discipline or agency as the core member. Teams may also utilize ad hoc members who may be subject matter experts in unique issues specific to a given case.

Supplemental Resources

Finally, Community BTAM Teams should consider having (or having access to) external consultants as needed. This may include:

BTAM Subject Matter Expert

This is a professional who has the relevant education, training, and experience to help with the inquiry, assessment, and management of challenging cases, coach and ensure consistency of the process, assist with the continual improvement of the process, and sustain the training of team members.

Independent Medical/Psychological Evaluator

This is a qualified forensic psychologist or psychiatrist with the relevant education, training, and experience to conduct clinical/forensic violence risk assessments when necessary. It is best to have a pre-established relationship with at least one, preferably two, qualified evaluators. Having a pre-established relationship allows for better opportunities to vet potential providers, to understand costs and processes for assessments, and for them to understand the needs and resources of your organization.

Community BTAM Team Responsibilities and Authorities

There are no specific statutory requirements for the responsibilities and authorities of Community BTAM Teams, so members should abide by and fulfill the responsibilities and authorities of their position and their agency or organization, as may be defined by law or by the member's organizational policies.

Community BTAM Teams should establish ongoing relationships with mental health agencies, community services boards, and local and state law enforcement agencies. Teams should, where possible, establish and maintain those relationships in each of the localities where an institution operates facilities or programs. This supports more effective and efficient collaboration when assessing and intervening with or managing those who may pose a threat.

Law enforcement officers serving on Community BTAM Teams may be able to obtain criminal offense information from Virginia and from states outside of Virginia (e.g., through NCIC), but they may not be able to share that information with Community BTAM Team members unless it was obtained through public sources of information.

Maximizing Effectiveness of the Threat Management Process

Team membership should not be viewed only in terms of what positions are represented on the team but should also consider the attributes of individuals who may be best suited to serve on a team like this. Team functioning can be enhanced by including team members with the following skills and attributes:

- People who are passionate about the goals of the team and believe prevention is possible
- People who are familiar with (and trained in) threat assessment principles and practices
- People who are inquisitive and can have a skeptical mindset for working on the team
- People who exercise a good sense of judgment and are objective and thorough
- People who relate well with others and can work well in a group
- A team leader who can effectively lead team discussions and keep the team on track
- People who can advocate for necessary resources both for the team and for the cases

Deisinger, et al (2008). *Handbook of Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams*.

Key Dynamics of Successful Multidisciplinary Teams

Research across several organizations has identified common factors related to the success of multidisciplinary problem-solving teams. While little of that research has directly involved Community BTAM Teams, the lessons learned are important for consideration. For example, Google did an exhaustive analysis of many of its teams and found that team success was largely unrelated to the technical skill of the team members. Rather, the team's success was driven more by dynamics related to interpersonal communication and collaboration.

The 5 key dynamics related to team success were:

- **Psychological Safety:** Able to take risks in discussion of issues without feeling insecure or embarrassed
- **Dependability:** Can count on each other to do high-quality work on time
- **Structure and Clarity:** Clear about our goals, roles, and plans
- **Meaning of Work:** Working on something that is personally important
- **Impact of Work:** Fundamentally believe that the work matters

Julia Rozovsky (2015), [The five keys to a successful Google team](#)

Training

Each Community BTAM Team member (and backup) should complete foundational BTAM training as resources allow. Such training is often provided through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). See the DCJS website (www.dcjs.virginia.gov/) for upcoming training opportunities. In addition, the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals provides a range of training opportunities.

Other Resources and Approaches to Increase Effectiveness

There are several factors that help make Community BTAM Teams more effective. These include:

- A clear grant of authority and resource support from the community/organization to engage in threat assessment and management activities on behalf of the community
- Having and implementing standard procedures to build a systematic BTAM process
- Creating a searchable database that allows the team to organize and utilize case information

Teams should work proactively to develop, research, implement, and enhance other resources that can help the process work more effectively.

- Identify and list local resources (organization-based and community-based), such as community mental health services, child protective services, law enforcement crisis response units, emergency psychiatric screening services, etc.
- Establish liaisons with resources and be familiar with how to access services (including after-hours); build relationships and communication with resources.
- Identify state-level resources, such as guidance and technical assistance from professional associations, the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, State Police Fusion Centers, etc.

- Identify potential subject matter expertise: what resources does the team have access to regarding implications when disabilities are present, independent violence risk assessments, tracking social media threats, etc.?
- Access informed/relevant legal counsel input (e.g., on questions such as [FERPA](#) exceptions and compliance with legal requirements).

Implement and Sustain an All-Threats Approach

In addition to a multidisciplinary approach, effective BTAM processes consider the range of all potential threats, regardless of whether they are internal or external to Virginia institutions of higher education.

Subjects Who May Pose a Threat

Research and practice indicate the importance of a comprehensive approach to the identification, assessment, and management of any subjects of concern who may pose a threat to the safety and well-being of the community. This includes a range of people who may pose a threat but also differ in their motivation and their affiliation with the organization or community that may be at risk. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration identifies four types of subjects who may engage in workplace violence:

- Type 1: The subject is unaffiliated with the organization or community and has other criminal intent as the primary motive, with violence as a secondary motive. This most commonly occurs during a robbery or burglary where the primary intent is financial gain, but violence may be used to eliminate witnesses or to facilitate escape from the situation. Such cases rarely come to the attention of Community BTAM Teams.
- Type 2: A customer, client, patient, student, patron, etc., who is likely to have an unresolved grievance against the organization or its members. Note that these may be current, former, or prospective clients of the organization.
- Type 3: Employees—an employee, contractor, or vendor who is likely to have an unresolved grievance against the organization or its members. Note that these may be current, former, or prospective employees of the organization.
- Type 4: A person with a personal relationship with a member of the organization. Note that the subject of concern is not a client or employee of the organization or a member of the community but is (or was) in a relationship with a client or employee of the organization or another community member.

OSHA and workplace violence prevention professionals have long discussed a fifth type of subject, though they have yet to officially endorse the concept. A Type 5 subject is one who has no affiliation with the organization or community and whose primary intent is violence. Such individuals often have an affiliation or identify with violent extremist ideological frameworks, and a disproportionate number of these subjects have exhibited symptoms of serious mental health concerns, though it is not always clear whether or how those mental health concerns contributed to violence risk.

Community BTAM Teams should develop processes to facilitate the identification and reporting of concerns regarding any subjects who may pose a threat to the community and/or its members. The team must also be prepared to adequately assess and (to the extent reasonable) manage the risk posed by the full range of potential subjects of concern. This includes procedures for referrals to relevant community services for the range of subjects with whom the team may intervene.

Coordinated and Timely Awareness of Developing Concerns

Effective BTAM processes develop systems to facilitate coordinated and early awareness of developing concerns through active engagement of the community; that is, they sustain a systematic effort to collect and connect the dots and work actively to engage their community in those processes.

Facilitating Bystander Engagement

Research and practice have shown that, where incidents of targeted violence have occurred, other people tend to have concerns about the subject or to be aware of behaviors that indicated thoughts, planning, or preparation for a violent act. People choose not to come forward for a variety of reasons. The witness or impacted person might not know whether their observation is important, whether they should get involved, what to look for, or where and how to report concerns, or they may be concerned about what will (or will not) be done if they report their concerns. Where community members have knowledge or concerns about the safety or well-being of a situation but do not come forward, this is often referred to as the bystander effect. To help bystanders be more actively engaged in supporting the safety and well-being of the community, members of the community need to know:

It Is Everyone's Role and Responsibility to Share and Address Concerns.

Supporting the safety and well-being of the community means that everyone has a role, not because the policy says so, but because that is the responsibility that members of the community have to each other—to recognize concerns, to respond in a helpful manner (where appropriate), and to report the concerns to persons who can best help the situation. All community members should be encouraged on an ongoing basis to report any concerning, aberrant, or threatening communication or behavior. The BTAM process is developed and implemented to facilitate early identification and intervention with those needing assistance and/or considering violence as a means of addressing their concerns. Building and supporting a safe and positive community climate enhances connection and engagement from and with the community.

Effective threat assessment and management processes encourage a perspective of “no one alone” (Deisinger, 2004). No member of the community should be (or feel) alone with a concern and unable to deal with it. Complex situations are best dealt with collaboratively using the best resources available. It is rare for one person to have all the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to address concerns, and it is unreasonable to expect that of any one person. We are better together!

A team should periodically examine where they get the most and least reports. The team may want to conduct some targeted outreach or additional liaison to areas from which they currently receive few or no reports, or where they receive reports that are significantly delayed or misdirected. They should also consider the factors that may be impacting areas from which they are receiving the most reports.

Consider:

- Are those areas well-informed and engaged in the process and so are better at recognizing and reporting concerns?
- Do those areas have unique environmental/systemic issues impacting the nature or number of concerns?
- What resources may be needed to address those issues?

Build and sustain a culture of care, concern, and engagement for the safety, health, and well-being of the community.

Reports of concern can come from:

- Government employees and staff (including volunteers and contractors/vendors)
- Health care providers
- Employers
- Community members
- Other entities

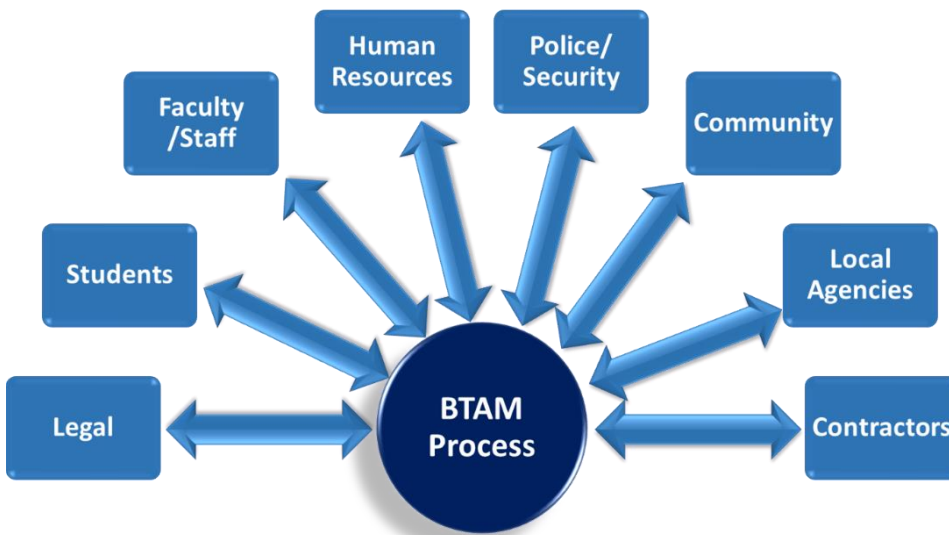
Encourage all members of the community to report concerning or threatening communications or behaviors that indicate intent to harm self or others or that a person may otherwise need intervention or assistance.

Establish and Promote Effective Reporting Mechanisms

Community members need to know where, how, and with whom they should share concerns. The institution should have effective mechanisms to foster reporting and centralized awareness of concerns by the Community BTAM Team, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 9 shows examples of various sources of information within and outside of the community that may report concerns to the Community BTAM Team. Likewise, these are various places where Community BTAM Team members can check in periodically and see if they have any additional concerns or updates to report.

Figure 9. Facilitate Coordinated and Early Awareness



Notice that all the communication pathways are bi-directional to support continued engagement in and support of the BTAM process. This is not to say that Community BTAM Team members disclose all aspects of the case to those outside of the Team, but rather that disclosures of information (within the limits of law and professional ethics) are based on what those persons need to know to support the safety and well-being of the situation.

Identify Concerning, Aberrant, Threatening, and Prohibited Behaviors to Be Reported

Community members will want to understand what behaviors to watch for and what sorts of concerns are best handled by the Community BTAM Team. While there is no one list of behaviors that may cause concern, providing examples of concerns with which the team can assist will help community members better recognize, respond to, and report concerns appropriately. Examples should include prohibited behaviors (e.g., engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to the school, communicating threats, bullying, etc.) but should also include examples of behaviors that may be concerning, aberrant, or threatening (discussed previously on page 11).

Establish and Identify How Concerns Are to Be Reported

Anyone who believes that a person or situation poses an imminent threat of serious violence should notify law enforcement.

Community BTAM Team members should be aware of the range of reporting mechanisms that are available for sharing concerns and know how those mechanisms are monitored and triaged to identify concerns relevant to the BTAM process. Consider mechanisms that allow for confidential as well as anonymous reporting. In confidential reporting processes, the reporting party is known, and their identity and information are treated confidentially within the boundaries of relevant law and policy. Community BTAM Team members can follow up with confidential reporters for clarification or additional information as the inquiry, assessment, and intervention processes move forward.

In anonymous reporting, the identity of the reporting party is not known, which can involve some challenges. Sometimes anonymous reporting parties do not include enough information to understand the problem or how to intervene. As they are anonymous, there may not be a way to follow up for more information or to consider the credibility of the report. However, some community members will only come forward through an anonymous reporting mechanism, and it is likely better to have an anonymous report (of a legitimate concern) than to have no report. Where anonymous reporting is recommended or utilized, emphasize the importance of good-faith reports and encourage reporting parties to share any information that would help understand the situation.

Note that some web-based reporting tools allow for anonymous reporting with the capability to follow up with the reporting party through the app without disclosing the identity of the reporting party. This allows for a better understanding of concerns, as well as engagement with the reporting party to support them through the process.

Respond to Concerns in a Timely and Effective Manner

Community members are often worried that their concerns are not significant enough to be reviewed, that they would be wasting the team's time, or that their concerns will not be taken seriously. Community BTAM Teams strive to inform community members that reports are wanted, even if the situation does turn out to be nothing. Community members are more likely to come forward with concerns when they understand the process of how those concerns will be addressed, that they will be taken seriously, and that the concerns will be addressed appropriately. To that end, Community BTAM Teams are responsive to reports, acknowledge receipt of concerns, engage in timely follow-up with the reporting party (where possible), and take timely actions to address or resolve concerns.

Regular Reminders of Issues and Processes

Our communities can be vibrant and exciting places due in part to the regular turnover in their membership. Unfortunately, that also means that everyone who understood the points (above) last year does not represent the whole of the community this year, so the messaging needs to be regular and ongoing.

Examples of strategies to support this effort include:

- Outreach/Awareness presentations regarding targeted violence, BTAM, and community safety to:
 - Community and workplace administrators, managers, and supervisors
 - Faculty and staff of schools and institutions of higher education
 - Students
 - Contractors and vendors
 - Community groups/organizations
 - Local partners (e.g., law enforcement, community service boards, mental health crisis response teams)

- Training/Awareness sessions
 - Recognition and reporting of concerning, aberrant, or threatening behavior
 - Overview of the BTAM process
 - Verbal de-escalation and effective conflict management
 - Incident survival and response
- Information: available and sustained through multiple formats
 - Administrative briefings
 - Website
 - Social media
 - Mobile apps
 - Email newsletters
 - Brochures/Pamphlets

Thorough and Contextual Assessment

Upon developing and implementing a multidisciplinary approach and facilitating coordinated and early awareness of development concerns, the Community BTAM Team is prepared to better facilitate a thorough and contextual assessment of cases that come to their attention. This section will provide an overview of key components of the assessment process.

Intake and Initial Review of Relevant Records

The Community BTAM Team should establish a process for the intake and triage/screening of a report regarding concerning, aberrant, or threatening behavior. When a potential threat or other concern is reported, the Community BTAM Team shall initiate an initial triage/screening and decide on the seriousness of the potential threat as expeditiously as possible in accordance with BTAM guidelines.

Intake Process

Upon receipt of the initial report, the team will obtain basic information about the situation, including (but not limited to):

- Initial Report of Concern: Date/time reported, date/time reviewed, person receiving report
- Reporting Party: Name, affiliation, contact information, relationship to the subject of concern
- Incident/Nature of Concern: Date/time occurred, location, nature of threat/concern, weapons involved/threatened, details about concerns, and any relevant background about the situation
- Subject of Concern: Name, affiliation, contact information, relationship to reporting party or target(s)
- Identified/Identifiable Target(s): Name, affiliation, contact information, relationship to or subject
- Witnesses: Name, affiliation, contact information, relationship to reporting party, subject, or target

Note that community members tend to be cautious if they are asked to provide too much information on forms, especially before Community BTAM Teams have established trust. However, if Community BTAM Teams ask for too little information, they may not receive enough to understand the situation and how best to respond. Community BTAM Teams should regularly monitor and adjust to best serve their community.

If the initial report contains information that indicates a serious and imminent threat, the team will activate or recommend the activation of the appropriate crisis response plans and initiate the BTAM process.

Indicators of a Serious and Imminent Risk

- Subject exhibits intent and capability to engage in imminent and/or serious harm to self/others, e.g.:
 - Having an unauthorized weapon on the premises, at a community activity, or en route to/from either of those
 - Attempting to breach security and/or gain access to targets
 - Expressing imminent intent to use weapon(s) or cause serious injury
 - Releasing a “legacy token” (e.g., statement of justification for violence)
- Lack of inhibitions for using violence, indicated by:
 - Feeling justified in using violence to address grievances
 - Having no perceived alternatives to the use of violence
 - Lacking concern for or desiring consequences resulting from a violent act
 - Having the capability, intent, and the will to cause harm

If emergent or imminent:

- Involve law enforcement and appropriate security personnel.
- Initiate relevant security protocols.
- Notify key agency and community administrators.
- When safe to do so, continue the initial inquiry and initiate the BTAM process.

If there are no indications of serious and imminent risk, then continue to the triage and screening step.

Initial Review

Upon receipt of a concern, the Community BTAM Team conducts an initial review to facilitate triage and screening of the case.

Definitions

Triage: Determining the level of concern regarding a case to determine if there are imminent or serious threats posed or issues that require crisis management procedures.

Screening: Determining if the case falls within the purview/mission of the BTAM process—that is, if the case exhibits elements (e.g., STEP Framework concerns) that merit further inquiry, assessment, management, or monitoring by the Community BTAM Team, whether any such concerns involve existing services or resources, or if the concerns do not fall within the purview or mission of the BTAM process.

Triage/Screening Team

Community BTAM Teams that deal with many cases may consider implementing a Triage/Screening Team that is a subset of the full Community BTAM Team.

If so, consider the following in establishing and operating the Triage/Screening Team:

- The Triage/Screening Team involves at least two (2) members of the Community BTAM Team, preferably from different roles, agencies/functions, and perspectives.
- Any Triage/Screening Team member may activate crisis protocols based on a reasonable assessment that the criteria are met.
- Cases are advanced to the full Community BTAM Teams when either:
 - The Triage/Screening Team has full consensus that the case is appropriate for BTAM, or
 - There is any disagreement as to whether to advance the case to the Community BTAM Team.

- All Triage/Screening Team members must agree to screen out a case, i.e., to decide which cases will not go to the full Community BTAM Team for action. Cases may be screened out if:
 - Identified concerns and inquiry results indicate no issues that are within the purview or mission of the BTAM process.
 - Identified concerns are being adequately addressed by existing resources and no BTAM expertise or resources are needed to manage or monitor concerns.
- Consider, when cases are screened out, having the Community BTAM Team (at their next staffing) review cases that were screened out to consider elevating them to the full BTAM process if needed.

Triage/Screening Process and Structure

Community BTAM Teams should establish a consistent process for conducting an initial review (triage and screening) of reported concerns. This triage process serves to identify imminent safety concerns and to prioritize cases for action by the team, to screen out cases that are not appropriate for the Community BTAM Team or are already being adequately addressed, and to determine the need for a more complete assessment and/or intervention strategy to address concerns. Triage and screening decisions will be based upon:

- The initial report(s) of concern
- Initial inquiry regarding the subject, target, reporting party, and witness(es), including:
 - Initial review of relevant records and information sources
 - Initial interviews of key parties as appropriate

Initial Review of Records

Upon receipt of initial report(s) of concern, the Triage/Screening process gathers other relevant information (“pings the system”) about the situation (i.e., about the Subject, Target, Environment, and Precipitating Events) from various sources such as:

- Prior Community BTAM Team contacts regarding any parties or entities involved
- Recent (and historical) performance and behavior
- Disciplinary or personnel actions
- Security or law enforcement contacts within the organization or relevant community
- Criminal or civil proceedings
- Prior critical involvement with mental health or social services
- Presence of known stressors, grievances, or losses
- Current or historical grievances that may be related to the behavior of concern
- Online searches: internet, social media, email, etc.

Initial Interviews

In addition to a review of relevant records, the triage/screening process conducts initial interviews as necessary to make triage/screening decisions. When circumstances allow, prior to conducting an interview with a person involved in a case, Community BTAM Team members are best served by being well acquainted with the information available about the reported concerns, as well as any relevant information about the interviewee’s background, behaviors, and relationship to others involved.

These may include:

- Initial interviews to verify or clarify the report with:
 - Person(s) reporting threat and/or person(s) receiving report of threat
 - The target or recipient(s) of threat

- Witness(es)
- The subject who made the threat
- Other potential sources:
 - Peers: friends/co-workers/classmates
 - Administration
 - People in supervisory roles, e.g., teachers, coaches
 - Parents/Guardians (where students/minors are involved)
 - Relational partners
 - Local or state law enforcement
 - Community services

The team should also consider the risks associated with each potential interview. Peers of subjects may warn the subject that the team is looking into their behavior. Co-workers or relational partners may have biases for or against the subject (or target) that skew their response. The subject may be alerted that the organization is aware of concerns and may escalate their behavior before they are stopped. The very act of asking questions about a subject may cause concern/fear that they are dangerous, even if that turns out not to be the case.

Team members will rarely know all those potential dynamics before interviews are initiated, but they should be aware of the potential impact and reactions and plan for relevant contingencies.

The team should also give consideration not only to who should be interviewed, but:

- By whom? What team member or key gatekeeper is best positioned in terms of role or relationship to have the most effective interview with the least conflict or bias?
- With what skill set? What training, experience, preparation, or mentoring will be necessary or helpful to support an effective approach?
- In what setting?
- What are the goals for the interview?
 - Information gathering and assessment
 - Redirect from violence/targets
 - Problem-solving/Support
 - Set boundaries/limitations
 - Admonishment/Confrontation
 - Intervention/Referral
 - Deterrence
 - Monitoring

Effective teams regularly monitor for, assess, and work to minimize the negative impact of bias in decision-making. The team should also seek out and factor in information from multiple sources in its assessment, rather than relying on just one piece of information or perspective. The team should consider whether a source has direct and first-hand knowledge, their credibility, and the consistency of that source information with that of other sources.

Interview With Target(s) and Witness(es):

Where possible, individuals who have been identified as potential targets of the subject of concern should be interviewed, along with any persons who witnessed the concerning behavior. The Community BTAM Team should inform the subject of the interview that the primary purpose of the interview is to gather information about a possible situation of concern with the goal of preventing harm to staff or others and helping those involved.

A potential target should be asked about their relationship to the subject of concern and queried about recent interactions with that subject. The interviewer should gather information about grievances and grudges that the subject of concern may hold against a target or against others. Interviews with potential targets should be conducted with special sensitivity. Care must be taken to gather information without

unduly alarming a potential target. If the Community BTAM Team believes that there may be a risk of violence to an identified target, that target should be offered assistance and support for their safety.

The assessment process facilitates an increased and revised understanding of issues over time. When new information is made available to the team during or after the initial assessment, the team should review the new information and re-evaluate the threat accordingly. The team will want to maintain contact with the target/recipient to obtain information about any further behaviors of concern, improvements in the situation, or other relevant developments.

Interview with the Subject of Concern:

Generally, a subject of concern who is part of the organization/community should be asked directly about their actions and intentions. Many subjects will respond forthrightly to direct questions approached in a non-judgmental manner. An interview conducted during a threat assessment inquiry can elicit important information that permits the Community BTAM Team to better understand the situation of the individual and possible targets. This understanding, in turn, will help the Community BTAM Team assess the risk of violence that the individual may pose in each situation. Interviews with the individual of concern can also generate leads for further inquiry.

Generally, it is best to have the subject learn from the team that people are concerned about their behavior and have a chance to explain that behavior or contributing circumstances, rather than have that subject hear through the grapevine that they are being “investigated” by the Community BTAM Team.

An interview can also send the message to the individual that their behavior has been noticed and has caused concern. Interviews give individuals of concern the opportunity to tell their perspectives, background, and intent; to be heard and experience support/empathy where appropriate; and to reassess and redirect their behavior away from activities that are of concern. The interview may suggest to a subject who has mixed feelings about attacking that there are people who are interested in their welfare and that there are better, more effective ways to deal with problems or with specific people.

Although an interview with a subject of concern can provide valuable information, relying too heavily (or solely) on that interview to judge whether that subject poses a threat is likely to present problems. The information offered by the subject may be incomplete, misleading, or inaccurate. Therefore, it is important to collect information to corroborate and verify information learned from the interview.

For subjects of concern who are not part of the organization/community, Community BTAM Teams should carefully weigh the risks and benefits of attempting to engage directly with the subject, especially when the subject may have engaged in criminal behavior. In such cases, local law enforcement or the organization's attorneys should be consulted regarding whether the subject should be interviewed, who is best positioned to conduct the interview, and the likely benefits and risks of such an interview. For subjects engaging in potentially threatening behavior from a distance (e.g., through social media) or who are anonymous, it may not be practical to conduct an interview and the team should focus more on building protective strategies for the organization/community and monitoring the subject's behavior/communications as best as circumstances allow.

Full Inquiry and Assessment Process

For those cases that are elevated for a full BTAM inquiry and assessment, the Community BTAM Team should keep a few points in mind. First, violence is a dynamic process; as different factors change, so too does the threat that a subject may pose—or not pose. The Community BTAM Team members are *not* trying to predict/determine whether this subject is a “violent person.” Instead, they are trying to determine under what circumstances this subject might become violent or might resort to violence, what the impact of the situation is upon others (even when a subject

poses no identifiable threat), what environmental/system factors may be contributing to the situation, and whether there are any precipitating events on the foreseeable horizon.

Community BTAM Teams should also seek out and factor in information from multiple sources as part of the assessment, rather than relying on just one piece of information or perspective. Community BTAM Team members should consider whether a source has direct and first-hand knowledge, the credibility of the source(s), and the consistency of that source information with that of other sources.

Effective teams regularly monitor for, assess, and work to minimize the negative impact of social and cognitive bias in decision-making.

The full inquiry provides for a more comprehensive and in-depth review of information that may be relevant to the case and includes reviews of records and sources as discussed in the triage/screening process above, as well as any others that may be relevant to the case. Similarly, the full inquiry involves more in-depth or follow-up interviews with relevant parties, as discussed in the triage/screening process above.

Throughout the assessment process, consider issues related to records reviews and interviews as outlined in the triage/screening process and, at any point, be prepared to determine if a serious and imminent threat exists (or is rapidly developing) that may necessitate the activation of crisis protocols.

Key Areas for Inquiry/Investigation

The following are key areas for inquiry and investigation by the team that have been developed based on research and standards of practice regarding threat assessment. These resources include (but are not limited to): [Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks](#) (Amman et al., 2017); [The International Handbook of Threat Assessment, 2nd Edition](#) (Meloy & Hoffmann, 2021); [The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment](#) (Meloy, et al., 2012); [Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Officials](#) (U.S. Secret Service, 2000) and [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence \(NTAC, 2018\)](#);

Note that this section is not intended as an exhaustive list of areas of inquiry but rather as core areas that support understanding the situation, assessing the nature and severity of any risk, and guiding interventions. Additional questions may be asked for clarification and/or to probe more deeply to fully understand the circumstances.

As noted above, violence stems from an interaction among the Subject(s), Target(s), Environment/Systems, and Precipitating Incidents (*STEP Framework*; Deisinger, 1996; Deisinger & Nolan, 2021). Identifying, assessing, and managing potential acts of violence or other harm requires a comprehensive and holistic perspective of the situation involving four key domains and their interactions. Effective approaches consider each of the four domains that may impact both the assessment and management of cases:

- S** Is the **Subject** engaging in behavior(s) that may pose a threat of violence or harm to self or others, cause significant disruption, or otherwise indicate a need for assistance or intervention?
- T** Are **Targets (or others impacted)** vulnerable to harm, in need of or taking protective actions, impacted by the situation, or otherwise indicating a need for support, assistance, or intervention?
- E** Are there **Environmental/Systemic** issues contributing to or impacting the situation?
- P** Are there reasonably foreseeable **Precipitating Events** that may impact the situation (Subject, Target, and/or Environment)?

Figure 10. STEP Framework (Deisinger, 1996; Deisinger & Nolan, 2021)



The following key areas of inquiry are organized around the STEP Framework. These are not intended as questions that would necessarily be asked directly of the subject of concern or target, etc., though some may be used that way. Rather, the team should review the totality of the information available and use the questions to guide their understanding of the situation and to inform plans for interventions and follow-up.

Areas of Inquiry Regarding Potential Subjects of Concern

Inquiry regarding a subject of concern seeks information regarding the nature and severity of concerns, whether the subject may pose a threat of violence or other harm to self or others, or whether the subject is otherwise in need of assistance or intervention. The inquiry considers all sources of information relevant to gaining as comprehensive an understanding of the subject and their concerns, as circumstances allow. Consider the presence of risk and protective factors, warning signs, coping skills, and support systems that may be relevant to the case.

What Situation(s) or Behaviors Are Causing Concern?

- Does the situation or circumstance that led to these concerns still exist?
- When and where do the behaviors tend to occur?
- Is there a pattern to the behaviors or a change in the pattern of behavior that is causing concern?
- If the behaviors have occurred previously, how has the subject dealt with the grievances?
- Has the subject previously come to someone's attention?
- Are the subject's behaviors causing others concern for the welfare of the subject, others, or both?

Here, the focus is on understanding the subject's behavior, its impact, and any factors that are contributing to or would assist with the behavior.

Have There Been Any Concerning, Aberrant, Threatening, or Violent Communications?

- Were there ***Directly Communicated Threats**** (threats made directly from the subject to the target or sources of grievance)?
 - Has there been ***Leakage**** (communications to third parties about grievances, ideation, or intent to use violence, planning, or preparation)?
 - How and to whom is the subject communicating?
 - What is the relationship between the subject and the target?
 - What means or modes of communication have been used (e.g., in person, letter, email, diary/journal, social media, website, etc.)?
 - What is the ***Intensity of Effort***** in communications or attempts to address the grievance?
 - Frequency and duration of contact
 - Number of means used
 - Number of recipients or targets of communication
- NOTE: ** Based on work by Dr. Mario Scalora (2021)
- Do communications provide insight into motives, grievances, ideation, intent, planning, preparation, targets, etc.?
 - Has anyone been alerted or "warned away"?

Community BTAM Team members will want to obtain the specific language used in any concerning communications and in what context. It is also important to understand how the communication(s) were sent/received, the volume and pattern of the communications, and how specifically or broadly the same communications were sent.

* Indicates a Proximal Warning Behavior (Meloy et al., 2012). See the [Definitions](#) section for further information.

Community BTAM Team members work to maintain collaborative relationships with those to whom the subject is communicating to facilitate timely awareness and ongoing monitoring of the nature of the communications and who is impacted by the communications that may be at risk, even if not yet specified as a target.

What Are the Subject's Motives and Goals?

- Does the subject have a major grievance or grudge?
- Against whom? What is the nature of the relationship?
- Are there other motives that support the use of violence, such as the desire for notoriety/fame?
- What does the subject seem to want to achieve?
- Is the subject exhibiting **Fixation***?
 - Increasing perseveration on a person/cause or need for resolution
 - Increasingly strident and negative characterization of the target
 - Angry emotional undertone
 - Social or occupational deterioration
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem?

Identifying unresolved or serious grievances provides information regarding who or what may be at risk for harm or in need of support or assistance. It also allows Community BTAM Team members, where possible, to help the subject engage in problem-solving and address any environmental/systemic factors that may be contributing to the subject's sense of grievance.

Has the Subject Demonstrated Significant or Novel Interest in Violence or Other Perpetrators?

- Do they exhibit heightened interest, fascination, obsession, or fixation with acts of violence?
- Do they immerse themselves in exposure to violence through movies, videos, books, video games, social media, etc., to the detriment of other life activities or in ways that negatively impact themselves or others?
Note: The concern is with the degree of exposure, modeling, identification with, or rehearsal of violence and the associated lack of other interests or influences, not with an incidental or occasional interest in such media.
- Is there **Identification*** (strong desire or need to emulate/be like others) with:
 - Perpetrators of targeted violence or powerful figures (e.g., specific perpetrators, pseudo-commandos, warriors, agents of change)?
 - Grievances of other perpetrators?
 - Weapons or tactics of other perpetrators?
 - Effect or notoriety of other perpetrators?
 - Ideologies or groups that support and encourage violence?

Having an interest in acts of violence that have occurred does not (by itself) necessarily indicate that the subject poses a threat or is otherwise in need of some assistance. Consider the context, developmental age, and other factors that may contribute to perceived fascination or obsessive interest. However, if a subject shows some fascination or identification on any of these topics and has raised concern in other ways, such as by expressing an idea to harm others or themselves, recently obtaining a weapon, or showing helplessness or despair, the combination of these facts should increase the team's concern about the subject.

* Indicates a Proximal Warning Behavior (Meloy et al., 2012).

Does the Subject Have (or Are They Developing) the Capacity to Engage in Targeted Violence?

- Are there ***Pathway Warning Behaviors****?
 - Planning: Are they researching or gathering information to support a plan for violence?
 - Preparation (Means, Method, Opportunity, Proximity):
 - Does the subject have the means and methods (e.g., access to a weapon, tools, materials) to carry out an attack? Note: Weapons may not be limited to firearms. Consider knives/edge weapons, bombs, arson, vehicles, etc.
 - Are they trying to obtain or get access to the means (e.g., weapons, tools, materials) to carry out an act of violence?
 - Is accessing or possessing a weapon a new interest and/or related to their grievances or violent intent?
 - Is the subject attempting to get proximity to target(s) or otherwise create opportunity to cause harm?
 - Is the subject engaging in stalking or surveillance activities?
 - Are they practicing or rehearsing for the violence?
 - Have they developed the capability (skill and will) to cause harm?
- Where is the subject on the Pathway? How quickly are they moving?
- Are there changes in patterns of behavior or activity levels or ***Energy Bursts**** (flurries of or changes in frequency/variety of activity)?
 - Do certain circumstances or events tend to impact their movement?
 - Is there co-occurring desperation or helplessness?
- Is the subject's thinking and behavior organized sufficiently to engage in planning and preparation?
- Is there a history of violence that speaks to capacity or potential targets?
 - What has been the context or circumstances for prior acts of violence?
 - Do prior grievances that led to violence still exist, or are they similar to current grievances?
- Are there aspects of ***Novel Aggression**** (testing capabilities/limits/boundaries or atypical aggression) when there is no history of violence?

These provide an indication of how far along the pathway the subject has progressed and may also help the team understand how quickly the subject is moving forward toward an attack—i.e., how imminent a threat there may be. Any development of capacity for attack-related behaviors should be a serious indication of potential violence.

* Indicates a Proximal Warning Behavior (Meloy et al., 2012).

Practice Note: It is often helpful to build a timeline of subject behaviors to help detect any patterns or changes in patterns of behavior. This is especially helpful in complex or longer-term cases where awareness of the sequencing of behaviors or incidents may impact the understanding of the situation. Consider developing a timeline that helps track the subject's behaviors of concern, target(s) behavior, and community BTAM or institution actions/intervention.

Is the Subject Experiencing Hopelessness, Desperation, and/or Despair?

- Has the subject experienced perceived loss, failure, or injustice?
- Does the subject express shame or humiliation related to the loss, failure, or injustice?
- Is the subject having significant difficulty coping?
- Are there multiple stressors?
- Are there indications of ***Last Resort Behaviors****?
 - Desperation, despair, finality, or action imperative
 - Violence justified to address perceived grievance
 - Lack of perceived alternatives
 - Lack of concern for or welcoming consequences
- Has the subject engaged in behavior that suggests that they have considered ending their life?

Many persons who have engaged in significant acts of targeted violence have been despondent and/or suicidal prior to their attacks or at the time of their attacks, hoping to kill themselves or be killed by responding police. Note that most people who are feeling hopeless, desperate, or even suicidal will not pose a threat of harm to others. However, these people may still need assistance and intervention.

- Development of a *legacy token*, defined by the FBI as a communication created by the subject and delivered (or staged for discovery) in which the subject:
 - Claims credit for planning and acts,
 - Articulates motivations and reasoning so others may understand the grievances suffered, or
 - Perpetuates media coverage to enhance notoriety/infamy

* Indicates a Proximal Warning Behavior (Meloy et al., 2012).

Practice Note: JACA

In *The Gift of Fear* (de Becker, 1997), the author notes that dangerousness is dynamic and situational and that four key factors influence the subject's movement from idea to action on the Pathway to Violence.

JACA is a helpful concept for considering Last Resort Warning Behaviors and Pathway Warning Behaviors:

Justification: The subject feels justified in using violence to address grievances.

Alternatives: The subject perceives few or no alternatives to violence to address grievances, running out of options.

Consequences: The subject is no longer concerned about or now accepts the consequences of acting violently. Note that this is even more significant when a subject desires the consequences to prove or draw attention to the injustices suffered (martyrdom).

Ability: The subject perceives their ability to engage in violence. Self-efficacy, the belief in our own ability, is a strong predictor of human performance, including violence.

The presence of Justification, lack of perceived Alternatives, and lack of concern for Consequences are all indicators of Last Resort Warning Behaviors, and the development of perceived Ability is an indication of a Pathway Warning Behavior.

Adapted from de Becker, G (1997). *The Gift of Fear*.

Has the Subject's Behavior Indicated or Raised Concern About a Need for Intervention or Supportive Services?

- Does the subject have difficulty coping or exhibit indications of poor mental wellness?
- Does the subject exhibit symptoms of serious, acute, or untreated mental illness? E.g.,
 - Significant lack of contact with reality:
 - Hallucinations (especially command hallucinations)
 - Delusions (especially paranoid/persecutory or grandiosity)
 - Extreme wariness or suspiciousness
 - Symptoms that impact the subject's perceptions of grievances or how others respond to the subject
 - Significant or sustained agitation or anxiousness
 - Significant or sustained depressed mood
 - Alcohol or other drug use/abuse
 - Pervasive patterns of maladaptive behavior
- Is the subject actively engaged in treatment, compliant with the treatment plan, including any prescribed medications, and making progress toward treatment goals?
 - Note that when a subject is actively engaged in treatment (e.g., psychotherapy and/or pharmacotherapy), the risk for violence diminishes significantly. It is important to understand not just whether the subject is attending therapeutic sessions but whether they are engaged and compliant with and benefiting from the treatment goals.

Threats to Self: The Nexus Between Threat Assessment and Suicide Risk Assessment

- If triage identifies any of the following concerns in addition to, or in place of, a potential threat to self, then the Community BTAM Team should assume primary responsibility:
 - The subject expresses ideation or intent to harm others.
 - The subject expresses co-occurring anger or hostility to others.
 - The subject's intent, preparations, or acts of harm to self would pose a threat of harm to others, whether intended or not.
 - The subject's suicidal or self-harm behaviors are responses to victimization, bias, bullying, harassment, or other environmental/systemic issues within the community.
 - Others are, or may reasonably be, significantly impacted or feel endangered by the subject's threat of harm to self.
- If none of the above conditions are met, the Community BTAM Team needs to take no other action, and the threat assessment case can be closed.
- The suicide risk assessment and interventions are addressed by the Suicide Prevention and Intervention Team as relevant to the case.
- Organization or community mental health professionals retain primary responsibility for the direct assessment and mental health interventions with the subject at risk.
- Other team members assist with assessment, intervention, or support actions and address any other concerns impacting the case.

Does the Subject Have Protective Factors, Stabilizers, or Buffers That Inhibit the Use of Violence?

Several factors may decrease risk or inhibit escalation to violence. Check for these protective factors to see if they are present and stable, absent or diminishing, or need to be bolstered.

- Viewing violence as unacceptable or immoral
- Accepting responsibility for actions
- Demonstrating remorse for inappropriate behavior
- Respecting reasonable limits and expectations
- Using socially sanctioned means of addressing grievances
- Valuing life, job/education, relationships, freedom
- Fearing loss of reputation, job, freedom, life
- Maintaining, using, and building effective coping skills
- Treatment access, compliance, engagement
- Sustaining trusted and valued relationships/support systems

A sustained, trusting, and valued relationship with at least one responsible person can be a key stabilizer and inhibitor of violence. That person can provide support, challenge distorted perceptions or violent ideation, and help connect the subject with support. Consider:

- Does the subject have at least one friend, colleague, family member, or other person that they trust and can rely on for support, guidance, or assistance?
- Is that trusted person someone who would work collaboratively with the team for the well-being of the subject of concern? Does that other person have the skill and willingness to monitor, intervene, and support the subject?
- Is the subject emotionally connected to and engaged with other people?
- Is there a deterioration of support, increased withdrawal, isolation from, or alienation from prior support systems?

Having someone that the subject trusts can be a protective factor, but it is important to understand the nature of the relationship. A connection with a responsible person can be a good influence on the subject. However, if the trusted person has a negative influence, then this can have a profound risk-enhancing effect. If the team decides that the subject in question poses a threat of harm, the team can solicit this responsible person's help in developing and implementing a management plan. The team should monitor the relationship's status in case it falls apart and then becomes a potential risk factor for escalation.

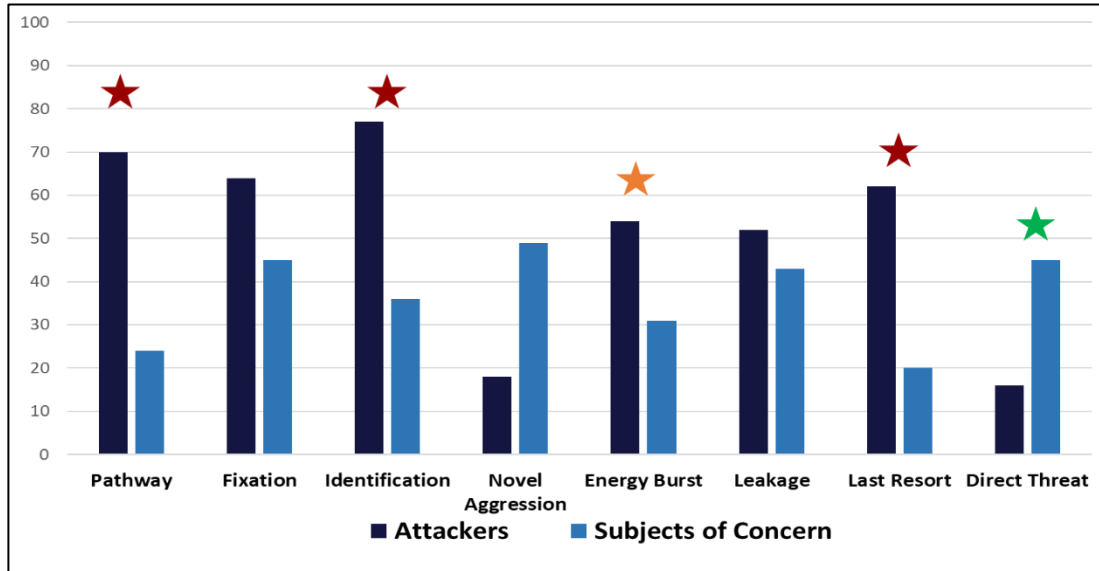
Other Key Areas for Inquiry Regarding Subjects

Note that, in addition to these general key areas of inquiry related to the subject/person of concern, there may be other critical areas of inquiry with sub-types of targeted violence (e.g., violent extremism, intimate partner violence, stalking, etc.). Community BTAM Team members should consider relevant areas of inquiry when those potential risks are present.

Prevalence of Proximal Warning Behaviors in Completed versus Averted Acts of Targeted Violence

Note that several studies have found that proximal warning behaviors discriminate between those who express intent for targeted violence and act (Attackers) and those who express intent for targeted violence and do not act (Subjects of Concern). See Figure 11 below.

Figure 11. Proximal Warning Behaviors Discriminating Between Attackers and Subjects of Concern



Meloy, J. R., Goodwill, A. M., Meloy, M. J., Amat, G., Martinez, M., & Morgan, M. (2019);
 Challacombe, D. J., & Lucas, P. A. (2019); Meloy, J. R. & Gill, P. (2016)

Across several studies, key proximal warning behaviors were found to discriminate between Attackers and Subjects of Concern who did not attack. Attackers were more likely to exhibit Warning Behaviors of Pathway, Identification, Last Resort, and Energy Burst, while Subjects of Concern were more likely to have expressed Directly Communicated Threats.

While Community BTAM Team members always consider the totality of information related to their particular subject of concern (rather than working from generalizations or profiles), data such as this is helpful in the prioritization of risk.

Areas of Inquiry Regarding Potential Targets

Targets (and others impacted by the subject's behavior) may behave or respond in ways that indicate the level of threat they perceive, increase their vulnerability, diminish their ability to protect themselves, or reflect their need for assistance or support.

Are Targets (or Others) Indicating Vulnerability, Concern About, or Impact from the Subject's Behavior?

- Are targets/others concerned for the well-being or safety of the subject, target, or others?
- Are targets or others around the subject engaging in protective actions (e.g., distancing, avoiding, minimizing conflict, modifying routines or behaviors, etc.) even if they do not define the subject as a threat?
- Are targets/others experiencing stress, trauma, or other symptoms that may benefit from intervention?
- Do targets/others have adequate support resources?
- Are targets engaging in behavior or in situations that increase their:
 - Desirability: a source of the subject's grievances or fuel for fantasies for violence?
 - Availability: the proximity or access between the subject and target?
 - Vulnerability: lack of protective factors or behaviors or coping abilities of the target?

FBI resources indicate that subjects are influenced in their choices of targets by several factors, including the desirability, availability, and vulnerability of potential targets. We may not always know what supports a target's perceived desirability, as we may not know the subject, their grievances/motives, or how a given target fuels their fantasies for violence. However, we can often help a target decrease their availability and vulnerability to reduce risk.

Key Areas of Inquiry Regarding Environmental/Systemic Factors Impacting the Situation

These are factors that impact or stem from the community, campus, workplace, home environment, or systemic issues that may allow, encourage (or not discourage), or exacerbate the use of violence to address concerns, inhibit reporting of concerns, or impact the ability to resolve concerns effectively.

Are There Environmental/Systemic Factors That Are Impacting the Situation?

- Systemic, policy, or procedural problems (including with the Community BTAM Team or process)
- Unfair, inconsistent, or biased disciplinary processes
- Silos, gaps, or delays in reporting of concerns
- Poor conflict management skills
- Poor supervisory skills and/or lack of willingness to address the situation
- Inadequate resources to address needs (within and outside the organization)
- Community/family/social climate concerns, e.g., harassment, bullying, bias, neglect, or abuse
- Lack of support or treatment resources in the community
- Social influences of others in the environment
 - Actively encouraging the subject's use of violence
 - Assisting the subject with planning or preparation
 - Reinforcing or escalating the subject's perception of grievance(s)
 - Denying or minimizing the possibility of violence by the subject
 - Passively colluding with the subject through failure to share concerns

Key Areas of Inquiry Regarding Precipitating Events

Violence risk is dynamic and situational. It is important to consider not just the current situation involving the subject, target, and environment/systems but also critical stressors or changes that may impact any of those entities in the reasonably foreseeable future. Awareness of and contingency planning for reasonably foreseeable precipitating events helps sustain a proactive engagement with cases.

Are There Precipitating Events That May Impact the Situation Currently and in the Foreseeable Future?

Common precipitants are related to loss, failures, or injustices; events or circumstances that trigger memories of past grievances; or situations that create unexpected opportunities to act.

- Loss, failure, or injustice related to:
 - Work or organization status or performance
 - Relationship/Support
 - Health
 - Community/Identity (rejection or ostracization of others with whom the subject identifies)
- Key dates/events
 - Relational (e.g., anniversary, end of a relationship, birthdays, holidays)
 - Employment/Disciplinary action
 - Administrative action/order (Issuance, service, violation)
 - Court order (issuance, service, violation)
 - Return to campus or work following separation (e.g., holidays or breaks)
Note that the *Protecting America's Schools* study found that 41% of violent acts occurred in the first week back following time away from school.
- Triggers and reminders of any of the above
 - Consider the impact of social media or mass media reminders for the subject and the target.
- Opportunity (unexpected availability and vulnerability of the target)
- Contagion effect of other high-profile or locally significant acts of violence
- Case management interventions

Nearly all case management interventions are intended to be precipitating events, i.e., to facilitate change. However well-intentioned, designed, and implemented, any intervention can:

- Help things get better,
- Make things worse,
- Have no discernible effect, or
- Create new concerns.

Community BTAM Teams must monitor the effect of interventions to help ensure they are positive precipitants and, where they are not, to adjust accordingly.

Key Areas of Inquiry Regarding the Integrity of the Assessment Process

What is the Completeness, Consistency, and Credibility of Information About the Situation?

We must always be attentive to the completeness, consistency, credibility, accuracy, and gaps in our knowledge about a situation. Consider:

- Are the subject's or target's conversation and "story" consistent with their actions?
- Do collateral sources confirm or dispute what the subject says is going on and how they are dealing with it?
- Are there multiple sources? Are they providing consistent information?
 - Do sources have direct and unique knowledge of the subject and/or situation?
 - Do any sources have ulterior motives?
- What gaps exist in the understanding of the situation? What don't we know?
- What biases or misperceptions may be influencing witnesses, targets, or members of the Community BTAM Team? Consider sources of bias/distortion in our thought processes that we should monitor. These can include (but are not limited to):
 - Confirmation bias: seeking and integrating information that supports/affirms our prior beliefs
 - Anchoring: basing final judgment on information gained early on—first impressions may bias future perspectives
 - Overconfidence: failure to spot limits of knowledge and therefore perceiving less risk; too much faith in one's ability
 - In-group bias: overestimating the abilities, value, and credibility of people we know (or are like) more than people we do not know or who are different
 - Availability: overestimating the likelihood of events that have greater availability in memory due to being unusual, recent, or emotionally salient
 - Probability neglect: overestimating risks of harmless or low-probability events while underestimating risks of high-probability events, even when they are not harmless (1/84 chance of dying in a vehicle accident vs. 1/5,000+ of dying in a plane crash)
 - Fundamental attribution error: placing blame for one's own bad outcomes on external events; when others have bad outcomes, making judgments about them; failure to account for interactions between the person and the situation
 - Hindsight bias: overestimating the predictability of past events based on current knowledge of facts and outcomes

Source: Daniel Kahneman (2013). *Thinking Fast and Slow*.

Throughout the threat assessment and management process, the Community BTAM Team seeks to enhance decision-making by reducing errors and increasing insights and creativity in managing cases.

Supplement Structured Professional Judgment

Community BTAM Teams may consider using relevant supplemental tools to facilitate structured professional judgement. As the field has developed, there are a broad range of tools to help support general threat assessment or focused areas of inquiry. The following are lists of tools that may be helpful. This is a partial listing of supplemental instruments and is not intended as an endorsement of any particular approach or tool.

General/Core Threat Assessment Tools

- Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk (WAVR-21, 3rd Edition)
- Historical Clinical Risk Management-20, Version 3 (HCR-20, V.3)
- Cawood Assessment Grid
- MOSAIC (de Becker)

Threat Assessment Tools for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) or Domestic/Dating Violence (DV)

- Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk Version 2 (B-SAFER)
- Danger Assessment (Campbell, 1986).
- Domestic Violence Inventory
- Domestic Violence Risk Appraisal Guide
- Idaho Risk Assessment of Dangerousness
- Lethality Assessment Program
- Mosaic (DV module)
- Ontario Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (ODARA)
- Spousal Assault Risk Appraisal Guide (SARA)

Supplemental Threat Assessment Tools: Stalking

- Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk Version 2 (B-SAFER)
- Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honor-Based Violence (DASH)
- Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM)
- Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment (SASH)
- Stalking and Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP)
- Stalking Risk Profile

Other Domain-Specific Threat Assessment Tools

- Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP 18): Most appropriate for consideration of risk related to violent extremist ideology
- Communicated Threat Assessment Protocol (CTAP): Most appropriate for use in assessing concerning or threatening communications
- Structured Assessment for Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY): Designed for use in assessing risk for those subjects within the 12–18-year age range

Violence Risk Assessment Tools

- Psychopathy Checklist Revised (PCLR)
- Violence Risk Assessment Guide (VRAG)
- Classification of Violence Risk (COVR)

Appropriate Use of Tools to Support Structured Professional Judgment

Community BTAM Team members should only utilize instruments that are designed for the population and issue of concern. The team should also avoid reliance on the instrument alone; the team must make sure that the evaluator is properly trained. The evaluator, in turn, should make sure that the instrument is reliable, valid, and current. Ultimately, the team needs to consider the results of any assessment tool used as simply one piece of information and integrate it with all of the other information gathered.

Community BTAM Team members should consider the following when utilizing such tools/instruments:

- Ensure that the instrument is reliable and valid.
- Be aware of the limitations of the instrument.
- Use for the purpose for which it was designed.
- Stay current with new data and versions.
- Ensure the evaluator is properly trained.
- Avoid relying only on the instrument in decision-making.
- Integrate information with structured professional judgment.

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (2006). *Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence*.

Formulating an Assessment of the Case

Fostering Effective Case Discussions:

When the team discusses the case to make its assessment, it can be helpful to keep in mind the following tips:

- All team members should actively engage and participate in the assessment and case management process, sharing their perspectives and concerns with the team.
- Keep the discussion focused on the facts of the case and consider the potential importance of the unknowns.
- Minimize bias in decision-making
 - Consider the totality and context of the information available.
 - Consider information sources, credibility, and relevance.
 - Corroborate critical information; resolve discrepancies.
 - Avoid generalizations or stereotypes; focus on behavior.
 - Consider changes in behavior or circumstances.
 - Be inquisitive and challenge assumptions.
 - Consider the impact of the unknowns.
- The team should not focus only on concerns and risks but also on protective factors, strengths, resources, and capabilities of the persons involved and the community.
- Focus on active problem-solving and resource utilization.

Enhancing Case Decision Making:

- Organize information systematically, e.g.:
 - STEP framework
 - Pathway model
 - Proximal and distal warning behaviors
 - JACA
 - Risk and protective factors
 - Timeline
 - Pending issues/tasks
- Use tools to support structured professional judgment as appropriate.
- Prepare a summary for the Community BTAM Team prior to case staffing, where possible.
- Community BTAM Team members should review case(s) before team discussions.
- Have a break/sleep between the review of case materials and the discussion.

Classifying Priority/Level of Concern

The Community BTAM Team may use a classification system to prioritize cases. Teams are encouraged not to focus only on the dangerousness/risk of the subject of concern but rather on the overall level of concern associated with a case. Many experts in the threat assessment field advocate the use of “level of concern” or “priority” over “risk” as a means of categorizing and prioritizing cases (e.g., Scalora et al., 2002; Meloy et al., 2011; Amman et al., 2017).

The concept of level of concern is particularly applicable to threat assessment in dynamic, operational conditions because it is judged on what information is currently available, which may be quite incomplete. A risk judgment, by contrast, requires all relevant information to have been gathered. Secondly, concern levels can reflect circumstance. (Meloy, et al., 2017, p. 258)

An effective classification (e.g., priority or level of concern) approach considers a holistic view of the case (e.g., using the STEP framework) and incorporates several factors, including:

- The nature, severity, and immediacy of any threats posed by the subject
- The impact of the situation on targets and others (i.e., nature, severity, immediacy of harm),
- The nature and level of interventions necessary to prevent or mitigate harm/impact and assist those involved.

However, other factors may also impact the level of concern/case priority, such as:

- Rate of change in the situation
- Vulnerability/Reactivity of the target
- Complexity/Number of environmental factors
- Political/Social influences
- Impact (current or impending) of precipitants
- Unknowns

The following is a sample priority classification utilizing those key elements and the STEP Framework to support a multidimensional assessment. Figure 12 reflects the overall distribution of cases that come to the attention of a Community BTAM Team.

Priority 1 (Critical): Subject exhibits intent and capability and poses an immediate or imminent threat to cause serious violence or harm to self or others. Target/Others are vulnerable and/or have support needs. Environmental/Systemic factors and Precipitating Events are typically present. Requires immediate law enforcement and administration notification, subject mitigation and containment, activation of crisis response and emergency notification protocols, target protection and safety planning, ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support.

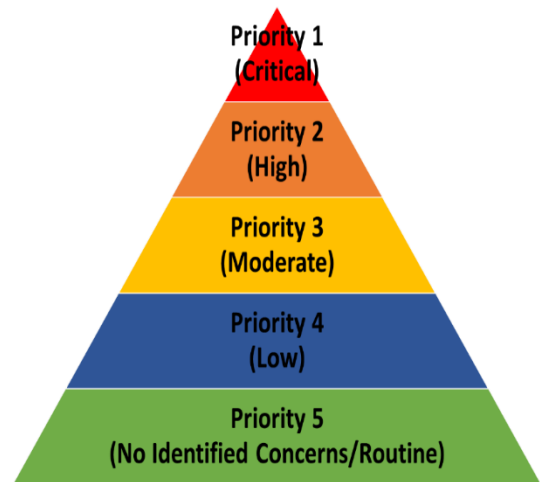
Priority 2 (High): Subject poses, or is rapidly developing capability for, a threat of serious harm to self/others or is in urgent need of intervention/assistance. Target/Others are vulnerable and/or have support needs. Environmental/Systemic factors and Precipitating Events are typically present. Requires law enforcement and administration notification, subject mitigation, activation of crisis response protocols as needed, target protection and safety plan, ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support.

Priority 3 (Moderate): Subject is not known to pose a threat of serious harm. Subject may be developing capability for harm and/or engaging in disruptive or concerning behaviors that indicate a need for intervention. Targets/Others are likely concerned and impacted. Environmental/Systemic and Precipitating factors may be present. Consider law enforcement, security, and administrative notification as appropriate. Requires ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support as necessary. Referrals as appropriate.

Priority 4 (Low): Subject does not indicate a threat of violence or harm to self/others but would/may benefit from intervention/assistance. Target vulnerabilities and needs may be present at low levels. Environmental/Systemic concerns or Precipitating Events may be present at low levels. May involve ongoing assessment and case management with periodic active monitoring or passive monitoring. Referrals as appropriate. Close case if no BTAM interventions or monitoring is indicated.

Priority 5 (No Identified Concerns): Subject does not pose a threat of harm to self or others or have a need for assistance or intervention. No target needs, Environmental factors, or Precipitants that need BTAM intervention. Close case.

Figure 12. Case Priority Level
Deisinger (1995/2023)



Whatever framework the Community BTAM Team chooses to use, all team members must use the same framework, and all team members should be trained and practiced in the consistent application of that framework.

Community BTAM Teams may use the Case Priority/Level of Concern to facilitate intentionality in team decision-making.

- Cases should be staffed in order of priority/level of concern so that the most serious and time-sensitive issues are addressed first. The Community BTAM Team works diligently to address the needs of all cases. However, teams should use a systematic approach to determine the allocation of time and resources.
- At the conclusion of staffing for each case, once team members are updated on new information or changes in the case or the impact of interventions on the case, the Community BTAM Team deliberates on the current case priority/level of concern. The team must have an articulable rationale for that determination based on how the case meets the relevant criteria.
- The Community BTAM Team should analyze the distribution of case priority/level of concern at the point of triage/screening. If most cases (at that point in time) are being reported at a Level 1 or 2, then the Community BTAM Team and/or the community are approaching the BTAM process as a reactive crisis management tool. If most cases are coming in at Level 3 or 4, then the Community BTAM Team and community are using the BTAM process as a proactive preventative tool to address developing concerns. Teams are encouraged to support the proactive use of the process.

Proactive and Integrated Case Management Plans

Considerations in Case Management

Based on the information gathered through the inquiry and a comprehensive and holistic assessment of the situation (e.g., STEP), the team will then develop a case management plan as necessary. The plan should be individualized and specific to the facts and situation of the case in question and provide for an integrated, holistic, and collaborative response to the case. The team will work so that recommended interventions are coordinated and so that different entities work together toward the same goals—the health, safety, and well-being of the community. Good case management is informed by research where possible but mostly by practice and experience, as case management is often more art than science.

An engagement model works well with most cases, especially those involving internal threats. Most subjects who come to the attention of Community BTAM Teams are often struggling or at a crisis point and are looking for assistance. Many have distanced themselves from others or feel alienated; they typically respond positively to someone who will hear their concerns, not overreact to emotional venting, engage in problem-solving, and demonstrate care for them and their situation. While this model generally works well, there are some cases in which such direct engagement may inflame or escalate the situation. Therefore, each situation should be evaluated based on its own case facts to best determine whether such direct engagement would be appropriate.

Teams should use the least intrusive interventions that fit the needs of the case. Interventions that create distance (e.g., changes in work assignments, suspension, expulsion, termination) can make further assessment, intervention, and monitoring difficult. That is not to say to avoid those interventions, but to be mindful that, when they are used, the team should consider how to sustain monitoring of their effect.

Finally, when considering who will facilitate interventions, remember that, in addition to a team member's role or skill, personalities and chemistry can impact the effectiveness of the intervention. A given team member may be very skilled but not able to relate to certain subjects or targets. Work together for the best approach based on available resources, setting ego aside. Intervention strategies selected should be the ones with the greatest potential for addressing short-term crises, as well as longer-term preventative power.

While holding staff and others accountable for their actions, supervisors/administrators must be fair and reasonable in disciplinary responses. It is important for Community BTAM Teams to recognize that even fair and reasonable discipline can be perceived as another grievance to which the subject may react. In such cases, the disciplinary response could lead to an escalation in threatening behavior. The most punitive responses may or may not prevent acts of violence. Suspension or termination/discharge can create the risk of precipitating either an immediate or a delayed violent response unless such actions are coupled with containment and support. For example, a staff member who has been terminated may conclude, "I have lost everything. I have only a short time to act. I will give them what they deserve." In addition, an employee/member who is suspended or terminated/discharged is often under less supervision than if they were to remain in a work setting.

That is not a reason to withhold appropriate and fair consequences for inappropriate behavior, but rather, when the situation arises, for Community BTAM Teams to have considered and planned for those contingencies. Administrative leave, suspension, expulsion, or termination options that focus solely on accountability and controlling the person do not (by themselves) address the ongoing challenges of:

- Moving the subject away from thoughts, plans, and capacity for violence and/or disruption
- Connecting the subject to resources (where needed)
- Addressing or mitigating organizational/systemic factors that impact the situation
- Monitoring subjects when they are no longer connected to the community

Use accountability and separation strategies equitably and intentionally, be aware of limitations, and plan for contingencies based on responses to the interventions.

Although detaining a subject may be necessary in a particular situation, without careful attention to the need for confinement, weapons removal, or interpersonal intervention, that action may be insufficient to prevent violence at an organization or otherwise protect a target. Similarly, simply referring a subject to the mental health system without seeing that referral in the context of an overall case management plan may not be enough to prevent violence. Singular interventions tend not to be sufficient to address complex and ongoing situations.

Utilize Key Relationships to Engage With the Subject, Target, and Witnesses.

Engagement (communication, interaction, and empathy) can help build key relationships with subjects, targets, and witnesses and can foster more effective:

- Information gathering and assessment
- Redirection from violence/targets
- Problem-solving/Support
- Setting of boundaries/limitations
- Admonishment/Confrontation
- Intervention/Referral
- Monitoring
- Deterrence

Consider the goals for the engagement and use that to inform the best approach, by whom, when, and where to engage.

A key to establishing an effective working relationship with the subject/person of concern (as well as some targets and witnesses) is to identify a responsible person they already trust. One key step to defusing a potentially violent situation involving someone with a grievance is to allow them to feel "heard" and validated. Even if they cannot get their way—which, oftentimes, they cannot—feeling as if someone has understood their position can go a long way toward moving the subject away from thoughts and plans of violence. Examples of a trusted ally include:

- Community BTAM Team member
- Supervisor
- Peer (positive influence)
- Mentor
- Parent/Family member
- Law enforcement officer
- Coach/Trainer
- Counselor
- Clergy
- Other

Develop an Individualized, Contextually Relevant Plan Based on Inquiry and Assessment.

- The case management plan is contextually relevant and situationally specific. It is based on the information associated with this case and not based on generalizations or stereotypes.
- Consider the STEP Framework—maintain a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing concerns associated with the case.
- Accountability is critical in case management.
 - Assign tasks/interventions to a specific person who is responsible for ensuring the task is completed, whether they perform the task themselves or assign it to someone who reports to them.
 - Set a timeline for completion of the task/intervention based on the needs of the case.
 - Establish a plan for monitoring the effects of the tasks/interventions on the case.
- Rapport and engagement matter
 - Consider the experience, personality, background, and skills of Community BTAM Team members when assigning tasks. Where possible, match people to their tasks.
 - Consider using trusted sources or third parties where appropriate.

An Integrated and Holistic Approach to Case Management

Effective case management integrates interventions, where appropriate and feasible, across the (relevant) domains of the STEP framework (Deisinger, 1996; Deisinger & Nolan, 2021; see Figure 13):

- S** De-escalate, assist, refer, contain, or control the **Subject** who may pose a threat of violence, harm, or significant disruption to self or others or otherwise indicates a need for assistance or intervention.
- T** Decrease vulnerabilities and provide support and assistance for the **Target** and others impacted or otherwise indicating a need for assistance or intervention.
- E** Address **Environmental/Systemic** issues to minimize impact, escalation, or recurrence.
- P** Prepare for and mitigate against **Precipitating Events** that may impact the situation (i.e., the subject/person of concern, target/others impacted, or the environmental/systemic factors relevant to the case).

Consider if there are actions the Community BTAM Team can or should facilitate (to address any concerns noted) beyond those already being effectively done.

Figure 13. STEP Framework
Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



Subject-Based Strategies or Interventions

Organizations regularly use many of the following examples of interventions or strategies to address situations involving concerning, aberrant, or threatening behavior. Teams should consider a broad range of interventions that may de-escalate, assist, refer, contain, control, or redirect the subject away from plans and preparation for violence and toward engaging adaptively and safely with others, problem solving, adapting, and improving their coping skills and well-being.

The following are examples of subject-based strategies or interventions:

- Check-in/Check-out
 - Maintain a channel of communication and engagement.
 - Gather information.
 - Build rapport and a relationship.
 - Decrease isolation.
 - De-escalate volatile reactions.
 - Set expectations.
 - Provide feedback and mentoring.
 - Monitor reactions to grievances and precipitating events.
- Problem solving about legitimate grievances
- Spouse/Parental/Family involvement
 - Family/Parent training and support (where the subject of concern is a minor) offers parents mentoring/guidance for dealing with the subject more effectively, as well as support and counseling for the associated stresses.
- Assistance or support services
 - Trauma-informed approaches
 - Work mentoring/Academic tutoring
 - Modification of work schedule or assignments
 - Alternative work/academic placement
 - Accommodations for work/classes
 - Social/Emotional learning
 - Behavioral management plans
 - Involvement in extracurricular activities
 - Performance improvement plans
 - Peer coaching/mentoring
 - Recognition/Positive engagement
- Counseling/mental health services
 - Check-in/Check-out with supervisor, human resources, or mental health staff
 - Disability/Mental health/Violence risk assessment
 - Suicide prevention and intervention programs
 - Outpatient counseling/mental health care
 - Emergency psychiatric evaluation and care

- Disciplinary measures
 - Subject confrontation or warning/boundaries
 - Parental discipline (minors)
 - Workplace or other organizational disciplinary processes
 - Administrative orders for no contact or communication
 - Termination/Exclusion from premises
- Criminal justice services
 - Law enforcement/Juvenile justice involvement
 - Court-issued protective orders
 - Substantial risk orders/"red flag" protective orders
 - Diversion programs
 - Mandated mental health services

Considerations in Use of Leave, Suspension, or Termination in Case Management

Times of interim separation or permanent removal may not only be precipitating events that impact subjects, targets, and potentially the community but also result in changes in the team's ability to monitor and manage the situation.

Leave, suspension, or termination options that focus solely on controlling the person do not address the long-term challenges of:

- Moving the subject away from thoughts and plans of, and capacity for, violence and/or disruption
- Connecting the subject to resources (where needed)
- Addressing target vulnerability/needs
- Mitigating organizational/systemic factors
- Monitoring the subject

Use with intentionality, fairness, awareness of limitations, and anticipation of consequences. Use separation approaches in conjunction with other supportive approaches (where possible) and monitor the situation.

When a subject is removed from an organization on an interim basis, the Community BTAM Team should work to address a variety of concerns to support changes for a safe and effective reintegration into the organization/community.

Prepare for Reintegration of the Subject:

- Establish conditions for return. Ensure that conditions for return are fair, proportional, and clearly communicated, including any assessment or evaluation that will be necessary for consideration of return.
- Assess subject readiness to return safely and effectively participate in their academic or work experience. Anticipate the date/event that allows for consideration of return to class/work. Facilitate relevant assessments or evaluations as appropriate.
- Develop a proactive case management plan with the following considerations:
 - **Align ongoing interventions.** Coordinate action steps across relevant entities (discipline, HR, security, etc.).
 - **Coach the subject about re-entry.** Help prepare the subject for return to class/work. Provide resources and support as appropriate.
 - **Anticipate environmental aspects that may impact the subject.** Monitor and support the subject regarding other factors that may impact return such as access to resources, documentation, reactions from other students/staff, social media, etc.

- **Prepare organization/community members for the subject's re-entry.** Coach relevant community members about how to support and prepare for the subject's return. Provide support in dealing with any ongoing concerns. Encourage ongoing engagement in monitoring the situation. Check in to see how those community members are doing.
- Consider precipitating events that may impact the subject, target, or community.
 - Monitor, reassess, and intervene as appropriate.

Target Case Management Strategies

Where targets are identified or identifiable, consider ways to help them reduce their vulnerability to harm where possible and address needs for support and assistance.

Coaching Targets Regarding Personal Safety Considerations

Consider things the target can do (or be coached or supported in) that increase their safety.

- Set clear limits and boundaries with subjects regarding communications and contacts.
- Monitor communications for changes/escalations by subject.
- Avoid contact with or response to the subject—don't reinforce the subject's attempts to get a response.
 - Document all contacts from/with the subject.
 - Maintain a log of contacts/communications from the subject, noting the date/time/means of contact, nature of contact, witnesses, and impact on the target (including any protective actions they have taken). See the following link to an interactive guide for an example of an incident log:
www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SPARC_StalkingLogInstructions_2018_FINAL.pdf
- Minimize reactivity to the subject's actions.
- Avoid emotionally reactive responses that can satisfy, inflame, or enrage the subject.
- Minimize public information, especially with social media and phones.
- Safety planning: See the following link to an interactive guide for safety planning regarding relational violence: [Personal safety in relationships when dating | love is respect](#)
- Maintain/Enhance situational awareness.
- Vary routine—be careful about consistent habits.
- Develop contingency plans for avoiding or escaping the subject, shelter, situational awareness, and personal safety.
- Utilize support systems—being/feeling like a target can be stressful. Use support systems/counseling.

Organizational Strategies for Reducing Target Vulnerability

Consider things the organization can do that may increase target safety. Examples include:

- Engagement/liaison with the target: Assign a team member as a point of contact for support and assistance.
- Change work/class hours/location.
- Change/Enhance security in the work location.
- Notice to co-workers: Coworkers can help monitor if the subject is present or posing a threat to the target.
- Security staffing
- Safety escorts
- Fear management
 - Sometimes victims are so debilitated by fear that they feel helpless and unable to take steps to help themselves; they need support, encouragement, and intervention.
 - Sometimes targets are unaware of, or in denial of, the level of danger they are in and not as concerned for their safety as they should be given the circumstances; provide feedback about concerns to help them understand risks to themselves and others.
- EAP/Counseling referrals

What All Targets/Victims Want

Gavin de Becker, in his 1997 best seller, "The Gift of Fear," discussed the four "Cs" that all targets/victims/survivors want from BTAM professionals:

- **Care:** That BTAM professionals care about them as human beings, not just because a policy or law directs us to take actions. People want to know that they matter.
- **Certainty:** Certainty for their safety, which we cannot provide—but we can provide clarity about the systems and processes and how we will work with them to support and enhance their safety and well-being.
- **Consistency:** Victimization often results in a sense of betrayal, a disruption of belief in a fair and just world. Any inconsistency on behalf of a BTAM Team member is likely to trigger that sense of betrayal. Be careful not to overpromise and underdeliver.
- **Communication:** Victims/Targets desire regular communication about the status of the situation and next steps. In the absence of reliable and regular information, victims may feel disregarded or disrespected. They may also be unduly influenced by their prior experiences, fears, or perceptions of risk related to their current situation.

©Gavin de Becker (1997). "The Gift of Fear"

Environmental/Systemic Case Management Strategies

Cases often help Community BTAM Team members identify environmental or systemic gaps that impact situations. As part of building a better and safer community, holistic threat management also considers necessary or desired modification of the environment.

For example, a person may react inappropriately to a poorly developed, burdensome procedure or policy. The person's behavior must be addressed, but if the procedure or policy tends to provoke discord because it is objectively unfair or unreasonable, then that procedure or policy may be reviewed and revised to be more helpful.

The team may have discovered a delay in reporting concerns, which was brought about by witnesses not knowing where or how to report concerns, indicating a need for more/better awareness or training.

Sometimes situations get out of hand due to poor conflict management, not just by the subject, but by the group or subset of the organization. The group may benefit from support/training in dealing effectively with conflict.

Environmental/systemic factors may not be under the purview or authority of the Community BTAM Team, so addressing these often involves bringing the issue to the attention of the organization's administration or collaborating with other community entities.

Considerations in Addressing Environmental/Systemic Concerns

- Address policy or procedural problems.
- Address reporting gaps/delays.
- Intervene with associates who support violent behavior.
- Enhance the conflict management skills of groups.
- Enhance supervisory skills and accountability.
- Enhance organizational climate to foster a caring community. Emphasize:
 - Fairness and respect
 - Effective communication
 - People being rewarded, supported, and held accountable
 - Prevention and early intervention with inappropriate behaviors
 - Building engagement for mutual safety and well-being

Community BTAM Teams work best in communities with an overall positive or safe climate, where members feel respected, that situations are handled fairly, and that bad behavior—like bullying, harassment, bias, threat, etc.—is addressed quickly and effectively. Communities can enhance their overall climate by surveying a representative sample of community members to see how safe and respectful the community feels to them. The Community BTAM Team, in conjunction with community partners, can then use the findings to facilitate changes to improve how safe, connected, and respectful the community feels.

Threat assessment is only one component of an overall strategy to reduce violence; it is implemented within the larger context of strategies to ensure communities are safe and secure environments. The primary objective of violence-reduction strategies should be to create cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support within the community and the organizations that are part of the community. Several strategies can support and enhance a safe and positive climate.

Examples include:

- Effective communication among community members
- Community climate assessments and intervention with identified issues
- Emphasis on community connectedness and respect
- A strong but caring stance against the code of silence
- Bullying/Harassment prevention and intervention
- Fostering trust and engagement between law enforcement and the community
- Collaborative relationships with mental health, social services, and other community-based resources
- Planning and preparation to deal with, respond to, and recover from potential crises
- Physical security and crime prevention through environmental design

Manage/Monitor Precipitating Events

As the case moves forward, other circumstances in the lives of the subject, targets, and others (including the Community BTAM Team members) may impact the case. Not all of these can be anticipated. However, when the Community BTAM Team members identify potential precipitating events, they should build a plan to prevent or lessen their impact (when possible) or at least monitor for their impact.

Note that Community BTAM Teams are not expected to anticipate every potential circumstance but to focus on those on the near horizon that are foreseeable, given what is known about the case.

Anticipate and Prepare for Precipitating Events.

- Minimize unnecessary precipitants where possible (look to systemic issues that unnecessarily impact the case).
- Consider the impact of the timing and location of interventions on the subject, the target, and the environment. Adjust interventions that are having no effect or a sustained negative effect.
- Monitor for when the intervention is no longer necessary.
- Monitor and plan for loss/injustice.
- Monitor and plan for key dates/events in the process of case management, e.g.:
 - Anniversaries
 - Hearings
 - Court dates
 - Administrative/Court actions
 - Service of notice about outcomes
- Monitor reactions to case management/interventions. Note that any case management intervention/action, no matter how well-intended or delivered, can result in any one of the four following outcomes:
 - Making the situation better
 - Making the situation worse
 - Having no demonstrable effect
 - Causing/Contributing to an entirely new problem

Community BTAM Team members should monitor for reactions to/effects of interventions and be prepared to adapt the case management plan accordingly.

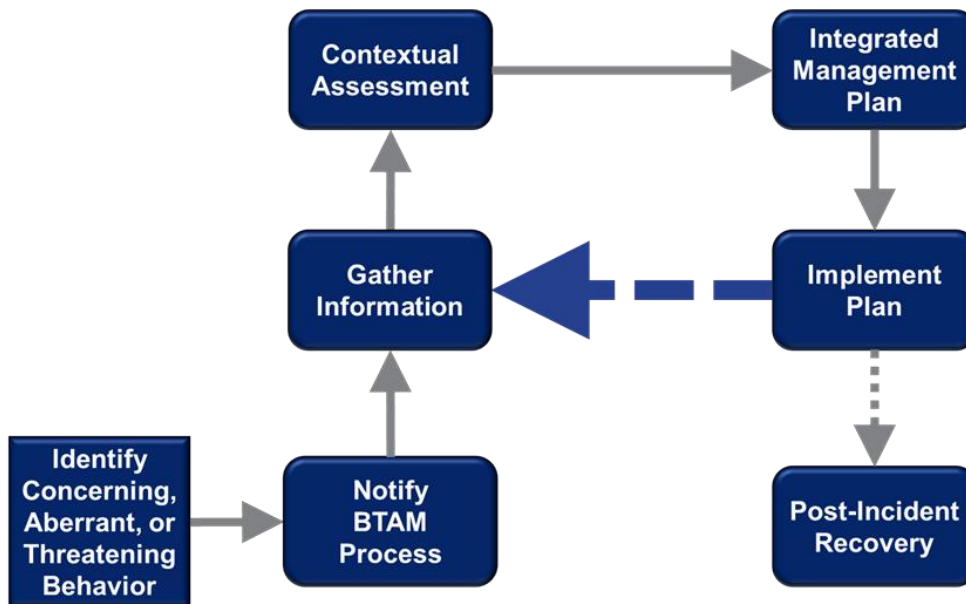
- Monitor for the contagion/identification effect of other high-profile or locally significant acts of violence. Such incidents can also destabilize targets and communities.
- Consider contingency plans and adapt case management plans as needed.

Monitor and Reassess the Case on a Longitudinal Basis

Monitoring and Reassessing Cases

The process of monitoring and reassessing cases on a longitudinal basis is a key aspect in which proactive and preventative threat management approaches differ from reactive crisis management or incident-based approaches. BTAM is an ongoing problem-solving process, not solely a response to an acute crisis, situation, or incident. The flow chart in Figure 14 summarizes the longitudinal and iterative process of threat assessment and management. That is, the BTAM process continues on a longitudinal basis until there are no longer STEP framework concerns that meet the mission and purview of the BTAM process.

Figure 14. The BTAM Process



Note that Figure 14 is a simplified version of the BTAM case management flowchart we discussed earlier, which is intended to guide Community BTAM Team members through critical decisions. This simplified chart is one that can be shared with the community to describe the BTAM process. The BTAM Team/process:

- Engages with and assists the community in identifying potential threats/concerns.
- Encourages and supports timely reporting to the Community BTAM Team.
- Gathers relevant information to which it may have lawful and ethical access.
- Uses the totality of that information to develop an initial assessment.
- Uses the assessment to develop an initial case management plan.
- Implements that plan with accountability.

As indicated by the large feedback arrow in the middle, there is a feedback loop by which we update the assessment of the case, adjust case management plans, implement the updates, and continue to monitor. That cycle continues until there are no longer concerns in any of the STEP domains that meet the purview of the Community BTAM Team.

Once STEP Framework concerns are resolved or reduced to a level being addressed by existing resources, the Community BTAM Team considers what, if any, recovery, resiliency, or support efforts are needed to support those impacted by the case. The Community BTAM Team makes referrals or recommendations to key partners (e.g., victim advocacy/assistance, family advocacy, counseling, human resources, etc.)

Closing a Case

In determining whether and when to close a case, the Community BTAM Team should consider the following:

- Has the Community BTAM Team completed the necessary interventions and actions regarding this case?
- Is the level of concern for the case currently Low or Routine/No Known Concerns?
If the case is at a Low Level of Concern, the Community BTAM Team should ensure that any remaining issues or tasks are being addressed and monitored by relevant resources within the community, and that those are sufficient for the needs of the case at this time.
- Have any relevant referrals been made, and are those resources engaged as needed?
- Has the Community BTAM Team reviewed, assessed, and concurred with all the following regarding the STEP framework for assessment and intervention?

Subject of Concern:

At this time, is the Subject known to be engaging in any behaviors that would either:

- Pose a threat of violence, harm, or significant disruption to self or others?
- Reasonably pose a threat of violence, harm, or significant disruption to self or others or indicate a need for assistance or intervention?

Targets or Others Impacted:

At this time, are Targets or others impacted known to:

- Have any significant ongoing concerns regarding their safety regarding this case?
- Be engaging in any behaviors that place them at risk regarding this case?
- Have any significant ongoing or further need for assistance or intervention?

Environmental/Systemic Concerns:

At this time, are there any known Environmental/Systemic concerns that are:

- Currently or significantly impacting the case?
- Reasonably likely to occur that would significantly impact this case?

Precipitating Events:

At this time, are there any known Precipitating Events that are:

- Currently or significantly impacting this case?
- Reasonably likely to occur and would significantly impact this case?

The case can only be closed if there are no articulable reasons to consider notification to other Community BTAM Teams, law enforcement agencies, or other community services for continued monitoring or intervention with the subject or target, or, if there is such a basis, the notification/referral has been made.

If the Community BTAM Team determines that the answers to all of the questions are “no” or that there are no significant concerns that rise to the level of the mission for the Community BTAM Team, then the team may close the case.

Comply with Relevant Laws, Policies, and Standards

What Laws, Regulations, or Rules May Apply?

There is a broad range of laws, regulations, or policies that may impact cases or the responsibilities, authorities, or limitations of Community BTAM Teams. It is important for Community BTAM Team members to understand key aspects of relevant laws, regulations, or policies, but also to know Community BTAM Team members' access to legal or policy consultation and guidance. The following are some bodies of law, regulation, or guidance that may apply:

- Constitutional protections regarding free speech, due process, search and seizure, etc.
- Civil rights concerns related to race, ethnicity, sex, disability, etc.
- Federal and state healthcare privacy laws
- Federal and state education privacy laws, e.g., FERPA ([Family Educational Rights Privacy Act](#))
- Federal and state disability laws
- Federal and state employment laws
- Federal and state intelligence/fusion center privacy policies
- State threat assessment laws, regulations, standards
- Record-keeping and open records laws
- Standards of practice/tort law
- Policies

It would be rare for all of these to apply and exceedingly rare for none of them to apply.

While none of these interfere with being able to deal with threats impacting the organization, some can be complex, and the guidance of legal counsel is strongly suggested.

Often, misunderstandings of the laws, regulations, or policies impact willingness to report or respond effectively to concerns. So, Community BTAM Team members should have a working knowledge of foundational issues and access to legal counsel (with training and experience in the relevant bodies of law) to provide guidance.

BTAM Required by State Law:

Note that several states have enacted legislation mandating threat assessment and management programs in Pre K-12 schools and/or institutions of higher education. Where a subject of concern or a target has been involved in threat assessment processes in states with such laws in place, BTAM Teams may have more access to relevant and helpful information to inform their current assessment of the situation.

At the time this *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide* is published, the following states are known to have statutory requirements for BTAM processes:

- Virginia:
 - Public Institutions of Higher Education (2008)
 - Public K-12 School Divisions (2013)
- Illinois:
 - All Institutions of Higher Education (2008)
 - Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Connecticut: All Institutions of Higher Education (2013)
- Florida: Public K-12 Schools (2018)
- Maryland: Public K-12 Schools (2018)
- Kentucky: Public K-12 Schools (2019)

- Oregon: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Rhode Island: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Tennessee: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Texas: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Washington: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- Pennsylvania: Public K-12 Schools (2019)
- New Jersey: Public K-12 Schools (2021)

In addition to these states that have statutory requirements for BTAM, other states have established BTAM as a recognized practice or standard of practice through state education departments or school board associations (e.g., Missouri, Iowa). Therefore, those states may also have relevant information on Virginia community members who have recently graduated or transferred from those educational settings.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):

As all Virginia communities have schools and many also have institutions of higher education, Community BTAM Team members must have a working understanding of relevant laws related to the privacy of student educational records. FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of information in a student’s educational records. It prohibits the inappropriate disclosure of student educational information beyond those who have a legitimate educational interest, i.e., a need to know. FERPA also provides the student (or, if the student is under 18, their parent or guardian) with an affirmative right to review any information in the student’s educational record.

In Virginia, if the subject of concern is a student, the BTAM team for the school or institution of higher education should be responsible for the case because of their clear statutory mandate.

Key Points About FERPA

- FERPA protects the privacy of educational records; it does not extend to direct knowledge or observations of students. This means that team members are free to ask—and campus staff are free to share—their observations about a student, verbal communications with that student, and anything else not written down.
- FERPA provides students (or their parents if the student is under age 18) with the affirmative right to review their educational records upon request.
- FERPA allows the sharing of information (within the institution) with educational officials having a legitimate educational interest. Information from an educational record can be shared with other campus staff who have a need to know. IHEs must define who they consider to be a school/educational official in their FERPA statement and should be sure that the roles of **BTAM** Team members would be defined as school/educational officials.
- FERPA also includes exceptions that allow information sharing in case of emergency situations and/or situations where public safety is a concern. Guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education (which enforces FERPA) following the mass casualty incident at Virginia Tech has made clear that it is up to individual campuses to decide whether there is an emergency or public safety concern. The **BTAM** Team or university staff member should articulate and document the nature of the emergency and/or threat to public safety.
- FERPA does not pertain to school/campus law enforcement unit records (i.e., records created and maintained by and primarily for a law enforcement purpose). Records created and maintained under the umbrella of the institution’s law enforcement unit or other designated law enforcement entity would not be educational records unless shared with campus officials.
- FERPA allows for the sharing of education records (without a release) when a student applies for enrollment or transfer to another educational setting. This allows for the sharing of **BTAM** information between schools, schools and colleges, or colleges and colleges where there is an articulable need to know.

- The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that FERPA does not permit a private right of action, meaning that individuals cannot be sued for violations of FERPA. The law provides that federal funding could be withheld or fines could be assessed in cases where a pattern or practice of violations is present (as opposed to isolated violations, which are not individually sanctionable). To date, there have been no instances where an educational institution has received such sanctions for violating FERPA. Rather, it is more likely that an institution would receive a corrective notice and additional training from the U.S. Department of Education if it were found to have a pattern of sharing information in violation of FERPA.

For more information about FERPA, see www.ed.gov and search for FERPA or the Student Privacy Policy Office, which oversees FERPA. You can contact that office directly with questions.

- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations](#)
34 C.F.R. Part 99 (amended 2022)
- [School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
U.S. Department of Education (2019)
- [Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 to Student Health Records](#)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2019)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

When it comes to accessing information that a health provider may have about a subject, that information is more difficult to access than information protected by FERPA. Federal (e.g., HIPAA) and state laws protect information shared between a licensed healthcare professional and patient and limit information that can be lawfully shared with others. Keeping that information confidential helps patients trust their healthcare providers and disclose more information to facilitate more effective treatment. Teams do not want to unduly compromise the safety that confidentiality provides; however, serious safety concerns always take precedence over privacy concerns.

Again, consult with your legal counsel—but the following is what legal experts advise about HIPAA and state confidentiality laws:

- HIPAA protects the confidentiality of information in health records. In addition, state laws also protect the confidentiality of mental health information and discussions between a patient and a mental health professional.
- HIPAA and state laws include exceptions where information can be shared in situations where a patient is a threat to themselves or others. In such situations where a mental health professional is aware that their patient has threatened harm to themselves or to someone else, the mental health professional may have a duty to warn someone or to do something to protect the victim in question.
- Under HIPAA and state laws, confidentiality is held by the client or patient, not the mental health professional. The Community BTAM Team can always ask the person in question for permission to access their mental health records and talk with their mental health professional. If approached with sincerity for their well-being and assurance that the team can best help the person in question with full information, it is quite likely that the person will consent. The team will need to get the person’s permission in writing.
- While HIPAA and state laws may prevent a mental health professional from disclosing information to the Community BTAM Team, it does not prohibit mental health professionals from receiving information about a patient. The team can provide the information it knows to an individual’s therapist or counselor. In many cases, a treating mental health professional may only have partial information about a patient/client. Receiving information from the team about an individual may enhance the treatment that the mental health professional is able to provide.

- If the team provides information to a mental health professional, it can then ask the mental health professional whether the new information received from the team elevates their concern about the patient to the point where they now have a duty to warn or a duty to protect. If so, the mental health professional may be able to share information with the team.
- Finally, access to mental health information can be helpful in threat assessment cases, but it may not provide more detail than the team is able to access through others who know or have observed the person in question. It is more important to consider incorporating any treating mental health professional into an individual case management plan.

Record Keeping

There are many issues related to the creation, storage, access, sharing, and destruction of records, so be sure to obtain guidance from administration, legal counsel, and relevant regulations or policies. Many Community BTAM Teams elect not to create records about cases but defer to the agency/organization bringing the case to the Community BTAM Team to create any documentation that is relevant and necessary to the case in question. This can lessen concerns about duplication of documentation, errors in creating documents, access to records, concerns about privacy, etc., and leaves those issues under the purview of the agency/organization seeking consultation about a case. Of course, this also means that if the Community BTAM Team were to have a consultation request from another agency/organization that involved the same subject or target, the Community BTAM Team may not be able to link those cases without access to a comprehensive database.

If the Community BTAM Team chooses to create records about cases, the following are some considerations for practice. It can be very helpful for the Community BTAM Team to maintain a centralized database of all cases that have come to the team's attention. It need not be complicated; a simple spreadsheet (one that can be searched for names, terms, etc.) would suffice. However, given the amount of information and the importance of accessing it easily and quickly, it is recommended that a database be used.

This database can be used to store all information gathered throughout the threat assessment and management process. Another option is for the database to be used as more of an incident-tracking system that holds the names and other identifiers of everyone who is reported to the team. This system would enable the team to cross-reference the case file that contains the information relevant to that person and incident. Either way, even if a report does not seem to be a legitimate threat now or the case is closed quickly, the individual's name should still be noted in the database. If, later, the individual's name comes up again, the team will find information from this earlier report in the database after "pinging" the system—that is, searching the database for the name in question—and therefore be more informed about the individual's pattern of behavior.

The database provides a simple and organized way to store, search, and retrieve information so that the Community BTAM Team can quickly know if a certain individual has previously appeared on the radar screen.

In addition to the database, other records maintained by the team may include:

- Documentation of the subject's statements and actions, including date, time, behaviors, impact, and witnesses. Encourage Community BTAM Team members and witnesses to document the subject's exact words when quoting threatening statements.
- Documentation of targets or witness reactions to the subject's behavior, including any protective actions taken
- Copies of emails, memos, voicemails, videos, and other communications pertaining to the case
- Agenda and minutes of team staffing and consultations.

BTAM records should be stored in a secure, centralized location that is accessible to team members but restricts unauthorized access. Typically, that is either on a secure computer server to which only members of the Community BTAM Team have access or in secure hard copy files in the office area of the administrator who has oversight of the Community BTAM Team but is not accessible to others.

Good Record Keeping: FORTify the BTAM Process

Effective threat assessment and management efforts that include thorough documentation can help demonstrate the team's good faith efforts to identify, inquire/investigate, assess, and manage threatening situations. Community BTAM Teams can fortify their approach by engaging in practices and (where appropriate) having accompanying documentation that demonstrates that the team was:

Fair: sought to understand situations and give individuals an opportunity to be heard and understood

Objective: sought information based on facts and observations of the case and not speculation or bias

Reasonable: engaged in responses that were effective and proportionate to the situation

Timely: quickly and responsively addresses reports of threatening behavior

(©G. Deisinger, 1996)

By maintaining records throughout the behavioral threat assessment and management process, the team establishes and preserves a legal and behavioral justification for interventions to address potential threats and support the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

Records Retention and Disposition

Where Community BTAM Teams create records about cases, they are encouraged to retain those records as long as is allowed under relevant laws or regulations regarding the retention of such records. Subjects may pose an ongoing or recurrent threat years later, even after leaving the community. The Library of Virginia, as required under the *Code of Virginia*, maintains retention schedules for public records. Community BTAM Teams involving public agencies should consult legal counsel to determine what retention schedules apply to the records created by the team.

Continuously Improve and Adapt

The final element of an effective BTAM process is to support continuous improvement of the program and modify and adapt to changing challenges and needs.

BTAM Process Development

There are a variety of things that Community BTAM Teams and team members can do to build and refine their process, collect the dots, connect the dots, and build competence and confidence in their abilities.

Integrate Multidisciplinary Processes

Communities and organizations within communities may have a variety of specialized or multidisciplinary processes to address complex issues. The challenge is that they often operate in silos without knowledge of what others are doing or of the role they may have in a particular case. Examples of such other multidisciplinary teams include (but are not limited to):

- School, campus, or workplace BTAM Team
- Student Assistance Program
- Suicide Prevention and Intervention Team
- Bullying Prevention Team
- Sexual Harassment/Title IX Team
- Domestic Violence/Dating Violence/Stalking Team
- IT-Based Insider Threat Team
- Crisis Intervention Team/Mental Health Co-Responder Team

“Communication, collaboration, and coordination are critical!”

—Gene Deisinger, PhD. (1993)

Community BTAM Team members should be aware of which of these processes/teams (and any other relevant ones) may exist in their community and understand any relevant and lawful nexus with the BTAM process. The following are ways to build effective collaboration between relevant teams:

Mind the Gap! (Build Connection and Coordination Between Processes)

- Clarify mission/roles so all involved understand roles and nexus.
- Shared membership and regular communication: Build overlap through shared membership and/or regular communication.
- Integrated planning: Coordinate and collaborate on cases that overlap.
- Designated authority and responsibility: Clarify which entities are responsible for which functions.

Prepare Foundations

- Establish the authority and legitimacy of BTAM processes.
- Review and integrate existing mechanisms and resources.
- Implement and enhance the structure and process.
- Conduct basic training for team members and backups.
- Enhance community awareness and engagement.
- Train key stakeholders in the process.
- Build collaborative relationships with organizational and community partners.
- Implement a systematized process for:
 - Reporting
 - Intake/Screening/Triage
 - Operational guidelines for assessment, management, and monitoring of cases
 - BTAM casework

Enhance Capabilities

- Conduct advanced/applied training for Community BTAM Team members, e.g.:
 - Interviewing
 - Domain-specific (e.g., intimate partner violence [IPV], stalking, violent extremism, trauma-informed approaches, etc.)
 - Clinical violence risk assessment as a supplement to the BTAM process
- Tabletop exercises/Case study reviews
 - Practice skills regularly; don't wait for a crisis case to start to learn and build skills.
- Professional organizations
 - Member's state/national professional associations
 - Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP; www.atapworldwide.org)
 - Note that there are also established associations of threat assessment professionals (e.g., other TAPs) around the world, including Canada (CATAP), Europe (AETAP), Asia Pacific (APATAP), Africa (AfATAP), and developing in South America. Members of these associations can be exceptional resources with cases having international connections.
- Ongoing process review and continuous improvement:
 - Review and update the BTAM process regularly.
 - Review policies, procedures, and processes.
 - Check for gaps.
 - Enhance capability and capacity.

Community BTAM Team members should regularly consider ways to enhance their professional and personal contributions to the BTAM process and support other team members in doing the same.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The following is an overview of Deisinger Consulting, LLC, and the team members who developed this *Community BTAM Practitioner's Guide*. Both are nationally recognized subject matter experts in the field of behavioral threat assessment and management, school and campus safety, and violence prevention.

Deisinger Consulting, LLC

DEISINGER CONSULTING, LLC is a professional services firm specializing in operational psychology, behavioral threat assessment and management services, and organizational development for an international client base. Dr. Deisinger, along with a multidisciplinary network of subject matter experts, helps clients develop, implement, and operate comprehensive approaches to threat management. We help protect organizations through a holistic and collaborative approach to preventing and mitigating harm, sustaining continuity of operations, and enhancing the safety and well-being of the organization and its members.

DEISINGER CONSULTING serves a wide range of clients in business, education, healthcare, government, military, law enforcement, intelligence, non-profit organizations, and security and protective operations across North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Dr. Deisinger and associates are uniquely qualified and exceptionally suited to advise on contemporary standards of practice in the field of behavioral threat assessment and management. As recognized experts in the field, Dr. Deisinger and associates regularly review and synthesize information and resources regarding contemporary standards of practice.

DEISINGER CONSULTING, LLC is owned and managed by Dr. Gene Deisinger, an internationally recognized expert in behavioral threat assessment and management.

DEISINGER CONSULTING, LLC is Virginia SWaM Certified as both a small business and a micro business through the Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity and is a registered vendor in eVA.

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.

Dr. Gene Deisinger is President of Deisinger Consulting, LLC, specializing in operational psychology, protective intelligence, and behavioral threat assessment and management for an international base of clients in business, education, healthcare, government, military, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, and security and protective operations. Dr. Deisinger helps clients develop, implement, and operate comprehensive, holistic, and collaborative programs to prevent and mitigate harm, sustain continuity of operations, and enhance the safety and well-being of the organization and its members.

In June 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice appointed Dr. Deisinger to serve as a subject matter expert on the Critical Incident Review Team regarding the mass casualty incident at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX.

Since 2021, Dr. Deisinger has served as a founding member and subject matter expert for the Mass Violence Advisory Initiative, a joint project of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Since February 2015, Dr. Deisinger has been retained as the Threat Management Consultant for the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety. Dr. Deisinger provides threat management training and consultation for schools, campuses, and government and law enforcement agencies across Virginia.

Until his retirement in December 2014, Dr. Deisinger served as Deputy Chief of Police and Director of Threat Management Services for Virginia Tech, positions for which he had been recruited following the 2007 mass casualty incident at that campus. As executive officer for the Virginia Tech Police Department, Dr. Deisinger provided

leadership for law enforcement operations to support a safe and secure campus environment and directed the university's multidisciplinary threat management functions across its global facilities.

Dr. Deisinger earned his doctorate in psychology from Iowa State University. He is a licensed psychologist, a certified health service provider in psychology, and, until his retirement, a certified law enforcement officer.

Dr. Deisinger was a founding member of the Iowa State University Critical Incident Response Team, a multidisciplinary team that conducted proactive planning and coordinated institutional responses during crisis situations. As part of that initiative, Dr. Deisinger developed and directed the Threat Management Team for Iowa State from its inception in 1993 until accepting his position at Virginia Tech in 2009.

Since 1994, Dr. Deisinger has provided threat assessment and management consultation and training to organizations across the United States and abroad, assisting hundreds of organizations in developing, implementing, and refining their threat management processes. He has provided consultation on a wide range of cases, helping organizations to implement integrated case management strategies. Dr. Deisinger has been an invited speaker for numerous national and international professional and government organizations.

In 2008, Dr. Deisinger was the lead author of *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams*, which is recognized by the American National Standards Institute as exemplifying the standard of practice for implementing and operating campus threat assessment and management teams. Several campuses, corporations, and healthcare systems have adopted the *Handbook* as an operating guide.

Since 2012, he has served as a subject matter expert for the White House and the U.S. Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Defense in their efforts to prevent targeted violence and other insider threats. From 2009–2011, Dr. Deisinger served as a subject matter expert and primary trainer for the national Campus Threat Assessment Training initiative, a program offered through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. From 2009–2012, Dr. Deisinger was appointed as a Fellow of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention. From 2008–2010, Dr. Deisinger was appointed as a subject matter expert for a joint project by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Secret Service, and Federal Bureau of Investigation that resulted in a monograph entitled *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*.

In 2009, following the tragedy at Fort Hood, the U.S. Army requested Dr. Deisinger's assistance in enhancing force protection and threat management capabilities. He subsequently served as a subject matter expert for the Defense Science Board, providing briefings to enhance understanding of targeted violence and the application of threat management methodologies in military settings. His contributions were included in the Board's 2012 publication, *Task Force Report: Predicting Violent Behavior*.

He has been featured in *Nature—International Weekly Journal of Science*, the *American Psychological Association Monitor on Psychology*, and the PBS Special, *The Path to Violence*.

W. Payne Marks

Payne Marks began his career in law enforcement in 1994 as a Deputy Sheriff with the Gloucester County Sheriff's Office in eastern Virginia. He moved to the Virginia State Police in 1996, where he served as a Trooper, Special Agent, and in various leadership positions, culminating in his service as the Director of the Virginia Fusion Intelligence Center.

Here, he was responsible for prioritizing and overseeing strategic and tactical intelligence analysis, leading a staff of 40 analysts, supervisors, and support staff. He also oversaw the field operations of the Criminal Intelligence Division, which included 20 special agents of the Field Intelligence Unit and the State Police personnel assigned to the various FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Forces within Virginia.

Based on research conducted while a graduate student at the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Domestic and Homeland Security, Marks facilitated the development of new violence prevention capabilities for the Virginia State Police by establishing a behavioral threat assessment and management program within the Virginia Fusion Intelligence Center. This initiative utilized multidisciplinary, investigative, and analytical tools and processes to help prevent instances of targeted violence within Virginia.

Preceding his service as Director of the Virginia Fusion Intelligence Center, Marks served as the Assistant Unit Commander of the Counterterrorism and Criminal Interdiction Unit (CCIU) of the Virginia State Police. Here, he was responsible for ensuring the operational readiness of seven CCIU teams deployed throughout Virginia. This included training, exercises, and responses, as well as the development of policies and procedures regarding responses to radiological events. He also co-chaired the Virginia Preventive Radiological Nuclear Detection (PRND) Working Group with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

As a member of the State Police Critical Incident-Stress Management Team, Marks volunteered as a peer debriefer for incidents that may cause job-related or post-traumatic stress. He also volunteered with the Virginia State Police Death Benefit Fund Association, serving as Association President until his retirement from state service in 2020.

Payne Marks holds a master's degree in security studies from the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, graduating in 2016. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Mary Washington (Virginia) in 1992. He completed the National Criminal Justice Command College through the University of Virginia in 2011.

He has presented to regional and national conferences concerning the role of law enforcement and behavioral threat assessment and management to prevent targeted violence in our communities. Marks has also worked as a private contractor supporting the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, delivering trainings, exercises, and evaluations to public safety agencies throughout the United States. Since retirement from state service in September of 2020, Payne Marks has established a consulting practice to continue the work of targeted violence prevention and intelligence-led initiatives to improve public safety. Marks is recognized by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services as a trainer to teach K-12 behavioral threat assessment and management to public schools in Virginia.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Definitions

Aberrant behavior: Behavior that is atypical for the person or situation and causes concern for the safety or well-being of those involved. Aberrant behavior for an individual involves actions, statements, communications, or responses that are unusual for the person or situation, or atypical actions that could lead to violence toward self or others or are reasonably perceived as threatening or causing concern for the person's well-being. These can include (but are not limited to):

- Unusual withdrawal or isolation of the subject from peers and family members
- Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person
- Atypical or out-of-context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration, or anger
- Confrontational, accusatory, or blaming behavior
- An atypical interest in or increasing fascination with weapons or acts of violence
- Fixation on violence as a means of addressing a grievance

Ammunition: Any material intended for use in a firearm, capable of being projected by a weapon, and/or that makes the weapon operational.

Bullying: Any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and the victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. Bullying includes cyberbullying but does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

Credible Threat of Violence: A knowing and willful statement, action, or course of conduct that would cause a person reasonably to believe that they are under threat of death or serious bodily injury. A course of conduct is any series of acts over a period of time, however short, that evidences a continuity of purpose, such as following or stalking an individual to or from the workplace/campus, telephone calls to the victim/target, and correspondence with the target, whether by public or private mail, e-mail, interoffice mail, or fax.

Direct Threat: Defined under law as one in which a person poses a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. A determination that a person with a disability poses a direct threat may not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about the effects of a particular disability and must be based on an individualized assessment, reasonable judgment relying on current medical evidence, or the best available objective evidence, to determine: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will mitigate the risk.

Distal Risk Factors: A distal risk factor is a characteristic or behavioral pattern that represents an underlying vulnerability for a particular condition or outcome, e.g., violence. Having a distal risk factor does not mean a subject will develop the condition or outcome, only that they may be at risk for developing it at some time in the future. Examples include:

- **Personal Grievance and Moral Outrage:** A combination of personal grievance and moral outrage concerning historical or contemporaneous religious or political events. Personal grievance is a major loss in love and/or work (anger, humiliation, and blame follow). Moral outrage is vicarious identification, i.e., the lone terrorist has not personally experienced the suffering of the victimized group.

- **Framed by an Ideology:** The presence of beliefs that justify the subject's intent to act. It can be a religious belief system, political philosophy, secular commitment, one-issue conflict, or an idiosyncratic justification. Beliefs are usually superficial, and favorite phrases are selected to justify violence.
- **Failure to Affiliate with an Extremist Group:** The experience of rejecting or being rejected by a radical, extremist, or other group with which the subject initially wanted to affiliate. Rejection further isolates and hardens the belief system and intent to be violent. Often, a long pattern of interpersonal difficulties is present. The subject will then turn to the internet in search of like-minded, violent true believers.
- **Dependence on the Virtual Community:** The use of social media, chat rooms, emails, listservs, texting, tweeting, posting, searches, etc., for virtual interaction, e.g., reinforcement of beliefs, virtual learning, planning, and preparation.
- **Thwarting of Occupational Goals:** A major setback or failure in a planned academic and/or occupational life course results in the subject being disillusioned with the social order and resentful of narcissistic wounding due to a history of slights, rejections, and failures.
- **Changes in Thinking and Emotion:** Interpersonal communication becomes more strident, humorless, binary, or dogmatic, e.g., "don't think, just believe." Internal fantasies become violent and grandiose, with the goal of purifying the environment by killing the unbelievers, accelerating an apocalyptic event, often sanctified by God, and/or engaging in violence as a righteous act. Emotional change from just anger to contempt and disgust, e.g., equation of outgroup with vermin or other toxic objects.
- **Failure of Sexual Pair Bonding:** Historical failures to maintain a stable and positive attachment with any sexual intimate. This may involve renunciation of actual sexuality, idealization in fantasy, erotic component of martyrdom (sexual fantasy), or the view that women are distrusted and need to be controlled.
- **Mental Disorder:** Evidence of a major mental disorder by history or in the present. Note that the ideology may provide a rationalization for symptoms of mental disorder and intellectually buffer and help manage the anxiety of a decompensating mind.
- **Greater Creativity and Innovation:** Evidence of tactical thinking "outside the box." The planned act is creative, innovative (a major aspect has not been done before in contemporary times), and/or is imitated by others. There may be an absence of fear of failure.
- **History of Criminal Violence:** Evidence of instrumental criminal violence in the subject's past, demonstrating a capacity and a willingness to engage in predation for a variety of reasons, such as a history of armed robberies or planned assaults on others for material gain.

Duty to Warn/Protect: A legal duty of a mental health professional with knowledge of a potential act of violence by someone in his care directed at a third party. This knowledge requires him to act reasonably to protect the potential victim from the threat.

Firearms: Any handgun, shotgun, or rifle that will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel single or multiple projectiles by an explosion of a combustible material.

Intervention: A strategy or approach intended to prevent violence or other harm and enhance the health, safety, or well-being of the community.

Intimidation: Engaging in actions that include, but are not limited to, stalking or behavior intended to frighten, coerce, or induce duress.

Intimacy Effect: The closer the interpersonal relationship between a person of concern and a target, the greater the likelihood of violence. This intimacy can be based on the person of concern's perception of the relationship, including delusional perceptions.

Monitoring: Checking on the status of the case.

Active Monitoring involves the Community BTAM Team deliberately and dynamically engaging with persons involved in the case and community systems to check in regarding the status of the case, subject/target responses to interventions, needs of the community, impact of environmental/systemic factors or precipitating events, etc.

Passive Monitoring involves encouraging and supporting those involved in the case or other members of the community to report any further issues or concerns to the Community BTAM Team as necessary.

Pathway to Violence: One of several models proposed to describe a subject's progression from grievance to attack. Steps along the pathway include a highly personalized grievance, violent ideation, research and planning, specific preparations for violence, breaches of security or other boundaries, and attack. It is possible that an individual's pathway may differ or not exist at all.

- **Grievance:** The subject experiences a real or perceived sense of loss, mistreatment, or injustice, often fueling a feeling of being wronged, shamed, or humiliated.
- **Ideation:** The subject expresses thoughts or fantasies regarding the use of violence to address a real or perceived grievance.
- **Planning:** The subject gives thought and consideration not only to the idea and intent of committing violence but also to the who, what, when, where, and how of doing so. This may involve gathering information regarding their grievances, their targets, means of causing harm, equipment, etc., or researching other incidents of targeted violence to learn from other perpetrators.
- **Preparation:** The subject attempts to prepare for the violence and to develop or acquire the capability to cause harm to the intended target(s)/victim(s). They obtain or try to obtain the means, refine methods, facilitate, or take advantage of opportunities and proximity to targets to fulfill their plans.
- **Implementation:** The subject initiates the operationalized plan once they perceive themselves as capable of doing so. Capability is based on the subject's perceived skill and will to cause harm.

Physical Attack: Unwanted or hostile physical contact such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving, or throwing objects.

Pose a Threat: The subject of concern has (or is in the process of obtaining) the intent and capability to cause harm to self or others through planning and preparation.

Property Damage: Intentional damage to property, including property owned or leased by the organization, employees, clients, visitors, or contractors/vendors.

Protective Factor: Characteristics or conditions that may help to decrease a person's risk for violence.

Proximal Warning Behaviors: Dynamic and/or changing patterns of behavior that may be evidence of increasing or accelerating risk.

- **Directly Communicated Threat:** An unambiguously stated or written threat to either a target or to law enforcement expressing intent to commit violence.
- **Energy Burst:** An increase in frequency, duration, or variety of warning behaviors related to a target, even if the behaviors themselves appear relatively innocuous, usually in the days or weeks before an attack.
- **Fixation Warning Behavior:** An extreme preoccupation with another person, an activity, or an idea. In threat assessment and management cases, it is often observed to involve a grievance, personal cause, or a public figure.
- **Identification Behavior:** Actual or virtual behavior demonstrating a psychological desire to be a pseudo-commando, adopt a warrior mentality, identify with military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with past attackers, or associate with advancing a particular cause or belief.

- **Last Resort Behavior:** Communications or actions indicating increasing desperation or distress, or that the person of concern perceives no alternatives to violence.
- **Leakage:** Communications or expressions in any form that do not directly threaten but otherwise reveal clues related to a subject's grievances, ideas, intentions, plans, or preparations for committing violence.
- **Novel Aggression:** This is an act of aggression that appears unrelated to any "pathway" behavior and is committed for the first time or is atypical. A person of concern may be engaging in this behavior to test their ability to engage in a violent act, and it could be thought of as experimental aggression.
- **Pathway Warning Behavior:** Any behavior that is part of the research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack.

Risk Assessment: A calculation, based upon known variables, of a person's risk for engaging in violence. Risk level is often based upon static factors rather than warning behaviors and frequently requires in-person evaluations in a clinical setting. Community BTAM Team members do not commonly use this technique.

Risk Factor: Characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may engage in violence. Violence risk is most often the result of multiple risk factors converging at a moment in time. Risk factors may encompass biological, psychological, and/or social factors in the individual, family, and environment. The risk of violence is highest when multiple factors are present or escalating, when protective factors and healthy coping techniques have diminished, and when the individual has access to lethal means.

Self-Harm/Self-Directed Violence: Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. Self-harm behaviors can be either non-suicidal or suicidal.

Sexual Assault: Any forcible sexual activity that occurs without the consent of the victim. It includes, but is not limited to, unwanted kissing and fondling, forcible vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse, and forcible penetration with an object or finger. Consent is an agreement reached without force, coercion, or intimidation between persons. Forcible sexual activity occurs when consent is not reached or when the victim is mentally incapacitated or physically helpless.

Stalking: A pattern of behaviors or course of action directed at another person with the intent to place—or when they know or reasonably should know that the conduct places—that other person, their family, or their household members in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury.

Suicide: Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with an intent to die as a result of the behavior.

Suicide Attempt: A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to die. A suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. A mixture of ambivalent feelings, such as a wish to die and a desire to live, is a common experience with most suicide attempts. Therefore, ambivalence is not a reliable indicator of the seriousness or level of danger of a suicide attempt or the person's overall risk.

Suicidal Behavior: Suicide attempts, injury to oneself associated with at least some level of intent, developing a plan or strategy for suicide, gathering the means for a suicide plan, or any other overt action or thought indicating intent to end one's life.

Suicidal Ideation: Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or the intent to end one's life is still considered suicidal ideation and shall be taken seriously.

Suicide Contagion: The process by which suicidal behavior or death by suicide influences an increase in suicidal behaviors in others who are also at risk. Identification, modeling, and guilt are each thought to play a role in contagion. Suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides within a community.

Target: The general definition of a target is a person, thing, or place that is the focus of an attack. In threat assessment and management casework, it is a point of fixation for intended violence. This can include people, buildings, organizations, or more general concepts.

Targeted Violence: An incident of violence where a potential assailant chooses a target(s) prior to a violent act.

Threat: A concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual may pose a danger to the safety of community members through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. The threat may be expressed or communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.

Threat Assessment: A systematic, fact-based process emphasizing an appraisal of observed (or reasonably observable) behaviors to identify potentially disruptive, dangerous, or violent situations, assess them, and manage/address them.

Victim: An individual who has experienced or witnessed an act or acts of violence or threats of violence.

Violence: Any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in organizations or the community, committed by members or visitors, but not including lawful acts of self-defense or the defense of others. Violence includes, but is not limited to, physical attack, beating, stabbing, suicide or attempted suicide, shooting, rape, domestic violence, property damage, threats, obscene phone calls, intimidating presence, and harassment of any nature, such as stalking, shouting, or swearing.

Violent Extremism: Violent action for which the impetus of the attack is born out of an ideological system, usually intended to enact some change or disrupt activities deemed unacceptable by followers of that ideology.

Warning Signs: Characteristics or behaviors that are associated with a current or escalating risk of violence. These tend to be dynamic, acute, and often associated with new stresses, events, losses, or failures.

Weapons: Any instrument of combat, or any object not designed as an instrument of combat but carried for the purpose of inflicting or threatening bodily injury. Examples include, but are not limited to, firearms, knives with fixed blades or pocketknives with blades longer than four inches, razors, metal knuckles, blackjacks, hatchets, bows and arrows, nunchucks, foils, stun weapons, or any explosive or incendiary device. A stun weapon is any device that emits a momentary or pulsed output that is electrical, audible, optical, or electromagnetic in nature and is designed to temporarily incapacitate a person.

Resources and References

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Professional Associations and Online Resources

Professional Associations

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)

www.atapworldwide.org

The Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) is a non-profit organization comprised of law enforcement, prosecutors, mental health professionals, corporate security experts, probation and parole personnel, and others involved in threat management and violence risk assessment. The purpose of ATAP is to afford its members a professional and educational environment to exchange ideas and strategies to address such issues as stalking, threats, and homeland security. The Association's website includes a resource library, conference presentation materials, and information about membership and events.

Government and Other Online Resources

Averted School Violence Project

www.avertedschoolviolence.org

The Averted School Violence Data Collection Platform, developed with support from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) of the U.S. Department of Justice, gathers data on incidents of averted school and campus violence for comparison with incidents of completed acts of violence. They invite submissions regarding cases of averted violence and provide summary analyses of their findings.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Adverse Childhood Experiences: How ACEs Affect Our Lives and Society

Interactive graphics: https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/phl/resource_center_infographic.html

Downloadable report: https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/phl/images/ACES_Infographic_Accessible.pdf

Connecting the Dots: Overview of Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence

https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/sites/vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps.connecting-the-dots/themes/ctd_bootstrap/asset/connecting_the_dots.pdf

Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships

Toolkit: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/dating-matters-toolkit/explore-component#/>

FERPA, U.S. Department of Education

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/ferpa>

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. The website has many resources about mental health concerns.

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

www.nrcdv.org

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence is an independent, non-profit organization that serves as a comprehensive source of information for those wanting to educate themselves and help others on the many issues related to domestic violence.

National Resource Center on Workplace Responses

www.workplacesrespond.org

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, the National Resource Center on Workplace Responses offers resources for those interested in providing effective workplace responses to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking. The site contains a workplace policy creation tool offering choices of model language.

National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)

www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac

A resource of the U.S. Secret Service, NTAC provides resources and training regarding research and practice regarding threat assessment in K-12 schools, building positive school climates, and bystander intervention.

Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC)

www.stalkingawareness.org

The Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) ensures first responders and other allied professionals have the specialized knowledge to identify and respond to the crime of stalking. As a comprehensive national resource center, SPARC provides a multi-faceted approach to programming. SPARC assists multidisciplinary professionals with information, resources, and policy and protocol development through our technical assistance endeavors. SPARC also offers local, regional, statewide, and national training.

U.S. Department of Education: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (34 CFR Part 99)

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/node/548>

School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is available at: https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/SRO_FAQs.pdf

Workplaces Respond to Domestic Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center

www.workplacesrespond.org

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, the Center offers internet-based information for those interested in providing effective workplace responses to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking. The site contains a workplace policy creation tool offering choices of model language.

INFORMATION SHARING AND PRIVACY

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: A Guide for First Responders and Law Enforcement, FBI, and ED

www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ferpa-guide.pdf/view

This two-page document describes what FERPA is, the information that campuses can provide to law enforcement, and the conditions under which campus staff can disclose information without the authorization of the student.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule: A Guide for Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and FBI

www.fbi.gov/file-repository/hipaa-guide.pdf/view

This short guide details what the HIPAA Privacy Rule is, who must comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule, and who is not required to comply with this rule. The resource also discusses the circumstances under which a HIPAA-covered entity may disclose protected health information (PHI) to law enforcement.

DATA ON VIOLENCE, CRIME, AND SAFETY

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) School-Associated Violent Death Study

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/savd.html

CDC reports that track school-associated violent deaths annually from 1992.

Federal Bureau of Investigation: Active Shooter Safety Resources

www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/safety-resources/active-shooter-safety-resources

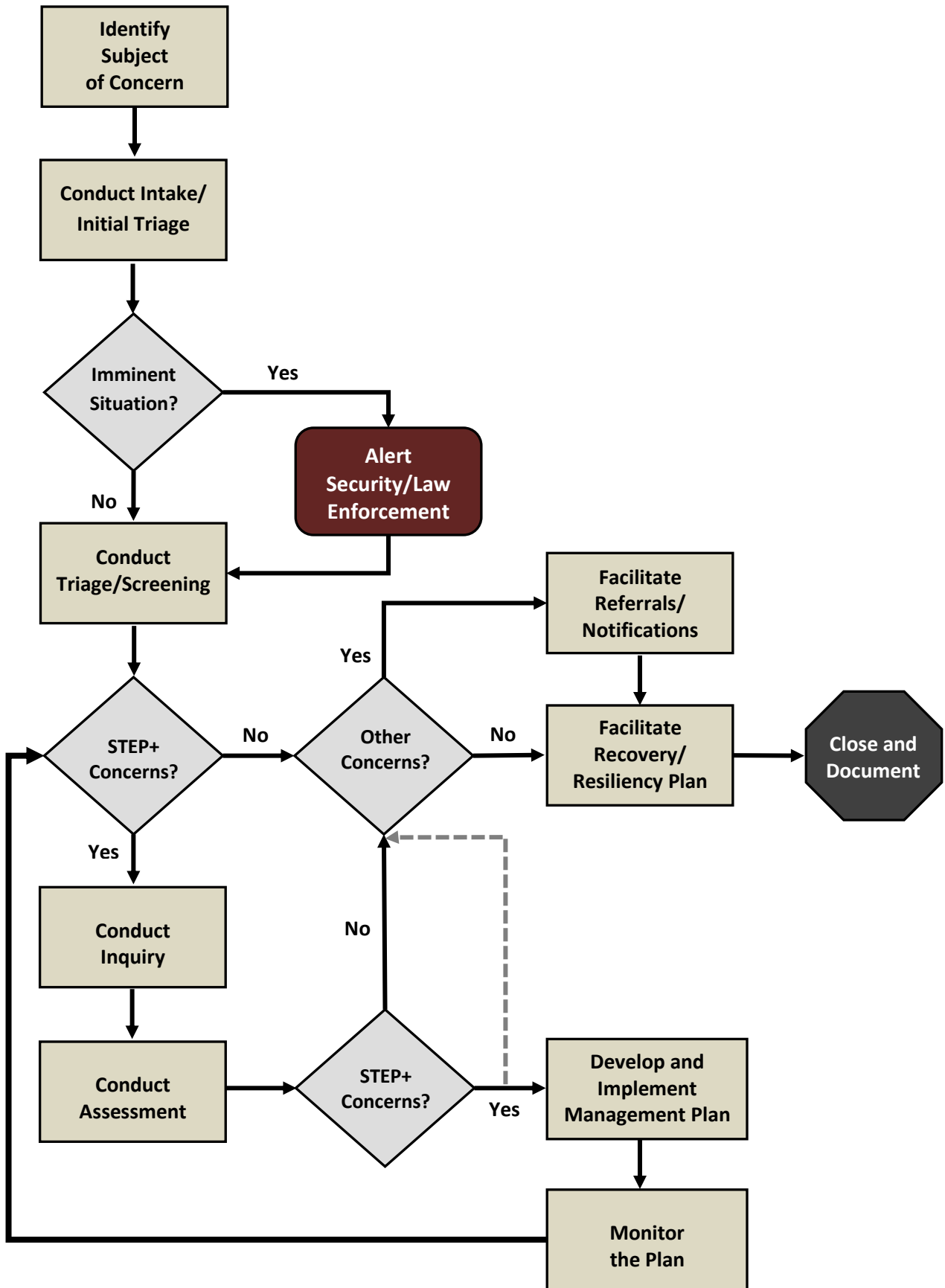
Several resources, including studies regarding active shooter incidents.

Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022092.pdf>

Annual report from the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education that provides data on crime and violence in educational settings from a variety of sources.

Threat Assessment and Management Process: Flowchart



Case Prioritization/Level of Concern

Priority 1 (Critical): Subject exhibits intent and capability and poses an immediate or imminent threat to cause serious violence or harm to self or others. Target/Others are vulnerable and/or have support needs. Environmental/Systemic factors and Precipitating Events are typically present. Requires immediate law enforcement and administration notification, subject mitigation and containment, activation of crisis response and emergency notification protocols, target protection and safety planning, ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support.

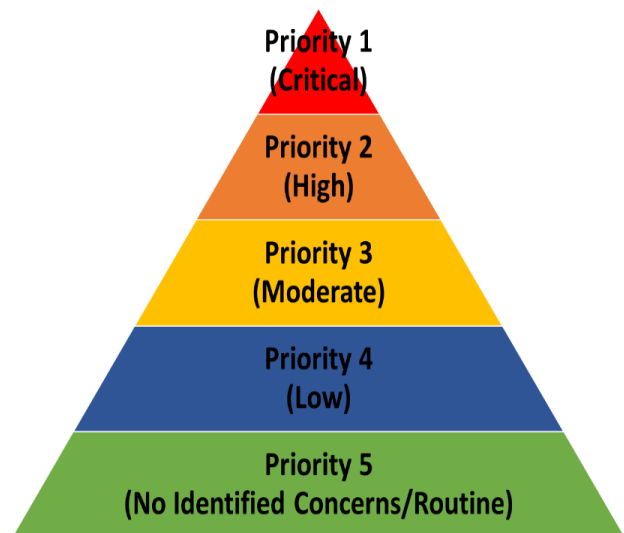
Priority 2 (High): Subject poses, or is rapidly developing capability for, a threat of serious harm to self/others or is in urgent need of intervention/assistance. Target/Others are vulnerable and/or have support needs.

Environmental/Systemic factors and Precipitating Events are typically present. Requires law enforcement and administration notification, subject mitigation, activation of crisis response protocols as needed, target protection and safety plan, ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support.

Priority 3 (Moderate): Subject is not known to pose a threat of serious harm. Subject may be developing capability for harm and/or engaging in disruptive or concerning behaviors that indicate need for intervention. Targets/Others are likely concerned and impacted. Environmental/Systemic and Precipitating factors may be present. Consider law enforcement, security, and administrative notification as appropriate. Requires ongoing assessment and case management, active monitoring, and target/community support as necessary. Referrals as appropriate.

Priority 4 (Low): Subject does not indicate a threat of violence or harm to self/others but would/may benefit from intervention/assistance. Target vulnerabilities and needs may be present at low levels. Environmental/Systemic concerns or Precipitating Events may be present at low levels. May involve ongoing assessment and case management with periodic active monitoring or passive monitoring. Referrals as appropriate. Close case if no BTAM interventions or monitoring is indicated.

Priority 5 (No Identified Concerns): Subject does not pose a threat of harm to self or others or have a need for assistance or intervention. No Target needs, Environmental factors, or Precipitants that need BTAM intervention. Close case.



Select Virginia Laws Related to Threat Assessment

Clicking on the Statute number will take you to the online Virginia Legislative information setting for the current version of the Code. Clicking on the title of the Code section in the table below will take you to that page in this document.

Section/Statute of the <i>Code of Virginia</i>	Page
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Note that the following references to the *Code of Virginia* may include only the subsections relevant to BTAM Teams or functions. Community BTAM Team members and other staff should be familiar with their full duties under the relevant statutes.

Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

§ 9.1-184. Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety created; duties.

- A. From such funds as may be appropriated, the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (the Center) is hereby established within the Department. The Center shall:
1. Provide training for Virginia public school personnel in school safety, on evidence-based antibullying tactics based on the definition of bullying in [§ 22.1-276.01](#), and in the effective identification of students who may be at risk for violent behavior and in need of special services or assistance;
 2. Serve as a resource and referral center for Virginia school divisions by conducting research, sponsoring workshops, and providing information regarding current school safety concerns, such as conflict management and peer mediation, bullying as defined in [§ 22.1-276.01](#), school facility design and technology, current state and federal statutory and regulatory school safety requirements, and legal and constitutional issues regarding school safety and individual rights;
 3. Maintain and disseminate information to local school divisions on effective school safety initiatives in Virginia and across the nation;
 4. Develop a case management tool for the collection and reporting of data by threat assessment teams pursuant to [§ 22.1-79.4](#);
 5. Collect, analyze, and disseminate various Virginia school safety data, including school safety audit information submitted to it pursuant to [§ 22.1-279.8](#), collected by the Department and, in conjunction with the Department of Education, information relating to the activities of school resource officers submitted pursuant to [§ 22.1-279.10](#);
 6. Encourage the development of partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote school safety in Virginia;
 7. Provide technical assistance to Virginia school divisions in the development and implementation of initiatives promoting school safety, including threat assessment-based protocols with such funds as may be available for such purpose;
 8. Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure collaboration and coordination of roles and responsibilities in areas of mutual concern, such as school safety audits and crime prevention;
 9. Provide training for and certification of school security officers, as defined in [§ 9.1-101](#) and consistent with [§ 9.1-110](#);
 10. Develop, in conjunction with the Department of State Police, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Department of Education, a model critical incident response training program for public school personnel and others providing services to schools that shall also be made available to private schools in the Commonwealth;
 11. In consultation with the Department of Education, provide schools with a model policy for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including procedures for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students; and
 12. Develop a model memorandum of understanding setting forth the respective roles and responsibilities of local school boards and local law-enforcement agencies regarding the use of school resource officers. Such model memorandum of understanding may be used by local school boards and local law-enforcement agencies to satisfy the requirements of [§ 22.1-280.2:3](#).
 13. Designate an employee of the Center as the school personnel safety official for the Commonwealth whose duty is to compile, maintain, and make publicly available a list of each division safety official designated and the contact information for such individual included in each collated packet of school safety audits received pursuant to subsection B of [§ 22.1-279.8](#). Such school personnel safety official for the Commonwealth shall at least annually confirm with each division superintendent that such contact information is up to date and accurate.
- B. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with the Center and, upon request, assist the Center in the performance of its duties and responsibilities.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in Educational Settings

§ 23.1-805. Violence prevention committee; threat assessment team.

- A. Each public institution of higher education shall establish policies and procedures for the prevention of violence on campus, including assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of the campus community.
- B. The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall determine a violence prevention committee structure on campus composed of individuals charged with education on and prevention of violence on campus. Each violence prevention committee shall include representatives from student affairs, law enforcement, human resources, counseling services, residence life, and other constituencies as needed and shall consult with legal counsel as needed. Each violence prevention committee shall develop a clear statement of mission, membership, and leadership. Such statement shall be published and made available to the campus community.
- C. Each violence prevention committee shall (i) provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a physical threat to the community; (ii) identify members of the campus community to whom threatening behavior should be reported; (iii) establish policies and procedures that outline circumstances under which all faculty and staff are required to report behavior that may represent a physical threat to the community, provided that such report is consistent with state and federal law; and (iv) establish policies and procedures for (a) the assessment of individuals whose behavior may present a threat, (b) appropriate means of intervention with such individuals, and (c) sufficient means of action, including interim suspension, referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment, medical separation to resolve potential physical threats, and notification of family members or guardians, or both, unless such notification would prove harmful to the individual in question, consistent with state and federal law.
- D. The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall establish a threat assessment team that includes members from law enforcement, mental health professionals, and representatives of student affairs and human resources. College or university counsel shall be invited to provide legal advice. Each such threat assessment team may invite other representatives from campus to participate in individual cases, but no such representative shall be considered a member of the threat assessment team. Each threat assessment team shall implement the assessment, intervention, and action policies set forth by the violence prevention committee pursuant to subsection C.
- E. Each threat assessment team shall establish relationships or utilize existing relationships with mental health agencies and local and state law-enforcement agencies to expedite assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior may present a threat to safety. Upon a preliminary determination that an individual poses a threat of violence to self or others or exhibits significantly disruptive behavior or a need for assistance, the threat assessment team may obtain criminal history record information as provided in [§§ 19.2-389](#) and [19.2-389.1](#) and health records as provided in [§ 32.1-127.1:03](#).
- F. Upon a preliminary determination that an individual poses an articulable and significant threat of violence to others, the threat assessment team shall:
 1. Obtain any available criminal history record information as provided in [§§ 19.2-389](#) and [19.2-389.1](#) and any available health records as provided in [§ 32.1-127.1:03](#);
 2. Notify in writing within 24 hours upon making such preliminary determination (i) the campus police department, (ii) local law enforcement for the city or county in which the public institution of higher education is located, local law enforcement for the city or county in which the individual resides, and, if known to the threat assessment team, local law enforcement for the city or county in which the individual is located, and (iii) the local attorney for the Commonwealth in any jurisdiction where the threat assessment team has notified local law enforcement; and
 3. Disclose any specific threat of violence posed by the individual as part of such notification.
- G. The custodians of any criminal history record information or health records shall, upon request from a threat assessment team pursuant to subsections E and F, produce the information or records requested.
- H. No member or invited representative of a threat assessment team shall redisclose any criminal history record information or health information obtained pursuant to this section or otherwise use any record of an individual beyond the purpose for which such disclosure was made to the threat assessment team.
- I. Each threat assessment team member shall complete a minimum of eight hours of initial training within 12 months of appointment to the threat assessment team and shall complete a minimum of two hours of threat assessment training each academic year thereafter. Training shall be conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (the Department) or an independent entity approved by the Department.

- J. When otherwise consistent with applicable state and federal law, in the event that a public institution of higher education has knowledge that a student or employee who was determined pursuant to an investigation by the institution's threat assessment team to pose an articulable and significant threat of violence to others is transferring to another institution of higher education or place of employment, the public institution of higher education from which the individual is transferring shall notify the institution of higher education or place of employment to which the individual is transferring of such investigation and determination.

§ 22.1-79.4. Threat assessment teams and oversight committees.

- A. Each local school board shall adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students consistent with the model policies developed by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (the Center) in accordance with [§ 9.1-184](#). Such policies shall include procedures for referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment, when appropriate.
- B. The superintendent of each school division may establish a committee charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams operating within the division, which may be an existing committee established by the division. The committee shall include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.
- C. Each division superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team that shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement and, in the case of any school in which a school resource officer is employed, at least one such school resource officer. New threat assessment team members shall complete an initial threat assessment training and all threat assessment team members shall be required to complete refresher threat assessment training every three years. Threat assessment teams may be established to serve one or more schools as determined by the division superintendent. Each team shall (i) provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self; (ii) identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported; and (iii) implement policies adopted by the local school board pursuant to subsection A.
- D. Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to self or others, a threat assessment team shall immediately report its determination to the division superintendent or his designee. The division superintendent or his designee shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian. Nothing in this subsection shall preclude school division personnel from acting immediately to address an imminent threat.
- E. Each threat assessment team established pursuant to this section shall collect and report to the Center quantitative data on its activities using the case management tool developed by the Center.
- F. Upon a preliminary determination by the threat assessment team that an individual poses a threat of violence to self or others or exhibits significantly disruptive behavior or need for assistance, a threat assessment team may obtain criminal history record information, as provided in [§§ 19.2-389](#) and [19.2-389.1](#), and health records, as provided in [§ 32.1-127.1:03](#). No member of a threat assessment team shall redisclose any criminal history record information or health information obtained pursuant to this section or otherwise use any record of an individual beyond the purpose for which such disclosure was made to the threat assessment team.

Information Sharing and Privacy

[§ 19.2-389](#). Dissemination of criminal history record information.

- A. Criminal history record information shall be disseminated, whether directly or through an intermediary, only to:
25. Members of a threat assessment team established by a local school board pursuant to [§ 22.1-79.4](#), by a public institution of higher education pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#), or by a private nonprofit institution of higher education, for the purpose of assessing or intervening with an individual whose behavior may present a threat to safety; however, no member of a threat assessment team shall redisclose any criminal history record information obtained pursuant to this section or otherwise use any record of an individual beyond the purpose that such disclosure was made to the threat assessment team;

[§ 19.2-389.1](#). Dissemination of juvenile record information.

Record information maintained in the Central Criminal Records Exchange pursuant to the provisions of [§ 16.1-299](#) shall be disseminated only:

- (x) To members of a threat assessment team established by a school board pursuant to [§ 22.1-79.4](#), by a public institution of higher education pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#), or by a private nonprofit institution of higher education, to aid in the assessment or intervention with individuals whose behavior may present a threat to safety; however, no member of a threat assessment team shall redisclose any juvenile record information obtained pursuant to this section or otherwise use any record of an individual beyond the purpose that such disclosure was made to the threat assessment team;

[§ 32.1-127.1:03](#). Health records privacy.

There is hereby recognized an individual's right of privacy in the content of his health records. Health records are the property of the health care entity maintaining them, and, except when permitted or required by this section or by other provisions of state law, no health care entity, or other person working in a health care setting, may disclose an individual's health records.

Pursuant to this subsection:

3. No person to whom health records are disclosed shall redisclose or otherwise reveal the health records of an individual, beyond the purpose for which such disclosure was made, without first obtaining the individual's specific authorization to such redisclosure.
- D. Health care entities may, and, when required by other provisions of state law, shall, disclose health records:
35. To a threat assessment team established by a local school board pursuant to [§ 22.1-79.4](#), by a public institution of higher education pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#), or by a private nonprofit institution of higher education:

[§ 9.1-136](#). Criminal penalty for violation.

Any person who willfully and intentionally requests, obtains, or seeks to obtain criminal history record information under false pretenses, or who willfully and intentionally disseminates or seeks to disseminate criminal history record information to any agency or person in violation of this article or Chapter 23 ([§ 19.2-387](#) et seq.) of Title 19.2, shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Exclusions to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act

§ 2.2-3705.2. Exclusions to application of chapter; records relating to public safety. (Freedom of Information Act)

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with

§ 2.2-3704.01:

13. Records received by the Department of Criminal Justice Services pursuant to [§ 9.1-184](#), [§ 22.1-79.4](#), and [§ 22.1-279.8](#) or for purposes of evaluating threat assessment teams established by a public institution of higher education pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#) or by a private nonprofit institution of higher education, to the extent such records reveal security plans, walk-through checklists, or vulnerability and threat assessment components.
14. Information contained in (i) engineering, architectural, or construction drawings; (ii) operational, procedural, tactical planning, or training manuals; (iii) staff meeting minutes; or (iv) other records that reveal any of the following, the disclosure of which would jeopardize the safety or security of any person; governmental facility, building, or structure or persons using such facility, building, or structure; or public or private commercial office, multifamily residential, or retail building or its occupants:
 - a) Critical infrastructure information or the location or operation of security equipment and systems of any public building, structure, or information storage facility, including ventilation systems, fire protection equipment, mandatory building emergency equipment or systems, elevators, electrical systems, telecommunications equipment and systems, or utility equipment and systems;
 - b) Vulnerability assessments, information not lawfully available to the public regarding specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities, or security plans and measures of an entity, facility, building structure, information technology system, or software program;
 - c) Surveillance techniques, personnel deployments, alarm or security systems or technologies, or operational or transportation plans or protocols

§ 2.2-3705.4. Exclusions to application of chapter; educational records and certain records of educational institutions.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except as provided in subsection B or where such disclosure is otherwise prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with [§ 2.2-3704.01](#):

8. Information held by a threat assessment team established by a local school board pursuant to [§ 22.1-79.4](#) or by a public institution of higher education pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#) relating to the assessment or intervention with a specific individual. However, in the event an individual who has been under assessment commits an act, or is prosecuted for the commission of an act that has caused the death of, or caused serious bodily injury, including any felony sexual assault, to another person, such information of the threat assessment team concerning the individual under assessment shall be made available as provided by this chapter, with the exception of any criminal history records obtained pursuant to [§ 19.2-389](#) or [§ 19.2-389.1](#), health records obtained pursuant to [§ 32.1-127.1:03](#), or scholastic records as defined in [§ 22.1-289](#). The public body providing such information shall remove personally identifying information of any person who provided information to the threat assessment team under a promise of confidentiality.

Sexual Violence

[§ 23.1-806. Reporting of acts of sexual violence.](#)

A. For purposes of this section:

“Campus” means (i) any building or property owned or controlled by an institution of higher education within the same reasonably contiguous geographic area of the institution and used by the institution in direct support of, or in a manner relating to, the institution’s educational purposes, including residence halls, and (ii) any building or property that is within or reasonably contiguous to the area described in clause (i) that is owned by the institution but controlled by another person, is frequently used by students, and supports institutional purposes, such as a food or other retail vendor.

“Noncampus building or property” means (i) any building or property owned or controlled by a student organization officially recognized by an institution of higher education or (ii) any building or property owned or controlled by an institution of higher education that is used in direct support of, or in relation to, the institution’s educational purposes, is frequently used by students, and is not within the same reasonably contiguous geographic area of the institution.

“Public property” means all public property, including thoroughfares, streets, sidewalks, and parking facilities, that is within the campus, or immediately adjacent to and accessible from the campus.

“Responsible employee” means a person employed by a public institution of higher education or nonprofit private institution of higher education who has the authority to take action to redress sexual violence, who has been given the duty of reporting acts of sexual violence or any other misconduct by students to the Title IX coordinator or other appropriate institution designee, or whom a student could reasonably believe has this authority or duty.

“Sexual violence” means physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent.

“Title IX coordinator” means an employee designated by a public institution of higher education or nonprofit private institution of higher education to coordinate the institution’s efforts to comply with and carry out the institution’s responsibilities under Title IX ([20 U.S.C. § 1681](#) et seq.). If no such employee has been designated by the institution, the institution shall designate an employee who will be responsible for receiving information of alleged acts of sexual violence from responsible employees in accordance with subsection B.

- B. Any responsible employee who in the course of his employment obtains information that an act of sexual violence may have been committed against a student attending the institution or may have occurred on campus, in or on a noncampus building or property, or on public property shall report such information to the Title IX coordinator as soon as practicable after addressing the immediate needs of the victim.
- C. Upon receipt of information pursuant to subsection B, the Title IX coordinator or his designee shall promptly report the information, including any personally identifiable information, to a review committee established pursuant to subsection D. Nothing in this section shall prevent the Title IX coordinator or any other responsible employee from providing any information to law enforcement with the consent of the victim.
- D. Each public institution of higher education and nonprofit private institution of higher education shall establish a review committee for the purposes of reviewing information relating to acts of sexual violence, including information reported pursuant to subsection C. Such review committee shall consist of three or more persons and shall include the Title IX coordinator or his designee, a representative of law enforcement, and a student affairs representative. If the institution has established a campus police department pursuant to Article 3 ([§ 23.1-809](#) et seq.), the representative of law enforcement shall be a member of such department; otherwise, the representative of law enforcement shall be a representative of campus security. The review committee may be the threat assessment team established under [§ 23.1-805](#) or a separate body. The review committee may obtain law-enforcement records, criminal history record information as provided in [§ 19.2-389](#) and [§ 19.2-389.1](#), health records as provided in [§ 32.1-127.1:03](#), available institutional conduct or personnel records, and known facts and circumstances of the information reported pursuant to subsection C or information or evidence known to the institution or to law enforcement. The review committee shall be considered to be a threat assessment team established pursuant to [§ 23.1-805](#) for purposes of (i) obtaining criminal history record information and health records and (ii) the Virginia Freedom of Information Act ([§ 2.2-3700](#) et seq.). The review committee shall conduct its review in compliance with federal privacy law.
- E. Upon receipt of information of an alleged act of sexual violence reported pursuant to subsection C, the review committee shall meet within 72 hours to review the information and shall meet again as necessary as new information becomes available.

- F. If, based on consideration of all factors, the review committee, or if the committee cannot reach a consensus, the representative of law enforcement on the review committee, determines that the disclosure of the information, including personally identifiable information, is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals as set forth in 34 C.F.R. § 99.36, the representative of law enforcement on the review committee shall immediately disclose such information to the law-enforcement agency that would be responsible for investigating the alleged act of sexual violence. Such disclosure shall be for the purposes of investigation and other actions by law enforcement. Upon such disclosure, the Title IX coordinator or his designee shall notify the victim that such disclosure is being made. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply if the law-enforcement agency responsible for investigating the alleged act of sexual violence is located outside the United States.
- G. In cases in which the alleged act of sexual violence would constitute a felony violation of Article 7 ([§ 18.2-61](#) et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2, the representative of law enforcement on the review committee shall inform the other members of the review committee and shall within 24 hours consult with the attorney for the Commonwealth or other prosecutor responsible for prosecuting the alleged act of sexual violence and provide to him the information received by the review committee without disclosing personally identifiable information, unless such information was disclosed pursuant to subsection F. In addition, if such consultation does not occur and any other member of the review committee individually concludes that the alleged act of sexual violence would constitute a felony violation of Article 7 ([§ 18.2-61](#) et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2, that member shall within 24 hours consult with the attorney for the Commonwealth or other prosecutor responsible for prosecuting the alleged act of sexual violence and provide to him the information received by the review committee without disclosing personally identifiable information, unless such information was disclosed pursuant to subsection F.
- H. At the conclusion of the review, the Title IX coordinator and the law-enforcement representative shall each retain (i) the authority to proceed with any further investigation or adjudication allowed under state or federal law and (ii) independent records of the review team's considerations, which shall be maintained under applicable state and federal law.
- I. No responsible employee shall be required to make a report pursuant to subsection B if:
 - 1. The responsible employee obtained the information through any communication considered privileged under state or federal law or the responsible employee obtained the information in the course of providing services as a licensed health care professional, an employee providing administrative support for such health care professionals, a professional counselor, an accredited rape crisis or domestic violence counselor, a campus victim support personnel, a member of clergy, or an attorney; or
 - 2. The responsible employee has actual knowledge that the same matter has already been reported to the Title IX coordinator or to the attorney for the Commonwealth or the law-enforcement agency responsible for investigating the alleged act of sexual violence.
- J. Any responsible employee who makes a report required by this section or testifies in a judicial or administrative proceeding as a result of such report is immune from any civil liability alleged to have resulted therefrom unless such person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.
- K. The provisions of this section shall not require a person who is the victim of an alleged act of sexual violence to report such violation.
- L. The institution shall ensure that a victim of an alleged act of sexual violence is informed of (i) the available law-enforcement options for investigation and prosecution; (ii) the importance of collection and preservation of evidence; (iii) the available options for a protective order; (iv) the available campus options for investigation and adjudication under the institution's policies; (v) the victim's rights to participate or decline to participate in any investigation to the extent permitted under state or federal law; (vi) the applicable federal or state confidentiality provisions that govern information provided by a victim; (vii) the available on-campus resources and any unaffiliated community resources, including sexual assault crisis centers, domestic violence crisis centers, or other victim support services; and (viii) the importance of seeking appropriate medical attention.

Mental Health

[§ 54.1-2400.1](#). Mental health service providers; duty to protect third parties; immunity.

A. As used in this section:

“Certified substance abuse counselor” means a person certified to provide substance abuse counseling in a state-approved public or private substance abuse program or facility.

“Client” or “patient” means any person who is voluntarily or involuntarily receiving mental health services or substance abuse services from any mental health service provider.

“Clinical psychologist” means a person who practices clinical psychology as defined in [§ 54.1-3600](#).

“Clinical social worker” means a person who practices social work as defined in [§ 54.1-3700](#).

“Licensed practical nurse” means a person licensed to practice practical nursing as defined in [§ 54.1-3000](#).

“Licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner” means any person licensed to engage in the practice of substance abuse treatment as defined in [§ 54.1-3500](#).

“Marriage and family therapist” means a person licensed to engage in the practice of marriage and family therapy as defined in [§ 54.1-3500](#).

“Mental health professional” means a person who by education and experience is professionally qualified and licensed in Virginia to provide counseling interventions designed to facilitate an individual’s achievement of human development goals and remediate mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders and associated distresses which interfere with mental health and development.

“Mental health service provider” or “provider” refers to any of the following: (i) a person who provides professional services as a certified substance abuse counselor, clinical psychologist, clinical social worker, licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner, licensed practical nurse, marriage and family therapist, mental health professional, physician, physician assistant, professional counselor, psychologist, qualified mental health professional, registered nurse, registered peer recovery specialist, school psychologist, or social worker; (ii) a professional corporation, all of whose shareholders or members are so licensed; or (iii) a partnership, all of whose partners are so licensed.

“Professional counselor” means a person who practices counseling as defined in [§ 54.1-3500](#).

“Psychologist” means a person who practices psychology as defined in [§ 54.1-3600](#).

“Qualified mental health professional” has the same meaning as provided in [§ 54.1-3500](#).

“Registered nurse” means a person licensed to practice professional nursing as defined in [§ 54.1-3000](#).

“Registered peer recovery specialist” means a person who by education and experience is professionally qualified and registered by the Board of Counseling to provide collaborative services to assist individuals in achieving sustained recovery from the effects of addiction or mental illness, or both. A registered peer recovery specialist shall provide such services as an employee or independent contractor of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, a provider licensed by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, a practitioner licensed by or holding a permit issued from the Department of Health Professions, or a facility licensed by the Department of Health.

“School psychologist” means a person who practices school psychology as defined in [§ 54.1-3600](#)

“Social worker” means a person who practices social work as defined in [§ 54.1-3700](#).

B. A mental health service provider has a duty to take precautions to protect third parties from violent behavior or other serious harm only when the client has orally, in writing, or via sign language, communicated to the provider a specific and immediate threat to cause serious bodily injury or death to an identified or readily identifiable person or persons, if the provider reasonably believes, or should believe according to the standards of his profession, that the client has the intent and ability to carry out that threat immediately or imminently. If the third party is a child, in addition to taking precautions to protect the child from the behaviors in the above types of threats, the provider also has a duty to take precautions to protect the child if the client threatens to engage in behaviors that would constitute physical abuse or sexual abuse as defined in [§ 18.2-67.10](#). The duty to protect does not attach unless the threat has been communicated to the provider by the threatening client while the provider is engaged in his professional duties.

C. The duty set forth in subsection B is discharged by a mental health service provider who takes one or more of the following actions:

1. Seeks involuntary admission of the client under Article 16 ([§ 16.1-335](#) et seq.) of Chapter 11 of Title 16.1 or Chapter 8 ([§ 37.2-800](#) et seq.) of Title 37.2.

2. Makes reasonable attempts to warn the potential victims or the parent or guardian of the potential victim if the potential victim is under the age of 18.
 3. Makes reasonable efforts to notify a law-enforcement official having jurisdiction in the client's or potential victim's place of residence or place of work, or place of work of the parent or guardian if the potential victim is under age 18, or both.
 4. Takes steps reasonably available to the provider to prevent the client from using physical violence or other means of harm to others until the appropriate law-enforcement agency can be summoned and takes custody of the client.
 5. Provides therapy or counseling to the client or patient in the session in which the threat has been communicated until the mental health service provider reasonably believes that the client no longer has the intent or the ability to carry out the threat.
 6. In the case of a registered peer recovery specialist, or a qualified mental health professional who is not otherwise licensed by a health regulatory board at the Department of Health Professions, reports immediately to a licensed mental health service provider to take one or more of the actions set forth in this subsection.
- D. A mental health service provider shall not be held civilly liable to any person for:
1. Breaching confidentiality with the limited purpose of protecting third parties by communicating the threats described in subsection B made by his clients to potential third party victims or law-enforcement agencies or by taking any of the actions specified in subsection C.
 2. Failing to predict, in the absence of a threat described in subsection B, that the client would cause the third party serious physical harm.
 3. Failing to take precautions other than those enumerated in subsection C to protect a potential third party victim from the client's violent behavior.

§ 37.2-809. Involuntary temporary detention; issuance and execution of order.

A. For the purposes of this section:

"Designee of the local community services board" means an examiner designated by the local community services board who (i) is skilled in the assessment and treatment of mental illness, (ii) has completed a certification program approved by the Department, (iii) is able to provide an independent examination of the person, (iv) is not related by blood or marriage to the person being evaluated, (v) has no financial interest in the admission or treatment of the person being evaluated, (vi) has no investment interest in the facility detaining or admitting the person under this article, and (vii) except for employees of state hospitals and of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is not employed by the facility.

"Employee" means an employee of the local community services board who is skilled in the assessment and treatment of mental illness and has completed a certification program approved by the Department.

"Investment interest" means the ownership or holding of an equity or debt security, including shares of stock in a corporation, interests or units of a partnership, bonds, debentures, notes, or other equity or debt instruments.

- B. A magistrate shall issue, upon the sworn petition of any responsible person, treating physician, or upon his own motion and only after an evaluation conducted in-person or by means of a two-way electronic video and audio communication system as authorized in [§ 37.2-804.1](#) by an employee or a designee of the local community services board to determine whether the person meets the criteria for temporary detention, a temporary detention order if it appears from all evidence readily available, including any recommendation from a physician, clinical psychologist, clinical social worker, or licensed professional counselor treating the person, that the person (i) has a mental illness and that there exists a substantial likelihood that, as a result of mental illness, the person will, in the near future, (a) cause serious physical harm to himself or others as evidenced by recent behavior causing, attempting, or threatening harm and other relevant information, if any, or (b) suffer serious harm due to his lack of capacity to protect himself from harm or to provide for his basic human needs; (ii) is in need of hospitalization or treatment; and (iii) is unwilling to volunteer or incapable of volunteering for hospitalization or treatment. The magistrate shall also consider, if available, (a) information provided by the person who initiated emergency custody and (b) the recommendations of any treating or examining physician licensed in Virginia either verbally or in writing prior to rendering a decision. Any temporary detention order entered pursuant to this section shall provide for the disclosure of medical records pursuant to [§ 37.2-804.2](#). This subsection shall not preclude any other disclosures as required or permitted by law.
- C. When considering whether there is probable cause to issue a temporary detention order, the magistrate may, in addition to the petition, consider (i) the recommendations of any treating or examining physician, psychologist, clinical social worker, or licensed professional counselor licensed in Virginia, if available, (ii) any past actions of the person, (iii) any past mental health treatment of the person, (iv) any relevant hearsay evidence, (v) any medical records available,

- (vi) any affidavits submitted, if the witness is unavailable and it so states in the affidavit, and (vii) any other information available that the magistrate considers relevant to the determination of whether probable cause exists to issue a temporary detention order.
- D. A magistrate may issue a temporary detention order without an emergency custody order proceeding. A magistrate may issue a temporary detention order without a prior evaluation pursuant to subsection B if (i) the person has been personally examined within the previous 72 hours by an employee or a designee of the local community services board or (ii) there is a significant physical, psychological, or medical risk to the person or to others associated with conducting such evaluation.
- E. An employee or a designee of the local community services board shall determine the facility of temporary detention in accordance with the provisions of [§ 37.2-809.1](#) for all persons detained pursuant to this section. An employee or designee of the local community services board may change the facility of temporary detention and may designate an alternative facility for temporary detention at any point during the period of temporary detention if it is determined that the alternative facility is a more appropriate facility for temporary detention of the person given the specific security, medical, or behavioral health needs of the person. In cases in which the facility of temporary detention is changed following transfer of custody to an initial facility of temporary custody, transportation of the person to the alternative facility of temporary detention shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of [§ 37.2-810](#). The initial facility of temporary detention shall be identified on the preadmission screening report and indicated on the temporary detention order; however, if an employee or designee of the local community services board designates an alternative facility, that employee or designee shall provide written notice forthwith, on a form developed by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, to the clerk of the issuing court of the name and address of the alternative facility. Subject to the provisions of [§ 37.2-809.1](#), if a facility of temporary detention cannot be identified by the time of the expiration of the period of emergency custody pursuant to [§ 37.2-808](#), the person shall be detained in a state facility for the treatment of persons with mental illness and such facility shall be indicated on the temporary detention order. Except as provided in [§ 37.2-811](#) for inmates requiring hospitalization in accordance with subdivision A 2 of [§ 19.2-169.6](#), the person shall not be detained in a jail or other place of confinement for persons charged with criminal offenses. Except as provided in [§ 37.2-811](#) for inmates requiring hospitalization in accordance with subdivision A 2 of [§ 19.2-169.6](#) or in subsection C of [§ 37.2-813](#) for persons prior to transfer to the facility of temporary detention, the person shall remain in the custody of law enforcement until either (i) the person is detained within a secure facility or (ii) custody has been accepted by the appropriate personnel designated by either the initial facility of temporary detention identified in the temporary detention order or by the alternative facility of temporary detention designated by the employee or designee of the local community services board pursuant to this subsection. The person detained or in custody pursuant to this section shall be given a written summary of the temporary detention procedures and the statutory protections associated with those procedures.
- F. Any facility caring for a person placed with it pursuant to a temporary detention order is authorized to provide emergency medical and psychiatric services within its capabilities when the facility determines that the services are in the best interests of the person within its care. The costs incurred as a result of the hearings and by the facility in providing services during the period of temporary detention shall be paid and recovered pursuant to [§ 37.2-804](#). The maximum costs reimbursable by the Commonwealth pursuant to this section shall be established by the State Board of Medical Assistance Services based on reasonable criteria. The State Board of Medical Assistance Services shall, by regulation, establish a reasonable rate per day of inpatient care for temporary detention.
- G. The employee or the designee of the local community services board who is conducting the evaluation pursuant to this section shall determine, prior to the issuance of the temporary detention order, the insurance status of the person. Where coverage by a third party payor exists, the facility seeking reimbursement under this section shall first seek reimbursement from the third party payor. The Commonwealth shall reimburse the facility only for the balance of costs remaining after the allowances covered by the third party payor have been received.
- H. The duration of temporary detention shall be sufficient to allow for completion of the examination required by [§ 37.2-815](#), preparation of the preadmission screening report required by [§ 37.2-816](#), and initiation of mental health treatment to stabilize the person's psychiatric condition to avoid involuntary commitment where possible, but shall not exceed 72 hours prior to a hearing. If the 72-hour period herein specified terminates on a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or, if the individual has been admitted to a facility of temporary detention, day or part of a day on which the clerk's office is lawfully closed, the person may be detained, as herein provided, until the close of business on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, legal holiday, or, if the individual has been admitted to a facility of temporary detention, day or part of a day on which the clerk's office is lawfully closed. The person may be released, pursuant to [§ 37.2-813](#), before the 72-hour period herein specified has run.

- I. If a temporary detention order is not executed within 24 hours of its issuance, or within a shorter period as is specified in the order, the order shall be void and shall be returned unexecuted to the office of the clerk of the issuing court or, if the office is not open, to any magistrate serving the jurisdiction of the issuing court. Subsequent orders may be issued upon the original petition within 96 hours after the petition is filed. However, a magistrate must again obtain the advice of an employee or a designee of the local community services board prior to issuing a subsequent order upon the original petition. Any petition for which no temporary detention order or other process in connection therewith is served on the subject of the petition within 96 hours after the petition is filed shall be void and shall be returned to the office of the clerk of the issuing court.
- J. The Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia shall establish and require that a magistrate, as provided by this section, be available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, for the purpose of performing the duties established by this section. Each community services board shall provide to each general district court and magistrate's office within its service area a list of its employees and designees who are available to perform the evaluations required herein.
- K. For purposes of this section, a health care provider or designee of a local community services board or behavioral health authority shall not be required to encrypt any email containing information or medical records provided to a magistrate unless there is reason to believe that a third party will attempt to intercept the email.
- L. If the employee or designee of the community services board who is conducting the evaluation pursuant to this section recommends that the person should not be subject to a temporary detention order, such employee or designee shall (i) inform the petitioner, the person who initiated emergency custody if such person is present, and an onsite treating physician of his recommendation; (ii) promptly inform such person who initiated emergency custody that the community services board will facilitate communication between the person and the magistrate if the person disagrees with recommendations of the employee or designee of the community services board who conducted the evaluation and the person who initiated emergency custody so requests; and (iii) upon prompt request made by the person who initiated emergency custody, arrange for such person who initiated emergency custody to communicate with the magistrate as soon as is practicable and prior to the expiration of the period of emergency custody. The magistrate shall consider any information provided by the person who initiated emergency custody and any recommendations of the treating or examining physician and the employee or designee of the community services board who conducted the evaluation and consider such information and recommendations in accordance with subsection B in making his determination to issue a temporary detention order. The person who is the subject of emergency custody shall remain in the custody of law enforcement or a designee of law enforcement and shall not be released from emergency custody until communication with the magistrate pursuant to this subsection has concluded and the magistrate has made a determination regarding issuance of a temporary detention order.
- M. For purposes of this section, "person who initiated emergency custody" means any person who initiated the issuance of an emergency custody order pursuant to [§ 37.2-808](#) or a law-enforcement officer who takes a person into custody pursuant to subsection G of [§ 37.2-808](#).
- N. In any case in which a person subject to an evaluation pursuant to this section is receiving services in a hospital emergency department, the treating physician or his designee and the employee or designee of the local community services board shall disclose to each other relevant information pertaining to the individual's treatment in the emergency department.

Substantial Risk Orders

[§ 19.2-152.13](#). Emergency substantial risk order.

- A. Upon the petition of an attorney for the Commonwealth or a law-enforcement officer, a judge of a circuit court, general district court, or juvenile and domestic relations district court or a magistrate, upon a finding that there is probable cause to believe that a person poses a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or others in the near future by such person's possession or acquisition of a firearm, shall issue an ex parte emergency substantial risk order. Such order shall prohibit the person who is subject to the order from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm for the duration of the order. In determining whether probable cause for the issuance of an order exists, the judge or magistrate shall consider any relevant evidence, including any recent act of violence, force, or threat as defined in [§ 19.2-152.7:1](#) by such person directed toward another person or toward himself. No petition shall be filed unless an independent investigation has been conducted by law enforcement that determines that grounds for the petition exist. The order shall contain a statement (i) informing the person who is subject to the order of the requirements and penalties under [§ 18.2-308.1:6](#), including that it is unlawful for such person to purchase, possess, or transport a firearm for the duration of the order and that such person is required to surrender his concealed handgun permit if he possesses such permit, and (ii) advising such person to voluntarily relinquish any firearm within his custody to the law-enforcement agency that serves the order.
- B. The petition for an emergency substantial risk order shall be made under oath and shall be supported by an affidavit.
- C. Upon service of an emergency substantial risk order, the person who is subject to the order shall be given the opportunity to voluntarily relinquish any firearm in his possession. The law-enforcement agency that executed the emergency substantial risk order shall take custody of all firearms that are voluntarily relinquished by such person. The law-enforcement agency that takes into custody a firearm pursuant to the order shall prepare a written receipt containing the name of the person who is subject to the order and the manufacturer, model, condition, and serial number of the firearm and shall provide a copy thereof to such person. Nothing in this subsection precludes a law-enforcement officer from later obtaining a search warrant for any firearms if the law-enforcement officer has reason to believe that the person who is subject to an emergency substantial risk order has not relinquished all firearms in his possession.
- D. An emergency substantial risk order issued pursuant to this section shall expire at 11:59 p.m. on the fourteenth day following issuance of the order. If the expiration occurs on a day that the circuit court for the jurisdiction where the order was issued is not in session, the order shall be extended until 11:59 p.m. on the next day that the circuit court is in session. The person who is subject to the order may at any time file with the circuit court a motion to dissolve the order.
- E. An emergency substantial risk order issued pursuant to this section is effective upon personal service on the person who is subject to the order. The order shall be served forthwith after issuance. A copy of the order, petition, and supporting affidavit shall be given to the person who is subject to the order together with a notice informing the person that he has a right to a hearing under [§ 19.2-152.14](#) and may be represented by counsel at the hearing.
- F. The court or magistrate shall forthwith, but in all cases no later than the end of the business day on which the emergency substantial risk order was issued, enter and transfer electronically to the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) established and maintained by the Department of State Police (Department) pursuant to Chapter 2 ([§ 52-12](#) et seq.) of Title 52 the identifying information of the person who is subject to the order provided to the court or magistrate. A copy of an order issued pursuant to this section containing any such identifying information shall be forwarded forthwith to the primary law-enforcement agency responsible for service and entry of the order. Upon receipt of the order by the primary law-enforcement agency, the agency shall forthwith verify and enter any modification as necessary to the identifying information and other appropriate information required by the Department into the VCIN, and the order shall be served forthwith upon the person who is subject to the order. However, if the order is issued by the circuit court, the clerk of the circuit court shall forthwith forward an attested copy of the order containing the identifying information of the person who is subject to the order provided to the court to the primary law-enforcement agency providing service and entry of the order. Upon receipt of the order by the primary law-enforcement agency, the agency shall enter the name of the person subject to the order and other appropriate information required by the Department into the VCIN and the order shall be served forthwith upon the person who is subject to the order. Upon service, the agency making service shall enter the date and time of service and other appropriate information required into the VCIN and make due return to the court. If the order is later dissolved or modified, a copy of the dissolution or modification order shall also be attested and forwarded forthwith to the primary law-enforcement agency responsible for service and entry of the order. Upon receipt of the dissolution or modification order by the primary law-enforcement agency, the agency shall forthwith verify and enter any

modification as necessary to the identifying information and other appropriate information required by the Department into the VCIN and the order shall be served forthwith.

- G. The law-enforcement agency that serves the emergency substantial risk order shall make due return to the circuit court, which shall be accompanied by a written inventory of all firearms relinquished.
- H. Proceedings in which an emergency substantial risk order is sought pursuant to this section shall be commenced where the person who is subject to the order (i) has his principal residence or (ii) has engaged in any conduct upon which the petition for the emergency substantial risk order is based.
- I. A proceeding for a substantial risk order shall be a separate civil legal proceeding subject to the same rules as civil proceedings.

§ 19.2-152.14. Substantial risk order.

- A. Not later than 14 days after the issuance of an emergency substantial risk order pursuant to [§ 19.2-152.13](#), the circuit court for the jurisdiction where the order was issued shall hold a hearing to determine whether a substantial risk order should be entered. The attorney for the Commonwealth for the jurisdiction that issued the emergency substantial risk order shall represent the interests of the Commonwealth. Notice of the hearing shall be given to the person subject to the emergency substantial 9 of 11 risk order and the attorney for the Commonwealth. Upon motion of the respondent and for good cause shown, the court may continue the hearing, provided that the order shall remain in effect until the hearing. The Commonwealth shall have the burden of proving all material facts by clear and convincing evidence. If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person poses a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or to other individuals in the near future by such person's possession or acquisition of a firearm, the court shall issue a substantial risk order. Such order shall prohibit the person who is subject to the order from purchasing, possessing, or transporting a firearm for the duration of the order. In determining whether clear and convincing evidence for the issuance of an order exists, the judge shall consider any relevant evidence including any recent act of violence, force, or threat as defined in [§ 19.2-152.7:1](#) by such person directed toward another person or toward himself. The order shall contain a statement (i) informing the person who is subject to the order of the requirements and penalties under [§ 18.2-308.1:6](#), including that it is unlawful for such person to purchase, possess, or transport a firearm for the duration of the order and that such person is required to surrender his concealed handgun permit if he possesses such permit, and (ii) advising such person to voluntarily relinquish any firearm that has not been taken into custody to the law-enforcement agency that served the emergency substantial risk order.
- B. If the court issues a substantial risk order pursuant to subsection A, the court shall (i) order that any firearm that was previously relinquished pursuant to [§ 19.2-152.13](#) from the person who is subject to the substantial risk order continue to be held by the agency that has custody of the firearm for the duration of the order and (ii) advise such person that a law-enforcement officer may obtain a search warrant to search for any firearms from such person if such law-enforcement officer has reason to believe that such person has not relinquished all firearms in his possession.
If the court finds that the person does not pose a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or to other individuals in the near future, the court shall order that any firearm that was previously relinquished be returned to such person in accordance with the provisions of [§ 19.2-152.15](#).
- C. The substantial risk order may be issued for a specified period of time up to a maximum of 180 days. The order shall expire at 11:59 p.m. on the last day specified or at 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the 180-day period if no date is specified. Prior to the expiration of the order, an attorney for the Commonwealth or a law-enforcement officer may file a written motion requesting a hearing to extend the order. Proceedings to extend an order shall be given precedence on the docket of the court. The court may extend the order for a period not longer than 180 days if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person continues to pose a substantial risk of personal injury to himself or to other individuals in the near future by such person's possession or acquisition of a firearm at the time the request for an extension is made. The extension of the order shall expire at 11:59 p.m. on the last day specified or at 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the 180-day period if no date is specified. Nothing herein shall limit the number of extensions that may be requested or issued. The person who is subject to the order may file a motion to dissolve the order one time during the duration of the order; however, such motion may not be filed earlier than 30 days from the date the order was issued.
- D. Any person whose firearm has been voluntarily relinquished pursuant to [§ 19.2-152.13](#) or this section, or such person's legal representative, may transfer the firearm to another individual 21 years of age or older who is not otherwise prohibited by law from possessing such firearm, provided that:
 - 1. The person subject to the order and the transferee appear at the hearing;

2. At the hearing, the attorney for the Commonwealth advises the court that a law-enforcement agency has determined that the transferee is not prohibited from possessing or transporting a firearm;
3. The transferee does not reside with the person subject to the order;
4. The court informs the transferee of the requirements and penalties under [§ 18.2-308.2:1](#); and
5. The court, after considering all relevant factors and any evidence or testimony from the person subject to the order, approves the transfer of the firearm subject to such restrictions as the court deems necessary.

The law-enforcement agency holding the firearm shall deliver the firearm to the transferee within five days of receiving a copy of the court's approval of the transfer.

- E. The court shall forthwith, but in all cases no later than the end of the business day on which the substantial risk order was issued, enter and transfer electronically to the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) established and maintained by the Department of State Police (Department) pursuant to Chapter 2 ([§ 52-12](#) et seq.) of Title 52 the identifying information of the person who is subject to the order provided to the court and shall forthwith forward the attested copy of the order containing any such identifying information to the primary law-enforcement agency responsible for service and entry of the order. Upon receipt of the order by the primary law-enforcement agency, the agency shall forthwith verify and enter any modification as necessary to the identifying information and other appropriate information required by the Department into the VCIN and the order shall be served forthwith upon the person who is subject to the order and due return made to the court. Upon service, the agency making service shall enter the date and time of service and other appropriate information required by the Department into the VCIN and make due return to the court. If the person who is subject to an emergency substantial risk order fails to appear at the hearing conducted pursuant to this section because such person was not personally served with notice of the hearing pursuant to subsection A, or if personally served was incarcerated and not transported to the hearing, the court may extend the emergency substantial risk order for a period not to exceed 14 days. The extended emergency substantial risk order shall specify a date for a hearing to be conducted pursuant to this section and shall be served forthwith on such person and due return made to the court. If the order is later dissolved or modified, a copy of the dissolution or modification order shall also be attested and forwarded forthwith to the primary law-enforcement agency responsible for service and entry of the order. Upon receipt of the dissolution or modification order by the primary law-enforcement agency, the agency shall forthwith verify and enter any modification as necessary to the identifying information and other appropriate information required by the Department of State Police into the Virginia Criminal Information Network, and the order shall be served forthwith and due return made to the court.

[§ 19.2-152.7:1. Definitions](#)

As used in this chapter:

“Act of violence, force, or threat” means any act involving violence, force, or threat that results in bodily injury or places one in reasonable apprehension of death, sexual assault, or bodily injury. Such act includes, but is not limited to, any forceful detention, stalking, criminal sexual assault in violation of Article 7 ([§ 18.2-61](#) et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2, or any criminal offense that results in bodily injury or places one in reasonable apprehension of death, sexual assault, or bodily injury.

Records Retention and Disposition

[§ 42.1-82. Duties and powers of Library Board.](#)

- A. The State Library Board shall:
 - 1. Issue regulations concerning procedures for the disposal, physical destruction or other disposition of public records containing social security numbers. The procedures shall include all reasonable steps to destroy such documents by (i) shredding, (ii) erasing, or (iii) otherwise modifying the social security numbers in those records to make them unreadable or undecipherable by any means.
 - 2. Issue regulations and guidelines designed to facilitate the creation, preservation, storage, filing, reformatting, management, and destruction of public records by agencies. Such regulations shall mandate procedures for records management and include recommendations for the creation, retention, disposal, or other disposition of public records.
- B. The State Library Board may establish advisory committees composed of persons with expertise in the matters under consideration to assist the Library Board in developing regulations and guidelines.

[§ 42.1-86.1. Disposition of public records.](#)

- A. No agency shall sell or give away public records. No agency shall destroy or discard a public record unless (i) the record appears on a records retention and disposition schedule approved pursuant to [§ 42.1-82](#) and the record's retention period has expired; (ii) a certificate of records destruction, as designated by the Librarian of Virginia, has been properly completed and approved by the agency's designated records officer; and (iii) there is no litigation, audit, investigation, request for records pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act ([§ 2.2-3700 et seq.](#)), or renegotiation of the relevant records retention and disposition schedule pending at the expiration of the retention period for the applicable records series. After a record is destroyed or discarded, the agency shall forward the original certificate of records destruction to the Library of Virginia.
- B. No agency shall destroy any public record created before 1912 without first offering it to the Library of Virginia.
- C. Each agency shall ensure that records created after July 1, 2006 and authorized to be destroyed or discarded in accordance with subsection a, are destroyed or discarded in a timely manner in accordance with the provisions of this chapter; provided, however, such records that contain identifying information as defined in clauses (iii) through (ix), or clause (xii) of subsection c of [§ 18.2-186.3](#), shall be destroyed within six months of the expiration of the records retention period.

Threat Assessment and Management Case Forms

The following pages provide sample forms to help Community BTAM Teams document information related to all aspects of threat cases, from initial report/intake, triage, assessment, initial case management, case updates, and case closure. These are provided as a resource to support teams in their efforts to identify, assess, and manage potential threats to the community and its members.

Community BTAM Teams should discuss and consult with agency leaders and legal advisors regarding the creation, storage, retention, access, and destruction of records related to the Community BTAM Team and its efforts.

Community BTAM Teams are encouraged to edit the forms to meet their policies and procedures and adapt the forms to meet their needs.

For each stage in the process, consider having at least two Community BTAM Team members review and sign the documentation to ensure accuracy.

Overview of Threat Assessment and Management Forms

Part I: Intake for Initial Report Concerned (2 pages)

This form is for documenting initial reports. The first page documents the incident/concern that occurred. The items about the incident are intended to provide a full understanding of what occurred and indicate whether there are any obligations for further notifications.

The next two pages are to document the persons involved in the potential case, i.e., the subject(s), target(s)/others impacted, and witnesses. Complete a copy of this form for each person involved in the case.

Part II: Triage/Screening (3 pages)

These forms document the triage/screening process. The first form documents record checks conducted in the initial inquiry. Note that these items should be updated to reflect the record sources routinely checked by the Community BTAM Team.

The second page is a summary checklist of key issues to consider in determining the need for further assessment or intervention. The purpose of triage/screening is to determine if there is a need for further review and action by the full team or if the concern can be reasonably resolved at triage or by referral to existing resources.

The third page is for documentation of any additional information, initial priority/level of concern, required notifications, and whether the case is conveyed to the Community BTAM Team and/or if referrals have been made.

Part III: Threat Assessment (3 pages)

The first two pages of this form serve to document findings regarding the key areas for inquiry regarding each of the STEP domains and include a checklist of key factors that will inform assessment and case management considerations. This form may also be used to update key areas/information during ongoing case reviews.

The third page is for documentation of team discussions, priority/level of concern, any required notifications, case status, and any referrals that have been made.

Part IV: Initial Case Management Plan (1 page)

This form uses the STEP framework to outline the case management plan. The teams should identify tasks, team members responsible for overseeing the completion of the tasks, and a date/time the task is due for an update to the team.

Part V: Case Update (2 pages)

This form uses the STEP framework to document updates and modification to the case management plan, including new information or outcomes of prior action items, and new or ongoing tasks for each of the domains. The teams should identify tasks, team members responsible for overseeing completion of the tasks, and a date/time the task is due for update to the team.

The second page is for documentation of Team discussions, priority/level of concern, any required notifications, case status, and any referrals that have been made.

Part V: Case Closure (1 page)

Teams may use this form to document a thorough, diligent, and deliberate review of the case to ensure that any concerns using the STEP framework have been sufficiently addressed until the case is stable at a Routine/No Known Concern or Low Level of Concern, with those concerns adequately addressed by existing services and resources.

PART I: INTAKE for INITIAL REPORT OF CONCERN			
Date Reported:		Day of Week: <input type="checkbox"/> Monday <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> Friday <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday	Time: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM
Taken by:	Agency:	Position:	
Intake/Case #:		Other Case #s:	

REPORTING PARTY:			
Name:		<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	ID #:
Affiliation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Client <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor/Vendor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> None/Unknown	Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Former <input type="checkbox"/> Prospective
Organization:		Building:	
Department:		Position:	
Org. Address:		Phone:	Email:
Home Address:		Phone:	Email:
Home City:		State:	Zip:

INCIDENT:			
Date Occurred:		Day of Week: <input type="checkbox"/> Monday <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> Friday <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday	Time: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM
Location:	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational property [<input type="radio"/> In building <input type="radio"/> Organizational grounds] <input type="checkbox"/> Organization-sponsored activity <input type="checkbox"/> Off property <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
Org/Campus:		Building/Program:	
Address:		City:	State:
Threat Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Assault [<input type="radio"/> Physical <input type="radio"/> Sexual] <input type="checkbox"/> Threat <input type="checkbox"/> Suspicious <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal/Self-Harm <input type="checkbox"/> Bomb threat <input type="checkbox"/> Unusual communication <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Disruptive <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment <input type="checkbox"/> Involuntary MH hold <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
Mode:	<input type="checkbox"/> In Person <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Text/IM <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Social media <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple modes
Persons(s) injured: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	Persons(s) require medical attention? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
Weapon involved: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	Type of weapon: <input type="checkbox"/> Firearm [<input type="radio"/> Rifle/Shotgun <input type="radio"/> Pistol] <input type="checkbox"/> Edged <input type="checkbox"/> Bomb <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		

Details of the incident/nature of concerns. Note what occurred, who was involved, where and when, if others were impacted or harmed, etc.
If threats/concerning statements were communicated, provide direct quotes where possible, using quotation marks to indicate direct quotes. Attach original communications if available.

PART I: INTAKE for INITIAL REPORT OF CONCERN – PERSONS INVOLVED

PERSON INVOLVED: Subject _____ Target _____ Witness _____ Intake/Case #:

Name:			<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	ID #:	
Affiliation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Client <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor/Vendor <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> None/Unknown			Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Former <input type="checkbox"/> Prospective
Organization:				Building:	
Department:				Position:	
Org. Address:		Phone:		Email:	
Relationship to Target:	<input type="checkbox"/> Spouse/Intimate partner <input type="checkbox"/> Dating partner <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <input type="checkbox"/> Acquaintance <input type="checkbox"/> Co-worker/Classmate <input type="checkbox"/> Stranger <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Current <input type="checkbox"/> Former
Home Address:		Phone:		Email:	
Home City:		State:		Zip:	

Comments:

Note: Complete additional form for each subject, target and witness involved.

PART II: TRIAGE/SCREENING – INQUIRY/RECORDS CHECKS

Regarding:	Case:
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RECORDS CHECKS (ALL):	Checked	Notes about significant findings:
Photo	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Community BTAM Team history	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Criminal history	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Driver license information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Vehicle/Parking information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Org. police/Security contacts	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Local law enforcement contacts	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Other law enforcement contacts	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Protective/No contact orders	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
No trespass notice	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Concealed weapons permit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Weapons purchase permit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Social media	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Online Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	

RECORDS CHECKS: Staff NS=Not Significant; NA=Not Applicable

Disciplinary actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Performance evaluations	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Grievances filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Title IX actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Application	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	

RECORDS CHECKS: Students

Class schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Academic standing/progress	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Admissions/Transfer records	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Conduct/Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Title IX actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> NS/NA	

OTHER RECORDS CHECKS:

Note: Complete a records check form for each subject and target.

PART II: TRIAGE/SCREENING - INQUIRY/SUMMARY		
Subject:		Case:
SUBJECT		Notes:
Behavior(s) causing concern/impacting others	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Concerning or aberrant communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Directly communicated threats	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Leakage: grievances, ideation/intent, planning, preparations, targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Identified grievances/motives for violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Fixation on grievances, targets, violent resolution, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Interest or identification with perpetrators, grievances, or violent acts	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
History of violence or novel aggression	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Last resort behaviors: desperation, imperative, diminished alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Pathway behaviors—Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Pathway behaviors—Preparing: means, methods, opportunity, proximity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Stalking/Unwanted contact, communication, or pursuit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Energy bursts/Changes in pattern(s) of disruptive/concerning behavior(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Despondency, despair, isolation, and/or suicidality	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Significant cognitive, emotional, or psychological concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Significant or multiple stressors/difficulty coping	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Lack of inhibitors/stabilizers to prevent violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Comments:		
TARGET/OTHERS		Notes
Identified targets (person/proxy, place, program, process, philosophy)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Fearful of harm	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Protective actions/Responding as if the subject poses a safety concern	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Vulnerability: e.g., consistent routine, low situational awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Need for assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Comments:		
ENVIRONMENT		Notes
Organizational climate concerns: e.g., bullying, bias, poor conflict mgmt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Systemic/Procedural	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Report latency/failure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Bullying/Bias	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Lack of support, guidance, or resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Adverse social influences	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
High rates of violence, harassment, disruption, stress	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Disproportionate rate/severity of concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Comments:		
PRECIPITATING EVENTS		Notes
Impending loss, failure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Key dates/events	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Triggers/Reminders	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Views intervention negatively	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Contagion influence	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Return from separation	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Other:		
Comments:		

PART II: TRIAGE/SCREENING ACTIONS

Subject:	Case:
NOTES	

CASE PRIORITY LEVEL:

<input type="checkbox"/> Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Routine/None
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NOTIFICATIONS	Reason	Date/Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational security	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> State/Federal law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Subject location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Target location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local law enforcement / <input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Subject residence / <input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

TRIAGE/SCREENING RECOMMENDATION:

BTAM CASE #

<input type="checkbox"/> No identified concerns: Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> No BTAM concerns: Referral(s) / Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown/Ongoing threat: Initiate BTAM case	
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REFERRALS:

TRIAGE/SCREENING COMPLETED BY:

Name	Position	Signature	Date

PART III: THREAT ASSESSMENT KEY AREAS FOR INQUIRY	
Subject:	Case:
SUBJECT Key Areas for Inquiry	Key Factors
Is the subject engaging in behaviors causing concern? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Concerns about nature, pattern, context, or change in frequency or intensity? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Others significantly impacted <input type="checkbox"/> Patterned occurrence continues <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in behavior/pattern
Is the subject engaging in concerning, aberrant, and threatening communications? Indicating grievances, ideation, intent, planning, preparation, or targets? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Directly communicated threats <input type="checkbox"/> Leakage <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple communication modes <input type="checkbox"/> Intent to engage in violence <input type="checkbox"/> Warning others
Has the subject expressed motives and/or grievances with intended violence/harm? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Immersion Fixation? <input type="checkbox"/> Grievances <input type="checkbox"/> Targets/Sources <input type="checkbox"/> Violence
Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in violence? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	Identification? <input type="checkbox"/> Incidents or perpetrators <input type="checkbox"/> Grievances of perpetrators <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons/Tactics <input type="checkbox"/> Notoriety or fame <input type="checkbox"/> Violent ideology
Does the subject have (or is developing) the capacity to engage in violence? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence history <input type="checkbox"/> Novel Aggression <input type="checkbox"/> Pathway behaviors? <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and research <input type="checkbox"/> Preparations <input type="checkbox"/> Surveillance, stalking, rehearsal <input type="checkbox"/> Energy burst behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid escalation/Imminence
Is the subject experiencing/expressing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Last resort behaviors <input type="checkbox"/> JACA behaviors? <input type="checkbox"/> Justification <input type="checkbox"/> Alternatives (lack of) <input type="checkbox"/> Consequences <input type="checkbox"/> Martyrdom <input type="checkbox"/> Ability <input type="checkbox"/> Legacy token
Does the subject's behavior indicate a need for intervention/support services? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Depressed mood <input type="checkbox"/> Hallucinations <input type="checkbox"/> Delusions <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme wariness/distrust <input type="checkbox"/> Martyrdom <input type="checkbox"/> Pervasive maladaptive behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Untreated symptoms of MI <input type="checkbox"/> Poor treatment compliance
Does the subject have protective factors or stabilizers that inhibit violence? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Does the subject have a positive, trusting, sustained relationship with a positive figure? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Views violence as unacceptable, immoral: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Accepts responsibility for actions: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Demonstrates remorse for inappropriate behavior: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Respects reasonable limits and expectations: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Uses socially sanctioned means of addressing grievances: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Values life, job, relationships, freedom: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Fears loss of reputation, job, freedom, life: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Maintains, uses, and builds effective coping skills: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown Treatment access, compliance, engagement: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Few/No protective factors <input type="checkbox"/> Protective factors diminishing <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of key support

PART III: THREAT ASSESSMENT KEY AREAS FOR INQUIRY	
Subject:	Case:
TARGET Key Areas for Inquiry	Key Factors
Are targets vulnerable, concerned, or impacted by the subject's behavior? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant impact/fear <input type="checkbox"/> Availability, access, proximity <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability <input type="checkbox"/> Few protective/coping skills <input type="checkbox"/> Need for assistance
ENVIRONMENTAL/SYSTEMIC Key Areas for Inquiry	
Are there Environmental/Systemic factors that are impacting the situation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Org. climate: bullying, bias <input type="checkbox"/> Systemic/Procedural <input type="checkbox"/> Report latency/failure <input type="checkbox"/> Poor conflict management <input type="checkbox"/> Unfair treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate resources <input type="checkbox"/> Adverse influences
PRECIPITATING EVENTS Key Areas for Inquiry	
Are there Precipitating Events that may impact the situation? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Impending loss, failure, injustice <input type="checkbox"/> Key dates/events <input type="checkbox"/> Triggers/Reminders <input type="checkbox"/> Views intervention as injustice <input type="checkbox"/> Contagion influence <input type="checkbox"/> Return from separation
PROCESS INTEGRITY Key Areas for Inquiry	
Are there concerns with consistency, credibility, or bias in information? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor credibility of the subject <input type="checkbox"/> Poor credibility of sources <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistency between sources <input type="checkbox"/> Significant gaps/unknowns
Other Relevant Information:	

PART III: THREAT ASSESSMENT	
Subject:	Case:
NOTES	

CASE PRIORITY LEVEL:

<input type="checkbox"/> Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Routine/None
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NOTIFICATIONS	Reason	Date/Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational security	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> State/Federal law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Subject location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Target location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

CASE STATUS:			BTAM CASE #
<input type="checkbox"/> No identified concerns: Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> No BTAM concerns: Referral(s) / Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown/Ongoing threat: Initiate BTAM case	

REFERRALS:

THREAT ASSESSMENT REVIEWED BY:

Name	Position	Signature	Date

PART IV: INITIAL CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN		
Subject:	Case:	
INTERVENTION/TASK	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DATE DUE
Subject Interventions		
Target Interventions		
Environment Interventions		
Precipitating Events (Monitoring/Interventions)		
Notes:		

CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEWED BY:

Name	Position	Signature	Date

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PART V: CASE UPDATE (to be updated regularly while the case is active)		
Subject:	Case:	
INTERVENTION/TASK		
Subject		
Updates:	Source	
Interventions	Responsible Person	DUE
Target Interventions		
Updates:	Source	
Interventions	Responsible Person	Due
Environment Interventions		
Updates:	Source	
Interventions	Responsible Person	Due

PART V: CASE UPDATE (to be updated regularly while the case is active)

Subject:	Case:	
Precipitating Events (Monitoring/Interventions)		
Updates:	Source	
Interventions	Responsible Person	Due
Comments		

CASE PRIORITY LEVEL:

<input type="checkbox"/> Critical	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Routine/None
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NOTIFICATIONS	Reason	Date/Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational security	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commonwealth Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> State/Federal law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Subject location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement: Target location	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Critical or High threat <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

CASE STATUS:

BTAM CASE #

<input type="checkbox"/> No identified concerns: Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> No BTAM concerns: Referral(s) / Close BTAM case	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown/Ongoing threat: Initiate BTAM case	
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REFERRALS:

THREAT ASSESSMENT REVIEWED BY:

Name	Position	Signature	Date

PART VI: CASE CLOSURE

Subject:	Case:
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- The Community BTAM Team has completed interventions and actions regarding this case.
- The Level of Concern for this case is currently Low or Routine/None.
 - If at a Low Level of Concern, remaining issues or tasks are being adequately addressed and monitored by relevant resources within the organization or community at this time.
- Any relevant referrals have been made and those resources are engaged as needed.
- The Community BTAM Team has reviewed and concurred with all the following regarding the domains of assessment and intervention:

SUBJECT: At this time, the subject *is not known to be engaging* in any behaviors that:

- Pose a threat of violence, harm, or significant disruption to self or others,
- May reasonably pose a threat of violence, harm, or significant disruption to self or others, or
- Indicate a need for further assistance or intervention from the Community BTAM Team.

TARGET/Others: At this time, targets or others *are not known* to:

- Have any significant ongoing concerns regarding their safety regarding this case, or
- Be engaging in any behaviors that place them at risk regarding this case, or
- Have any significant ongoing or further need for assistance or intervention from the Community BTAM Team.

ENVIRONMENT/SYSTEMIC CONCERNS: At this time, there *are no known*:

- Environmental/systemic concerns that are significantly impacting this case, or
- Environmental/systemic concerns that are reasonably likely to occur that would significantly impact this case.

PRECIPITATING EVENTS: At this time, there *are no known*:

- Precipitating Events that are significantly impacting this case currently, or
- Precipitating Events that are reasonably likely to occur and would significantly impact this case.

- There is no articulable basis to consider notification to other BTAM Teams, law enforcement agencies, or other community services for continued monitoring or intervention with the subject or target, or
- If there is such a basis, the notification/referral has been made.

THERE ARE NO FURTHER IDENTIFIABLE ACTION STEPS. THIS CASE HAS BEEN RESOLVED AND IS CLOSED.

CASE CLOSURE REVIEWED BY:

Name	Position	Signature	Date

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Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services | 1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219

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