Virginia Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams

Basic Training Session

A Training Curriculum Developed by

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D. &

Marisa Randazzo, Ph.D.

Participant Manual

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Gene Deisinger, Ph.D. & Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D.

Editorial Assistance by:
Emily Reineke, MA

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INTRODUCTION

In the time since the campus shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, several prominent organizations and task forces have released reports on campus safety and violence prevention. All of these reports have recommended that campuses create threat assessment teams as a key measure to prevent violence before it can occur.   The threat assessment model is now advocated for use in higher education settings by entities at the federal, and state levels, as well as various international and national associations. These include the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health & Human Services; the National Association of Attorneys General; the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators; and state task forces in Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, North Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin.   In 2008, both the commonwealth of Virginia and the state of Illinois passed laws requiring their colleges and universities to establish threat assessment teams (applying to public higher education institutions in Virginia and all higher education institutions in Illinois).

This curriculum is designed to help colleges and universities to develop and implement a threat assessment capacity that fits within their unique cultures and that is effective in both preventing violence and helping persons in need.   The course includes information on how to create and implement a threat assessment team (or add threat assessment capabilities to an existing team) and how to identify, investigate, evaluate, and intervene with persons and situations that raise concern on campus.   It also covers issues surround information-sharing and record-keeping, and includes case studies to help illustrate key concepts.

This curriculum was designed by Dr. Gene Deisinger and Dr. Marisa Reddy Randazzo. Drs. Deisinger and Randazzo have more than 30 years of combined experience investigating individual threat cases and conducting original research on targeted violence and threat assessment in educational institutions. Their approach has been cited as a model program for threat assessment and management services. This training is based on research and best practices in the area of campus threat assessment, including the model for threat assessment developed from the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education's landmark study of school shootings (which Dr. Randazzo co-authored). Their model has been used as a foundation for successful threat management programs on numerous campuses, schools and corporations across the country.

From empirical research and individual threat assessment cases, it is clear that many violent situations on campus can be prevented, de-escalated and managed. Threat assessment is complex, but not complicated. There is no need for cumbersome procedures and protocols.   But threat assessment does take the right training, identifying the right people to be involved in the process, and having experienced professionals that you can depend upon for advice when needed.   Most institutions have at least some of the critical elements already in place, but can benefit from threat assessment training and from expert consultation in maximizing threat assessment capabilities and improving collaboration and coordination of case management services.

For more information on campus threat assessment and threat management, please see The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams (Boston: Applied Risk Management, 2008; www.arm-security.com) or reach out to Dr. Deisinger and Dr. Randazzo directly (Gene.Deisinger@gmail.com or MRandazzo@ThreatResources.com).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D., is a nationally recognized expert on threat assessment and management. Dr. Deisinger was a founding member of the Iowa State University Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), a multidisciplinary team that serves as a pro-active planning group and coordinates institutional responses during crisis situations. As part of this team, Dr. Deisinger developed the threat management program. He has served as the primary threat manager for Iowa State University since the program's inception in 1994. This program has been recognized as a model for threat assessment in college and university settings. He has personally managed and supervised threat cases and protective details for a broad range of governmental dignitaries, public figures, and members of the university community. Dr. Deisinger has provided consultation and training to numerous colleges, universities, law enforcement agencies, and private corporations across the United States; and been an invited speaker for several national organizations. He currently serves as a subject matter expert, consulting to the FBI, Secret Service and U.S. Dept of Education, regarding their joint study of targeted violence in institutions of higher education. As a licensed psychologist, a certified health service provider in psychology, and a certified peace officer, Dr. Deisinger brings a unique perspective to the field of threat assessment. He serves as the Associate Director of Public Safety and Deputy Chief of Police with the Iowa State University Police Division, and also serves as a Special Deputy United States Marshal with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.

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Marisa Reddy Randazzo, Ph.D., is a national expert on threat assessment and targeted violence. Formerly the Chief Research Psychologist for the U.S. Secret Service, Dr. Randazzo has provided threat assessment training to over 10,000 professionals in higher education, secondary schools, corporations, law enforcement agencies, human resources, mental health, and the intelligence community throughout the United States, Canada, and the European Union. In her ten years with the Secret Service, she reviewed hundreds of threat investigations and supervised the agency's research on assassinations, presidential threats, insider threats, school shootings, security breaches, and stalking incidents. She also served as Co-Director of the Safe School Initiative, the largest federal study of school shootings in the United States, and is co-author of the U.S. Secret Service/U.S. Department of Education model of threat assessment for educational institutions. Dr. Randazzo now heads Threat Assessment Resources International, LLC, providing threat assessment training and case consultation to colleges, schools, corporations, and security professionals. She has testified before Congress, briefed Cabinet Secretaries, and been interviewed by numerous major television, radio, and print news outlets about threat assessment and targeted violence prevention. In 2005, Dr. Randazzo was awarded the Williams College Bicentennial Medal for her work in preventing violence.

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Dr. Deisinger and Dr. Randazzo are the lead authors of The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams (Boston: Applied Risk Management, 2008). This book is a practical guide designed specifically for implementation of threat assessment teams within institutions of higher education. Ordering information is available at www.arm-security.com or www.amazon.com.

TRAINING MATERIALS

Virginia Campus
Threat Assessment Teams:

Basic Training Session

Training Curriculum developed by
Marisa Randazzo, Ph.D. &
Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.
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THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
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TRAINING AGENDA

- ❑ Overview of Violence on Campus
- ❑ Nature and Process of Targeted Violence
- ❑ Contrasting Assessment Approaches
- ❑ Guiding Principles and Best Practices
    - ❑ Group exercise
- ❑ Operationalizing a Multi-Disciplinary Team
    - ❑ Group exercise
- ❑ Steps in the Campus Threat Assessment and Management Process
    - ❑ Group exercise
- ❑ Legal Considerations
- ❑ Conclusion / Q&A

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After the course, participants will be able to:

- ❑ Understand targeted violence and prevention implications
- ❑ Distinguish between various assessment approaches
- ❑ Know the guiding principles of threat assessment
- ❑ Identify strengths of effective team members
- ❑ Encourage reporting about threats, concerns
- ❑ Know how to screen and triage initial reports
- ❑ Gather information and assess situations of concern
- ❑ Develop, implement, and monitor case management plans
- ❑ Understand legal issues that affect teams
- ❑ Identify resources for further reading

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DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What do we fear most?

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VIRGINIA TECH

Blacksburg, VA: 4/16/2007

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Dekalb, IL: 2/14/2008

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Overview of
Violence & Mental Health
Concerns on Campus

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ON-CAMPUS VIOLENCE

Type of Violence	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Murder	11	8	45	16	18
Forcible Sex Offense	2722	2717	2738	2676	2605
Robbery	2053	1981	1966	1957	1871
Aggravated Assault	2906	3034	2784	2719	2631
Arson	1024	966	789	709	653
Injurious Hate Crime	33	53	36	37	127
Illegal Weapon Arrest	1450	1438	1432	1262	1183

Source: US Dept. of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education
Available at: www.ope.ed.gov/security/

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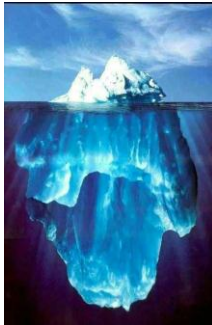
BEYOND THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

Beyond Mass Shootings

A broad range of issues impact the safety and well-being of college campuses.

- Harassment
- Bias-related incidents
- Stalking
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual assault
- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Suicide

Keep the Big Picture in Mind

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MENTAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS

Counseling Center Clients Reporting:	Percent*
Non-suicidal self-injury	21
Seriously considered suicide	25
Prior suicide attempt	8
Seriously considered harming others	8
Afraid of losing control & acting violently	7
Intentionally harmed another person	5

Note: Includes prior to and after starting college.

Source: Center for the Study of Collegiate Mental Health (CSCMH): 2009 Pilot Study

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MENTAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS

College Students Reporting:	Percent*
Felt so depressed, difficult to function	43
Diagnosed with depression	5
Seriously considered suicide	9
Attempted suicide**	1

Note: Includes 1 or more times in the last school year.

** Approximately 1100 college students suicides each year.

Source: American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment (Spring 2008; N=80,121)

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MENTAL HEALTH ON CAMPUS

Counseling Center Clients	Percent
Clients with severe mental health issues	49
❑ Impaired ability to maintain enrollment	8
❑ Severely distressed but treatable	41

Source: 2007 National Survey of University Counseling Center Directors

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Nature and Process of Targeted Violence

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TARGETED VIOLENCE AFFECTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Joint Project of the
- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
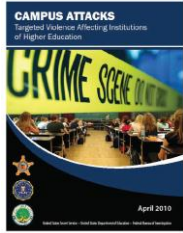
CAMPUS ATTACKS
Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education

April 2010

Attacks: 1900 – Present
- 272 incidents
  - Rate rises with enrollment

Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education.*

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NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 1909-2009*

(n = 281)

Number of Incidents: 1900s=1, 10s=0, 20s=3, 30s=8, 40s=1, 50s=13, 60s=19, 70s=25, 80s=40, 90s=79, 2000s=92

*Data collected through 2008, projected for 2009 based on average per year for decade.

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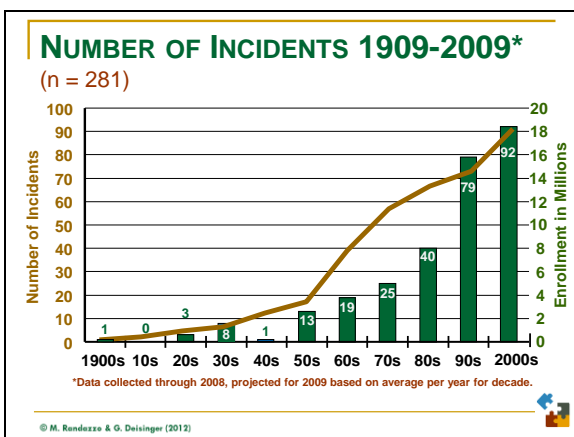
TARGETED VIOLENCE AFFECTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

About the Incidents
- Occurs on and off-campus
  - 80% on-campus (residence, grounds, class/admin)
  - 20% off-campus (residence, public area)
- Precipitating events present: 83%
- Targeted one or more specific persons: 73%
- Pre-incident threat/aggression to target: 29%
- Pre-incident concerns reported by others: 31%

Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education.*

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TARGETED VIOLENCE AFFECTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

About the Perpetrators
- Age: 16 – 64
- Gender: Male (80%); Female (20%)
- Status:
  - Current / Former Student: 60%
  - Current / Former Employee: 11%
  - Indirectly Affiliated: 20%
  - No known Affiliation: 9%

Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education.*

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FACTS ABOUT SERIOUS CAMPUS VIOLENCE

Perpetrators of serious campus violence
don't *"just snap"*

These incidents are not impulsive or random.

- Most consider, plan, and prepare before engaging in violent behavior;
- Most discuss their plans with others before the attack.

Source: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Dept. of Education (2002). *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative.*

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PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE

Implementation

Acquisition

Planning

Ideation

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FACTS ABOUT CAMPUS ATTACKS

We cannot know whether to be concerned by a subject's appearance – but we can tell by their behavior.

- No unique profile of the campus attacker.
- Most have concerned several others with troubling behavior before their attacks.
- Most are suicidal or at a point of desperation prior to their attacks.

Source: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education, (2002)
Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative.
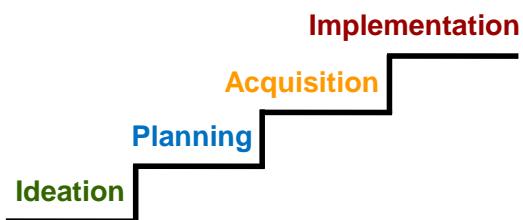
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IMPLICATIONS

- Many campus and workplace targeted attacks can be prevented.
- Information about a person's ideas and plans for violence can be observed or discovered before harm can occur.
- But information available is likely to be scattered and fragmented.
- Key is to act quickly upon an initial report of concern, see who else has a piece of the puzzle, then pull all the information together to see what picture emerges.
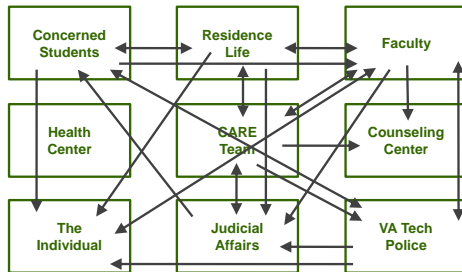
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WHERE TO REPORT?

Concerned Students	Residence Life	Faculty
Health Center	CARE Team	Counseling Center
The Individual	Judicial Affairs	VA Tech Police

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

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IMPLICATIONS

- Assessment involves asking: Is this person on a pathway toward violence or significant disruption to the community?
- Using a team can be particularly effective for gathering and evaluating information, and intervening if necessary.
- Threat assessment and case management is not an automatically adversarial process.
- Engagement with a person of concern can be critical to preventing violence or harm.

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*Contrasting
Assessment Approaches*

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CURRENT PREVENTION APPROACHES

- Mental health violence risk assessment/
  (Clinical assessment of dangerousness)
- Automated decision-making
- Profiling
- Threat assessment

MENTAL HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT

- Also known as a clinical assessment of dangerousness
- Evaluates a person's risk for more general/prevalent types of affective violence
- Not intended (nor effective) for evaluating risk of a targeted attack
- May supplement threat assessment process but is not a replacement

AUTOMATED DECISION-MAKING

Two Areas of Concern:

- The statistical or mathematical process for making the evaluation is unknown

- No correlation between satisfaction with using the automated tool and the accuracy of the decision made

PROFILING

- Most commonly used as an investigative tool to describe the person or type of person who committed a particular crime
- It is retrospective in that it uses clues from a crime that has already occurred to narrow down possible suspects
- When used with respect to evaluating risk of violence, profiling is prospective, not retrospective

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PROSPECTIVE PROFILING

Gather data on offense characteristics

Identify common characteristics to generate composite

Compare the person in question with the composite

Closer the match, the greater the cause for concern
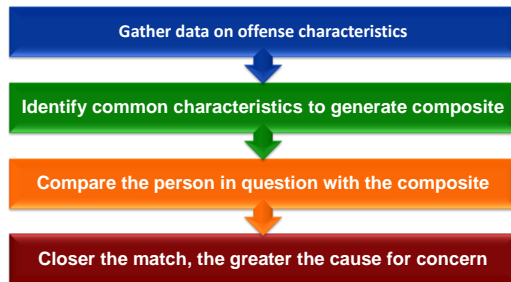
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INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

- Male (80+%);
- White (75%) / Majority race (85%+);
- Age: Social violence: 15-24
       School violence: 15-17
       Workplace violence: 30-45
       Stalking violence: 35-40
- Military / Weapons experience;
- Power & control oriented;
- Obsessed / Identifies with violence.

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KEY POINT:

Workplace violence offender profiles
that are based on
demographic or static variables
are remarkably accurate,

and utterly worthless.

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PROFILING – TWO MAJOR FAILINGS

- It identifies far more people that match a profile but do not pose a threat
- It fails to identify a person whose behavior suggests real concern but whose traits or characteristics do not match the profile

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BEWARE THE LURE OF THE BLACK SWAN

Attributes of Black Swan Events:

- Rarity,
- Extreme impact,
- Concocted, retrospective predictability.

The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable
Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2007)

<u>Goal:</u>
**Case Management
Vs.
Prediction of Violence**

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OVERVIEW OF THREAT ASSESSMENT

A systematic process that is designed to:

1) • **Identify persons of concern**
2) • **Gather information/investigate**
3) • **Assess information and situation**
4) • **Manage the situation**

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THE THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Threat assessment is an objective process:

Facts → Conclusions → Strategies

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WHY THREAT ASSESSMENT?

- Evidence-based and derived from:
  - U.S. Secret Service model;
  - Safe School Initiative;
  - FBI recommendations regarding workplace violence;
  - Student development (e.g., Ursula Delworth, 1989);
- Used successfully to prevent campus, school, and workplace shootings.
- Broadly applicable for identifying people in need.
- Low-cost and effective.
- Legally defensible approach.
- Involves the community.

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WHY THREAT ASSESSMENT?

Recommended by:

- Virginia Tech Review Panel (governor's panel)
- Report to President from U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, Health & Human Services
- Numerous professional associations:
  - AASCU, ASJA, IACLEA, MHEC, NAAG, NASPA
- Several state task forces on campus safety:
  - CA, FL, IA, IL, KY, MA, MO, NC, NJ, NM, OK, PA, WI.

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WHY THREAT ASSESSMENT?

Required by legislation:

- Commonwealth of Virginia –public institutions
- State of Illinois – All institutions

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AUTHORITY FOR A TEAM

Va. Code § 23-9.2:10.

D. The board of visitors or other governing body of each public institution of higher education shall establish a specific threat assessment team that shall include members from law enforcement, mental health professionals, representatives of student affairs and human resources, and, if available, college or university counsel. Such team shall implement the assessment, intervention and action policies set forth by the committee pursuant to subsection C.

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Guiding Principles and Best Practices

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Prevention is possible
   - Acts of targeted violence typically follow a logical progression of behavior:
     - Idea
     - Plan
     - Acquisition
     - Implementation
   - This allows opportunities for behavioral progression to be observed.

THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

2. Violence is a dynamic process
   - Not asking whether this is a "violent person."
   - Looking at changes in circumstances, situation, and its impact on the person in question.

DISCUSSION POINT:

What is the
single best predictor
of violence?

KEY POINT:

Dangerousness is not a permanent state of being nor solely an attribute of a person.

Dangerousness is situational & based on:

Justification;

Alternatives;

Consequences; and

Ability.

Source: Gavin de Becker
The Gift of Fear

45

DISCUSSION: JACA

Example of JACA:

"You forced me into a corner
and gave me only one option…

Now you have blood on your hands
that will never wash off"

- Seung-Hui Cho
Video message discovered after killings
at Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

3. Targeted Violence is the product of an interaction among four factors:

S The **subject** who may take violent action

T Vulnerabilities of the **target** of such actions

E An **environment** that facilitates or permits violence, or does not discourage it

P **Precipitating events** that may trigger reactions

Source: Deisinger & Randazzo

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COMPONENTS OF RISK

Subject   **Target**

Source:
Deisinger & Randazzo

Precipitating Events   **Environment**
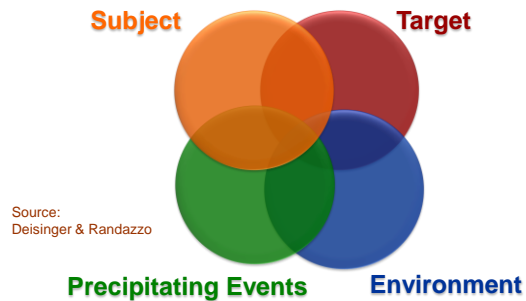
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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

4. Corroboration is critical
   - Check facts
   - Use multiple sources
   - Gauge credibility of sources
   - Maintain a healthy skepticism

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

5. Threat assessment is about behavior, not profiles

   ❑ There is no accurate or useful profile of a "campus shooter" or "workplace shooter."

   ❑ Focus is on behavior that suggests a potential for harm OR some need for assistance.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

6. Cooperating systems are critical resources

   ❑ Multiple, communicating systems facilitate all aspects of threat assessment
     ▪ Identification
     ▪ Information-gathering/Investigation
     ▪ Assessment
     ▪ Management or referral

   ❑ Team can facilitate liaison with local agencies.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

7. Determine if situation **poses** a threat

   ❑ Critical question is about behavior along a pathway toward harm or significant disruption.

   ❑ Focus is not solely on whether the person made a threat.

   ❑ Expressed threats (or the lack thereof) are not reliable indicators.

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Threat Assessment Principles

8. Keep victims in mind
   - Threat assessment involves victim concerns as well
   - Victims are typically more concerned about case management than threat assessment
   - Team members should focus on victim safety and well-being, as well as assessment and management

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Threat Assessment Principles

9. Early identification and intervention helps everyone
   - Early identification allows greater range of options for case management.
   - Criminal justice approaches may not be necessary.
   - Alliance is more likely.
   - False positives are cleared more rapidly.

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Threat Assessment Principles

10. Multiple reporting mechanisms enhance early identification
    - Simple, easy, direct access to the threat assessment team is critical for effective reporting.
    - Multiple ways to report can enhance likelihood of reporting.
    - Can counter-balance normal reluctance to report.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

11. Multi-faceted resources can provide effective intervention
    - Maximize effectiveness through multiple, sustained, and coordinated efforts.
    - Address the major contributing factors to change the equation.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

12. Safety is a primary focus
    - Safety is guiding mission of all threat assessment and management efforts.
    - Assessment and management steps are all tools toward the goal of safety.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
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Tabletop Exercise

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ENHANCING PRINCIPLES

Participant Exercise:

- ❑ Identify 1 or 2 principles of threat assessment that your institution already does well.
- ❑ Identify 1 or 2 principles of threat assessment that could be improved at your institution.

THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
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Operationalizing a Multi-Disciplinary Team

www.ThreatResources.com

CONTEXT OF SAFE CAMPUSES

Comprehensive Safety Planning

Pro-active plans in place to:

- ■ Prevent and mitigate violence
  - ❑ Identify at-risk situations
  - ❑ Assess situations
  - ❑ Intervene & manage concerns
- ■ Prepare for potential violence
- ■ Respond to violent acts and
- ■ Recover from the event.

ENHANCE CAPACITY

Use organizational resources and processes more effectively to enhance:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Coordination
- Capitalization

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COMPONENTS OF A CAMPUS THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

- ❑ Systematic process for addressing concerns
- ❑ Multi-disciplinary Threat Assessment Team
- ❑ Administration support
- ❑ Policies and procedures necessary for functioning
- ❑ Legal counsel input on information-sharing
- ❑ Incident tracking and other record-keeping
- ❑ Multiple reporting mechanisms
- ❑ Effective case management resources and strategies.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM: FUNCTIONAL AUTHORITY AND ROLE

- ❑ Understand threats / concerns;
- ❑ Evaluate legitimacy of concerns;
- ❑ Identify motivations for violence;
- ❑ Assess likelihood of physical harm;
- ❑ Develop strategies for risk reduction;
- ❑ Guide implementation of strategies;
- ❑ Re-evaluate threat;
- ❑ Evaluate needs of community.

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NEED FOR COLLABORATION

"Most important, dangerous people rarely show all of their symptoms to just one department or group on campus. A professor may see a problem in an essay, the campus police may endure belligerent statements, a resident assistant may notice the student is a loner, the counseling center may notice that the student fails to appear for a follow-up visit. Acting independently, no department is likely to solve the problem. In short, colleges must recognize that managing an educational environment is a team effort, calling for collaboration and multilateral solutions."

Source: Peter Lake, Chronicle of Higher Ed 6/29/2007

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TEAM MEMBERSHIP

- ❑ Academic Affairs / Provost / Graduate College
- ❑ Employee Assistance
- ❑ Human Resource Services
- ❑ Media Relations
- ❑ Police / Security
- ❑ Residence Life
- ❑ Student Affairs / Dean of Students
- ❑ Student Health / Counseling Service
- ❑ University Counsel

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE TEAM

- ❑ Players (First-string)
- ❑ Players (Second-string, specialty units)
- ❑ Team Leadership
  - ▪ Owners
  - ▪ Coaches
- ❑ Trainers
- ❑ Marketing
- ❑ Scouts
- ❑ Fans

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Tabletop Exercise

www.ThreatResources.com

SETTING A THRESHOLD FOR TEAM INVOLVEMENT

Participant Exercise – Part 1:

- ❑ What information do you want reported to your threat assessment team?
- ❑ What 'threshold" do you want to establish for reporting?

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SETTING A THRESHOLD FOR TEAM INVOLVEMENT

Participant Exercise – Part 2:

- ❑ How will you communicate this with your campus?
  - ■ What wording will you use?
  - ■ What method(s) will you use?

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SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE TEAM MEMBERS

- Passionate about the goals of the team
- Familiar with threat assessment principles and practices
- Demonstrates an inquisitive and skeptical mindset
- Exercises good sense of judgment, objectivity, and thoroughness
- Relates well with others
- Effectively facilitates team discussion
- Advocates for necessary resources

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TEAM DECISION-MAKING

Crew Resource Management:

- Consensus-driven decision making
- Team leader may make ultimate decision, but <u>everyone on team</u> is obligated to share opinions and raise concerns and ideas
- Focus on what still works – for the person and their situation
- Focus on what the team can change or fix

Source: NASA & Major Airlines

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TEAM DECISION-MAKING

Crew Resource Management:

- Think creatively about resources, as well as "eyes and ears."
- Anticipate likely change in the short and mid-term, and how the subject may react.
- Monitor the situation using available resources.
- Document decision-making, implementation, and progress.

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TEAM ACTIVITIES

- Daily/On-going
- Weekly / Bi-Weekly
- Monthly
- Semi-Annually
- Annually

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THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
INTERNATIONAL

Steps in the Threat Assessment Process

www.ThreatResources.com

STEPS IN A THREAT ASSESSMENT INQUIRY

- Facilitate reporting to team
- Identify / learn of person at risk
- Gather information
- Evaluate person/situation
- If necessary, develop threat management plan
- Implement threat management plan
- Monitor and re-evaluate plan to ensure safety
- Refer and follow-up as appropriate

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

Identify Person of Concern → Conduct Initial Screening → Imminent Situation? — Yes → Alert Law Enforcement; No → Conduct Triage

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

Concerns? — No → Close & Document Case; Yes → Conduct Full Inquiry → Make Assessment → Poses a Threat? — No → In Need Of Help? — No → Close & Document Case; Yes → Implement Referral or Assistance Plan; Poses a Threat? Yes → Develop & Implement Management Plan → Monitor The Plan → Refer & Follow-up → Close & Document Case

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

Identify Person of Concern → Conduct Initial Screening → Imminent Situation? — Yes → Alert Law Enforcement; No → Conduct Triage

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FACILITATE REPORTING

For reporting to be effective, people need to know:
- Their role and responsibility to report
- What to report
- Where to report
- Reports are wanted
- Something will be done
- Regular reminders of issues and process

"If you see something, say something."
Source: NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority

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EARLY IDENTIFICATION

- Persons at risk of:
  - Harm to others
  - Harm to self
- Persons who demonstrate inability to take care of themselves:
  - Serious mental health concerns
  - Substance abuse
- Behavior that is significantly disruptive to the learning, living, or working environment

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WHERE TO REPORT?

Police & Security
Administration
Community
Faculty / Advisors
Human Resources
Threat Assessment Team
Student Services
Students

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FACILITATE REPORTING

- Available 24 / 7
- Records protected in centralized database
- Cross-referenced with other contacts
- Review by trained personnel

THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:
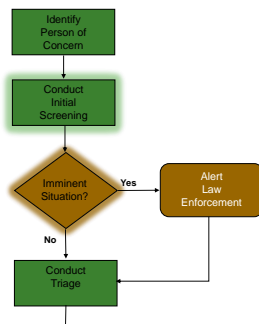
INITIAL SCREENING

- The team should gather initial information from several key sources, including:
  - Student affairs (for a case involving a student)
  - Human resources (for a case involving a faculty member or staff member);
  - Campus police/security,
  - Local law enforcement
  - Online search of the person's name, the name of the institution, and the name(s) of anyone they may have threatened, harassed, pursued, or scared.

INITIAL SCREENING

❑ Recommended Internet sites include:

Google.com	Bebo.com
MySpace.com	Xanga.com
Facebook.com	Snopes.com
YouTube.com	TheHoodUp.com
Twitter.com	Cuil.com
Blackplanet.com	RateMyProfessor.com
MiGente.com	Craigslist.com
Technorati.com	(Search by relevant location)
(searches blogs)	

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IMMINENT SITUATION?

❑ Determine if situation is emergency/imminent
- Decide beforehand on definition
- Examples: if person has weapon, has indicated intent to use it

❑ If imminent/emergency, call campus police.

❑ If not, move on to Initial Screening

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:
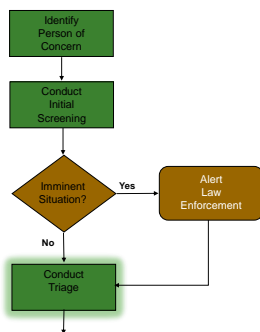
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TRIAGE

- Triage questions can include:
  - Has there been any mention of suicidal thoughts, plans, or attempts?
  - Has there been any mention of thoughts/plans of violence? Or fear of violence from a potential target or third party?
  - Does the person have access to a weapon or are they trying to gain access?
- If yes to any of these questions, a full inquiry is recommended.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

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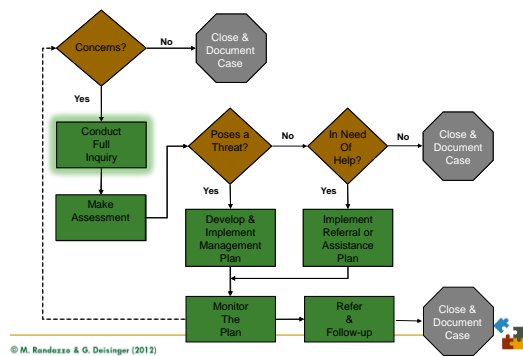
GATHER INFORMATION (FULL INQUIRY)

- Think broadly and creatively about those who might have information:
  - Co-workers
  - Other staff
  - Friends
  - Family
  - Online friends, web sites, etc.
  - Previous schools / employers
  - Others?
- Document information and use it to answer the Key Investigative Questions.

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What are the person's motive(s) and goals? / What first brought him/her to someone's attention?

- Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
- Does the person have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result? Does the person feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternatives?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*. And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?

- What, if anything, has the person communicated to someone else (targets, friends, co-workers, others) or written in a diary, journal, email, or Web site concerning his or her grievances, ideas and/or intentions?
- Has anyone been alerted or "warned away"?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*. And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

3. Has the person shown any inappropriate interest in campus attacks/attackers, weapons, incidents of mass violence?

- Workplace/school attacks or attackers;
- Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
- Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, rampage violence, mass murderers).

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*. And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

4. Has the person engaged in attack-related behaviors?

- ❑ Developing an attack idea or plan
- ❑ Making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons
- ❑ Surveying possible sites and areas for attack
- ❑ Testing access to potential targets
- ❑ Rehearsing attacks or ambushes

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

5. Does the person have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?

- ❑ How organized is the person's thinking and behavior?
- ❑ Does the person have the means (e.g., access to a weapon) to carry out an attack?
- ❑ Are they trying to get the means to carry out an attack?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

6. Is the person experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?

- ❑ Is there information to suggest that the person is feeling desperation and/or despair?
- ❑ Has the person experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
- ❑ Is the person having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
- ❑ Has the person engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

7. Does the person have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible person?

- ❏ Does the person have at least one friend, colleague, family member, or other person that he or she trusts and can rely upon?
- ❏ Is the person emotionally connected to other people?
- ❏ Has the person previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

8. Does the person see violence as an acceptable, desirable – or the only – way to solve a problem?

- ❏ Does the setting around the person (friends, fellow guests, colleagues, others) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
- ❏ Has the person been "dared" by others to engage in an act of violence?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

9. Are the person's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?

- ❏ Does information from collateral interviews and from the person's own behavior confirm or dispute what the person says is going on?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

10. Are other people concerned about the person's potential for violence?
- Are those who know the person concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
- Are those who know the person concerned about a specific target?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?
- What factors in the person's life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the person will engage in violent behavior?
- What is the response of others who know about the person's ideas or plans? (Do they actively discourage the person from acting violently, encourage the person to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with an attack, etc.?)

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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KEY INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

12. Where does the subject exist along the pathway to violence?

Has the subject:
- Developed an idea or plan to do harm?
- Taken any steps toward implementing the plan?
- Developed the capacity or means to carry out the plan?
- How fast are they moving toward engaging in harm?
- Where can the team intervene to move the person off that pathway toward harm?

Sources: Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008), *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* And U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

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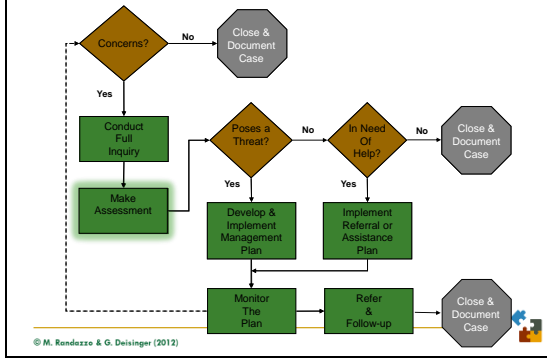
EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- ❑ Focus on facts of specific case.
- ❑ Focus on the person's behavior rather than the person's traits.
- ❑ Focus on understanding of context of behavior.
- ❑ Examine progression of behavior over time.
- ❑ Corroborate critical information.

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EVALUATION GUIDELINES

- ❑ Every team member's opinion matters and must be shared
- ❑ Focus on prevention not prediction
- ❑ Goal: Safety of the community and the person in question

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EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Does the person pose a threat of harm, whether to himself, to others, or both?

   - ❑ Focus on prevention not prediction
   - ❑ Goal: Safety of the community and the person in question

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

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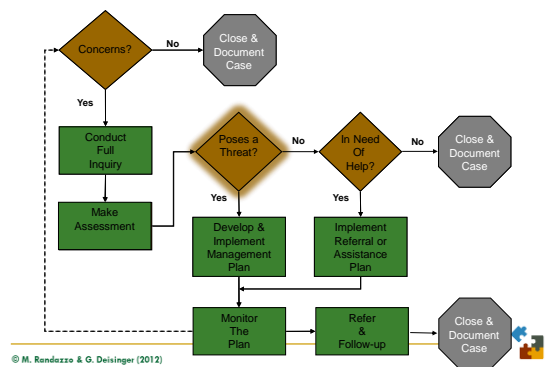
EVALUATION QUESTIONS

2. If not, does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention?

   - ❑ Focus on prevention not prediction
   - ❑ Goal: Safety of the community and the person in question

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EVALUATION CLASSIFICATION

☐ **Priority 1 (Extreme Risk)** – Appears to pose a clear/immediate threat of violence or self-harm and requires immediate containment. Needs law enforcement notification, target protection, and management plan.

☐ **Priority 2 (High Risk)** – Appears to pose a threat of violence or self-harm but lacks immediacy or specific plan. Requires threat management plan.

☐ **Priority 3 (Moderate Risk)** – Does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self harm at this time, but does exhibit behavior/circumstances that are likely to be disruptive to the community. Requires referral and/or active monitoring plan.

☐ **Priority 4 (Low Risk)** – Does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self-harm at this time, nor is significant disruption to the community expected. Requires a monitoring plan.

☐ **Priority 5 (No Identified Risk)** – Does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self-harm at this time, nor is significant disruption to the community expected. Close case after proper documentation.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
INTERNATIONAL

Tabletop Exercise
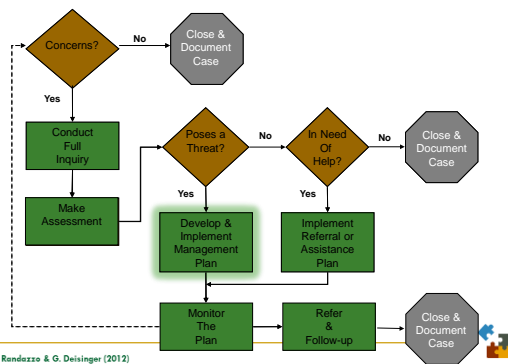
www.ThreatResources.com

THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS:

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Effective Case Management Strategies

THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
INTERNATIONAL

www.ThreatResources.com

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EFFECTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

The primary goal of Threat Assessment & Management is the **safety** of all persons involved.

Counseling, support, confrontation, termination, arrest, prosecution, etc., are **tools** to reach that goal.

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CASE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Effective case management incorporates interventions in each of the (relevant) factors:

S De-escalate, contain, or control the **subject** who may take violent action;

T Decrease vulnerabilities of the **target**;

E Modify physical and cultural **environment** to discourage escalation; and,

P Prepare for & mitigate against **precipitating events** that may trigger adverse reactions.

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DEVELOP A CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN

❑ Develop an individualized plan based on information gathered in the investigation and other facts known about the person.
  - Case management is more art than science.
  - Plan must be fact-based and person-specific.
  - Engagement is essential, even when dealing with someone who is very angry.
  - Distancing makes monitoring and intervention more difficult.
  - Personalities matter.

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DEVELOP A CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN

❑ Anticipate what might change in the short- and mid-term, and how the person may react.
❑ Monitor using available resources. Who sees the person regularly, inside work/campus, outside, on weekends, online, etc.?
❑ Document decision-making, implementation, and progress.

Source: NASA and major airlines

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THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
INTERNATIONAL

Tabletop Exercise

www.ThreatResources.com

CASE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Participant Exercise:
- Create a list of case management resources available at your institution.
- Identify resources that may be available in the surrounding community.

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CLOSING A CASE

Threat management cases generally:

Remain open until the person in question is no longer reasonably assessed to pose a threat or in need of case management and/or monitoring.

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CLOSING A CASE

While the case is open the team should:
- Continue to monitor and modify the plan as long as the individual still poses a threat
- Recognize that a person can continue to pose a threat even after he/she ceases to be a member of the campus community
- Continue to monitor the situation through its relationship with local law enforcement agencies and mental health agencies, as well as in direct cooperation with the person, if possible

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Legal Considerations

www.ThreatResources.com

WHAT RULES MAY APPLY?

- Federal Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act
- State public accommodations laws / disability-related employment laws
- Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA")
- State Patient-Health Care Professional Privileges

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DISABILITY LAW CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensuring due process
- Direct threat provisions
- Not assuming every threat assessment case involves mental illness

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INFORMATION SHARING: FERPA

- Federal Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
- FERPA should not be an impediment to effective threat assessment and case management.
- FERPA governs records only, not observations, communications, etc.
- FERPA does not govern police records.
- New guidance from ED encourages information sharing where public safety is a concern.
- FERPA does not permit a private right of action.

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INFORMATION SHARING: HIPAA

- Check with legal counsel as to which laws govern counseling center records.
- Confidentiality is held by client, not MH provider.
- In cases where HIPAA applies, can try these strategies:
  - No legal prohibition against _providing_ information to health/MH professionals.
  - Can inquire about _Tarasoff_ - type duty.
  - Can ask subject for permission to disclose.

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RECORD KEEPING

- Incident tracking database
- Document exact words and actions - include date, time, behaviors, witnesses;
- Document personal reactions and protective actions;
- Preserve evidence: Keep copies of email, memos, etc.

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RECORD KEEPING

Incident tracking database:

- Incident Information:
    - Date, location, nature of incident, means of approach;
- Subject information:
    - Name, DOB, sex, description, affiliation, status, etc.
- Target / Victim Information;
    - Name, DOB, sex, description, affiliation, status, etc.
- Witness/Reporting Party Information:
    - Name, DOB, sex, description, affiliation, status, etc.

THREAT ASSESSMENT RESOURCES
INTERNATIONAL

Conclusion & Resources

www.ThreatResources.com

CONCLUSION

- Many incidents of campus and workplace violence are preventable.
- Campus/school/workplace attackers typically raise concerns before they engage in violence.
- Information about a person's ideas and plans for violence are usually available before harm occurs – but the information will likely be scattered.
- A threat assessment team can pull together scattered information and determine whether there is a real concern or opportunity for intervention.
- The team can then develop and implement an integrated plan to intervene and reduce the risk and monitor the situation.

RESOURCES

Implementing Behavioral Threat Assessment on Campus: A Virginia Tech Demonstration Project
www.ThreatAssessment.vt.edu

Threat Assessment and Management Teams: What Risk Managers Need to Know (Published by URMIA)
www.HigherEdCompliance.org

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals
www.atapworldwide.org

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams
www.TSGinc.com
www.amazon.com

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.
erdeisin@vt.edu

Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D.
MRandazzo@ThreatResources.com

the handbook for
CAMPUS THREAT ASSESSMENT
& MANAGEMENT TEAMS

by
Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.
Marisa Randazzo, Ph.D.
Daniel O'Neill
Jenna Savage

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TABLETOP EXERCISES

Tabletop Exercise:
Enhancing Threat Assessment Principles

Question 1:
Which 1 or 2 principles of threat assessment does your institution already do well? Please give an example of each, or a reason why they work:

Question 2:
Which 1 or 2 principles of threat assessment could be enhanced at your institution? Please list some suggestions for how that could be accomplished:

Part 1:

What is your team's mission statement?

What scope of cases and/or situations do you want reported to the team?

Part 2:

How will you communicate that mission statement or scope to the campus community? What slogan, examples or message will you use (or do you use)? What methods will you use (or do you use) to disseminate this message?

CASE INVESTIGATION TABLETOP EXERCISE

PERSON OF CONCERN: _____

INITIAL REPORT: _____

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SCREENING QUESTION: Emergency or imminent situation?   YES (call 911)   NO

FULL INQUIRY

Information Gathered (Student Case) – Fill in information next to each source checked
☐ **Dean of Students:**
☐ **Student Organizations:**
☐ **Student Conduct:**
☐ **Professors/Instructors:**
☐ **Campus public safety:**
☐ **Local law enforcement:**
☐ **Disability services:**
☐ **Veterans services:**

☐ **Legal counsel:**

☐ **Friends:**

☐ **Internet searches (list sites searched):**

☐ **Previous school(s):**

☐ **Others (please specify source(s)):**

☐ **Person of concern:**

Information Gathered (Employee Case) – Fill in information next to each source checked
☐ **Human Resources:**
☐ **Department Chair / Supervisor:**
☐ **Co-worker(s):**
☐ **Previous employer(s):**
☐ **Previous school(s):**
☐ **Campus public safety:**

☐ **Local law enforcement:**
☐ **Grievance/conduct board:**
☐ **EEO/Diversity offices:**
☐ **Legal counsel:**
☐ **Internet searches (list sites searched):**
☐ **Health/counseling provider or EAP (typically requires release from person):**
☐ **Others (please specify source(s)):**
☐ **Person of concern:**

FERPA Exception for Health/Safety Emergency or Public Safety Concern?
Please indicate whether the Team feels there is a concern for public safety or a health/safety emergency in this situation – and if so, why:

Investigative Questions

1. *What are the person's motive(s) and goals? What first brought them to the Team's attention?*

The purpose of this question is to understand the overall context of the behavior that first brought the person to the attention of the Team, and also to understand whether those conditions or situation still exist. If those conditions still exist, the Team can use that information in crafting a management or referral/monitoring plan if necessary.

Answer:

2. *Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?*

If the Team finds that the person in question has communicated an idea or plan to do harm — and that the source of that information is credible — this is a strong indication that the person may be on a pathway toward violence and therefore poses a threat. The Team should try to confirm or corroborate this information through another source, or through other information.

Answer:

3. *Has the person shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?*

- Workplace, school or campus attacks or attackers;
- Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
- Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers);
- Obsessive pursuit, stalking or monitoring others.

A "yes" to this question alone does not necessarily indicate that the person in question poses a threat or is otherwise in need of some assistance. Many people are interested in these topics but never pose any threat. However, if a person shows some fascination or fixation on any of these topics and has raised concern in another way, such as by expressing an idea to do harm to others or to himself/herself, recently purchasing a weapon, or showing helplessness or despair, the combination of these facts should increase the Team's concern about the person in question.

Answer:

4. *Has the person engaged in attack-related behaviors (i.e., any behavior that moves an idea of harm forward toward actual harm)?*

If the Team determines that the person has engaged in any attack-related behavior, this is an indication that the person is on a pathway toward violence and has taken a step(s) forward toward carrying out an idea to do harm. Any of these behaviors should prompt the Team to try to corroborate or confirm these behaviors through other sources (or confirm the reliability of the source reporting these behaviors). Any attack-related behaviors should be seen as a serious indication of potential violence.

Answer:

5. *Does the person have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?*

It is important for the Team to recognize that in some areas of the country, it is quite common to own weapons and to have experience using weapons from a young age. Therefore, what the Team should focus on is the combination of the person owning or having access to weapons AND some indication that the person has an idea or plan to do harm. Similarly, the Team should be concerned if the person develops an idea to do harm and THEN starts showing an interest in weapons. Either combination should raise the Team's concern, and move the Team toward determining that the person poses a threat.

Answer:

6. *Is the person experiencing hopelessness, desperation and/or despair?*

If the Team determines that the person in question is experiencing — or has recently experienced — desperation, hopelessness, and/or thoughts of suicide and there is NO other information indicating the person has thoughts or plans to harm other people, the Team should develop a plan to refer the person to necessary mental health care or emergency psychiatric intervention, possibly involving the institution's counseling center and/or police or local law enforcement if necessary. If the Team determines that the person in question is experiencing — or has recently experienced — desperation, hopelessness, and/or thoughts of suicide and there IS information that the person also has thoughts or plans to harm other people, the Team should determine that the person poses a threat and move to develop and implement a management plan to intervene with the person. The management plan should include resources to evaluate and treat the person's desperation and/or suicidal thoughts/plans.

Answer:

7. *Does the person have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible person (e.g., a friend, significant other, roommate, colleague, faculty advisor, coach, parent, etc.)?*

If the Team decides that the person in question poses a threat of harm, the Team can solicit the help of this responsible person. The responsible person can also be encouraged to take a more active role in discouraging the person from engaging in any harm — whether to himself/herself, others, or both.

Answer:

8. *Does the person see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or only way to solve problems?*

A "yes" to this question should increase the Team's concern about the person in question. But it should also lead the Team to consider what options they may have for helping the person solve their problems or improve their situation so that the person no longer looks toward violence to solve the problem.

Answer:

9. *Is the person's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?*

If the Team decides to interview the person of concern, the interview can be used as an opportunity to determine how forthcoming or truthful the person is being with the Team. The less forthcoming the person is, the more work the Team may have to do to develop an alliance if a management plan is needed.

Answer:

10. *Are other people concerned about the person's potential for violence?*

As people are often reluctant to see violence as a possibility, if the Team learns that someone in the person's life does think the person is capable of violence, this should raise the Team's concern considerably. However, the Team should recognize that those in close relationships with the person may be too close to the person/situation to admit violence is possible or even likely.

Answer:

11. *What circumstances might affect the likelihood of violence?*

All of us are capable of violence under the right (or wrong) circumstances. By asking this question, the Team can identify what factors in the person's life might change in the near- to mid-term, and whether those changes could make things better or worse for the person in question. If things look like they might improve for the person, the Team could monitor the person and situation for a while and re-assess after some time has passed. If things look like they might deteriorate, the Team can develop a management plan (if they believe the person poses a threat of harm or self-harm) or a referral plan (if the person does not pose a threat but appears in need of help) to help counteract the downturn in the person's circumstances.

Answer:

12. *Where does the person exist along the pathway to violence?*

- Have they developed an idea to do harm?
- Have they developed a plan?
- Have they taken any steps toward implementing the plan?
- Have they developed the capacity or means to carry out the plan?
- How fast are they moving toward engaging in harm?
- Where can the Team intervene to move the person off that pathway toward harm?

Answer:

EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

EVALUATION QUESTION A. *Does the person pose a threat of harm, whether to him/herself, to others, or both? That is, does the person's behavior suggest that he or she is on a pathway toward harm?*

Answer:

If the answer is "no," the Team documents its response and reasoning and proceeds to Question B. If the answer is "yes," the Team documents its response and rationale, and then proceeds to develop, implement, and continually monitor an individualized threat management plan to reduce the risk that the person poses. The Team should document the details of this plan, as well as document steps it takes to implement the plan and/or refer the person for help. The Team does not need to answer Question B.

EVALUATION QUESTION B. *If the person does not pose a threat of harm, does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care?*

Answer:

If the answer is "no," the Team documents its response, records the person and incident in the Team's incident database, and closes the inquiry. If the answer is "yes," the Team documents its response and rationale, and then develops, implements, and re-evaluates a plan to monitor the person and situation and/or connect the person with resources in order to assist him/her with solving problems or addressing needs. The Team should document the details of this plan, as well as document steps taken to implement the plan and/or refer the person for help.

Priority Level	Comments
○ **Priority 1 (Imminent Risk)** The person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward self or others and requires containment. The Team should immediately notify law enforcement to pursue containment options, and/or take actions to protect identified target(s). Once such emergency actions have been taken, the Team shall then develop and implement a management plan in anticipation of the person's release or return to campus.	
○ **Priority 2 (High Risk)** The person/situation appears to pose a threat of self-harm or physical violence, usually to an identifiable target, but currently lacks immediacy and/or a specific plan — or a specified plan of violence does exist but currently lacks a specific target. This requires the Team to develop and implement a management plan.	
○ **Priority 3 (Moderate Risk)** The person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self-harm at this time, but does exhibit behaviors/circumstances that are likely to be disruptive to the community. This case warrants some intervention, referral and monitoring to minimize risk for significant disruption to the community or escalation in threat. The Team should develop a referral and/or active monitoring plan.	
○ **Priority 4 (Low Risk)** The person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self-harm at this time, nor is their evidence of significant disruption to the community. This case may warrant some intervention, referral and monitoring to minimize risk for escalation in threat. The Team should develop a monitoring plan.	
○ **Priority 5 (No Identified Risk)** The person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or self-harm at this time, nor is their evidence of significant disruption to the community. The Team can close the case without a management or monitoring plan, following appropriate documentation.	
○ **Insufficient Information / No Priority Level Selected**	

Tabletop Exercise:
Case Management Resources

Part 1:

Please list the various resources, services, and policies/tools <u>at your institution</u> that could be utilized for case management purposes:

Part 2:

Please list the various resources, services, and policies/tools <u>in the surrounding community</u> that could be utilized for case management purposes:

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Threat Assessment and Management Process

Identify Person of Concern
↓
Conduct Initial Screening
↓
Imminent Situation? — Yes → Alert Law Enforcement
↓ No
Conduct Triage
↓
Concerns? — No → Close & Document Case
↓ Yes
Conduct Full Inquiry
↓
Make Assessment
→ Poses a Threat? — No → In Need Of Help? — No → Close & Document Case
↓ Yes (Poses a Threat) → Develop & Implement Management Plan
↓ Yes (In Need Of Help) → Implement Referral or Assistance Plan
→ Monitor The Plan → Refer & Follow-up → Close & Document Case

© Deisinger, G., Randazzo, M.R., O'Neill, D., & Savage, J. (2008).
The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.
Available through: http://www.sigmatma.com/resources/books.html

Principles of Threat Assessment and Management

The following principles guide threat assessment and management:[1]

Principle 1: Targeted Violence Can Often Be Prevented

Perpetrators typically come up with an idea to do harm, develop a plan, acquire the means to do harm (e.g. get access to weapons), and then carry out the attack.[2] A TAM Team looks for information that may indicate that a person is on such a trajectory toward violence, and if so, the Team then determines where it might be able to intervene to prevent harm.

Principle 2: Violence is a Dynamic Process

A TAM Team tries to determine the circumstances in which the person in question might pose a threat to himself or to others. A key aspect of the threat assessment and management process is to look ahead over the coming days, weeks, and months and see what in the person's life or situation might change — and how that change(s) might affect the likelihood of violence.

Principle 3: Targeted Violence is a Function of Several Factors

Threat assessment should examine facts about the individual, the context of behavior, the environment in which the individual lives, the individual's current situation, factors that may precipitate violence or other negative behavior, and ways to make a target less accessible or vulnerable.

Principle 4: Corroboration is Critical

Being skeptical about information received and corroborating information through multiple sources are critical to successful threat assessment and management.[3] This means that it is important to check facts where possible.

Principle 5: Threat Assessment is about Behavior, not Profiles

There is no single "type" of person who perpetrates targeted violence.[4] Instead, threat assessment is evidence-based, focusing on the specific behaviors a person has exhibited and determining whether the person poses a threat (or is at risk) based upon those behaviors.[5]

Principle 6: Cooperating Systems are Critical Resources

Communication, collaboration, and coordination among various departments and agencies are critical throughout the process of threat assessment and management. Using different systems throughout campus as well as outside resources provides more eyes and ears on the process of both assessing and managing a potentially violent situation.

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[1] These principles come from Fein et al. (2002); Calhoun, F. & Weston, S. (June 2006); and from the experience of the primary authors.

[2] Vossekuil et al., 2002.

[3] Fein, et al., 2002.

[4] Vossekuil,et al., 2002.

[5] Randazzo et al., 2006; Reddy et al., 2001.

Principle 7: Does the Person Pose a Threat?

The central question of a threat assessment is whether the person in question _poses_ a threat, NOT whether they _made_ a threat.[6] A TAM Team should take _all_ potential threatening behaviors seriously, not just those that have been verbalized or expressed in some other way. Similarly, just because a person has expressed intent to do harm does not necessarily mean that he/she poses a legitimate threat.

Principle 8: Keep Victims in Mind

The TAM Team will need to pay attention to both victim safety and victim well-being. Victims are inherently more interested in threat management than threat assessment — meaning that they are more interested in what the Team will do to intervene, rather than what the particular assessment is. The TAM Team may need to devote time and energy to managing victim or witness fears.

Principle 9: Early Identification and Intervention Helps Everyone

The earlier a concern is reported to the Team, the easier it is to address and resolve. Early identification also allows for a broader range of intervention options, especially those that are less punitive or control oriented.

Principle 10: Multiple Reporting Mechanisms Enhance Early Identification

The TAM Team should make it as easy as possible for the campus community to report concerns and for the Team to quickly access the resources it needs in order to intervene appropriately.

Principle 11: Multi-Faceted Resources Can Provide Effective Interventions

Multiple strategies to de-escalate or contain the individual, connect the individual with the resources and assistance needed, reduce his/her access to the target, decrease the vulnerability of a potential target, and address situational or environmental factors should be used in concert in order to manage a threat.

Principle 12: Safety Is a Primary Focus

Safety is the primary goal of all threat assessment and management efforts. The TAM Team's ultimate purpose is to ensure the safety of the campus community by identifying and managing threats. Any particular interventions — counseling, support, confrontation, termination, arrest, hospitalization, etc. — are tools to achieve the goals of safety. They are not ends unto themselves.

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[6] Fein et al., 2002; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998; Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden (September 1995).

Once the Team has gathered and documented the information it has collected, we recommend that the Team first use this information to answer several key inquiry questions. [7] These questions are designed to help organize the information gathered.

What are the person's motive(s) and goals?
The purpose of this question is to understand the overall context of the behavior that first brought the person to the attention of the TAM Team, and also to understand whether those conditions or situation still exist. If those conditions still exist, the Team can use that information in crafting a management or referral/monitoring plan if necessary.

Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?
If the Team finds that the person in question has communicated an idea or plan to do harm — and that the source of that information is credible — this is a strong indication that the person may be on a pathway toward violence and therefore poses a threat. The Team should try to confirm or corroborate this information through another source, or through other information.

Has the person shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?
- Workplace, school or campus attacks or attackers;
- Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
- Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers);
- Obsessive pursuit, stalking or monitoring others.

A "yes" to this question alone does not necessarily indicate that the person in question poses a threat or is otherwise in need of some assistance. Many people are interested in these topics but never pose any threat. However, if a person shows some fascination or fixation on any of these topics and has raised concern in another way, such as by expressing an idea to do harm to others or to himself/herself, recently purchasing a weapon, or showing helplessness or despair, the combination of these facts should increase the Team's concern about the person in question.

Has the person engaged in attack-related behaviors (i.e., any behavior that moves an idea of harm forward toward actual harm)?
If the Team determines that the person has engaged in any attack-related behavior, this is an indication that the person is on a pathway toward violence and has taken a step(s) forward toward carrying out an idea to do harm. Any of these behaviors should prompt the Team to try to corroborate or confirm these behaviors through other sources (or confirm the reliability of the source reporting these behaviors). Any attack-related behaviors should be seen as a serious indication of potential violence.

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[7] From Deisinger, Randazzo, O'Neill & Savage (2008). *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams.* Stoneham, MA: Applied Risk Management. These questions are taken largely from Fein et al. (2002) and have been modified for a higher education setting and to be used for faculty and staff who raise some concern, as well as for students. The guidance for how to weigh or interpret responses to the questions has been provided by the authors.

Does the person have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?

It is important for the Team to recognize that in some areas of the country, it is quite common to own weapons and to have experience using weapons from a young age. Therefore, what the Team should focus on is the combination of the person owning or having access to weapons AND some indication that the person has an idea or plan to do harm. Similarly, the Team should be concerned if the person develops an idea to do harm and THEN starts showing an interest in weapons. Either combination should raise the Team's concern, and move the Team toward determining that the person poses a threat.

Is the person experiencing hopelessness, desperation and/or despair?

If the Team determines that the person in question is experiencing — or has recently experienced — desperation, hopelessness, and/or thoughts of suicide and there is NO other information indicating the person has thoughts or plans to harm other people, the Team should develop a plan to refer the person to necessary mental health care or emergency psychiatric intervention, possibly involving the institution's counseling center and/or police or local law enforcement if necessary. If the Team determines that the person in question is experiencing — or has recently experienced — desperation, hopelessness, and/or thoughts of suicide and there IS information that the person also has thoughts or plans to harm other people, the Team should determine that the person poses a threat and move to develop and implement a management plan to intervene with the person. The management plan should include resources to evaluate and treat the person's desperation and/or suicidal thoughts/plans.

Does the person have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible person (e.g., a friend, significant other, roommate, colleague, faculty advisor, coach, parent, etc.)?

If the Team decides that the person in question poses a threat of harm, the Team can solicit the help of this responsible person. The responsible person can also be encouraged to take a more active role in discouraging the person from engaging in any harm — whether to himself/herself, others, or both.

Does the person see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or only way to solve problems?

A "yes" to this question should increase the Team's concern about the person in question. But it should also lead the Team to consider what options they may have for helping the person solve their problems or improve their situation so that the person no longer looks toward violence to solve the problem.

Is the person's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?

If the TAM Team decides to interview the person of concern, the interview can be used as an opportunity to determine how forthcoming or truthful the person is being with the Team. The less forthcoming the person is, the more work the Team may have to do to develop an alliance if a management plan is needed.

Are other people concerned about the person's potential for violence?

As people are often reluctant to see violence as a possibility, if the Team learns that someone in the person's life does think the person is capable of violence, this should raise the Team's concern considerably. However, the Team should recognize that those in close relationships with the person may be too close to the person/situation to admit violence is possible or even likely.

What circumstances might affect the likelihood of violence?
All of us are capable of violence under the right (or wrong) circumstances. By asking this question, the Team can identify what factors in the person's life might change in the near- to mid-term, and whether those changes could make things better or worse for the person in question. If things look like they might improve for the person, the Team could monitor the person and situation for a while and re-assess after some time has passed. If things look like they might deteriorate, the Team can develop a management plan (if they believe the person poses a threat of harm or self-harm) or a referral plan (if the person does not pose a threat but appears in need of help) to help counteract the downturn in the person's circumstances.

Where does the subject exist along the pathway to violence?
- Have they developed an idea to do harm?
- Have they developed a plan?
- Have they taken any steps toward implementing the plan?
- Have they developed the capacity or means to carry out the plan?
- How fast are they moving toward engaging in harm?
- Where can the Team intervene to move the person off that pathway toward harm?

Make the Assessment.
Once the Team has answered the above questions (recognizing that a team may not be able to obtain information regarding all of the questions) and documented its answers, it then assesses the threat posed by the individual by answering the following two ultimate assessment questions:

A. *Does the person pose a threat of harm, whether to him/herself, to others, or both? That is, does the person's behavior suggest that he or she is on a pathway toward harm?*[8]
If the answer is "no," the Team documents its response and reasoning and proceeds to Question B. If the answer is "yes," the Team documents its response and rationale, and then proceeds to develop, implement, and continually monitor an individualized threat management plan to reduce the risk
that the person poses. The Team should document the details of this plan, as well as document steps it takes to implement the plan and/or refer the person for help. The Team does not need to answer Question B.

B. *If the person does not pose a threat of harm, does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care?*
If the answer is "no," the Team documents its response, records the person and incident in the Team's incident database, and closes the inquiry. If the answer is "yes," the Team documents its response and rationale, and then develops, implements, and re-evaluates a plan to monitor the person and situation and/or connect the person with resources in order to assist him/her with solving problems or addressing needs. The Team should document the details of this plan, as well as document steps taken to implement the plan and/or refer the person for help.

The answers to Questions A and B will dictate the Priority Level that the TAM Team assigns to the case. The Priority Level is designed to communicate both the level of threat posed by the person in question, as well as actions that may be necessary on the part of the Team to address and reduce that threat level. While the Team can choose its own rating scale, we offer the following for consideration.

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[8] Fein et al., 2002.

Recommended Reading

Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams: What Risk Managers Need to Know Now
J. Nolan, M. Randazzo & G. Deisinger (2011). URMIA Journal, 105-122.
http://www.sigmatma.com/images/NolanRandazzoDeisinger_CampusThreatAssessmentTeams_FINAL_20110802.pdf

 Implementing Behavioral Threat Assessment on Campus: A Virginia Tech Demonstration Project
M. Randazzo & E. Plummer (2009). Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech University Press.
http://www.threatassessment.vt.edu/Implementing_Behavioral_Threat_Assessment.pdf

The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams
G. Deisinger, M. Randazzo, D. O'Neill, & J. Savage (2008). Stonington, MA: Applied Risk Management
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Suggested Reading

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Quinsey, V.L., Harris, G.T., Rice, M.E. & Cormier, C.A. (1998). *Violent offenders: Appraising and managing risk*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

The Jed Foundation (2008). *Student mental health and the law: A resource for institutions of higher education*. New York, NY: The Jed Foundation.

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