

BJA STOP School Violence Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program

Commonwealth of Virginia/VA Center for School & Campus Safety

PROGRAM ABSTRACT

In 2013, Virginia legislation became effective requiring all public school divisions to establish and operate threat assessment teams (TAT) in support of school safety, the first state in the country to do so. Responsibilities include assessing and intervening with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students. Mandated TATs in Virginia function similarly to crisis intervention teams in that they are expected to make referrals to community service boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment. The legislation also required the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) to develop model threat assessment (TA) policies and protocols for schools and collect quantifiable data on TAT activities.

Since the mandate to establish and operate TATs was unfunded, the VCSCS offered needed training to school and division personnel on behavioral TA and the implementation and operation of behavioral TATs through one-time asset forfeiture funding. The VCSCS continues to receive requests for support from schools and law enforcement agencies for assistance in this area. Challenges include difficulty adapting the policies to unique characteristics of the division or school, implementing systemic change without division-wide training, high turnover of TAT members, issues regarding information sharing across divisions and with institutions of higher education, and records management.

Documentation of required TA activities and management of TA records is highly inconsistent across the Commonwealth. Establishing a standardized process of documenting TA activities and the collection of real-time data is critical for school TATs and for the VCSCS to gather required data. There is no uniform, electronic record management system by which schools can collect data related to their TA activities.

The VCSCS proposes a 36 month project to expand training opportunities to non – reporting schools, establish a cadre of TA trainers for sustainability, offer consultation on TAT implementation, and improve the efficacy and efficiency of TA data collection. This project will improve the ability of schools to identify, assess and intervene with individuals who may pose a risk of targeted violence to the school community and to enhance the ability of TA teams to effectively intervene with individuals who may pose a risk of targeted violence. Model policies, training curricula, and a case management tool will assist other states in implementing TATs across the nation.