



# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

**Campus Threat Assessment & Management:**  
**A Systematic Approach to Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threatening Behavior**

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**Deisinger Consulting, LLC**  
 President & Founder

**Education, Training & Certifications:**

- Ph.D., Counseling/Clinical Psychology
- Licensed Psychologist (IA)
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- Certified Law Enforcement Officer (IA & VA: Retired)

**Experience:**

- Virginia Center for School & Campus Safety
- Threat Management Consultant
- Virginia State Police/Virginia Fusion Center
- Threat Management Consultant/Member of Advisory Board
- Virginia Tech (Retired)
- Deputy Chief of Police & Director, Threat Management
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- Deputy Chief of Police & Director, Threat Management
- JTTF / ATAC Southern District of Iowa
- Special Deputy US Marshal (2001-2009)

**Lead Author:**

- Virginia School Model Policies, Procedures & Guidelines
- Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment Teams










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**Session Agenda**

- Introduction
- Overview of Workplace / Campus Violence
- The Nature and Process of Targeted Violence
- Essential Elements of a Threat Management Process:
  - Multi-disciplinary approach capable of addressing all threats;
  - Coordinated & early awareness of concerns & engagement;
  - Thorough & contextual assessment;
  - Proactive & integrated case management;
  - Monitors & re-assesses case on a longitudinal basis;
  - Standards of practice and law;
  - Continuous improvement & adaptability.
- Case Scenarios & Applications






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**Virginia CARES for Schools and Campuses**

- Threat assessment and management are part of a larger, on-going approach to support and enhance school/campus safety and well-being.
- School/campus safety and well-being are sustained and enhanced through:
  - C:** Caring and connection to build a positive climate;
  - A:** Awareness of resources and reporting options;
  - R:** Recognition of (and response to) threatening, aberrant and concerning behaviors;
  - E:** Engagement with the community and with persons (within the school or campus) for whom there is concern; and
  - S:** Support for all members of the school community.



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**What is Threat Assessment & Management?**

A **systematic** process that is designed to:

- 1 **IDENTIFY** situations / subjects of concern
- 2 **INQUIRE**, investigate & gather information
- 3 **ASSESS** situation
- 4 **MANAGE** the situation / mitigate risk

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**Threat Assessment & Management Process**

BTAM facilitates a more objective process:



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### What is a “Threat”?

#### A threat:

- **Is a concerning communication or behavior that:**
  - Indicates an individual may pose a danger to the safety of campus staff or students:
    - through acts of violence or
    - other behavior that would cause harm to self or others
- **May be expressed or communicated:**
  - behaviorally
  - orally
  - visually
  - in writing
  - electronically
  - or through any other means
- **Is considered a threat regardless of whether:**
  - observed by or communicated directly to the target or
  - observed by or communicated to a third party and
  - whether the target is aware of the threat



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### Threatening Behaviors

#### Threatening behaviors (examples):

- **An act that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating, such as:**
  - Directly communicated threats
  - Leakage
  - Overt physical or verbal intimidation
  - Bullying that continues after interventions to stop the behavior
  - Throwing objects or other gestures intended to cause fear
  - Making inappropriate statements about harming others
  - Any statements or behaviors indicating suicidality
  - Research or planning related to carrying out violence
  - Stalking
  - Physical violence toward a person or property
  - Possession of weapons on school property or at school activities

[The Concept of Leakage in Threat Assessment](#)



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### What is “Aberrant or Concerning Behavior”?

#### Aberrant or concerning behavior:

- **Atypical for the person or situation and:**
  - Causes concern for the safety or well-being of those involved
  - Involves actions, statements, communications or responses that are unusual for the person or situation or
  - actions which could lead to violence toward self or others or
  - are reasonably perceived as threatening or causing concern for the well-being of the person



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### Aberrant or Concerning Behavior

#### ▪ Aberrant or concerning behavior (examples):

- Withdrawal, isolation or alienation from others
- Sudden changes to usual attire, behavior, or hygiene
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Sullen or depressed behavior
- Declining academic/work performance
- Atypical interest or fascination with weapons or violence
- Fixation on violence as means of addressing a grievance
- Fearful, anxious, depressed, tense, reactive or suspicious
- Atypical outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration, or anger
- Confrontational, accusatory, or blaming behavior
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem



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### Threat Assessment & Management Goal

The primary goal of the threat assessment and management process is to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the organization.



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### Principles of Threat Management

- Threat assessment & management is about prevention, not prediction

- Threat assessment and management is a helping process, rather than punitive or adversarial



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## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Predatory / Targeted Violence

#### Targeted Violence:

- Incident(s) of violence
- Where (a) potential assailant(s)
- Chooses a particular target(s)
- Prior to a violent/destructive act.

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

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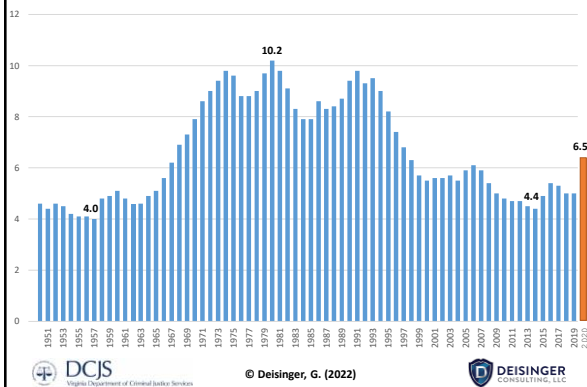
### Targeted Violence

#### Examples of Targeted Violence:

- Public Mass Violence
- Lone Actor Terrorism / Violent Extremism
- Grievance-Based Violence impacting:
  - Workplace, schools, & campuses
  - Houses of Worship / Faith communities
  - Government agencies / Public figures
- Domestic / Intimate Partner Violence\*
- Predatory Sexual Assault / Sexual Misconduct
- Stalking
- Human Trafficking
- Gang Violence\*
- Harassment / Bullying / Mobbing
- Bias and Hate Crimes
- Suicide in Public Setting

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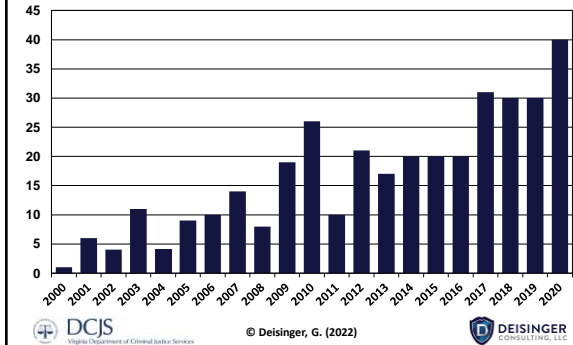
### Homicide Rates in US, 1950-2020



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### Active Shooter Incidents in US

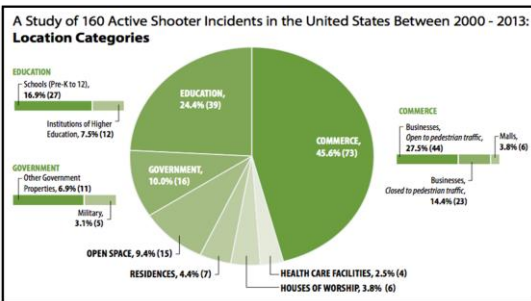
Sources: FBI Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the US Between 2000-2013;  
FBI Studies of Active Shooter Incidents in the US Between 2014-2020.



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### Incident Location Categories

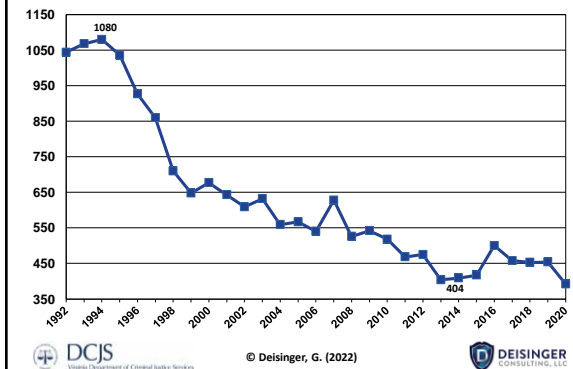
FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. Active Shooter Events from 2000 to 2013 &  
Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015



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### Workplace Homicide

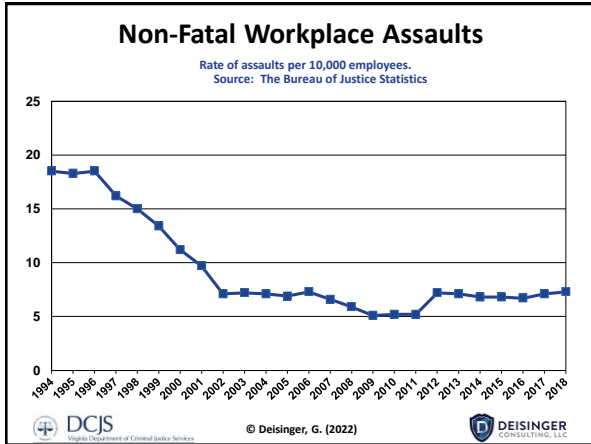
Source: The Bureau of Justice Statistics



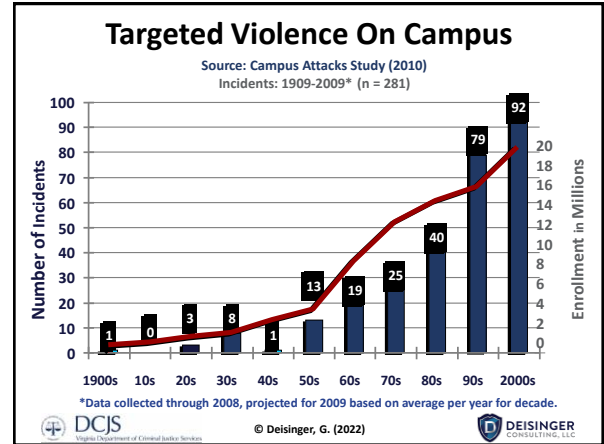
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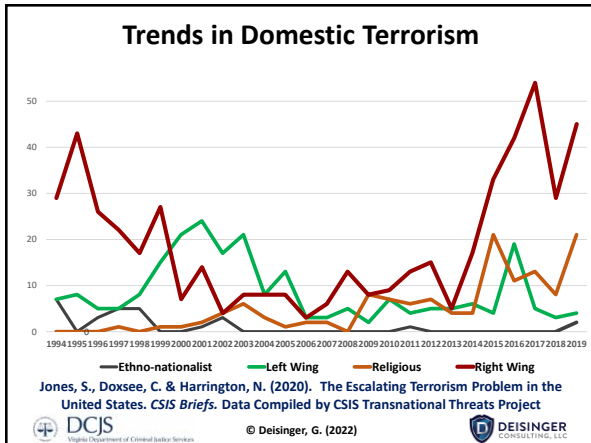
## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach



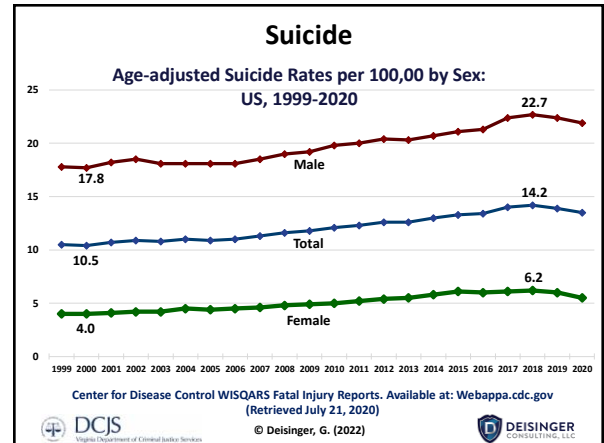
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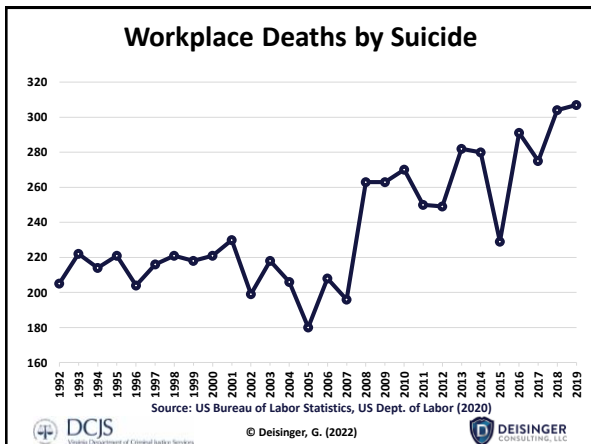
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### Modes of Violence

Affective Violence:		Predatory Violence
Intense emotion & 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 target	↔	Minimal displacement of target;
Reactions are time limited	↔	Not time limited;

Source: Meloy (2000) *Violence Risk & Threat Assessment*  
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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Understanding Targeted Violence

- There is no demographic profile of a perpetrator of targeted violence.
- There is no profile for the type of campus that has been targeted.
- In addition to students, others engage in violence:
  - Administrators, faculty, other staff,
  - Parents/guardians of students,
  - Contractors and vendors
  - People in relationships with staff or students, and
  - People with no connection to the campus.



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### Understanding Targeted Violence

- Most perpetrators act alone
- But, in many cases, others (e.g., staff, students, peers, family members, etc.) were involved in some way:
  - Failing to report concerns
  - Failing take other steps to prevent violence
  - Encouraging violence
  - Helping with plans or preparation for violence.
- Most perpetrators of mass casualties used firearms
  - Typically acquired from home
- Over 1/3 of perpetrators used knives



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### Understanding Targeted Violence

- 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 school disciplinary actions
- Many had prior contact with law enforcement
- Many perpetrators were suicidal in addition to their violent thoughts or acts toward others
- Suicidal behaviors are a significant and growing concern across all genders and age groups.



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### Understanding Targeted Violence

- Perpetrators usually had multiple motives
  - Most common: unresolved grievance with a peer
- Many perpetrators had multiple stressors, including significant difficulties with losses or failures
- Many student perpetrators had been victims of (or participated in) prior bullying, often known to others
- Most perpetrators did not threaten their targets directly prior to engaging in violence
- Many perpetrators expressed their grievances and aspects of their thoughts or plans to others
  - Often through social media or online activities



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### Understanding Targeted Violence

- All perpetrators exhibited concerning behavior.
- Most perpetrators had engaged in multiple behaviors that caused others to have serious concerns about their behavior and/or well-being.
- Many perpetrators had experienced psychological, behavioral, or developmental symptoms, but may not have been diagnosed with a mental health condition or benefited from adequate treatment.
- Incidents of targeted violence are rarely sudden or impulsive acts.

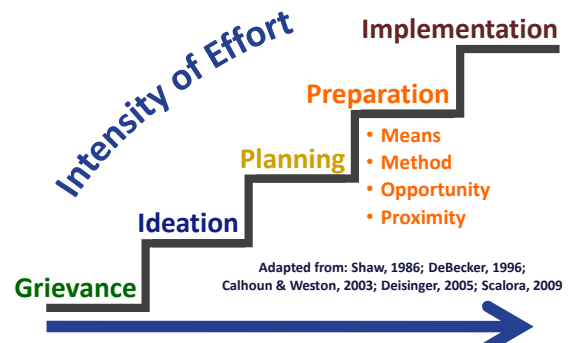


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### Pathway to Violence



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### Understanding Targeted Violence

- Prior to most incidents of targeted violence, other people knew about aspects of the individual's ideas, plans or preparations to cause harm.
- Many bystanders who had knowledge of concerning behaviors did not report them.
- Often, there were concerns about the perpetrator by others outside of the school, but the concerns were not reported to school staff.



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### Targeted Violence Prevention

- Many acts of targeted violence can be prevented.
- Information about a subject's ideas, behaviors, plans & preparations for violence can often be observed before harm can occur.
- Information about a subject behavior, plans or preparations is likely to be scattered & fragmented.
- Keys are to:
  - Act quickly upon an initial report of concern,
  - Gather additional information,
  - Enhance understanding.

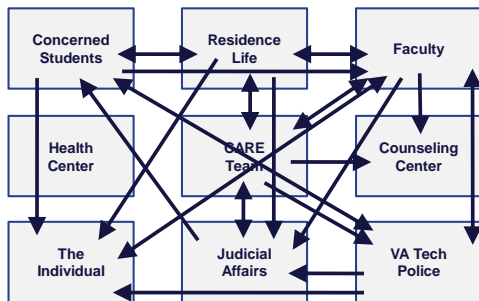


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### Communication is Key



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



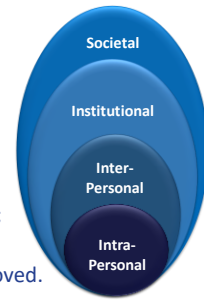
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### Effective Prevention Strategies

- Comprehensive;
- Systematic and theory driven;
- Collaborative;
- Socio-culturally relevant;
- Appropriately timed;
- Delivered by well-trained staff;
- Utilize multiple & varied methods;
- Sustained over time;
- Continuously evaluated and improved.



Source: Nation, M., et al (2003). What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs. *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.



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### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF COLLABORATIVE THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

### Essential Elements of an Effective Threat Assessment & Management Process

Organizations must have a systematic process that:

- Utilizes a robust & relevant multi-disciplinary approach to address all threats;
- Enables coordinated & early awareness of developing concerns through active community engagement;
- Facilitates a thorough & contextual assessment;
- Implements proactive & integrated case management;
- Monitors & re-assesses case on a longitudinal basis;
- Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice;
- Continuously improves & adapts to challenges & needs.

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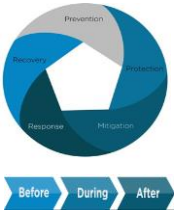
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## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### TAM is a Systemic Process

**Systematic Process:**

- Building & supporting community safety & well-being
- Identification/recognition & reporting
- Intake & Initial Inquiry
- Triage / Screening
- Full Inquiry / Investigation
- Assessment
- Management
- Monitoring & Re-Assessment
- Update/Engagement & Closure
- Continuous improvement of environment/systems



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### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Utilizes a robust & relevant multi-disciplinary approach to address all threats**

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### TAM Functions

**Define Mission, Scope & Authority**

- Enhance awareness/recognition of potential threats
- Enhance reporting
- Triage, screening, and assessment
- Case management to prevent/mitigate harm
- Guide implementation of strategies
- Re-evaluate, monitor and intervene with situation
- Build community safety & well-being
- Enhance: policy, process, practice and people\*
- Enhance: \*\*
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Coordination
  - Capitalization

\* © G. Deisinger, Ph.D.  
\*\* © G. Deisinger, C. Cychosz, L. Jaeger (1993/1995)

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### Establishing a BTAM Team:

**Developing the Team:**

- **Mission:** Purpose, scope, functions & authority
- **Structure:**
  - Membership (Core & Ad-Hoc)
  - Leadership
  - Support
- **Training:**
  - Member roles, responsibilities & resources
  - Behavioral threat assessment & management process
  - Consulting/Reporting options & methods

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### Team Membership:

**Multi-Disciplinary Involvement by:**

- **Administration**
  - Academic Affairs/Provost; Graduate/Professional Schools
  - Student Affairs; Dean of Students; Residence Life; Conduct
  - Human Resources; Employee Relations
- **Police / Security (local/state law enforcement)**
- **Key Gatekeepers / "Boundary Spanners"**
- **Legal Counsel \***
- **Mental Health Professional \***
- **Threat Management Professional \***
- **Independent Medical/Psychological Evaluator \*\***

\* Internal or External Resource      \*\* External Resource

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### Skills of Effective Team Members

- **Passionate about the goals of the team**
- **Communicates effectively**
- **Relates well with others**
- **Familiar with threat assessment & management policies, processes and practices**
- **Actively and effectively participates in team-work**
- **Demonstrates an inquisitive mindset**
- **Exercises judgment, objectivity, and diligence**
- **Demonstrates accountability**
- **Advocates for necessary resources**

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

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## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Key Dynamics of Successful Teams

**Psychological Safety:** We take risks without feeling insecure or embarrassed.

**Dependability:** We can count on each other to do high quality work on time.

**Structure & Clarity:** We are clear about our goals, roles, and execution plans.

**Meaning of Work:** We are working on something that is personally important for each of us.

**Impact of Work:** We fundamentally believe that the work we are doing matters.

Julia Rozovsky (2015) *The five keys to a successful Google team.*



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### Team Size

**Optimal Size: 5 – 9 members**

▪ **Fewer than 4**

- Too much responsibility / stress
- Minimal diversity of thought

▪ **Greater than 9**

- Diminished responsibility & engagement
- Decreased individual performance
- Decreased communication
- Increase of cliques

Mueller, J.S. (2012). *Why Individuals in Larger Teams Perform Worse. Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes, 117(1), 111-124.*



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### Subject Affiliation

**Subject Relation to Workplace**

- Type 1: Unaffiliated (with other criminal intent)
- Type 2: Customer/Client
- Type 3: Employee
- Type 4: Personal Relationship

Source: Occupational Safety & Health Administration, US Dept of Labor

- Type 5: Unaffiliated (without other criminal intent)

Source: G. Deisinger (2005)



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### Subjects: Address All Threats

**Perpetrator's Affiliation:**

▪ **Student: 60%**

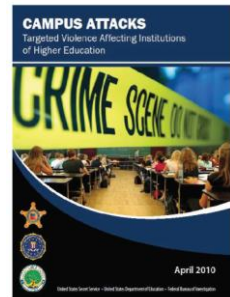
- Current: 45%
- Former: 15%

▪ **Employee: 11%**

- Current: 6%
- Former: 5%

▪ **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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### SOURCES OF GRIEVANCES / TARGETS

**Grievance Sources / Targets:**

- Persons
- Places
- Programs
- Processes
- Philosophies
- Proxies

© Deisinger (2012)

**Chosen based on:**

- Desirability
- Availability
- Vulnerability

Source: FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (2017)



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### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Enables coordinated & early awareness of developing concerns through active community engagement**

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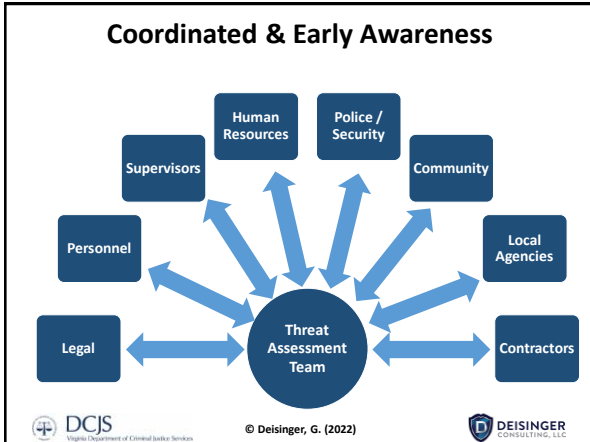


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## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach



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### Importance of Reporting

**Key considerations:**

- Reporting allows concerns to be addressed
- Earlier reporting allows greater range of options
- The threat management process is designed to help
- Goals are to maintain the health, safety and well-being of the campus community

What might create barriers to reporting?  
How can we overcome these?

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### Facilitate Engagement

**For effective bystander intervention & engagement, people need to know:**

- Their role and responsibility
  - GOAL: Consult and engage about concerns
- What to consult about
- Where (and with whom) to consult
- Consultations are wanted
- Something will be done
- Regular reminders of issues and process

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### Guidance on Reporting

**Are there concerns about a subject?**

- Threatening/concerning statements or actions
  - Directly communicated threats
  - Leakage: communication to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties
- Any concerns about suicide/self-harm
- Behavior that disrupts the working environment
- Behavior that seems troubling or disturbing:
  - Heightened wariness, suspiciousness, distrust
  - Numerous unresolved conflicts with others
  - Alienation or isolation
  - Deteriorating well-being or mental health

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### Guidance on Reporting

**Are there concerns about a subject?**

- Significant changes in behavior or mood
- Preoccupation with grievances or injustices
- Unusual interest in or preoccupation with specific persons or security systems
- References to planning or preparing to cause harm
- Identifies with others who have engaged in violence
- Increasing desperation
- Decreasing/minimal support or coping skills
- Anything out of the ordinary

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### Building Awareness

**Outreach/Awareness presentations**

- Managers, supervisors, employees
- Contractors

**Training Sessions**

- Consulting & case management process;
- Verbal de-escalation
- Incident survival

**Information: Available and sustained**

- Website
- E-mail updates/newsletters
- Social media

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## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Maintaining Awareness

**Sustain organizational knowledge about:**

- **Mission & function of team**
  - Early intervention and assistance with situations
- **Importance of consulting about concerning behaviors**
  - “This may be nothing but . . .”
  - If in doubt, shout it out!
- **Mechanisms for reporting and consultation**
- **Community role in maintaining safety and well-being of the community**
- **GOAL:** Sustain a culture of care, engagement and consultation.

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### Facilitating Engagement / Reporting

- **Clear and trusted reporting mechanisms**
  - Confidential
  - Anonymous
  - Anonymous with reach back
- **Acknowledgement of report**
- **Support engagement**

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### Documentation

**Record keeping**

- **Consult with administration and legal counsel:**
  - Record creation, storage, access, sharing, and destruction
- **Consider:**
  - Database of threat assessment team cases
    - Documentation of the subject’s exact words and actions
    - Documentation of target reactions and protective actions
    - Copies of emails, memos, voicemails, assignments, etc.
  - Agenda and minutes of team staffing and consultations.
    - Data
    - Assessment
    - Plan

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### Process & Record Keeping

**FORTify the process:**

- **Process and documentation should demonstrate that TAM team’s decision-making process was:**
  - F**air,
  - O**bjective,
  - R**easonable, and
  - T**imely

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### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Facilitates a thorough  
& contextual assessment**

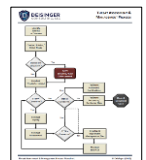
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### Steps in the Threat Assessment Process

**Threat assessment team:**

- **Receives report of threat**
  - Intake: How you take in reports and being processing
  - Triage: Assigning urgency/priority to cases
  - Screening: Determining appropriateness for TAM
- **Gathers additional relevant information**
- **Analyzes information and assesses threat**
  - If the team decides subject poses a threat:
    - Team alerts superintendent
    - Responds to manage threat
- **Monitors and re-evaluates plan**
- **Follow up as appropriate**



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Comprehensive Threat Assessment & Management

Targeted Violence is the product of an interaction among multiple domains:

- S** The **subject** of concern;
- T** The **target** or others impacted;
- E** The **environment/systems**; and,
- P** **Precipitating events**.



Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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### Intake

Upon receipt of initial report, the team obtains basic information about the situation:

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



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### Imminent Situation?

Determine if situation is emergency/imminent

- **Subject intends imminent and/or serious harm to self/others, e.g.,:**
  - Has weapon on campus or campus activity, or enroute to/from either of those
  - Imminent intent to use weapon(s) or cause serious injury
  - Attempting to breach security and/or to gain access to targets
- **Lack of inhibitions for using violence, indicated by:**
  - Feels justified in using violence to address grievances
  - Has no perceived alternatives to the use of violence
  - Lack of concern for or desiring of consequences
  - Has the capability and willingness to cause harm



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### Imminent Situation

If the situation is emergent or imminent, initiate crisis response procedures according to school policy, e.g.:

- **Involve law enforcement and appropriate security personnel**
- **Initiate relevant security protocols**
- **Notify key administrators**
- **When safe to do so, move on to triage and assessment steps to further resolve any ongoing threat posed**



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### Triage and Screening

Timely and systematic review by trained personnel

- **Consider Triage/Screening Team:**
  - Minimum of two (2) members
  - Different roles/departments
- **Review initial report(s)**
- **Consult relevant records/sources**

**Triage / screening process shall:**

- **Consider the nature and level of concern indicated**
- **Determine if existing resources and mechanisms are sufficient to address those concerns**
- **Determine whether the full team needs to further assess and manage the situation**
- **Initiate any crisis responses as appropriate**



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### Inquire / Gather Information

Review relevant records based on lawful and ethical access to information, such as:

- **Prior threat assessment team contacts**
- **Work performance history**
- **Disciplinary or personnel actions**
- **Law enforcement or security contacts at organization and in the community**
- **Critical involvement with mental health or social services**
- **Presence of known problems, grievances, or losses**
- **Current or historical grievances that may be related to the behavior of concern**
- **Online searches: internet, social media, email, etc.**



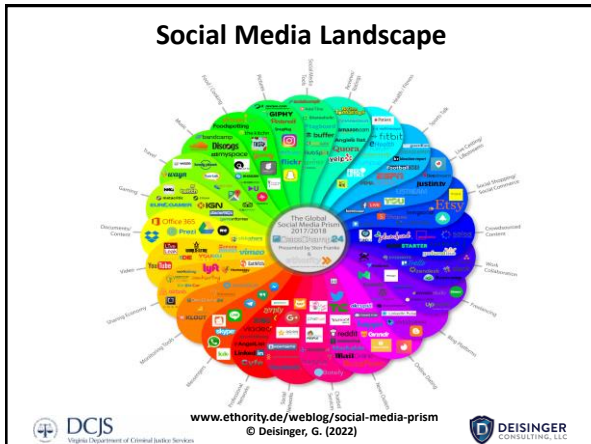
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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach



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### Inquire/Gather Information

**Consider interviews:**

- Initial interviews to verify report:
  - Person(s) reporting threat
  - Person(s) receiving report of threat
  - Target/Recipient(s) of threat
  - Witness(es)
  - Subject of concern
- Other potential sources:
  - Peers: Friends/Co-workers
  - Employers, teachers, other staff
  - Parents/guardians
  - Relational Partners
  - Local law or state enforcement
  - Community services

Corroboration of information across these sources will be powerful in helping to assess the level and nature of the threat... What might significant differences in the information provided by these sources reveal?

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### Considerations for Interviewing

**Considerations for interviews:**

- By whom?
- With what skill set?
- In what setting?
- With what goals in mind?
  - Information gathering and assessment;
  - Redirect from violence/targets;
  - Problem solving/support
  - Set boundaries/limitations
  - Admonishment/confrontation
  - Intervention/support/referral
  - Monitoring
  - Deterrence

Are TAT members adequately trained and prepared to conduct interviews?

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### Triage/Initial Assessment Using STEP+

**Triage Considerations:**

- S** Is **Subject** engaging in behavior(s) causing concerns for violence or significant disruption or need for assistance?
- T** Are **Targets or others** concerned, impacted, vulnerable, taking protective actions, or need assistance?
- E** Are there **Environmental/systemic** issues impacting the situation?
- P** Are there reasonably foreseeable **Precipitating events** that may impact the situation?
- +** Are there identifiable actions to mitigate concerns?

**If yes to any, a full inquiry is recommended.**

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)

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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**What situation(s) or behaviors are causing concern?**

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

Adapted from: FBI (2017) Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks; \* Meloy, et al. (2012). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment; U.S. Secret Service (2000) Protective Intelligence & Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State & Local Law Enforcement Officials.

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### Key Areas for Inquiry - Subject

**Have there been any concerning, aberrant, threatening, or violent communications?**

- Were there **Directly Communicated Threats**\*?
- Has there been **Leakage**\*?
- How and to whom is the subject communicating?
  - What is relationship between subject and target?
  - What means/modes communication have been used?
- What is the **Intensity of Effort**\*\* in communications or attempts to address grievance?
- Do the communications provide insight about motives, grievances, ideation, planning, preparation, targets, etc.?
- Has anyone been alerted or "warned away"?

Adapted from: \* Meloy, et al. (2012). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment; \*\* FBI (2017) Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks; U.S. Secret Service (2000) Protective Intelligence & Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State & Local Law Enforcement Officials.

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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY



## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Key Areas for Inquiry - Subject

**Considerations for Anonymous Communications:**

- Leakage of grievance, ideation, plans, preparation
- Pattern indicating escalation pertinent to grievance
- Intensity of Effort, indicated by:
  - Frequency of contact
  - Duration of contact
  - Multiple means of contact
  - Target dispersion
- Intensity of Focus upon a specific target / grievance
- Pathway behaviors
  - Intent or justification for violence
  - Planning or preparation
  - Diminishing alternatives

Scalora, M. (2014) *Electronic Threats & Harassment. In the International Handbook of Threat Assessment*


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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**What are the subject’s motives and goals?**

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

Adapted from: \* Meloy, et al. (2011). *The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment*; FBI (2017) *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; USSS NTAC (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*


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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**Has 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 violence?
- Is there **Identification**\* (strong desire or need to emulate/be like others) with:
  - Perpetrators of targeted violence or powerful figures
  - Grievances of other perpetrators
  - Weapons or tactics of other perpetrators
  - Effect or notoriety of other perpetrators
  - Ideologies or groups that support and encourage violence

Adapted from: \* Meloy, et al. (2011). *The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment*; FBI (2017) *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; USSS NTAC (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*


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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**Does the subject have (or are they developing) the capacity to engage in targeted violence?**

- Are there **Pathway Warning Behaviors**\* ?
  - Planning
  - Preparation (Means, Method, Opportunity, Proximity)
- Where on the Pathway?
- Are there changes in activity levels or **Energy Bursts**\* ?
- How organized is the subject’s thinking and behavior?
- History of violence or aspects of **Novel Aggression**\* ?
- Is subject developing perceived capability?

Adapted from: \* Meloy, et al. (2011). *The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment*; FBI (2017) *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; USSS NTAC (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*


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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**Is the subject experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?**

- Has subject experienced perceived loss, failure, injustice?
- Does subject express shame or humiliation?
- Is subject having significant difficulty coping?
- 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
  - Development of **Legacy token**\*\*

Adapted from: \* Meloy, et al. (2011). *The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment*; \*\* FBI (2017) *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; USSS NTAC (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*


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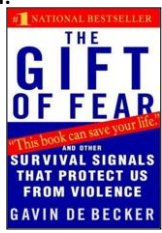
### Key Areas for Inquiry

**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 (1997) *The Gift of Fear*




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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY



## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

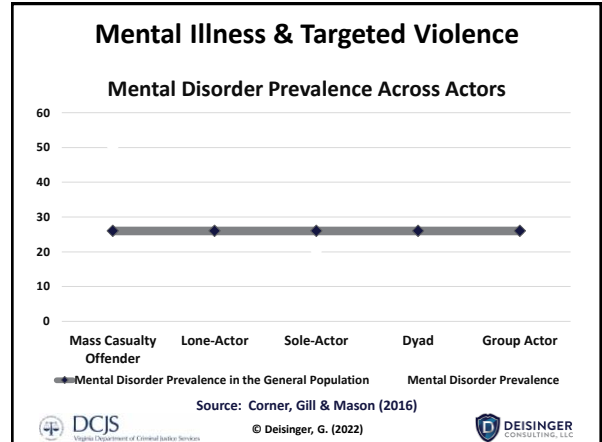
**Has the subject's behavior indicated or raised concern of need for intervention or supportive services?**

- Does subject have difficulty coping?
- Symptoms of severe, acute, untreated mental illness:
  - Significant lack of contact with reality:
    - Hallucinations (especially command hallucinations)
    - Delusions (especially paranoid/persecutory or grandiosity)
    - Extreme wariness, distrust, paranoia
  - Symptoms that impact subject's perceptions of grievances or how others respond to subject
  - Significant or sustained agitation or anxiousness
  - Significant or sustained depressed mood
  - Alcohol or other drug use/abuse
  - Pervasive patterns of maladaptive behavior
- Is subject actively engaged in treatment?

Adapted from: FBI (2017). *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*.  
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### Threats to Self: The Nexus Between Threat Assessment and Suicide Risk Assessment

- Benefits of utilizing the TAT in the suicide risk assessment process:
  - TAT practiced in working collaboratively to address concerns related to the health, safety, and well-being of the campus
  - Utilizing TAT for all cases that pose a threat to self or others enhances consistent application of policies, procedures, and practices across cases
  - TAT members have lawful access to protected records
  - TAT law enforcement members have access to other records and resources to supplement response
  - Sensitive information gathered during the TA process is not allowed to be re-disclosed outside of the TAT, therefore making the process more confidential and protected

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### 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 TAT should assume primary responsibility:
  - Subject expresses co-occurring anger or hostility to others
  - Subject expresses ideation or intent to harm others
  - Subject's intent, preparations, or acts of harm to self would pose a threat of harm to others, whether intended or not
  - Subject's suicidal or self-harm behaviors are responses to victimization, bias, bullying, harassment, or to other environmental/systemic issues within the campus
  - Others are, or may reasonably be, significantly impacted or feel endangered by the threat of harm to self

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

- If none of the above conditions are met, then no other actions are needed by the threat assessment team and the threat assessment case can be closed
  - The suicide risk assessment and interventions are completed by the Suicide Crisis Response Team as relevant for the case
- Campus or community mental health professionals retain primary responsibility for the direct assessment and mental health interventions with the subject at risk, per campus guidelines
- Other team members assist with assessment and intervention actions, and address any other concerns impacting upon the case

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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

**Does the subject have protective factors, stabilizers, or buffers that inhibit use of violence?**

- Views violence as unacceptable/immoral
- Accepts responsibility for actions
- Demonstrates remorse for inappropriate behavior
- Respects reasonable limits and expectations
- Uses socially sanctioned means to address grievances
- Values life, job, relationships, freedom
- Maintains and uses effective coping skills
- Treatment compliance/engagement
- Sustains trusted and valued relationships

Adapted from: FBI (2017). *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; National Threat Assessment Center (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence.*

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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Key Areas for Inquiry - Subject

**Does the subject have a trusting & sustained relationship with at least one responsible person?**

- Is subject emotionally connected to other people?
- Does subject have a friend, colleague, family member, or other person that they trust and can rely upon?
- Does that other person have skill and willingness to monitor, intervene, support subject?
- Is the relationship in jeopardy?
- Is there sustained/increased isolation or alienation?

Adapted from: FBI (2017) *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*; U.S. Secret Service (2000) *Protective Intelligence & Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State & Local Law Enforcement Officials*.

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### Proximal Warning Behaviors

**Proximal Warning Behaviors**

- Pathway (actions)
- Fixation
- Identification
- Novel Aggression
- Energy Burst
- Leakage
- Directly Communicated Threat
- Last Resort Behaviors

Meloy, J.R., Hoffmann, J., Guldemann, A. & James, D. (2012). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. 30(3): 256-79.

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### Protective Factors

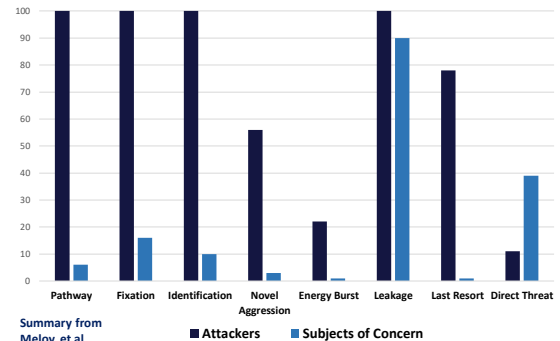
**Stabilizers and Buffers Against Violence Risk**

- P Positive Personal Attachments
- R Remorse is Genuine for Transgressions
- O Obeys Limits Set by Employer or Authorities
- T Takes Sanctioned Actions to Address “Wrongs” & Setbacks
- E Enjoys Life & Freedom
- C Coping Skills are Positive
- T Treatment Compliance

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WAVR 21 V3

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### Proximal Warning Behaviors



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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Target

**Are targets (or others) indicating vulnerability or concern about the subject’s potential for violence?**

- Are others concerned that subject may take action?
- Are others concerned about a specific target?
- Are others concerned for the well-being of the subject?
- Are targets or others around the subject engaging in protective actions?
- Do targets have adequate support resources?
- Are targets or others experiencing stress, trauma, or other symptoms that may benefit from intervention?
- Are targets engaging in behaviors that increase their:
  - Desirability
  - Availability
  - Vulnerability

Adapted from: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2021); FBI (2017). *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*.

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### Key Areas for Inquiry - Environment

**Are there Environmental/Systemic factors that are impacting the situation?**

- Systemic, policy, or procedural problems
- Silos, gaps, or delays in reporting of concerns
- Poor conflict management skills
- Poor supervisory skills and/or willingness to address
- Organizational climate concerns: e.g., harassment, bullying
- Lack of support resources in community
- Social influences of others in environment; e.g.
  - Actively discourage or encourage/dare use of violence
  - Deny/minimize the possibility of violence
  - Passively collude with act

Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020); FBI (2017). *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks*.

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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

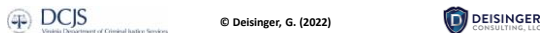
## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Risk Factors for Workplace Violence

#### Environment / Workplace Factors

- Understaffing leading to job overload or compulsory overtime
- Frustrations from poorly defined job tasks and responsibilities
- Downsizing or reorganization
- Labor disputes and poor labor-management relations
- Poor management styles (e.g., arbitrary or unexplained orders)
- Corrections or reprimands in front of other employees
- Inconsistent discipline
- Inadequate security
- A lack of employee counseling
- A high injury rate
- Frequent grievances

Federal Bureau of Investigation (2004). *Workplace Violence: Issues in Response*.



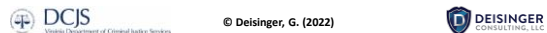
91

### Key Areas for Inquiry – Precipitating Events

**Are there precipitating events that may impact the situation currently and in foreseeable future?**

- Loss, failure, or injustice
- Key dates/events
- Triggers and reminders of any of the above
- Opportunity
- Contagion effect
- Resource changes
- Case management interventions

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2021)



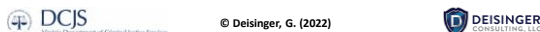
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### Key Areas for Inquiry – Global

**What is the consistency and credibility and completeness of information about the situation?**

- Are the subject's conversation and "story" consistent?
- Do collateral sources confirm or dispute each other?
- Do sources have direct and unique knowledge?
- Are there multiple sources?
- Do any sources have ulterior motives?
- What gaps exist in understanding of situation?
- What biases or misperceptions may be present?

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2021)



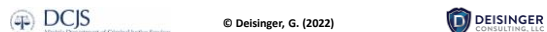
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### Improving Decision-Making

#### Protecting Against Cognitive Bias

- Confirmation Bias
- Anchoring
- Over-Confidence
- In-group Bias
- Availability Bias
- Probability neglect
- Fundamental attribution error
- Hindsight Bias

Daniel Kahneman (2013) *Thinking Fast & Slow*



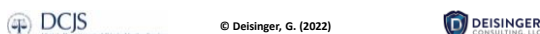
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### Decision-Making

#### Managing Information to decrease Cognitive Overload:

- Humans do not multi-task well, despite perceptions
  - Instead, we shift attention from task to task
    - Decrease level of attention to given task
    - Decrease quality of attention
  - Maximum information load is 10 items
  - Optimal information load is 4 - 6 items
  - Irrelevant information still contributes to overload
- Consider how you brief on cases

Daniel Levitin (2014) *The Organized Mind*



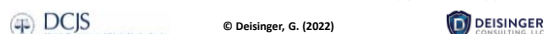
95

### Using Supplemental Assessment Tools

#### Systematize data collection and assessment:

- Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk (WAVR-21);
- Cawood Assessment Grid;
- MOSAIC (DeBecker);
- Stalking Risk Profile;
- Screening Assessment for Stalking & Harassment (SASH);
- Dangerousness Assessment (Campbell);
- Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA);
- Spousal Risk Assessment Guide (SARA);
- Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP 18);
- Violence Risk Assessment Guide (VRAG);
- Classification of Violence Risk (COVR);

Note: This is a partial listing of supplemental instruments and not an endorsement of any particular approach.



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Using Assessment Tools

**Appropriate use of instruments:**

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

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

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### Facilitating Case Discussions

- **Fostering Effective Case Discussions:**
- Active participation by all team members
- Keep discussion focused on the case
- Minimize bias in decision-making
  - Consider totality and context of 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
- Focus on active problem-solving

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### Decision-Making: Cognitive Load

**Enhancing Case Decision Making:**

- Organize information systematically, e.g.:
  - STEP Framework
  - Pathway model
  - Proximal warning behaviors
  - JACA
  - Timeline
  - Pending Issues/Tasks
- Use tools to support structured professional judgement
- Prepare summary for Team
- Team review case(s) before discussion
- Have a break/sleep between review and discussion



Deisinger (2018)  
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### Assessment Using STEP+

**Assessment Considerations:**

- S** Is **Subject** engaging in behavior(s) causing concerns for violence, significant disruption, or need for assistance?
- T** Are **Targets or others** concerned, impacted, vulnerable, taking protective actions, or need assistance?
- E** Are significant **Environmental/systemic** issues impacting the situation?
- P** Are there reasonably foreseeable **Precipitating events** that may impact the situation?
- + Are there identifiable actions to mitigate concerns?



**If yes to any, case remains open.**  
Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)  
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### Prioritization

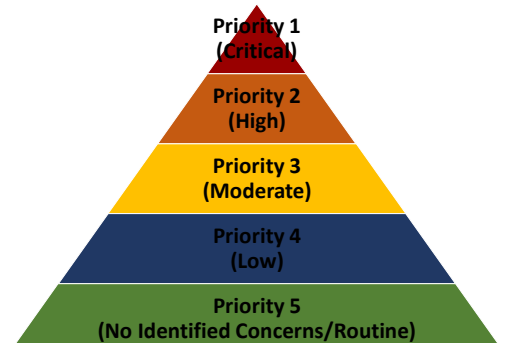
**Prioritization based on totality of circumstances:**

- Immediacy
- Severity
- Impact
- Probability / likelihood / credibility
- Rate of change in situation
- Vulnerability / reactivity of target
- Complexity / number of environmental factors
  - Political / social influences
- Impact (current or impending) of precipitants
- Unknowns

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### Priority/Level of Concern Classification



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Priority Classification

**Priority 1 (Critical)** – Subject poses imminent threat of serious violence or harm to self/others. Target/others vulnerable and/or have support needs. Environmental/systemic factors & Precipitating events typically present. Requires immediate law enforcement and administration notification, subject mitigation & containment, activation of crisis response and notification protocols, target protection & safety planning, ongoing assessment and management planning, active monitoring, and target/community support.

**Priority 2 (High)** – Subject poses, or is rapidly developing capability for, a threat of serious violence or harm to self /others; or is in urgent need of intervention/assistance. Target/others vulnerable and/or have support needs. Environmental/systemic factors & precipitating events typically present. Requires immediate law enforcement & administration notification, subject mitigation, activation of crisis response protocols as appropriate, target protection and safety plan, ongoing assessment and management plan, active monitoring, and target/community support.



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### Priority Classification

**Priority 3 (Moderate)** – Subject not known to pose a threat of serious violence or harm though risk cannot be ruled-out. Subject may be developing capability for harm and/or engaging in aberrant or concerning behaviors that indicate need for assistance/intervention. Targets/others likely concerned and impacted. Environmental/systemic & precipitating factors may be present. Consider law enforcement, security & administrative notification as appropriate. Requires ongoing assessment and management plan, and active monitoring. 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 or environmental/systemic concerns, or precipitating events may be present at low levels. May involve ongoing assessment/management with passive monitoring or periodic active monitoring. Referrals as appropriate; Close case if no TAM interventions or monitoring indicated.

**Priority 5 (No Identified Concerns)** – Subject does not pose threat of violence, harm, or disruption to self or others, or show need for assistance or intervention. No target needs, environmental factors, or precipitants that need TAM intervention. Close case.



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### TAM is a systematic process that:

**Implements proactive & integrated  
case management plans**

© Deisinger (2007); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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### Develop a Case Management Plan

**Develop an individualized, contextually-relevant, plan based on inquiry and assessment.**

- Plan is contextually relevant and situationally specific
- Accountability is critical
  - Assign tasks/interventions to specific person
  - Set deadline
  - Set monitoring plan
- Consider the STEP Domains
- Rapport and engagement matter
  - Consider personalities, backgrounds and skills
  - Consider use of trusted sources



Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2021)



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### Subject-Based Strategies

**Implement appropriate strategies:**

- No further action
- Monitor/Watch & wait;
- Third party monitoring
- Third party intervention
- Direct intervention: Support, assist, referral, confrontation
- Administrative actions
  - No contact/communication notice, probation, suspension, expulsion/termination, no trespass/ban from premises
- Civil actions
- Mental Health interventions (voluntary or involuntary)
- Criminal justice interventions

Adapted from: Calhoun & Weston (2003) *Contemporary Threat Management*



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### Subject Control Strategies

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

- Moving person away from thoughts & plans of, and capacity for, violence and/or disruption;
- Connecting person to resources (where needed);
- Mitigating organizational/systemic factors;
- Monitoring person when they are no longer connected to organization.

**Use with intentionality, awareness of limitations, and anticipation of consequences.**

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Engagement

Utilize key relationships (with subject, target and witnesses) as channel of communication for:

- Information gathering and assessment;
- Redirect from violence / targets;
- Problem solving / support
- Set boundaries / limitations
- Admonishment / confrontation
- Intervention / referral
- Monitoring
- Deterrence

Source: Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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### Fostering Engagement

Consider involving someone the subject/target trusts:

- Team member
- Professor
- Academic advisor
- Counselor
- Parent / family member
- Peer
- Coach
- Outside counselor
- Clergy
- Other



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### Target Management Strategies

Coaching regarding personal safety approaches

- Clear limits and boundaries
- Monitor communications for changes / escalations
- Avoid contact / response
  - Document all contacts from/with subject
- Minimize reactivity to subject actions
- Minimize public information
- Maintain/enhance situational awareness
- Vary routine
- Develop contingency plans: Escape, shelter, defense
- Utilize support systems

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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### Target Management Strategies

Organizational Roles in Reducing Target Vulnerability

- Engagement with Target
- Change work hours
- Change work location
- Change/enhance security in work location
- Notice to co-workers
- Security staffing
- Safety escorts
- Fear management
- EAP / Counseling referrals

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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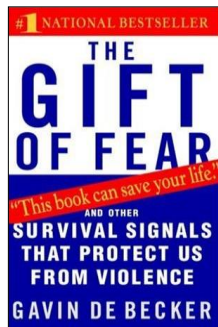
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### Remembering Who We Serve

What targets/victims want:

- Care
- Certainty
- Consistency
- Communication

- Gavin de Becker  
"The Gift of Fear"



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### Environmental Management Strategies

- Address systemic, policy, or procedural problems
- Identify/address reporting gaps/delays
- Intervene with associates that support violent behavior
- Enhance conflict management skills
- Enhance supervisory skills & accountability
- Enhance organizational climate – caring community
  - Emphasize fairness & respect
  - Effective communication
  - People rewarded, supported, and held accountable
  - Prevention & early intervention with inappropriate behaviors
  - Build engagement for mutual safety & well-being

Source: Deisinger (1996); FBI (2004); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Manage Precipitating Events

- Minimize unnecessary precipitants where possible
- Consider impact of timing and location of interventions
- Monitor reactions to case management/interventions
- Monitor & plan for Loss / Injustice
- Monitor & plan for Key dates / events
- Monitor for reactions to administrative/court actions

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Monitors & re-assesses  
the situation  
on a longitudinal basis**

Source: Deisinger (1998); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)

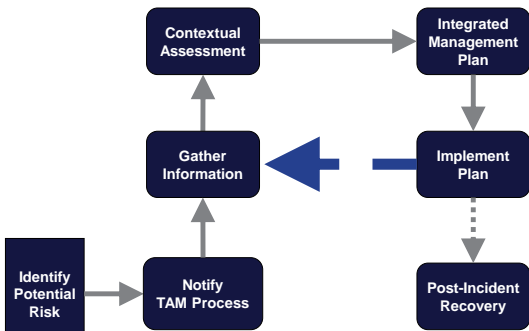


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### Threat Assessment Process



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### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Conducts all practices in accordance  
with relevant laws, policies,  
and standards of practice**

Source: Deisinger (1998); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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### Current Practice: Schools & IHE's

#### Required by legislation:

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



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### What Laws, Regulations, Rules May Apply?

- Constitutional issues,
- Civil Rights
- Federal & State Healthcare Privacy Laws
- Federal & State Disability Laws
- Federal & State Employment Laws
- Federal & State Employee Privacy Laws
- Federal/State Intelligence/Fusion Center Privacy Policies
- State Threat Assessment Laws, Regulations, Standards
- Record-Keeping & Open Records Laws
- Standards of Practice / Tort Law
- Organizational Policies



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Free Resource

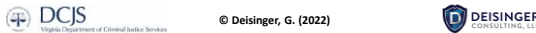
#### Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams: What Risk Managers Need to Know Now

Jeffrey J. Nolan, J.D.,  
Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D., &  
Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.

University Risk Managers  
& Insurance Association  
(URMIA) Journal, 2011



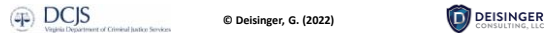
Free download:  
[www.nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Campus\\_Threat\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Management\\_Teams.pdf](http://www.nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Campus_Threat_Assessment_and_Management_Teams.pdf)



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### Information Sharing: FERPA

- Is not an impediment to effective threat assessment and management.
- Protects educational records, not observations, verbal communications, direct personal knowledge, etc.
- Allows sharing with:
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest
  - Other educational settings for enrollment or transfer
  - Outside of campus to protect health or safety
- Does not govern law enforcement unit records.
  - If created and maintained by law enforcement, for law enforcement purposes.
- Does not permit a private right of action.

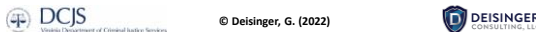


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### Disclosures Allowed Under HIPAA

Disclosure of “protected health information” is allowed if provider makes good faith determination that disclosure:

- “Is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health and safety of a person or the public” and disclosure
- “Is made to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat”



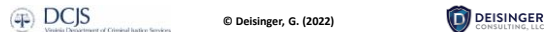
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### Health Care Provider Privilege

E.G.: Under APA Ethics Code, otherwise-privileged information may be disclosed without consent:

- “where permitted by law for a valid purpose such as to protect the client/patient, psychologist, or others from harm”

**Know the law for your state and discipline!**

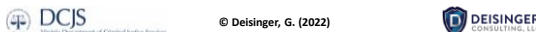


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### Duty to Warn/Protect

§ 54.1-2400.1. Mental health service providers; duty to protect third parties; immunity

- MHP has a duty 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.

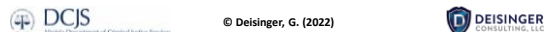


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### Understanding Confidentiality

Confidentiality is right held by client, not the mental health provider.

- In cases where privacy laws apply, consider these strategies:
  - Ask subject for authorization to disclose.
  - No legal prohibition against providing information to health professionals.
  - Ask medical provider about Tarasoff - type duty to warn/protect.
  - Request and document name of provider.



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Dispelling ADA Myths

Restrictions & sanctions may be imposed for misconduct, even if caused by disability IF appropriate due process is provided.

#### TAM teams should:

- work with conduct/judicial affairs, student affairs, human resources and counsel regarding processes;
- work with counsel on “direct threat” and “otherwise qualified” standards;

**Community should understand: ADA protections should not conflict with safety of the community or individuals**



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### Disability Law Considerations

#### Cautions:

- Ensure due process
- Do not assume every threat assessment case involves mental illness
  - Caution against automatic referrals to counseling
- Understand “Direct threat: provisions”
  - Elimination of “threat to self” element of definition
  - Consider whether “otherwise qualified”
- Use mental health violence risk evaluations appropriately
  - Understand limitations of forensic evaluations

Source: Deisinger & Nolan (2019)



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### “Direct Threat”

#### Direct Threat

- A significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by the organization’s modification of its policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services.



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### “Direct Threat”

#### Direct Threat

- Based on a reasonable belief that a disability would pose a significant risk of substantial harm,
  - Risk must be identified & current, not speculative or remote
- Organization may require:
  - An individualized assessment of the individual’s present ability to safely perform essential functions of the job.
  - Assessment shall be based on a reasonable medical judgment that relies on the most current medical knowledge and/or on the best available objective evidence.



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### “Direct Threat”

#### Direct Threat

- In determining whether an individual would pose a direct threat, the factors to be considered include the:
  1. duration of the risk;
  2. nature and severity of the potential harm;
  3. likelihood that the potential harm will occur; and
  4. imminence of the potential harm.”
- Even if a genuine significant risk of substantial harm exists, the employer must consider whether the risk can be eliminated or reduced below the level of a “direct threat” by reasonable accommodation.



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### “True Threats”

#### True Threat

Threatener intends to communicate a serious expression of intent to commit unlawful violence against an individual or group. Threatener need not actually intend to carry out the threat.

Virginia v. Black, 538 U.S. 343 (2003)

#### Considerations:

- Content
- Context
- Target
- Intention

FBI (2017). *Making Prevention of Violence a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks*



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Virginia Code § 23.1-805

#### Violence prevention committee; threat assessment team.

A. Each public college or university shall have in place policies and procedures for the prevention of violence on campus, including assessment and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of the campus community.



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### Virginia Code § 23.1-805

D. The board of visitors 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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### Virginia Code § 23.1-805

E. Each team shall establish or utilize existing relationships with local and state law-enforcement agencies, as well as mental health agencies, to expedite assessment & 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
- 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.



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### Virginia Code § 23.1-805

E. No member of a 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.



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### VA Code:§2.2-3705.4.

#### TAT Records Exclusion from FOIA

The following records are excluded from the provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law:

8. Records of a threat assessment team established by a public institution of higher education pursuant to §23-9.2:10 relating to the assessment or intervention with a specific individual.



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### VA Code§ 23.1-806

#### Reporting of Acts of Sexual Violence (2015)

D. Public & Private IHE shall establish a Review Committee to review information related to acts of sexual violence.

Review Committee shall consist of three or more persons and shall include:

- Title IX coordinator or designee,
- Campus law enforcement / security representative,
- Student affairs representative.



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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY



## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

**VA Code§ 23.1-806**

D. The Review Committee may be the threat assessment team established under § 23-9.2:10, or a separate body.

The review committee may obtain:

- law-enforcement records
- criminal history record information
- health records
- available institutional conduct or personnel records, and
- known facts and circumstances of the information reported
- Information or evidence known to the institution or to law enforcement.


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**VA Code§ 23.1-806**

D. Review Committee shall be considered a threat assessment team established pursuant to § 23-9.2:10 for purposes of:

- (i) obtaining criminal history record information and health records and
- (ii) the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Shall conduct review in compliance with federal privacy law.




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**Policies to Support the Process**

**Policies with TAM-related implications:**

- Workplace violence prevention
- Threat assessment & management
- Harassment & discrimination
- Crisis management
- Employee discipline
- Interim suspension
- Fitness for duty
- Direct threat evaluations
- Weapons
- Bomb threat
- Pandemic


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**Lessons from the Fabrikant File: A Report to the Board of Governors of Concordia University (1994)**

John S. Cowan

*In the report which follows, I identify a substantial number of actions or omissions which I consider to be mistakes. It is, of course, vastly easier to see mistakes with a retrospectroscope. In many cases the mistakes were exacerbated or caused in their entirety by decisional processes, policies, practices and mechanisms which were never designed or contemplated to carry the burden of a like case. In such a milieu very fine people can make very poor decisions.*

Available at:  
<https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/archives/docs/cowan-report.pdf>

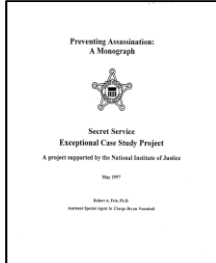



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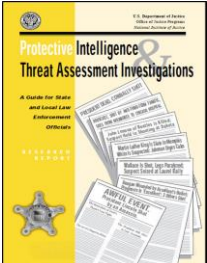
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**Exceptional Case Study Project**



Fein, R. & Vossekuil, B. (1997) *Preventing Assassination: A Monograph. Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project.*



Fein, R. & Vossekuil, B. (1997) *Protective Intelligence Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State & Local Law Enforcement Officials.*


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**The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States (2002)**

Joint Project of the:

- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education

Available at:  
[www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf)




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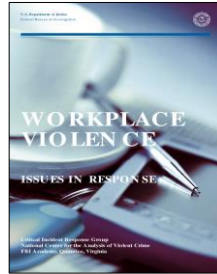
# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

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**Workplace Violence: Issues in Response. (2004)**

U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation



Available at:  
[www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence)



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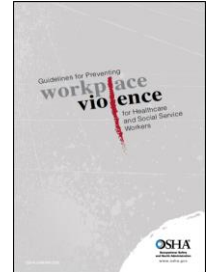
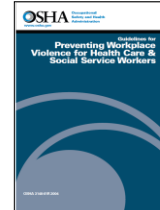


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### Informed by Research & Practice

**Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care and Social Service Workers (2004/2015)**

Occupational Safety & Health Administration



Available at:  
[www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3148.pdf](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh3148.pdf)



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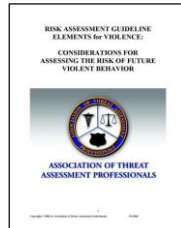


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### Informed by Research & Practice

**Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence: Considerations for Assessment the Risk of Future Violent Behavior (2006)**

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)  
[www.atapworldwide.org](http://www.atapworldwide.org)



Available at:  
[cdn.ymaws.com/www.atapworldwide.org/resource/resmgr/imported/documents/RAGE-V.pdf](http://cdn.ymaws.com/www.atapworldwide.org/resource/resmgr/imported/documents/RAGE-V.pdf)



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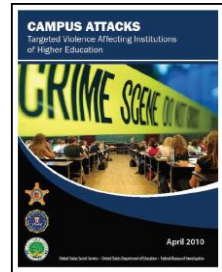
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### Informed by Research & Practice

**Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education (2010)**

Joint Project of the:

- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education
- Federal Bureau of Investigation



Available at:  
[www.fbi.gov/file-repository/campus-attacks-pdf.pdf](http://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/campus-attacks-pdf.pdf)



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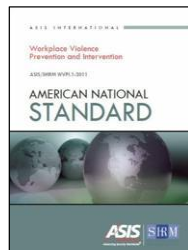


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### Informed by Research & Practice

**Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention American National Standard (2011)**

ASIS International & Society for Human Resource Management



Available at:  
[www.asisonline.org/publications/sg-asis-shrm-workplace-violence-prevention-and-intervention-standard/](http://www.asisonline.org/publications/sg-asis-shrm-workplace-violence-prevention-and-intervention-standard/)



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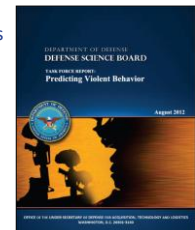
### Informed by Research & Practice

**Task Force Report: Predicting Violent Behavior (2012)**

Department of Defense; Defense Science Board

**1.8 Recommended Strategy**

- Provide effective intervention capabilities throughout DoD using a threat management approach.
  - Increase likelihood of early detection and warning of problems to commanders, supervisors, co-workers with improved information sharing and knowledge.
  - Enhance awareness of the risk of targeted violence throughout DoD.



Available at:  
[www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/PredictingViolentBehavior.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/PredictingViolentBehavior.pdf)



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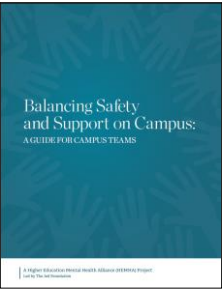
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**Balancing Safety and Support on Campus:  
A Guide for Campus Teams (2013)**

Higher Education  
Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA)  
Led by the Jed Foundation



Available at:  
[www.hemha.org/campus\\_teams\\_guide-1.jpg](http://www.hemha.org/campus_teams_guide-1.jpg)



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Released: 6/18/13

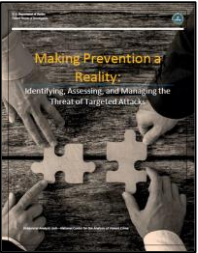

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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks (2017)**

US Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Behavioral Analysis Unit



Available at:  
[www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf](http://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf)

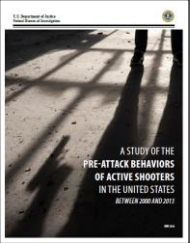

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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 200 and 2013 (2018)**

US Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Behavioral Analysis Unit



Available at:  
<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view>

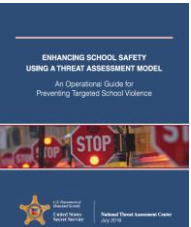

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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence (2018)**

US Dept. of Homeland Security  
US Secret Service  
National Threat Assessment Center



Available at:  
[www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS\\_NTAC\\_Enhancing\\_School\\_Safety\\_Guide\\_7.11.18.pdf](http://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf)

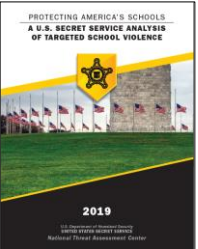

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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence (2019)**

US Dept. of Homeland Security  
US Secret Service  
National Threat Assessment Center



Available at:  
[www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ussc-analysis-of-targeted-school-violence.pdf](http://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ussc-analysis-of-targeted-school-violence.pdf)


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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

**Informed by Research & Practice**



**www.avertedschoolviolence.org**


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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Workplace Violence & Active Assailant- Prevention, Intervention & Response Standard (2020)**

ASIS International



Available at:  
<https://store.asisonline.org/workplace-violence-prevention-and-intervention-standard-softcover.html>

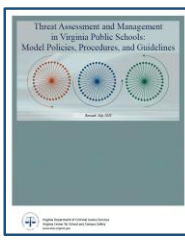
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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, 3rd Edition (2020)**

**Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.**  
 Virginia Center for School & Campus Safety  
 Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services



[https://www.dcj.virginia.gov/sites/dcj.virginia.gov/files/publications/law-enforcement/threat-assessment-model-policies-procedures-and-guidelinespdf\\_0.pdf](https://www.dcj.virginia.gov/sites/dcj.virginia.gov/files/publications/law-enforcement/threat-assessment-model-policies-procedures-and-guidelinespdf_0.pdf)


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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools (2021)**

US Dept. of Homeland Security  
 US Secret Service  
 National Threat Assessment Center



Available at:  
<https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2021-03/USSS%20Averting%20Targeted%20School%20Violence.2021.03.pdf>

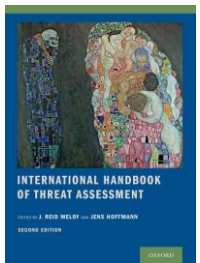
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**Informed by Research & Practice**

**International Handbook of Threat Assessment Second Edition (2021)**

Edited by:  
 J. Reid Meloy &  
 Jens Hoffmann



Available at:  
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/international-handbook-of-threat-assessment-9780190940164?q=Meloy&lang=en&cc=us>

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**TRAINING**

**13<sup>th</sup> AETAP CONFERENCE**  
 April 25-29, 2022 | Online  
[www.aetap.eu](http://www.aetap.eu)

**ATAP JOINT THREAT ASSESSMENT TRAINING**  
 June 14-16, 2022 | Philadelphia, PA  
[www.atapworldwide.org](http://www.atapworldwide.org)

**ATAP Threat Management Conference**  
 August 9-12, 2022 | Anaheim, CA  
[www.atapworldwide.org](http://www.atapworldwide.org)

**APATAP VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM**  
 Spring 2022  
[www.apatap.wildapricot.org](http://www.apatap.wildapricot.org)

**NATIONAL CATAP CONFERENCE**  
 October 16-20, 2022 | Whistler, BC  
[www.catap.ca](http://www.catap.ca)

**1<sup>st</sup> AfATAP CONFERENCE**  
 Fall, 2022 | Virtual, South Africa  
[www.afatap.africa](http://www.afatap.africa)

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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### TAM is a Systematic Process That:

**Continuously improves & adapts to challenges & needs**

Source: Deisinger (1998); Deisinger & Nolan (2021)



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### Challenges

#### Communication and Coordination are Critical!

- **Multiple processes that manage cases:**
  - Student Assistance / CARE Team
  - Threat Assessment
  - Sexual Harassment / Title IX
  - Domestic Violence / Dating Violence / Stalking
  - Insider Threat
  - Dignitary Protection
- **Mind the Gap!**
  - Clarify mission/roles
  - Shared membership
  - Regular communication
  - Integrated planning
  - Designated authority and responsibility

Source: Deisinger (2015); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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### Common Pitfalls

#### Continued focus only on students as subjects of concern

- Address **all** domains of threat:
  - Students
  - Staff
  - Indirectly affiliated
    - Interpersonal relations
    - Vendors/Contractors
  - Non-affiliated subjects



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### Building Collaboration

#### Support Collaboration

- Make it ok to ask for help, to be vulnerable
- Lead by example
- Build bridges
- Reinforce efforts to collaborate
- Support choirs



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### Common Pitfalls

#### Undue rush to sever connection with person of concern

- Separation may:
  - Decrease opportunities to monitor situation
  - Decrease resources available to mitigate risk
  - Exacerbate rather than minimize threat
- Case-by-case evaluation must be done, balancing pros and cons of separation vs. continued engagement
- Anticipate separation as potential precipitating event and have plan to monitor/intervene.

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



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### Challenges

#### Prepare for re-integration of subject:

- Evaluate subject readiness to safely and effectively participate in experience
- Coach subject about re-entry
- Anticipate environmental aspects which subject may encounter
- Develop proactive case management plan
- Monitor & Re-assess
- Intervene as appropriate

Source: Deisinger (2011); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)



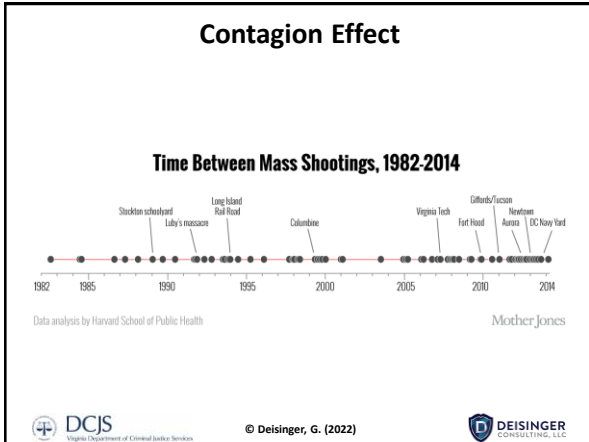
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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach



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### The Question Evolves

#### The Questions Impact the Answers Sought

- Is the subject dangerous?
  - Can I discipline, arrest or hospitalize?
- What intervention is needed with the subject?
  - What can I/my organization do?
- What are the concerns about the situation?
  - What may help?
  - Who are good resources?
  - Who needs to be involved?
  - What don't we know?
  - How are things changing?

G. Deisinger, Ph.D. (2018)

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### Considerations For Community BTAM

#### Challenges:

- **Subjects:** Paths cross roles and jurisdictions
- **Targets:** Paths cross roles and jurisdictions
- **Organizations:**
  - Don't understand each other's roles and resources
  - Don't communicate, collaborate or coordinate
  - Under-resourced
  - Don't understand threat
  - Don't share investment

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### Common Challenges

#### Use of Consultants with Questionable Expertise

- Consultants have no, minimal, or irrelevant:
  - Education
  - Training
  - Experience
- Fail to conduct background on consultants
- Fail to evaluate validity of methods
  - Are sources cited for methods and materials?
  - Are they relevant to your situation?

Source: Deisinger (2007); Deisinger & Nolan (2019)

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### Growing/Future Challenges

#### Increased Complexity due to:

- Strategic partnerships / collaborations
- Remote business
- Globalization

#### Challenges:

- Identifying threats
  - Distance
  - Limited contact/engagement
- Capacity and authority to address concerns
- Duty to warn/protect
- Monitoring

Source: Deisinger (2010); Deisinger & Nolan (2020)

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### Violent Extremism: Domestic Trends

#### Violent extremism: Broad base

- Racial / Ethnic supremacy
- Opposition to government authority
- Misogynistic (including Incel)
- Single Issues: (e.g., abortion, animal rights)

#### Redefining Extremist "Groups"

- Groups / organizations → Individuals / network
  - Activity driven more by shared goals than ideology
  - Cross over between ideology

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# VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL & CAMPUS SAFETY

## Campus Threat Assessment & Management: A Systematic Approach

### Violent Extremism: Global Threat

#### Growth of Global Interconnectedness

- Crowdsourcing funds online
- Sharing tactics, techniques & procedures for action
- Inspiration through sharing manifestos and livestreams
- Recruitment for direct action / combat
- Recruitment through youth scenes
  - Online
    - Social media
    - Encrypted communication
    - Gaming
  - Music festivals
  - Combat sports

Miller-Iddress, C. (2020). *Hate in the Homeland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.



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### Weaponization of Information

#### Pathways:

- Disinformation
- Misinformation
- Conspiracy
- Voice cloning
- AI generation
- Deep fakes



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### Continuous Improvement

#### Team Training and Process Development

- Basic training for new team members & backups
- Advanced/applied training
  - Interviewing
  - Domain specific (e.g., DV/IPV, Stalking, Extremism, etc.)
- Tabletop exercises / case study reviews
- Professional organization/affiliation
  - Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)
- Review of process
  - Deisinger Consulting, LLC



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### Continuing Process Development

#### Prepare Foundations:

- Review/integrate existing mechanisms & resources
- Implement/enhance process structure
- Train key stake-holders in process
- Build collaborative relationships
- Implement systematized process:
  - Reporting
  - Screening/Triage
  - Operational Guidelines (manual)
  - BTAM Casework
  - Ongoing Process Review / Continuous Improvement

SEE RESOURCE: Self & Team Assessment Worksheet



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### Contact Information

#### Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

<http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcscs/>

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