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Making Prevention a Reality:

Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks

Behavioral Analysis Unit—National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime

Behavioral Threat Assessment Center

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Message from the FBI Director

Every day in America, acts of planned violence are carried out against innocent people simply going about their lives. The mass shootings we see so frequently today are a dramatic example. I know many Americans feel that no place is safe – schools, places of worship, worksites, or public gatherings. Fear like that can become disabling, and that is no way to live.

The FBI is committed to making our country safer by finding ways to reduce attacks like mass shootings, and other forms of targeted violence such as stalking, terrorism, or ambush attacks on law enforcement. For years, the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, academic researchers, mental health experts, and the news media have studied this problem. In 2015, the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit brought together a multidisciplinary group of experts to collaborate on solutions.

This monograph represents the collective experiences and insights of the Behavioral Analysis Unit and these experts. We hope it serves as a practical guide to threat assessment and management. It is intended for novice and experienced professionals alike, and I believe it offers something for all of us who are paid to investigate and stop such acts of violence. The best way to counter any threat is to combine knowledge, experience, and cooperation with our partners. We must all work as a team.

I am grateful to all those who helped create this guide for their time, their expertise, and their commitment to public safety. I hope this helps you better understand and ultimately prevent targeted acts of violence in your communities. Thank you for making the choice to do good for a living and for serving the people of this great country.

James B. Comey
Director
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Foreword

The FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) is part of the Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG) located at the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, and consists of FBI Special Agents and professional support staff, and representatives from other federal agencies and departments. The NCAVC provides operational support in the areas of counterterrorism, counterintelligence, cyber crimes, crimes against children, crimes against adults, and threat assessment. The Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC) is the NCAVC's center of expertise for threat assessment and management. Cases accepted by the BTAC often include post-incident analysis of completed attacks; "person of concern" cases in school, workplace and other contexts; stalking; threats and extortion; and other forms of planned violence.

The BTAC reviews cases from behavioral, investigative, and legal perspectives, offering a range of services for law enforcement agencies around the country and the world. Services include behavioral threat assessments and management strategies, interview strategies, prosecutorial strategies, on-site deployments to assist with investigations of completed attacks, and more. Products generated by the BTAC serve as operational tools for client law enforcement agencies to help them effectively prioritize resources and plan investigative and violence prevention strategies. The BTAC also conducts research into targeted violence from a law enforcement perspective in an effort to gain insight into criminal thought processes, motivations, and behaviors. Results of this research are shared with law enforcement and academic communities through publications, presentations, and training, as well as through application of knowledge to the investigative and operational functions of the BTAC.

Assistance of the BTAC can be requested by law enforcement agencies. They may request it through one of the FBI's 56 domestic FBI field offices or 64 legal attaché offices in US embassies around the world, in furtherance of their own investigations or in responding to a request by a community, school, employer, or other entity. One goal of this guide is to educate and empower communities to address some of these issues independently.

The BTAC, working with experts in targeted violence and threat assessment and looking at the active shooter problem from a law enforcement and behavioral perspective, wanted to examine promising strategies for preventing these attacks. From July 26 to 28, 2015, the BTAC hosted a symposium at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. A collaborative group consisting of representatives from law enforcement, academia, law, and mental health, along with members of the BTAC and the NCAVC, came together to share expertise and experiences on this important issue.

The agenda included presentations and working group sessions on relevant topics in the field of threat management. This monograph is the culmination of those efforts, outlining consensus views and offering BTAC experiences with recommended practices in a field that is evolving. It is hoped this monograph will serve as a useful and practical guide for understanding and implementing threat assessment and management at all levels.

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Introduction

Traditional law enforcement techniques historically have focused on the apprehension and prosecution of violent offenders *after* violent crimes are committed. When police are given information that someone may potentially commit a crime or become violent in the future, their responsibilities, authorities, and available investigative tools are suddenly less clear. This guide is about threat assessment and management, or stated another way, *how law enforcement officers and others may identify, assess, and manage the risk of future, planned violence.* This task is a complex and nuanced one. Published research about intended violence and its perpetrators, along with knowledge and experience derived from previous cases, are applied to the facts and circumstances of each case. In other words, there is a lot to think about.

The FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) held a symposium in mid-2015, bringing together academic researchers, mental health experts, and law enforcement practitioners of threat assessment to discuss the active shooter phenomenon. Specifically, symposium participants focused on prevention strategies with regard to this crime problem. By far the most valuable prevention strategy identified was the threat assessment and management team. The good news is that every organization and community has the potential to stand up or access such a team. The intent of this publication is, therefore, to provide desperately needed guidance on making this a reality for every community based upon a consensus of recommendations in an evolving field. Recommendations are offered about this process in very practical terms. It is not intended as an academic textbook but rather as a hands-on guide for novice and experienced threat assessment practitioners alike.

The first and most fundamental potential barrier to engagement is lack of knowledge-knowledge about threat assessment and management itself, about risk factors and warning signs, about what goes into managing potential threats. This knowledge is a key to implementing viable strategies to reduce targeted violence. Without it, prevention efforts are far less effective because they may then be guided by assumption and fear of the unknown, rather than knowledge and experience. This guide provides some of the information needed for creating teams and engaging in the business of threat assessment and management. It is derived from published research and the collective experience of the BAU and other experts.

This guide first addresses some important awareness aspects of the active shooter problem, not the least of which is the term “active shooter.” The content of this publication does not begin and end with active shooters, but instead applies to targeted violence generally. However, it does not specifically address potential acts of terrorism, or threat assessment for violence perpetrated primarily in furtherance of a political, religious, or other extremist cause or ideology. Planned violence, threat assessments, violence and mental health, and barriers to successful prevention efforts are also discussed. The guide then offers specific and actionable information on identifying, assessing, and managing persons who pose a true concern for planned, targeted violence. Guidance about setting up and running a threat management team is offered. Sample tools are provided in the appendices.

Additionally, this guide is context-neutral, and can be applied to educational, workplace, and other situations.

Prevention *is not and cannot* be a passive process. It requires a strong and overt commitment by organizations and communities to prioritizing public safety and caretaking for those in need. This is manifested by adoption of policies and programs to support targeted violence prevention efforts, establishment of threat assessment and management teams, and education to underscore the importance of these processes and to promote acceptance and engagement by all.

Chapter 1 Awareness: Initial Step Toward Change

Violence is gender neutral

Those responsible for threat assessment and management should recognize that both male and female persons of concern for targeted violence will come to their attention. There may be a tendency for stakeholders to view the potential threat posed by females as less worrisome, e.g. dismissing threatening writings by females as mere fantasy or attention-seeking material. The BAU strongly cautions against this approach, and recommends safety stakeholders not dismiss female persons of concern as nonthreatening based upon statistics supporting the idea that males are more likely to offend in this way. Targeted violence is a highly individualized crime based upon highly individualized and unique motivators.

For ease of reading, however, only male gender pronouns are used in this publication in reference to single individuals.

Diminishing the violent offender

While it can be difficult or even impossible to truly understand, for some people there is an aura of power or cultural fascination surrounding shooting attacks. It attracts and encourages certain troubled individuals, helping to propel them along their paths toward intended violence. This aura can be projected by an offender in a pre-recorded video manifesto or during an attack, or it may be an interpretation by the reader of an online statement posted immediately after an incident. The dominance of 24/7 media coverage, networks and internet sites competing with each other for viewers, and even our own fascination as a society perpetuates this and allows it to grow and evolve.

Before case-specific prevention efforts even begin, the problem of glorification of these events should be addressed. First and foremost, the words society as a whole uses to describe both the phenomenon and the attackers are fostering this mystique. Terms like “active shooter,” “lone wolf,” or any others that romanticize and idealize these offenders, should be deemphasized. Such words and phrases project power and sensationalize predatory violence. Instead, describing an attack as an incident or shooting incident, and the attacker as an assailant or offender, is strongly recommended as a means of denying legacy establishment to these violent criminals. Extensive media coverage featuring the offenders’ names, photos and life stories only cements the legacies they seek to achieve. It may never be possible to pinpoint primary influences on individual decisions to attack, particularly in cases where an offender does not survive the incident. Highly personal factors are dominant motivators; however, some inspiration may also derive from intensive and available coverage of past acts and actors.

A shooting incident, once sensationalized in the media, can live on for years in full color and sound, at a keystroke. A change in the way these events are reported and talked about may diminish

this phenomenon. The term active shooter[a] should be dropped from our cultural narrative. News media should refrain from naming the assailants, from posting their photographs, videos and communications, and from publishing detailed investigations into their lives and motives.

This guide will adopt that posture and refrain from using sensationalizing descriptors.

These offenders don't "snap"—they decide

Violence can be categorized in one of two ways: predatory/planned or impulsive/reactive. Predatory/planned violence is premeditated and serves some purpose for those who plan and conduct violent attacks. Impulsive/reactive violence, on the other hand, is emotional and impromptu; it is frequently a defensive behavior in response to a perceived imminent threat. These two types of violence are distinctly different. Clinical and forensic data on adult and adolescent mass murder, the type of violence this guide is concerned with, will reveal that virtually all of these acts are premeditated, rather than impulsive, violence. Two obvious signs indicate this is so: the planning and preparation for days, weeks, or months, sometimes recorded by these offenders and often observed by others, and the utter lack of emotion witnessed by survivors while the perpetrators committed their crimes.[1]

Targeted mass attacks are just that—"targeted." Forethought and planning go into the attack. These are not spontaneous, emotion-driven, impulsive crimes emanating from a person's immediate anger or fear. In fact there is no evidence in the research to date that "snap" mass murders occur at all.[2] The perpetrators often have a grievance and they take time to consider, plan, and prepare their attack. This is one advantage that threat assessment teams have—preparing to engage in violence almost always requires time and action, which in turn allows for opportunities for bystander observation and reporting. This will be discussed further below.

Threat assessment

Threat assessment is a systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience, focusing on an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, a person of concern is moving toward an attack. A threat assessment is not a final product, but the beginning of the management process. It guides a course of action to mitigate a threat of potential violence; merely identifying that someone is of moderate or higher concern, without developing a management strategy, does not complete this process and is not recommended.

When a person of concern has been brought to the attention of safety stakeholders, it is essential to engage as early as possible in the assessment and management process. By the time crisis-stage management is reached, likely solutions run the risk of being "knee jerk" rather than measured

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[a] The BAU acknowledges this term has a valid, descriptive meaning for responding law enforcement officers and safety personnel. It lets responders know that an offender may be a continuing threat of gun violence, which activates a particularized response and set of tactics by law enforcement. The BAU understands the value in retaining this term as an internal, law enforcement phrase for operational use.

and thoughtful, with past, present and future in mind. By engaging in the assessment and management process as soon as a person of concern is identified, threat managers are more likely to succeed in preventing a violent outcome. Steering a person in a different direction early on may mean offering assistance to someone who needs it before that person concludes violence is necessary.

Research

Scientific research and lessons learned from completed acts of targeted violence have added significantly to the body of knowledge about who commits it and why, what warning signs may be evident, and more. This increase in knowledge suggests that law enforcement agencies and other entities may consider developing methods to address threats of violence by persons of concern from a prevention standpoint, where feasible. Guidance is available from various sources to institutions and organizations that need to develop policies and procedures aimed at violence prevention. Research-based data are becoming increasingly available to assist in assessing violence risk within the context of mental health assessment. Foundational studies such as the Exceptional Case Study Project[3] and the Safe School Initiative[4] addressed targeted violence. Though they have been advanced by a significant body of additional research and thought, their key findings remain core to this discipline. Both studies focused on the thinking and behavior of planned violence offenders leading up to their crimes. They found most offenders did not threaten their targets directly, but prior to the incidents they displayed identifiable behaviors reflecting potentially violent intent. These conclusions support using an evidence-based approach to assess persons of concern by evaluating behaviors in order to determine the appropriate level of concern.

Invaluable resource materials derived from research and experience are publicly available, such as those identified in Appendix F. These resources, largely used to create this guide, lay the framework and build a convincing case for public and private entities to incorporate the threat assessment and management process for gathering, assessing and managing concerning persons and situations via strategies for preventing targeted violence.

In addition to qualitative and quantitative research, targeted violence incidents themselves represent an additional and invaluable source of knowledge and experience for threat assessment practitioners and policymakers alike. For example, as a result of the 2007 tragedy at Virginia Polytechnic University, the Virginia legislature passed measures resulting in an improved emergency evaluation process in that state, modified criteria for involuntary commitment, tightened procedures for mandatory outpatient treatment, increased state funding for community mental health services, requirements for better collaboration between the courts and the services system, and the establishment of data systems for monitoring and oversight of the commitment process.[5] This tragic incident also provided learning material for threat assessment professionals regarding risk factors and missed warning signs, losses of opportunity to intervene, the violent behaviors themselves, and more. With every incident, lessons are learned.

The symposium participants' intentions and hopes for this guide are to summarize much of this knowledge for organizations and communities, in furtherance of a goal of standing up teams and processes to manage threats of planned violence.

Barriers to successful engagement

Entities identified below all potentially play a role in threat assessment and management. They may encounter or inadvertently cause barriers to successful engagement. Threat management is about diverting dangerous and concerning behaviors away from a course that would ultimately lead to an act of targeted violence, and any person or organization interacting with a person of concern can impact the course of events. As a proactive measure when faced with a person of concern, referral of the matter to a local threat management team is always a good choice, and is at minimum preferable to doing nothing.

- Law enforcement: Most uniformed law enforcement organizations are stretched thin as it is. It can be difficult to devote resources to preventing something that may or may not happen. Law enforcement agencies, their officers and agents, and leaders may consider becoming versed in preemptive measures to prevent violence to the extent practicable for each agency and community. Awareness can be developed about threat assessment and how it fits into daily operations.

- Prosecution: Prosecutorial discretion and ingenuity are highly effective tools in threat management, and their use is encouraged. Even low-level cases may be worthy of pursuit in order to hold a person of concern accountable; another goal may be to deter violent behavior. Prosecutorial agencies should view themselves as part of the solution.

- Schools: Schools are responsible for maintaining a safe and positive learning environment for all students. The desire to avoid conflict or trouble can unnecessarily create obstacles and ultimately do disservice to persons of concern and to the general population at a school. Information should be shared with threat managers where permissible, and schools should be part of threat management solutions.

- Social services: These agencies address needs and facilitate access to services for at-risk individuals and families; they also engage at the community level to improve lives. The social services system may be more overburdened than any other in the overall threat management process, which creates serious challenges for it in performing its functions in a safe and effective manner. Social services can offer invaluable resources in the quest for successful threat management; the impact of these resources can be enhanced via co-deployments with other components of the team and by referring problematic issues for collaborative engagement.

- Health care systems and providers: The health care system is similarly overburdened, which creates challenges related to evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of at-risk individuals. Ideally, health care workers at all levels might develop awareness about threat assessment and how violence and

mental illness intersect. They should be open to sharing information with threat managers when privacy laws permit sharing, and in all cases be receptive to receiving information from law enforcement and others to help inform their own clinical judgments.

- Lawmakers: Members of legislative bodies have the responsibility for solving problems left by gaps in the law; unfortunately, these gaps are many and varied. These are not simple issues with obvious, single solutions. It is recommended that lawmakers remain mindful that statistics rarely provide proof of successful prevention; only tragedies make the headlines, whereas successful prevention efforts are difficult to measure. Regardless, prevention programs require resources. Legislators are positioned to assist with providing needed resources to threat management programs.

- Courts: Among many other responsibilities, the courts have power to issue orders for incarceration and other restrictions on freedom, mental health evaluations and treatment, and more. The influence and power of the court extends from the infancy of a case until well beyond its conclusion. It is recommended that courts achieve fluency with mental health issues, particularly where violence is concerned. Courts are encouraged to think of judicial discretion as an effective threat management tool; using every available tool could be a step toward preventing tragedy.

- Probation and Parole: Probation and parole agencies can directly impact threat management cases in their unique positions of observation and control over a person of concern. Violations of conditions may be indicative of a greater problem. Probation and parole departments may consider obtaining training on risk factors, warning behaviors, and mitigators so they can recognize these signs and understand what bigger picture may be forming when violations occur. These agencies should be part of the threat management team on any case where they oversee a person of concern.

- Employers: Persons of concern spend perhaps as much time at work as they do anywhere else; colleagues and leadership are uniquely positioned to observe and be impacted by a person of concern. Discipline and dismissals, violence prevention policies, encouraging bystander reporting and more, all affect how an employer manages threats of violence; none of these issues are simple or easy to navigate. One issue of particular significance is that former employees can still pose a threat to the workplace or community at large after they no longer work or live in a particular location. In order to plan forward-thinking management strategies when needed, employers are encouraged to either create or participate in threat management teams, or fully cooperate with inquiries by threat managers.

- Parents and immediate family: In many circumstances, parents may have the best optic on a person of concern's struggles and vulnerabilities, especially if the person lives at home with them. In some cases, parents or other family members may tend to "circle the wagons" around a minor child and avoid cooperation with mental health recommendations, school concerns, social services assistance, and law enforcement inquiry. Although often difficult, it is important for parents to remain open to assistance and guidance when it is needed to address concerning behavior or mental health issues.

Addressing these issues early can have a profound impact on improving quality of life and reducing later violence concerns.

- Bystanders (friends, neighbors, loved ones): Anyone with an opportunity to observe or interact with a person of concern may see or hear something that generates apprehension. When this happens, bystanders are urged to communicate that information on to an appropriate person, as referenced below in "Bystanders."

Early recognition of barriers

As soon as a team receives a new report and an assessment and strategy are being considered, it must also begin thinking about what obstructions may surface. The earlier a threat management team recognizes particular hindrances, the more effectively it can address them. Barriers at multiple stages can inhibit effective management. Some barriers may be intentional (e.g., a resistant parent) and some may not be (e.g., confusion about privacy laws and information sharing), but all can complicate the process.

Barriers to successful engagement vary in degrees of difficulty, and can be encountered throughout the process. For example, erroneous information may surface during any stage of assessment. This common occurrence can cause threat managers to treat unsubstantiated rumor as fact and exhaust resources prematurely, or lead to a stalemate wait-and-see circumstance wherein they lack sufficient, corroborated information upon which to base case decisions. Avoiding these barriers requires threat managers to carefully validate information when it is received. As threat management teams mature, they will become increasingly adept at identifying and navigating challenges. Members should always take the time to consider all obstacles during every assessment.

Self-awareness

Stakeholders and threat management teams should be on guard against becoming barriers themselves. They may inadvertently minimize concern for a variety of reasons. Members may find themselves desensitized to a person of concern who has been an annoyance for a long period of time, or they may be uncertain about what particular behaviors truly mean. They may have difficulty in accepting that a true violence concern could exist in a given community. There may be uncertainty about which stakeholder is responsible for a case.

Additionally, stakeholders or teams may erroneously believe that responsibility for a case or particular issue falls to another organization, or they may simply not know their own organizations' policies and authorities. They may fear being sued or fear inadequate liability protection in the event of litigation; while this is a natural and likely inevitable concern, the obstacle arises when this fear becomes crippling to the point where no action is taken. These potential barriers may be alleviated by establishment of sound policies and procedures grounded in law and established responsibilities. Tools like non-disclosure agreements, memorandums of understanding, and/or standard operating procedures can help.

Information sharing

Another potential barrier to effective engagement is open information sharing amongst entities and threat management teams. It is critically important that stakeholders and team members alike completely and accurately share information to the extent possible. For example, school administrators can share staff observations and social services can share information about family dynamics. There are times, however, when information sharing is subject to limitations by law. For example, only law enforcement agencies are generally entitled to view criminal history information, and certain limitations on disclosure apply to health information and educational records. These limitations do not translate to absolute prohibitions, and one must understand what federal and state laws allow before proceeding.

Violence and mental illness

Researchers have been exploring the relationship between mental illness and violence for the better part of four decades. On balance, studies show a small but significant relationship between serious mental disorder, particularly psychotic disorders, and general violence risk.[6] Although most people with a major mental illness do not commit violent acts, the likelihood of it is slightly greater for someone with a serious mental illness than for someone who is not so afflicted. Co-occurring variables can either enhance or decrease risk. Risk factors include past violence, childhood exposure to violence, substance abuse or dependence, and numerous environmental stressors.[7] When considering targeted violence, substantially higher rates of severe mental illness have been observed among adult mass murderers, public figure attackers, and lone actor terrorists than in the general population.[8]

Behavior, not diagnosis

It can be tempting to get caught up in questions about a person of concern's mental health diagnosis, particularly when vague statements are made to suggest he may be unstable, hear voices, or "may" have been diagnosed with a disorder. Understanding that a specific behavior can be connected to a specific diagnosis may help validate observations and reports of others. For example, knowing someone has been diagnosed on the autism spectrum can help explain and validate observations about strained social interactions, lack of visible emotions, and inflexibility with routines. However, it can also foster unsupported assumptions about other behaviors which may not be occurring. Initial diagnoses are sometimes incorrect due to any number of factors, or they are later amended or clarified. After all, a person being evaluated may very well demonstrate different symptoms or behaviors at different times, leading to diagnostic uncertainty and flux. It is best to avoid becoming focused on diagnosis when a person is being assessed for violence potential.

Ultimately, behaviors are the foundation of any mental health diagnosis, but they do much more than simply inform diagnosis and treatment. Behaviors can be clues to a person's intentions. For example, if threat managers learn that a person of concern was discovered in a potential target's neighborhood and he does not normally belong there, that could be evidence of pre-operational surveillance. Whether the person who is conducting the approach behavior is diagnosed with schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder, or nothing at all is much less relevant at this juncture.

That a person of concern may be actively involved with surveillance of a target, rather than what diagnosis might be affecting this behavior, is what will drive the threat assessment.

However, information about a specific diagnosis may be quite helpful during threat *management*. Different internal states implicate different techniques to reduce violence concern. For example, a recent case involved a highly paranoid individual with whom law enforcement had to successfully interact in order to manage violence concerns. During what was to be a lengthy encounter, detectives brought prepackaged and sealed food and drink to counteract any paranoia he may have felt about being poisoned by others—one of his ongoing perceptions.

Threat assessment and management is an intertwined, dynamic process with mental disorder symptoms and diagnoses being several pieces in a larger puzzle.

Chapter 2 Identification: An Essential Step for Threat Management

Low probability/high impact events

Targeted violence attacks generate fear and anxiety. The seeming randomness of these crimes leaves members of the public wondering if they are safe at any given time. In reality, targeted violence attacks represent a low base rate, albeit high impact, crime. Base rate refers to the frequency of these events in a certain population over a certain period of time. The base rate for school attacks will differ from the base rate for public figure assassinations, though both are examples of targeted violence.

Even one homicide is too many. However, the generally low incidence of this kind of offense is worth noting. As of 2006, the average American K-12 school could expect one of its current or former students to be involved in a homicide on its grounds about once every 13,870 years.[9] Even with frequency of targeted violence shooting events on the rise at this moment,[10] student-associated intentional gun deaths at school have risen and fallen multiple times since 1992.[11] Workplace homicide has declined significantly since 1993, and continues to do so, although it remains a significant problem.[12] The sort of violence this guide concerns itself with, however, is less apparent in typical statistical reports. It is difficult to find consensus on the number of targeted violence attacks regardless of venue, because the exact criteria for counting an incident often varies among academic researchers, media, and the government.

That said, this guide was not written to highlight statistics and probabilities. It was written because these incidents are horrific, wrenching, and, symposium participants believe, may be preventable. As for randomness, they are rarely, if ever, truly random. The term targeted violence refers to an incident of violence where a known or knowable assailant chooses a particular target prior to a violent attack.[13] The chosen target may be one or more individuals, a class or category of individuals, or an institution. The offender may not actually reach or ultimately harm the chosen target for any number of reasons, but pre-event target selection of some kind has been made. This targeting is, in a sense, one of the keys to prevention. It likely means the would-be offender has a personal grievance toward someone, a group of persons, or perhaps an organization. It may be openly expressed, along with the idea that violence is the only valid solution to the problem perceived by the grievant. Research, planning, and preparation are likely needed in order to ensure success. Other behaviors, as well as expressions and communications, may hint at or outright announce an intention to become violent. All of these mental and behavioral “waypoints” along a pathway to violence may be observed by someone, who can in turn report to authorities.

Bystanders become upstanders

Bystanders are the force multiplier of threat management. They are the extra eyes and ears for threat management teams, school administrators, human resource managers, police officers, and others responsible for the safety of others. The value of bystanders in prevention efforts cannot be overstated.

Bystanders are a key component for prevention of targeted violence events. A bystander is anyone positioned to have awareness of risk factors or to observe warning behaviors related to a person

who may be considering acting violently. A bystander can be a friend on social media, a classmate, a co-worker, a neighbor, a family member, or a casual observer. The term upstander has been previously used to describe individuals who spoke out against genocide,[14] and more recently in the context of countering bullying. It may more accurately describe the desired response in bystanders—that they will report what they know or see to law enforcement, human resources, school staffers, or a caring adult. An upstander can potentially intervene by various means, but most importantly by simply conveying what he knows, observes, or fears may happen.

Transforming bystanders into upstanders is a must. However, bystanders may feel overwhelmed by or fearful of informing on a friend or associate, because of any of the following concerns:

- Potential for ridicule
- Potential for reprisal either from the person of concern or from the organization
- Appearance of being a "snitch"
- Potential of not being taken seriously
- Uncertainty about the seriousness of the information or situation
- Mistrust of confidentiality or mistrust of the system to handle the situation appropriately
- Desire to remain uninvolved in the affairs of others
- Other concerns which may be unique to each person

The upstander asks not what should have been done, but what can I do? A culture of shared responsibility helps the upstander feel comfortable doing this. Upstanders also do not assume others will carry the burden of reporting. Steps must be taken to ensure that, in policy and in practice, upstander reporting is valued and treated with discretion and respect. The occasional problematic reporter, or someone who may tend to over-report behavior that may not actually pose a concern, may happen. However, working from an assumption that most people have both a genuine interest in doing the right thing and are not hypervigilant to benign behaviors, will serve this purpose well.

Creating Opportunities

There are programs scattered throughout the country aimed at achieving knowledge and familiarity with students, especially at-risk ones. One model for ensuring that caring adults have "eyes on" every student follows this general format: imagine a large chart with all school staff names listed across the top for each column, and each student name listed down the side for each row. Staffers mark the box for each student they know by name and with whom they can comfortably have a conversation. A box left completely empty represents a student with no relationship with a caring adult at the school—no eyes are on that student. Special attention is then paid to establishing some kind of relationship between at least one staffer and that student. If successful, no student completely slips through the cracks at that school. This system may not be a full-proof measure against violence, but it may dramatically reduce the chances that an at-risk student will spiral downward outside the awareness of those empowered to help.

Among key research findings is the certainty that upstanders are an absolutely critical component of prevention. In one study,[15] researchers found that in 81% of school shooting cases they reviewed, the offender told at least one person about the attack beforehand. In 59% of cases at least two other individuals had some information about the event before it was carried out. This alone

suggests that upstanders are invaluable resources who create opportunities for intervention and ultimately prevention.

Research of both successful attacks and potentially prevented cases reveals several observations about bystanders:

- Bystanders may take steps to convey information, or they may do nothing
- The school/workplace/environmental climate directly affects whether bystanders come forward
- Bystanders sometimes do not believe violence will actually occur, or they misjudge the likelihood and immediacy of the threat
- For student bystanders, parents or parental figures influence whether they will report[16]
- Bystanders are more likely to report if there is an anonymous way to do so, if the means of reporting is clear and easy, and if they believe the authority receiving the report to be trustworthy

In view of the impact these events have on communities and the nation, virtually everyone in society can be an upstander. They should be viewed as such and, more importantly, encouraged to *view themselves* as such.

Ideally all community members will be upstanders. When someone hears or sees something concerning from children, family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers, they might ideally ask questions or at least think about whether there is a concern that should be brought to the attention of authorities. For example, one recent case involved a juvenile who received hundreds of ball bearings by mail order, a fact known by his parents. When his parents asked, their son provided an explanation that did not necessarily make sense and yet went unchallenged. Subsequently, the juvenile used the ball bearings to construct several improvised explosive devices with an intention to engage in violence while his parents remained unaware of his true intent.

Opportunities for identification

Each bystander in a person of concern's sphere represents an opportunity to identify potential warning behaviors. Behavior supports assessments as to the appropriate level of concern and guides management strategies. One concern is that bystanders may be unaware of the importance of the information they possess. This may be because any one person could possess a relatively small amount of information: perhaps a comment overheard in the hallway or a sudden flurry of odd social media posts. A bystander could dismiss or downplay the importance of the information because he is unaware the person is exhibiting many other warning behaviors outside of his field of view. It could take reporting from many upstanders to form an accurate picture of a case. Without the support of upstanders in many segments of society, threat assessment and management would be much more challenging.

Threatening behavior can include communication or physical actions intended to intimidate others. When ignored, these behaviors can escalate to more serious problems. Someone who engages in harassment, intimidation, bullying or making threats must be assumed to be doing so with intention,

and the behavior may be repeated as long as it is [a] effective in supplying the person with something he wants, or [b] not stopped by an authority with the power to do so. Although not a complete list, some examples of reportable behavior could include:

- Any physical violence toward a person or property
- Direct or indirect threats of violence
- Any act, gesture or statement that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating, such as overt physical or verbal intimidation, throwing objects or other gestures intended to cause fear, or making contextually inappropriate statements about harming others
- Unusual or bizarre behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or harm due to its nature and severity, such as: stalking; erratic or bizarre behavior suggestive of mental disturbance or substance abuse; fixation with mass murder, weapons, or violence generally; or fixation with hate group, terrorist, or extremist material
- Any statements or behaviors indicating suicidality

A more complete summary of concerning behaviors which may be worthy of upstander reporting is found in Chapter 3, Assessment: Analysis for Guiding Management.

Reporting and reporting mechanisms

Reporting is an essential part of prevention. Reporting mechanisms should be easy to understand and effective at getting information to someone empowered to act on it. Transparency is advised, including clear notice regarding to whom a report should be made, how it may be reported, and preferably offer multiple options for each. An anonymous reporting system should be an option. While perhaps not ideal in all instances, it may be the only way some people feel comfortable reporting.

To maximize observation and reporting of warning signs, organizations and communities should foster an environment of shared responsibility by:

- Designing a strong violence prevention program
- Developing reporting mechanisms that are easy to understand and use
- Creating organizational policies to structure and implement these concepts to encourage reporting
- Providing training for upstanders, leaders and threat managers to ensure effectiveness

Creating a culture of shared responsibility

Ultimately, a culture of shared responsibility will further the goal of prevention. One thing that sets upstanders apart is that they often feel a positive emotional connection to their environment—to school and staff, to the workplace, or to a larger community. This connection seems to be fostered by a climate of safety and respect, wherein people feel joined with the community or organization and believe that others in that environment know and care for them. For example, in school settings this happens when social and emotional interactions occur daily between students, staff, and teachers. Upstanders are more likely to report their concerns when they believe all information is valued and that

coming forward will not cause harm. Targeted violence offenders sometimes convey vague information about the possibility of an attack, which very reasonably may cause a bystander to be concerned about overreacting. Uncomfortable gut feelings about inappropriate conduct are worth reporting, and someone trained to understand targeted violence can evaluate the information. An upstander may have one small piece of information which in turn is used to complete the larger picture; without it authorities may be unable to accurately assess a situation.

Making a threat versus posing a threat

A threat is an expression of intention to inflict injury or damage[17] and is often one of the first ways a person of concern may be identified. Whether it is an actual expression of intent to do harm, a "leakage" of violent thought, or merely an inappropriate statement, it is something that needs further exploration. Threat assessment may begin when a threat is reported, but it does not end there. All threats are not created equal, although they must all be taken seriously and thoroughly evaluated. Content (i.e., the words or deeds used), context (i.e., what happens before, during and after a threat is made) and circumstances (i.e., surrounding facts, such as method of delivery, relationship between threatener and target, or type of target) must all be thoroughly assessed in order to determine what level of concern is appropriate when a threat is made.

A *direct* threat has been defined as an unambiguous statement to a target or to authorities of intent to do harm. In many circumstances there is little to no correlation between a directly threatening communication and a subsequent act of targeted violence.[18] This is most likely to be true when no relationship exists between the threatener and target. Conversely, when a threatener and target *do* have a relationship, violence becomes more likely to occur. This concept is discussed in detail later in this section.

Whether an individual has actually conveyed a threat should *not* be a driving factor in the decision to follow through on a report. In fact, for a person who truly intends to do harm, making a direct threat would be quite counterproductive. Doing so naturally causes a logical and predictable chain of events to begin to unfold, including investigation, increased vigilance, and target hardening, each presenting challenges to the would-be offender.

While directly threatening communications should be thoroughly evaluated, a genuine forewarning of violence is often not intended by the threatener. Conversely, a person could *pose* a very real threat of violence without ever communicating that idea to anyone. Stakeholders should consider the communicated threat, but the focus should be on whether the person *poses* a threat through the consideration of all information. It is important to understand: [19]

- Some persons who make threats ultimately pose a threat
- Some persons who pose a threat never make threats
- Many persons who make threats do not pose a threat

Postponing action until a person of concern has overtly threatened someone may be a grave mistake. However, if a decision is made to interview or confront a person of concern, he may deny any ill intent and even apologize for causing concern. Denial places threat assessors in a difficult position, particularly where there may be fear of litigation or complaint by the person under scrutiny. Even so, a denial of intent to do harm should not be taken at face value, as it is not proof of benign purpose. Someone truly intending to hurt others will rarely admit it when confronted with his threatening statements or actions. Outright denial, rationalization, or minimization can be tactics to avoid immediate repercussions, to allow him to continue on unfettered, and/or to allow him to enjoy manipulating the situation. Not everyone who engages in menacing and threatening behavior intends harm. However, simply taking a person's word for it when he has already demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to behave appropriately is unwise. Rather, the denial should be considered a piece of information in the evaluation of the whole case.

Intimacy effect

When both threatener and target are known, particular attention should be paid to their relationship in attempting to assess the appropriate level of concern for violence. Threats become more valuable as pre-incident indicators of violence when the degree of intimacy between a threatener and target increases.[20] This is referred to as the intimacy effect. Actual intimates are very close, of course, and therefore it is appropriate to assign a high level of concern to cases of threats, harassment and stalking directed toward an intimate or former intimate. These cases can also have a "spillover" effect at work, school or public places, wherein opportunistically chosen victims are targeted in addition to the desired one. One study found that over 70% of men who murdered their intimate partners explicitly threatened to do so beforehand.[21] Other degrees of intimacy exist and should be considered. Work colleagues, students at the same school, and members of the same congregation or community all have degrees of closeness. This relationship allows a threatener to know where a target spends time, what a target's vulnerabilities might be, and could also provide sufficient emotional investment for a threatener to feel angry or humiliated if his threats fail to provoke the desired behavior. Should a target decide to refuse demands or fail to demonstrate the desired reaction, the threatener may then be faced with a choice: admit his impotence or take action to show the target and possibly the world that he should have been taken seriously. Strangers, particularly those separated by significant distances, have the lowest degree of intimacy and therefore threats made in that context do not automatically generate the same level of concern.

Stalking

Not all stalking cases will include an act of targeted violence. However, in the broadest definition of the word stalking—hunting for prey—it can be argued that every act of targeted violence involves some aspect of stalking. All stalking behaviors, historical and current, should be considered as part of any threat assessment, regardless of whether the stalking has anything to do with the person of concern's identified grievance.

A person of concern who has engaged in previous stalking incidents may demonstrate ability to engage in research, planning, and preparation towards a target. The use of those terms—the middle steps on the "pathway to violence"—demonstrate even further the association of stalking with targeted violence. (See pages 24-25, 32-33) Stalkers may also be described as "fixed" and "focused" which are dimensions to be considered when assessing the potential targeted violence offender. The person of concern's stalking behaviors should be evaluated for recency, frequency, and severity as they may be illustrative of the problematic way he engages with others and/or the unhealthy way he interacts with the world. This information will allow threat management teams to evaluate the individual's ability to engage in pathway behaviors and how quickly he may navigate the stages. It may be that a person of concern's previous incidents of stalking were unintentionally a training mechanism for future targeted violence.

A stalking case may be the reason a person of concern is brought to the threat management team. All stalkers should be considered "persons of concern" within the context of this guide. The assessment for violence should be explored in any stalking investigation; utilizing a threat assessment team is an ideal way to accomplish this task. While there is research on the link between stalking and targeted acts of violence, it has yet to be fully understood and all too often incidents of stalking are minimized. Currently, there is no consistent mechanism amongst jurisdictions to record whether stalking behaviors preceded a homicide. The true association between stalking and other targeted violence warrants further study. It is not a mere coincidence that stalking behaviors have been identified in the timelines of previous targeted attack cases.

The team should be mindful that many stalking cases are unreported, as such the absence of a stalking charge in an individual's record is not reflective of his potential engagement in this crime. Often in stalking cases, other charges such as trespass or criminal mischief may be used to criminalize the actions of the offender. Obtaining the actual police reports in such cases may reveal the underlying stalking behaviors. Further, the fact that a stalking case may not have risen to a criminal level does not diminish the concern of the stalking behaviors. Such information may be garnered through the interviews of the family, friends and associates of the person of concern. It is of utmost importance to be cognizant of and not dismiss any signs of current and historical stalking conducted by the individual.

Anonymous communicated threats

Many threatening communications are sent anonymously. They may come in the form of notes, emails, bathroom wall scrawls, or other methods. In addition to attempting to assess an appropriate level of concern (See Appendix A) provoked by the communication itself, logical investigation should be conducted when these are received in an effort to identify authorship. When a threat is made, the threat itself should be assessed by considering several variables, including the manner and context in which the threat was conveyed and the apparent relationship between the threatener and the target.

Electronic threats can be a particular concern—the internet age has made it entirely too easy to threaten and harass just about anyone anonymously. Anonymity, whether real or perceived, increases disinhibition and lowers behavioral constraints normally felt during more personal interactions. The perceived absence of monitoring or controls, as well as the ease of finding like-minded virtual friends, can also reinforce bad online behavior (see page 50: Pronoid pseudo-communities).[22] Does this necessarily correlate with increased violence risk? Much work remains to be done in the area of electronic threats research. Although data are preliminary, threatening Tweets are not thought to be predictive of a physical approach absent other simultaneous activity or contact toward a target.[23] However, as with any case, each circumstance warrants individual scrutiny, paying particular attention to:

- Any noted patterns of escalation
- Intensity of effort and focus observed in a pattern of communications
- Potential leakage of harmful intent (See pages 34-35: Leakage)
- Evidence of a personalized motive by the threatener
- Expressed intention to approach
- Justifications for violence[24]

Analysis of threatening communications

Several questions may help assess level of concern for violence when a threatening communication is received. These are a few generalities for consideration and not an all-inclusive list of communication assessment questions. Each case is unique and contains numerous variables, all of which cannot be accounted for here.

- What is the relationship or prior contact between threatener and target(s)?
  - The degree to which the intimacy effect is applicable should always be considered
- Does the method of delivery indicate physical proximity by the threatener?
  - Signs of a possible approach may be more concerning than a long-distance mailing
- How many communications were received, by whom, and over what time frame?
  - Increasing intensity of effort (measured by frequency, duration, and different means of communication) may be a sign of escalation
- According to the threatener, when will the threatened action or consequence happen?

- Generally, alerting the target and authorities to a violent plan is counterproductive to success; however, anniversaries and dates which are significant to the author may be reason for concern
- An expression of time running out or a looming deadline may justify increasing concern

➢ What is the significance of any identified dates or places?
- Certain dates or places may be symbolic of past attacks or upcoming events which have meaning to the threatener

➢ Is the threatened plan of harm feasible, given what is known about the threatener?
- Highly unrealistic plans may be indicative of an insincere threatener

➢ What details are known about any grievance or issue identified in the threat?
- Threats involving a personal motivation or justification for violence are generally cause for greater concern than those which merely threaten

First Amendment protected speech

First Amendment protected speech principles are implicated where public communications are concerned; privacy rights, on the other hand, govern the gathering or viewing of private communications or other personal items of relevance in a case. As a threat assessment strategy, monitoring a person of concern's communications is sometimes recommended; these may include publicly accessible social media or weblog ("blog") posts, school essays, articles, books, or communications authored by the person. These options, like any other threat assessment option, must be considered in view of legal authorities and protections, including the fundamental right of free expression guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The First Amendment protects this right. However, not all forms of expression are protected "speech." It is important to understand the line between Constitutionally-protected speech, and advocacy of violence or conduct that may lead to violence or other unlawful activity. The First Amendment does not protect, among other things, "true threats," fighting words, incitement of imminent lawless action, or material support to terror groups. Context, target, and intention are all important to figuring out whether something is an unprotected "true threat" as defined by the US Supreme Court. In a "true threat," the threatener *intends to communicate a serious expression of intent* to commit unlawful violence against an individual or group; he need not actually *intend to carry out* the threat.[25] Since the lower courts do not entirely agree on how to apply this definition, in those cases where a threat has been made and a threat assessment team may be recommending prosecution, consultation with the prosecutors is necessary to determine whether the statement in question is protected speech.

In addition to purely First Amendment considerations, governmental agencies must have an authorized purpose for monitoring someone's speech. One such authorized purpose is trying to determine whether a person is exhibiting behaviors that pose a concern for significant and imminent violence. In cases involving protected speech, for example, where someone has not articulated a threat, the government cannot take an action that destroys, or even significantly diminishes, his ability to communicate a public message or idea through his words or deeds.

In a school setting, conduct on school campuses that either 1) materially disrupts class work, or 2) involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others, does not carry First Amendment protection.[26] In a workplace setting, employees are not entitled to unrestricted speech on any topic; they must be speaking about a matter of "public concern" in order to have First Amendment protection.[27] Simply stated, context matters. The First Amendment has limitations, and courts "will consider time, place, manner of expression, and organizational and individual impact" when deciding whether an expression is protected by the First Amendment.[28]

***Elonis v. United States* – Online Threats**

In *Elonis v. United States*, commonly referred to as "the Facebook threats case," the United States Supreme Court examined the "guilty mind" necessary for a conviction under federal law for communicating threats in interstate commerce. Mr. Elonis posted a number of disturbing statements on his Facebook account, stating a desire to kill his estranged wife, a kindergarten class, and law enforcement officials who investigated his threatening behaviors. His statements were often specific and brutally violent. Mr. Elonis maintained that he did not mean to threaten anyone; rather, he meant to engage in artistic expression as a rapper. The case was originally expected to be decided on First Amendment grounds. However, rather than focusing on free speech the Supreme Court reversed his conviction on a technicality. News of the reversal nevertheless created a degree of false fear that internet threat cases would be difficult to successfully prosecute.

When considering prosecution of online threats in light of *Elonis*, law enforcement is encouraged to collect and memorialize, during data collection and interviews, any evidence that tends to prove a person of concern who transmitted a threatening message did so *for the purpose* of issuing a threat or with knowledge that the communication *will be viewed* as a threat. If a threatener alleges he intended only sarcasm or humor, investigators should be on the lookout for evidence that contradicts this allegation. Any circumstantial evidence that counters a threatener's position that his threats were just "artistic expression" may also be helpful. As a final note, in those cases where law enforcement officials admonish a person of concern who makes an online threat, they should carefully document the admonishment and the threatener's responses, demeanor, and behavior.

Chapter 3 Assessment: Analysis for Guiding Management

Targeted violence threat assessment is complex. High level of violence concern almost invariably results from many factors, only some of which may be plainly visible to a threat assessment team. There will be unknown details in every case. This is a primary reason why threat assessment is a nuanced and complex discipline. A great deal of time and study is required to develop proficiency in threat assessment. As human behavior is variable in nature, thoughtful consideration of many facts and circumstances is required to conduct a thorough assessment.

There are no "usual suspects"

There is no demographic profile of a targeted violence offender. Objective assessment of threat enhancing and mitigating circumstances is the key to evaluating concern for violence. Any individual, no matter what age, sex, race, religion, education or income level, marital status, or occupation, has the potential to engage in targeted violence. The first step in preventing future violence is identifying and evaluating a person's behaviors. No single behavior is predictive of targeted violence; rather, a "perfect storm" sometimes develops based on a multitude of factors and conditions. When conducting an assessment, the facts and circumstances identified in this chapter must each be examined while focusing on the person of concern, the potential target(s), the situation, and the setting. Threat assessment is a multifaceted process, stemming from a holistic analysis of the pattern of behaviors displayed by a person of concern.

Data interpretation and weighting

A checklist approach to assessment can work to ensure relevant topics are considered, but not for deciding how much weight to place upon each fact and circumstance. Assessment of each fact and circumstance must be uniquely weighted based upon:

- What makes up the whole person, including his behaviors and characteristics
- Any direction of interest in persons, places, or issues demonstrated by the person of concern
- The situation including a grievance, environmental and contextual factors, or recent or anticipated losses
- The setting including organizational culture and the physical setting[29]

Totality of circumstances versus singular points of assessment will drive the ultimate level of concern held by a threat management team. Human judgment applied to each factor on a case-by-case basis is the only endorsed method of violence threat assessment.

Bias

"Analysis at a glance" is a threat assessment hazard. Unintended bias by assessors must be understood and avoided. There are several types, each posing its own unique challenge. The BAU suggests that threat management teams adopt an evidence-based, structured approach to its work, rather than a biased approach.

The tendency to look for evidence or interpret information in a way that confirms a preconceived opinion is *confirmation bias*. Human nature is often such that it is easier to notice facts that support already held beliefs and overlook facts that do not. Further, this bias can also cause one to give greater weight to such information because of the tendency to accept it at face value without scrutiny. Even worse, people are usually better able to remember such information. For example, a preconceived belief is "I know John is going to end up shooting up this place because he has been angry for a long time." To support this opinion, one might then only collect examples of when John's anger has attracted attention—while ignoring examples of his positive behaviors.

Availability bias is a tendency to assign the most importance to behavior which comes immediately to mind—if it can be recalled quickly then it must be important, or at least more important than other information which is not as readily recalled. This presents a risk that the most recent information will outweigh older information simply based upon its recency rather than on its importance. The takeaway for threat managers? Take care to evaluate behavior over time when possible; then it will likely become clearer if the person of concern is escalating, de-escalating, or holding steady.

"Hindsight is 20/20." This statement is never truer than when discussing the predictability of violent attacks. *Hindsight bias* is the inclination, after an event, to see it as having been more predictable than it was. A tendency to blame based upon an erroneous belief that something was predictable can potentially affect threat managers, such as when a particular threat management technique is not successful. For example, if mental health counseling is recommended but fails to de-escalate a person of concern's behavior, those critical of the threat management process may blame the team for making an incorrect recommendation because the person of concern reacted negatively to a suggestion he attend counseling. Hindsight bias facilitates a potentially erroneous argument that the team should have predicted that counseling would fail, when in reality there would have been no way to know that before implementation.

Hindsight bias can affect threat assessment and management by inducing *foresight bias*, which emphasizes an unrealistic ability to predict future events. This kind of bias could cause stakeholders or threat managers to erroneously apply outcomes in previous cases to the current one, even when the fact patterns are dissimilar. For example, one assailant posted what he called a "manifesto" online before offending against a camp of juveniles. Foresight bias might cause observers to conclude that every troubled person who posts a manifesto is about to engage in violence. Psychologists, in particular, have faced the challenge of being asked to predict who will become a violent offender from among the overwhelming majority of non-violent mentally ill; even with the best available instruments general violence prediction is only moderately accurate.

Biases can occur or become more pronounced when fatigue or complacency become an issue. These problems can affect threat managers and stakeholders during a long term, repetitive, or unusually intense case. In those situations, threat management teams should remember that facts and

circumstances can quickly change a case and the level of concern for violence it generates. Thus, teams should consider how best to mitigate fatigue or inadvertent complacency. Team structure itself may assist in reducing fatigue because the weight of a case, or all cases, does not rest on one person alone. Teams must also be on guard against complacency by remaining focused on the task at hand and maintaining a positive mental outlook.

Triage versus 360° assessment

A primary purpose of an assessment is to inform decision-making regarding how, and how quickly, to best manage a person of concern away from violence. An assessment is only as good as the information upon which it is formulated. The quantity and quality of information collected will likely dictate the assessment's degree of accuracy and utility. In addition to addressing concerns about public safety, stakeholders should also strive to promote a person of concern's well-being. Optimally, threat managers would like to obtain as much relevant information as possible about the person of concern and the events occurring in his life, in order to devise the most appropriate management strategy. This is referred to as a whole person or 360° assessment. It typically requires an abundance of investigative effort and time. However, in instances where the information on the person of concern is unknown or unavailable and time is of the essence, the threat assessment can and should function more like a triage process. Relying on limited information which likely reveals behaviors over a short time, a triage assessment is used to determine case prioritization and resource allocation, and can include a preliminary level of concern and any immediately necessary management strategies. The use of triage assessments is vital, especially when multiple cases arise simultaneously, similar to emergency medical professionals assessing patients based on their urgency of need for care. Whole person assessment and triage share the same goal: to maximize threat mitigation and ultimately prevent violence.

Having a sense of urgency and knowing when to apply it are important skills for threat managers. Distinction must be made between cases requiring an emergent response, and those which do not. This will involve being able to determine whether a particular case justifies a low level of concern for targeted violence risk, a high level of concern, or somewhere in between. A system in use at the BAU, and elsewhere, for delineating between levels of concern (See Appendix A) was inspired by the National Weather Service (NWS) system of [1] no message, [2] watch, or [3] warn.[30] Example: the NWS remains silent on the topic of tornadoes on any given day for which the chance of one is not measurably above the base rate. The NWS issues a tornado *watch* when the conditions are right for the formation of such an event, making it possible. It does not mean one will occur. It issues a *warning* when a tornado has been sighted or is imminent. For assessing violence concern, the BAU adopts a similar posture, one which takes into account the appropriate level of concern for [a] violence potential, and [b] how imminent that violence may be, based upon an application of published research and the unit's experience with case facts and circumstances. A concern level does not predict violence likelihood but rather expresses the extent to which conditions may facilitate violence potential.

Standardization of processes from intake through assessment is strongly recommended; case *management* will be unique in each instance. This chapter identifies those elements which should be

considered in assessing a case for violence concern and imminence. These include enhancers (risk factors, warning behaviors, stressors and precipitating events, and indicators of potential imminence) and mitigators. Every case is unique and will feature varying numbers of these elements; a checklist-based or quantitative formulaic method for assessing a case is not endorsed. A case may have an overwhelming number of threat mitigators, for example, and only three enhancing factors. However, if those enhancers are firearms access, substance abuse, and a persecutory delusional belief system, those three may very well overwhelm any number of mitigators. Conversely, a single mitigator (e.g., convalescing due to a serious physical illness) could dramatically reduce violence concern even in the face of a slew of enhancers. This is where a trained and experienced team, following a standardized assessment protocol, becomes an effective tool for managing persons of concern away from targeted violence.

Pathway to violence

It is generally believed that persons intending to engage in targeted violent acts move along an identifiable pathway on their journey to attack.[31] The progression may be rapid or slow, and will not follow the same course from person to person. Some scholars have proposed pathway-like maps, while others have identified key indicators of high or imminent risk. Recently, the pathway concept was proposed as merely one of eight warning behaviors. Pathways can exist in multiple and complex forms, or may not exist at all in some cases.[32] Regardless of which model is adopted for use, threat managers will find that both state of mind and outward behaviors of the person of concern are inextricably intertwined—behavior is a manifestation of thought. For the purposes of this practical guide, the well-known pathway to violence model which crystallized over the past twenty years and is relatively easy to understand, is presented. Further discussion later in this chapter will place this pathway within a larger constellation of warning behaviors.

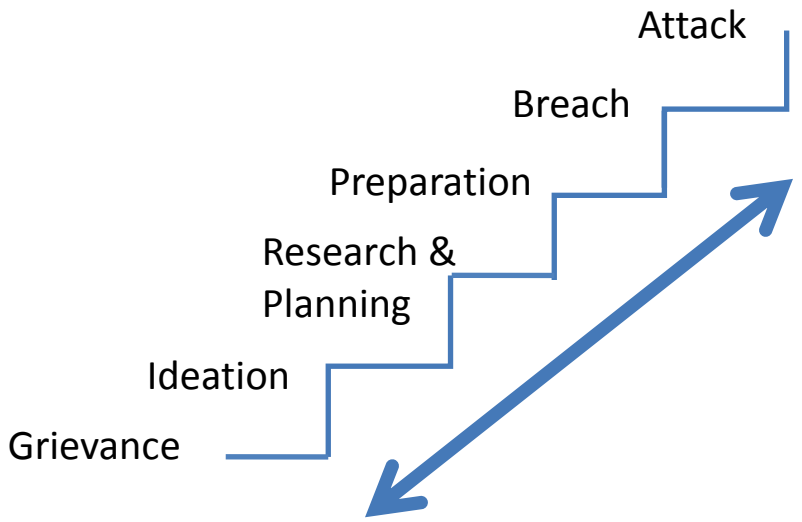
The traditionally known pathway to violence model is an excellent place to begin the discussion because it addresses the question of "why?" It describes a first step on the journey toward intended violence as the formation of a deeply held personal grievance or humiliation based upon real or imagined injustices inflicted upon the grievant. This grievance could be against an individual, an institution, or other entity the person of concern feels slighted or wronged him. It may be nurtured and cultivated over time, even years. Depending upon the particular individual, it may be plainly evident to all around him or kept hidden and private. Although there are cases of targeted violence in which a grievance or motivation was never identified, this appears to be rare with regard to the kind of mass targeted violence attacks this guide addresses. Regardless of whether a specific grievance exists or can be pinpointed, only a few general motives for mass targeted violence offending appear to be prevalent in the experience of the BAU. They include:

- Revenge for a perceived injury or grievance
- Quest for justice (as defined by the offender)
- Desire for notoriety or recognition
- Desire to solve a problem perceived to be unbearable

- Desire to kill or be killed

When a person of concern for targeted violence is unable to resolve the negative emotional burden of unachieved justice, he could then progress to a violent ideation: the idea that violence is an acceptable, or even the only, means of achieving redress.[33] Unable to shake off a grievance and its accompanying anger, despair, humiliation, or other negative emotional responses, the person of concern may eventually conclude that violence is justified, necessary, and his only choice. The adoption of this idea can be profoundly relieving, almost like a salve on a wound. It is for this reason that a sudden turnaround by a formerly angry, depressed, or menacing person of concern should not be presumed as good news. More assessment is often prudent.

Additional steps along the pathway are discussed in greater detail on pages 32-33. They involve both emotional and logistical considerations important for planning and carrying out an act of planned violence. They include research and planning, preparation, probing and/or breach of security measures, and the attack itself. A key factor to remember when recognizing that someone is on an apparent pathway to violence, is that time is on his side. Completing the steps from grievance to attack may take weeks, months, or even years. Someone may appear stalled along the way; he may even retreat a step or two. Conversely, the entire route may be covered relatively quickly or steps may not be observable to a threat assessment team. The following graphic illustrates, in very simplistic terms, one of several pathways to planned violence models; it may be useful in visualizing the concepts discussed in this section.



Calhoun and Weston (2003)

The role played by mental illness

A general stereotype exists that people who suffer from a mental illness may be dangerous.[34] There is a small but significant relationship between serious mental illness, such as psychosis, and risk of violence toward others. However, misinformation and/or lack of knowledge or exposure to the

mentally ill may grossly exaggerate this fact. Certainly, the unpredictable behaviors associated with some forms of mental illness can provoke concern. However, many times it is just the fear of the unknown associated with mental illness that makes people uncomfortable.

In the immediate aftermath of a targeted violence event, an inference may be made that *the reason* an incident occurred is the offender was mentally ill. While serious mental illness is substantially present in targeted violence offenders,[35] it does not necessarily follow that such illness is *the driving force* behind the decision to offend. Assessing violence potential is more complex and dynamic than simply determining whether or not someone has a mental disorder. Many factors, including some which may be interrelated, play a role in an offender's decision to plan and take violent action; these are discussed in this chapter. People with serious mental illness may have particular vulnerability to other variables which increase risk, such as past violence/childhood exposure to violence, personality disorders, substance abuse or dependence, and numerous environmental stressors.[36] When considering serious mental illness, threat managers should assign a logical level of significance to it, based upon the nature of observed symptoms and behaviors.

From a threat assessment perspective, different types of mental illness-driven behaviors may inhibit or enhance violence concern and/or implicate different management strategies. There is a difference between someone who is so mentally disturbed that he cannot organize himself enough to plan and carry out a violent attack, and a functional person with a mental disorder that permits predatory thinking and violent planning, as well as an ability and commitment to follow through.

Homicide and suicide are more closely linked than many think. In many cases multiple homicides are linked with prior suicide attempts, gestures, or suicidal ideation on the part of the perpetrator. This is especially true with targeted violence. A "Safe Schools Initiative" research project revealed that 78% (32 of 41 studied) of targeted mass attackers exhibited a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts at some point prior to their attack.[37] Moreover, many offenders attempt or succeed at suicide or "suicide by cop" at the conclusion of a targeted violence event.

Threat managers should direct their attention to psychiatric symptoms and associated behaviors, rather than formal diagnoses, for purposes of assessing violence concern. Symptoms of mental disorder can be debilitating for the individual in question and alter his perception of others' interactions and activities. For example, if he is struggling with paranoid beliefs that others are out to get him and he feels threatened or endangered by contact with others, he could potentially feel justified in using violent means to defend himself.

A personality disorder, on the other hand, is not the same sort of disorder as a serious mental illness. It is an enduring, pervasive, and inflexible pattern of internal experience and behavior which is not in harmony with cultural expectations. Personality disorders typically onset in adolescence or early adulthood, and are stable over time. They feature certain attitudes, behaviors and thought patterns

that are maladaptive. As a result, a personality-disordered individual may be able to conclude that violence is an acceptable or even necessary response to a problem.[38] Because he is not, however, disengaged from reality, he is capable of engaging in logistical and rational processes necessary to violently offend. Any observed behavior that demonstrates the person of concern's thoughts, thinking, planning, and organization is important to consider for understanding his trajectory towards violence, if any. Once these are understood, work can begin on managing behaviors and ultimately lowering violence concern.

Forensic Mental Health Assessment/Violence Risk Assessment

A foundation of mental health treatment is the relationship that develops between the patient and his therapist. This therapeutic alliance is essential for the treatment process to work. The theory behind the trust-based therapeutic alliance is that a client seeks treatment from a mental health professional because he genuinely wants to be helped. What this fails to take into account is that someone truly considering engaging in an act of targeted violence must conceal that intention in order to ensure success. This can be difficult for providers inexperienced in such cases to accept. The violence risk assessment process assists in removing subjectivity from the equation.

When mental health professionals attempt to assess an individual's potential danger to himself or others, they may use unstructured, clinical judgment as they interview the person about his history and current mental state. This falls short of a "violence risk assessment," (VRA) ideally performed by forensically trained mental health professionals and which entails a much more systematic, structured, and thorough evaluation of the individual. For example, most clinicians base their suicide risk/homicide risk assessments on a patient's self-report rather than conducting a multi-faceted VRA. An objective VRA involves asking additional questions of the patient which are predetermined and required by the tool being used, as well as gathering collateral information by interviewing family members, reviewing police reports, and conducting psychological testing. This evaluation process may interfere with trust and rapport-building and thus is not emphasized in general mental health provider training. However, unstructured clinical assessments are susceptible to the deceptions and poor insight of the patient. Mental health providers have not been very successful at violence prediction, which explains why forensic psychologists moved away from unstructured clinical assessments to more actuarial or structured assessment approaches to assess risk for violence. Forensic mental health professionals receive much more training on violence risk assessment than other providers.

Although pursuing a formal mental health diagnosis can be a distraction during the assessment process, diagnostic certainty is more useful during the management phase. Diagnosis by a qualified, licensed mental health professional can be a bridge to strategies for interacting with the individual,

treatment if feasible, and an effective threat management plan overall. Mental health intervention should not be considered a standalone solution. Rather, it can and should be part of a comprehensive strategy when mental illness is an aspect of the case. Some persons of concern will be resistant or unreceptive to mental health treatment for various reasons. Even though they may not always be able to communicate back to a threat management team, mental health partners are good resources when psychiatric symptoms and behaviors are present. Evaluation and diagnosis can create additional opportunities for intervention and mitigation of any threat generated by the person of concern.

In this guide only a few of the many issues threat managers and stakeholders may encounter with regard to mental illness have been identified. It is important to think about what approach and interaction methods will be used during encounters with persons of concern who suffer from mental disorders or disturbances. The BAU recommends consultation with qualified, licensed mental health professionals for advice during such instances. Additionally, written resources about interacting with the mentally ill are available which may also provide assistance (see Appendix F, References).

The "person of concern"

As previously noted, a holistic view of a person of concern is needed in order to conduct a viable threat assessment and create a management plan. However, some individual qualities below may be of particular interest in conducting a threat assessment. They include but are not limited to: [39]

- Strength of coping mechanisms (i.e., healthy conflict resolution, processing emotional stress, or tolerance for change)
- Negative traits (i.e., desperation, maladjustment, low trust, impulsivity, inattention, irrational thinking, low empathy)
- Attitude about self (i.e., narcissistic/entitled, injustice collector, positive self-esteem, future-oriented)
- Need for attention, recognition, or notoriety
- Response to rules and authority
- Preoccupation with violence
- Deceptiveness and manipulation
- Motivation

Brittle people

The pathway to violence discussed above identifies a potentially observable path along which a person of concern may travel on the way to engaging in a violent attack. Although not every targeted violence event has its origins in a personal grievance, it is a common starting point. Clearly, however, most aggrieved persons do not go on to research, plan, prepare for and execute a targeted violence event. So who are those individuals most at risk for targeted violence? They are exceptionally brittle,[40] unable to withstand slights, rejections, or offenses both minor and otherwise. Time and again, targeted violence offenders have claimed to be persecuted and alienated from their peers, family, and the world at large, viewing themselves as outsiders and not part of a larger social network. They seem unable to

process the slights, rejections, teasing, and bullying that everyone experiences at some point in their lives. Most people learn to deal with these experiences as a normal, if unfortunate, part of life. Well-adjusted people develop emotional armor and learn to stand up to, ignore, or just ride out such behavior. To a brittle person lacking adequate resources to help him appropriately process and cope, even a minor loss can be absolutely devastating. Brittle targeted violence offenders, moreover, cannot seem to muster a healthy response. They continue to brood and obsess over every injustice, whether real or imagined, that has ever been inflicted upon them. Suicidal feelings are not uncommon. However, it is important to recognize that brittle people who are suicidal can also become homicidal toward others.

Conducting the assessment

In the next few subsections, threat enhancing and threat mitigating factors will be identified and explained, although the individuality of each human being, and therefore each case, prevents this from being considered an exhaustive list. In fact, there may be no such thing. Rather, this information (like the rest of this guide) should be considered as a general reference to get a threat assessment team started in conducting an assessment. With experience will come the expertise to identify additional enhancers and mitigators and evaluate how they fit into an overall case assessment. It is impossible to absolutely quantify the weight of each individual factor. Each case is a unique combination of personal and environmental factors which preclude assigning all relevant factors equal weight. The urge to quantify and calculate an assessment like a math problem must be resisted. Threat assessment envisions a holistic assessment of the person of concern, the potential target, the situation, and the potential setting for an incident.

Threat enhancers

Risk factors

Risk factors are existing realities about the person of concern that may increase the risk of violence he poses in a given situation. They are already in place at the time of assessment. Risk factors, as opposed to the *behaviors* a person may demonstrate (discussed later), can either be static or dynamic. Static risk factors are historical or dispositional, will not change over time or will change very slowly, and are not amenable to intervention (e.g., gender, history of prior violent acts). Dynamic risk factors are situational or clinical, and can and do change, often rapidly (e.g., weapons possession, illegal drug abuse). Some risk factors are highly interrelated with behaviors (e.g., current access to a gun (risk factor) and actively attempting to acquire more guns (behavior)).

Violence History

- History of violence**:** The best predictor of future violence in many cases is past violence. Past violence might not be indicated in a criminal history report, so it is important to cover this in interviews, social media reviews, personnel file reviews, or other available sources.

- Childhood exposure to violence**:** Violence in a person of concern's family of origin or adolescent peer group has also been identified as a risk factor for adult violence.

Health/Mental Health

- Substance abuse or dependence: Psychostimulants are a concern, and are encountered as both illicit and prescription drugs; they can increase the fight or flight response, and more importantly for targeted violence assessment, they can cause grandiosity and/or paranoia in some.[41] Generally, prescription medication side effects are variable and can sometimes include violent ideation and altered thought processing. Alcohol lowers serotonin levels in the brain, potentially leading to irritability and aggression.[42] The use of non-prescription substances could be evidence of self-medication for a diagnosed or undiagnosed issue. However, there is evidence that drug and alcohol abuse is significantly lower among those engaged in targeted violence than those engaged in impulsive/reactive violence.

- Personality disturbance or disorder: Paranoia, narcissism, borderline personality, psychopathic or significant antisocial tendencies, or significant and sustained anger manifestations, can all increase risk of targeted violence and should be taken seriously. They can cause a person of concern to believe violence is justified and acceptable. Facets may include but are not limited to low empathy for others, abdication of personal responsibility, habitual projection of blame onto others, persistent belief that others are malevolent, or chronic belief in one's own superiority over others. If personality disturbance or disorder appears to be a factor in a threat assessment case, a qualified mental health professional should be consulted to help a team understand how it may impact violence concern and potential management strategies.

- Severe mental illness: As previously noted, severe mental illness slightly increases the risk of general violence toward others. Psychosis, in particular, can raise concerns depending upon the nature of the symptoms; however, psychosis alone is neither necessary nor sufficient to assign a high level of concern. Its importance as a risk factor should be connected to how logically linked the symptoms are to future violence.[43] Major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders can all feature psychotic symptoms which may elevate risk. Symptoms of special concern include command hallucinations, delusional beliefs of persecution or control, hostility, and grandiosity.[44] When these symptoms *co-occur with* additional risk factors, particularly substance abuse or dependence, or a confirmed history of violent acts and/or childhood exposure to violence, the concern may increase.

- History of suicidality: If a person of concern has threatened or attempted suicide in the past, this should trouble threat managers. Suicidal and homicidal violence are more closely linked than many realize. Evidence of suicidal thoughts is reflective of lost hope, and it may be accompanied by acceptance of the consequences for behaving violently toward others. Suicide is often contemplated by targeted violence offenders before they decide to attack; instead, they choose to punish those they feel drove them to their plight.[45] In a study of 160 active shooter incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013, in 64 incidents (40%), the offender committed suicide.[46]

➢ Organized: If a person of concern has a demonstrated ability to organize behavior, regardless of any superficial appearance of illogical or incoherent speech or personal presentation, then he is potentially able to plan and carry out an act of violence.

Weapons

➢ Firearms and edged weapons: It is easier and more lethal to engage in targeted violence, particularly toward multiple targets, with a firearm. Possession of, access to, experience or familiarity with weapons are all risk factors because they improve one's ability to carry out the act. Unfortunately, this can be difficult to determine in many cases. Edged weapons and stabbing instruments have been successfully used in attacks as well; they are often more accessible than firearms.

➢ Explosives: Fascination or experimentation with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is a risk factor. They, too, increase ability to do harm and may also indicate study of past targeted violence incidents where IEDs were used or their use was attempted.

Problematic Behavioral History

➢ History of stalking, harassing, threatening, or menacing behavior: This spectrum of behavior may indicate low empathy, general disregard for rules and limits, or defiance of authority. These behaviors could also represent attempts to or actual breaches of security. If demonstrated as a pattern, it may also indicate the person has become habituated to engaging the world in an aggressive manner, potentially lowering inhibitions about escalating to violence. This is particularly relevant in the majority of mass murders which began with a spousal or family homicide. Several known targeted violence offenders engaged in stalking behavior before they engaged in mass violence.

➢ History of non-compliance with limits and boundaries**:** Violations of protective orders or terms of probation, flouting of private property lines (in furtherance of harassing activities, for example), and disregard for rules at school or work, all fall within this category of behavior. Such a history may bode poorly for a threat management strategy that is based on limit-setting, because the person of concern may not be willing to comply with limits.

Social/Environmental

➢ Negative family dynamics and support system**:** An unhealthy family or social peer environment can enhance risk. If there is tacit or active endorsement of violence within the home or family sphere, this can affect how the person of concern views violence. Similarly, if law-breaking or other negative tendencies are the norm in a person's family sphere or social environment, it can influence behavior in negative ways. A toxic family or social peer dynamic could even fuel a person of concern to act. Irresponsible and chaotic families can also contribute to casual access to firearms in the home.

➢ Isolation: Living in physical or emotional isolation from others, particularly from family and friends, deprives the person of concern of emotional support often needed to work through life's

difficulties and challenges. The person has no one to rely upon. This can occur even when the person of concern shares a home with family members.

➢ Instability: Financial, residential, professional, familial and/or social instability all potentially interfere with the person of concern's ability to become and remain grounded and to feel emotionally safe and secure. Instability in these spheres of life can lead to grievance formation, serve as stressors, and erode coping mechanisms.

➢ Others are concerned: When behaviors exhibited by the person of concern cause fear in others, stakeholders should take notice. After all, individuals close to the person of concern are often best positioned to observe alarming behaviors. They may not be able to precisely articulate all of the behaviors which concern them; they just know they are troubled.

Warning behaviors

Unlike risk factors, warning behaviors are dynamic and represent changes in patterns of behavior that may be evidence of increasing or accelerating risk.[47] When warning behaviors are evident, they require a threat management strategy and operational response. They are, for the most part, proximal behaviors, occurring more closely in time to a potential act of targeted violence.

The body of knowledge about warning behaviors is based upon research of and experience with attackers and assassins of celebrities, politicians, and other public figures; psychiatric patients who have engaged in violence; adolescent mass murderers and school shooters; adult mass murderers; spousal homicide perpetrators; workplace violence offenders; and federal judicial threateners and attackers. For each "successful" targeted violence offender with any given behavioral past, there are likely many more who exhibited similar behaviors, but never attacked. Warning behaviors cannot *predict* targeted violence, but are useful in identifying accelerating risk which should elevate concern.

Pathway to violence warning behavior

This set of behaviors refers to the pathway to violence model referenced on pages 24-25. The pathway begins with a grievance and proceeds to violent ideation, as discussed on pages 24-25, while subsequent steps along the pathway are those articulated here. "Pathway warning behavior" may be any behavior that is part of research, planning, preparation, or implementation of an attack.[48]

➢ Research and planning: Once a person of concern decides that violence should or must be used to seek justice for real or perceived wrongs, under most circumstances he must then begin to think and plan. The person of concern then considers when, how, and where to offend. He can craft and refine his plan by researching methods, the planned target, past offenders, and previous targeted violence incidents. The person of concern may consider both practical and symbolic reasons when selecting potential targets. As with other steps along the pathway, research and planning need not cease when the next step begins; it can and may comingle with other steps.

➢ Preparation: The person of concern may acquire the equipment, skills, and/or any other resources necessary to conduct the attack. This can include obtaining weapons and gear as well as familiarization of and practice with the weapons. The person may conduct an actual or virtual rehearsal of any aspect of the attack (e.g., driving the intended route to the site). It can also include farewell writings or other end of life planning, or creation of artifacts meant to be left behind to claim credit and explain motive.

An example of preparation behavior is the case of Mr. A. He came to the attention of a threat management team after his passport and a notebook filled with violently themed writings were found in a parking lot. Additional investigation determined that he was a danger to others and was actively planning to mount a violent assault. At the time of his psychiatric hospitalization related to the above circumstances, he was an employee of a retail store. Search warrants were executed at Mr. A's house which revealed numerous journals. Of particular note was a notebook containing almost a daily diary of his plans for an assault, seemingly at the store where he worked. After articulating his grievance and general disgust for people who shopped at the store, he wrote that in order to prepare for the assault, he started bringing a large duffle bag to work so his coworkers would not be alarmed on the day when he eventually brought his guns to work in that same bag, in violation of company policy prohibiting firearms at the store.[b] This case vignette could also serve as an example of breach behavior, discussed next.

➢ Breach: This step involves circumvention of security measures or boundaries at the target location. Breach activities can include conducting dry runs, engaging in approach behaviors to include stalking, and testing security at the target location. In practice, the BAU has expanded this definition to include cyber intrusion behaviors where these breaches may be intended to identify security plans and weaknesses, gain protected information about a target, or otherwise further an attack plan via unauthorized access to systems. Breach behavior may occur immediately prior to an attack, or earlier.

➢ Attack: An offense may involve violence against both preplanned and opportunistically chosen targets. Both practical and symbolic acts may occur. The violent offense is the culmination of a highly personalized quest for justice which may, ultimately, only be fully understandable to the offender.

Fixation warning behavior

Any behavior that indicates an increasing preoccupation with a person or a cause may be fixation warning behavior.[49] It can be demonstrated by an increased focus on the person or cause, and/or an increasingly negative characterization of the same. Further, the frequency and duration of the person of concern's communications about the fixation may significantly increase. Opinions may

[b] Case vignettes are provided throughout this guide in order to illustrate points with real-world examples. However, all identifying information has been redacted. The facts utilized may be taken out of their full context for emphasis and in some instances are amalgams of more than once case. Therefore, vignettes should not be considered evidence or presumed to stand alone as the only relevant facts of a case.

become more rigid, and speech and actions may appear angrier. Social or occupational deterioration can occur as the person loses interest or ability to focus on these aspects of his life.

Identification warning behavior

The person may adopt a "pseudo-commando" identity[50] or warrior mentality, often with the goal of targeting unarmed civilians in a non-military encounter.[51] A preoccupation with firearms and a desire to use them for revenge may be evident.[52] The person may view himself as an agent to advance a particular cause or belief system.[53] The practical aspect of identification warning behavior may feature an unusual fascination with weapons or other military or law enforcement paraphernalia. This can be demonstrated through actual weapons, ammunition or paraphernalia purchases, or through virtual activities such as intense preoccupation with and practice on first-person shooter games, or in-depth on-line research of weapons.[54] A psychological aspect of identification may involve physical costuming, immersion in aggressive or violent materials, or fantasizing about offending violently. Conversations or writings may indicate a desire to copycat and "one up" previous attackers or assassins.

Novel aggression warning behavior

This is an act of violence which appears unrelated to any "pathway" behavior *and* which is committed for the first time. The person of concern may be engaging in this behavior in order to test his ability to actually engage in a violent act[55] and it could be thought of as experimental aggression. Examples of acts of novel aggression could include animal cruelty, assault, firearm discharge, arson or bombing, rehearsed violence with inanimate objects fantasized to be human targets, or even vandalism. A threat management team should not discount property crimes as they may be attempts at or first steps of a more serious offense or potentially novel aggression.

Energy burst warning behavior

This is demonstrated by an increased pace, duration, or range of any noted activities related to a potential target, even if the activities themselves seem harmless. These can be overt or stealthy behaviors and have been noted to occur usually in the hours, days, or weeks before a targeted violence incident.[56] For example, a would-be offender may make more frequent trips, errands, purchases, or communications as he rushes to finalize his plans and settle his affairs prior to an assault.

Leakage

This has been defined as a communication *to a third party* of intent to do harm to a target through an attack.[57] The leaked information to the third party could be overt: "I am going to kill my classmates tomorrow;" or it may be less direct: "Don't come to school tomorrow, but watch the news."[58] The BAU takes a somewhat broader view of leakage; expressions, whether or not they are communicated to others, which seem to convey thoughts, feelings or intentions to do harm, are all considered leakage. For example, creating an animated video depicting a mass shooting would be concerning behavior, regardless of whether it is posted or shared with others. Leakage can be readily identifiable, self-contained messaging, or more of an accidental or a gradual release of information that reveals clues related to the person's thoughts, planning, or intentions. Leakage may be more common

in adolescents than in adults,[59] which may be partially due to factors such as increased impulsivity and more extensive social media use.

When leakage in any form is discovered, it should be recognized as such and not dismissed as fantasy writing or mere venting; it may be fantasy or it may be an indication of something more serious. A full consideration of all facts and circumstances will help threat managers to discern the difference. A comparison could be made to suicide notes: before a suicide has occurred, a note referencing suicide could be dismissed as a cry for help; after the worst has happened, it becomes clear that the note was actually a farewell. Leakage can pose the same challenge and therefore all instances of potential leakage are worthy of thoughtful consideration. The term legacy token has been used to describe an artifact designed to claim credit for a completed targeted violence incident and/or to articulate the motivation behind the violence. Attention should be paid to past tense versus present tense in leakage. If a statement is in the past tense, it could be a sign the person of concern does not see himself in the future, or considers an attack a foregone conclusion, and actually intends to create such a post-attack artifact.

Preventing leakage from becoming a legacy token should be the goal of threat managers. For example, Mr. B posted comments on social media about suicide and killing people. His concerned family called authorities. When interviewed, he told the police it was all a misunderstanding and that he had no plans to hurt anyone or himself. He admitted to having challenges in his social life, but denied any ill intentions. He was articulate, cooperative, and polite, telling police that his family tended to worry too much. The interaction satisfied investigators, who concluded he did not seem to meet criteria for a mental health hold. Mr. B later wrote of feeling profoundly relieved when the investigators left him alone, because if they had searched his room that day they would have found evidence of attack planning. Less than a month later, after posting videos with similar content, he attacked and killed several people on the streets of his community. Some of his pre-attack leakage served to establish a legacy of sorts, informing the world of his grievance and sense of injustice.

Directly communicated threat warning behavior

This is a statement of intended violence made to the target or to others before the act is implemented. The threat may be implicit or explicit, and communicates a wish to harm or kill the target or another person(s). This is often the least common among the warning behaviors; as noted elsewhere in this publication, a logical chain of events begins to unfold once a threat has been made, which poses challenges to the success of a violent plan. Nonetheless, all threats should be taken seriously.

Approach behavior

A person of concern's attempt to gain proximity to a target is considered an approach. Not all approaches are problematic, and individuals may have a legitimate reason for being in proximity to the target. However, an approach may be intended for nefarious purposes such as pre-attack surveillance. The method and means of how an approach is made may be indicative of final acts of preparation, level of energy expended, or escalation. Having protective measures in place may not limit, prohibit, or

prevent approach behavior. Approach behaviors can be exhibited in activities such as trespass, stalking, burglaries, and criminal mischief.

End of life planning

These are terminal behaviors which may or may not be closely associated with the desperation of last resort thinking. Examples include making a will or documenting last wishes, giving away one's possessions, getting one's "house in order," or any other behavior indicating the person of concern may be making arrangements to accommodate the end of his life in the near future.

Last resort warning behavior

This behavior includes communications or actions indicating increasing desperation or distress, or indicating that the person of concern perceives no alternatives to violence. It may include a time or violent action imperative. A time imperative is an expressed sense that time is running out or a deadline is looming.[60] A violent action imperative is an expressed sense that nonviolent options have evaporated or that violent action is justified.[61] Drastic changes in appearance or personal caretaking may be present, potentially indicating either preparation to act or mental decompensation, or both. Examples have included obtaining large or multiple tattoos with violent imagery and messaging, dramatic weight loss, shaving head hair, cessation of hygiene or suddenly appearing unkempt, or a significant disruption in sleeping or eating patterns. Additional last resort behaviors demonstrating a sense of desperation might include sudden onset of reckless sexual, financial, or other acts that suggest a lack of concern for future consequences.

Indicators of potential imminence

Risk factors and warning behaviors can also assist in gauging imminence, or *how soon* violence may occur. Just as predicting the occurrence of violence is not possible, the same holds true for predicting its timing. However, certain behaviors may indicate a person *of high concern* may be close to acting.

- Energy burst behavior (see page 34)
- End of life planning (see page 35)
- Last resort behavior (see page 36)

- Sudden cessation of medications or other substance use: A person of high concern who normally ingests alcohol, illegal or unconventional substances, or prescription medications, and who suddenly stops doing so could be preparing to act. An individual who discontinues his substance usage may be attempting to become clear-headed and alert, enabling him to focus on and fully experience a violent assault. This differs from a general disinclination to comply with a medication regimen (e.g., stopping medication because "I don't like how it makes me feel").

- Sudden withdrawal from life pattern: In some cases, this behavior could include a sudden retreat to temporary quarters, unexplained absences from work, failure to appear for appointments that would normally be kept, or other signs of withdrawal from life obligations or patterns. This increase in

isolation from others could signal that the person of high concern is in final rehearsals (fantasy-based or actual) or otherwise making final preparations. A place of privacy in which to work and prepare is often needed for a would-be offender to get ready; accordingly, if a person of high concern lives alone, withdrawal from pattern may be unnecessary. Similarly, if a juvenile of high concern is allowed absolute dominion over his bedroom or personal space in the family home, withdrawal from pattern may also be unnecessary because privacy is already assured.

Triggers and stressors

A stressor can be anything in the person of concern's life that causes tension or anxiety. It could be an upcoming review at work, an unhappy home environment, chronic pain, or financial distress. Stressors can be chronic or acute, mild or severe, obvious or hidden. Identifying the stressors affecting the person of concern is an important step in accurately assessing and managing the case. They are threat enhancers and, like risk factors and warning behaviors, are not to be weighted uniformly but rather individually on a case-by-case basis. Generally, the more stressors that exist in a person of concern's life, the more difficult it will be for him to cope. Ascertaining a person's reaction to stressors is as important as identifying the stressors themselves. Persons of concern with greater resilience in response to life's challenges will cope with them better than a brittle person. It is also important to maintain continual awareness, looking out for future stressors and how they may change the assessment and management of the case.

"Triggers" are usually associated with impulsive/reactive violence which is primarily an emotional and defensive response to a threat.[62] To say that a specific trigger is responsible for a targeted violence incident is to imply the person reacted emotionally and attacked, or "snapped," which is not accurate. Multiple *precipitating events* can build up over a period of time, raising stress levels until the person of concern is susceptible to having a "last straw event."[63] Particular attention should be paid to recent material, relational, or status losses in any of these categories: family, intimate/peer, occupational, and self-image.[64] A brittle person's reaction to the loss, and whether desperation and despair follow, are key points of assessment. Among adolescent and adult mass murderers, significant losses happened to many offenders in the hours, days, or weeks leading up to their violent acts.[65]

The threat management team must always include in its assessment the identification of potential future events which could push a lower concern case to higher concern. Is the person of concern at risk of foreclosure a year down the road? Is his marriage unhappy, creating a risk of divorce on the horizon? The team should adopt a forward-thinking approach and attempt to identify upcoming stressors and precipitating events.

Mitigators

In addition to risk factors, warning behaviors, stressors, and precipitating events, safety stakeholders and threat managers should also identify the protective factors present in a person of concern's life. These protective factors, or threat mitigators, may prevent him from thinking seriously about, or completing, an act of targeted violence. These variables are also termed stabilizers, buffers[66] or inhibitors.[67] General types of stabilizers, buffers and inhibitors include:

- Persons, things, or circumstances of sufficient value to the person of concern that reduce the likelihood that he may plan and carry out an act of targeted violence
- Facets of the person himself which enhance his ability to cope with life's trials
- External factors which reduce the risk of planned violence, such as in relation to the target or physical environment

Just as with threat enhancing factors, mitigating factors are not to be weighted uniformly but rather individually on a case-by-case basis. A treasured relationship with one's children, for example, might have greater weight than a multitude of other mitigators or enhancers. Below are examples of threat mitigators commonly evaluated by threat management teams:

- Pursuit of non-violent, legally and socially-sanctioned methods of conflict resolution: Complaints, letters and emails, and habitual initiation of litigation are typically considered threat mitigators. These behaviors demonstrate investment in sanctioned methods of seeking redress for injustice, which therefore suggests that violence is not considered to be the only alternative. A person of concern's complaints, especially when they are constant, can be cumbersome and annoying to address; however, devotion of energy and effort toward leveraging "the system" or communicating openly about grievances may indicate the person is more interested in venting, securing financial compensation, getting an apology, or simply being acknowledged, rather than planning future violence.

Howlers

The BAU occasionally experiences someone who makes repeated threats of violence, and yet *also* pursues non-violent, legally and socially sanctioned methods of conflict resolution at the same time, such as continually filing litigation and complaints. Such a person may be a "howler" [68] who could be less likely to have violent intent, in that he appears to be invested in lawful, nonviolent processes for obtaining justice. This person's commitment may be to the act of communicating, rather than acting out violently. In all cases, however, concern from a threat assessment and management perspective should arise when a "howler" has failed to achieve his goals, and legally and socially sanctioned methods are exhausted—he could then feel nonviolent options have evaporated.

- Sense of humor: A sense of humor and the ability to laugh, in spite of life's challenges, is considered a mitigator. Laughing reduces negative physiological reactions to stress, and stress-resistant people tend to employ humor or spend time with those who do.[69] Using humor to cope increases resilience. Review of interviews and investigative information in relation to successful and thwarted targeted violence incidents generally revealed that the offenders did not tend to use humor to cope with challenges.

- Positive, realistic goals: Nurturing of future plans and aspirations is a mitigating factor. Goals, provided they are realistic and healthy, tend to mitigate violence concern because the person of has something positive to work toward. As a more practical matter, the establishment of short- and long-term plans and goals suggests the person sees himself existing in the future, which infers the person is not considering suicide or mass homicide.

- Supportive family: At least one family member who supports intervention, sets reasonable limits on behavior, and provides healthy structure and a positive influence, can be a threat mitigator. The more family members who are capable and willing to fill this supportive role, the better.

- Healthy social supports: Having a network of law-abiding friends and/or significant others around, particularly in daily life, is a mitigator. Such positive and healthy social supports act as stabilizing forces in the person's life, buffering against negative feelings which can lead to a need to act out violently. Membership or participation in a church, law-abiding club, or community group can all qualify as mitigators. A special pet can also offer healthy support.

- Positive coping mechanisms: A person of concern who regularly engages in positive activities such as exercise, healthy interests, or a hobby may have acquired an increased capacity to deal with stress if these are outlets unrelated to a grievance or to violence. As long as these outlets do not involve illegal, destructive, or harmful activities, they will generally be considered mitigators.

- Access and receptiveness to assistance: Access *and* receptivity to needed assistance generally reduce concern because aid can often improve quality of life in various ways. Examples include access to mental health or social services, educational or vocational assistance, outreach from family or friends, help for physical or medical conditions, financial assistance with basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, and any other needs the person may have.

- "On the radar": The mere fact that a person of concern is the focus of an assessment and management process, with buy-in by law enforcement and safety stakeholders, is a good starting point. Active threat assessment and management allows the team to devise and implement strategies to steer the person away from violence. The effectiveness of this mitigator depends heavily on engagement by stakeholders and support from the top down in each organization involved in the process.

Level of concern

The term "risk assessment" can mean different things within different professions, and is used often in various spheres. To physical security specialists, risk equals "threat plus vulnerability." To understand risk of security breach, one must know the threat and identify all vulnerabilities. To investigators, a risk assessment may be a less formal calculation of the probability of an undesirable event. Threat managers may often be asked to assess someone's violence risk. In the mental health profession, "risk assessment" is a technical term; it is an approach to psychological assessment that considers a multitude of factors and behavioral data, usually requiring in-person evaluations in a clinical

setting. All relevant data must be in hand in order to assess risk. These are unlikely to be available to threat managers faced with a need to quickly assess a rapidly changing situation. In the absence of complete information, a "level of concern" assessment can reflect the dynamic nature of warning behaviors, changing circumstances, and the effects of intervention.[70] Someone may be at high risk for violence, and yet justify varying levels of concern over time depending on what is being observed. The BAU recommends threat management teams think and write in terms of "level of concern," rather than level of risk. The BAU uses concern levels of low, moderate, elevated, and high, with an additional rating for potential imminence. (See Appendix A)

Once the team has gathered all of the available information, to include threat enhancers, threat mitigators, precipitating events, and other factors, they can begin to assess a level of concern. No magic or mathematical formula exists. Reasonable minds may differ about the importance of one enhancer over another or how many mitigators will outweigh a particularly troubling enhancer. This is why threat managers work best in teams. The consultative process allows for discussion and consensus. Ultimately, a team will arrive at a conclusion on a level of concern and will recommend management strategies based upon the particulars of the case.

Awareness of scrutiny

Expect behavioral changes in the person of concern if he becomes aware of the threat assessment process. Awareness of scrutiny can operate as a mitigator where the person yearns for attention or direction and he finds relief in finally being heard. It can be a reality check for the person of concern, reminding him that any plans for violent action have now been made much more difficult. Or, this awareness can cause the person of concern to engage in impression management, outright deception, acceleration of his plan, or to completely "go dark" and hide behaviors that could alarm

Violence Risk Assessment Tools

Several violence risk assessment tools are commercially available to assist mental health professionals and threat assessors with evaluating the violence potential of a person of concern. Actuarial violence risk assessment tools use an equation, formula, or statistical table to arrive at a mathematical probability of violence or other outcome. They employ quantified predictor variables validated through empirical research to arrive at a risk assessment for violent outcome. Tools that do not use a mathematical approach, but rather focus on qualitative data, are structured professional judgment (SPJ) tools. This method is based on scientific research, training, and experience, and places an emphasis on professional judgment guided by structured assessment tools. Threat assessments derived using SPJ generally examine individual enhancing and mitigating characteristics, with the goal of devising a management strategy that focuses on violence prevention. Finally, unstructured, clinical judgment is also occasionally used but is not the best choice for accurate threat assessments. In that approach, an evaluator assesses violence likelihood unaided by additional materials. Research has demonstrated this method is less accurate than actuarial or SPJ methods.

observers. Added attention might generate feelings of persecution in the paranoid. Depending on the particulars of a threat management strategy implemented for a person of concern, this awareness may be an expected and acceptable circumstance.

Establishing a baseline of behavior prior to awareness of scrutiny, if possible, may be helpful. When change is observed in this baseline behavior, it may be because the person of concern is reacting positively or negatively. For example, if the person has been a prolific online poster but goes quiet after being talked to about his concerning posts, it raises questions. Is the silence attributable to attempts to conceal or has there been a successful deterrent effect? Are there other possible explanations that would explain the change, such as ill health, or perhaps a positive life improvement? As with any behavior, change means *something,* and looking at that change and its meaning is important.

Targeting

Relationship to grievance

With enough information, and sometimes logical deduction, potential targets of a person of concern can often be identified. Additional targets may be actually or symbolically associated with those individuals. Opportunistic victims may be targeted at the time of the offense for any number of reasons, including convenience and availability, high visibility and potential for maximum shock value, or because a desired target is unavailable. In some cases, it may be difficult or impossible to pinpoint a relationship between grievance and targeting, even with the benefit of hindsight. For example, one assailant violently offended against the crowd at a suburban movie theater. No associations between the offender and the theater, or between the offender and any of the 82 casualties, were ever identified.

An offender may target locations rather than specific individuals. Choices can include locations where activity related to a grievance unfolded (e.g. school, workplace, or a shopping mall where a despised class of persons spends time). Other times it is less clear—some offenders have chosen locations where they were successful, perhaps for the last time. Sometimes, the target ultimately selected may not be a first choice, but rather one which is vulnerable and accessible. One offender returned to his old classroom building at his former university and assaulted a class in session with multiple firearms. He had no association with any of his victims. However, he had spent much of a highly successful undergraduate career in that building before beginning a period of repeated life failures. Logically, this targeting may make little sense to the rational observer. However, it apparently made sense to him. While he never articulated a grievance or violent ideation toward the students he hurt and killed, he had demonstrated a cluster of concerning risk factors and warning behaviors before the event. The learning point from a case like this may be that grievance may occasionally not be evident, but nevertheless threat managers should focus on an accelerating pattern of warning behaviors, how those behaviors may be influenced by risk factors, and whether mitigators are available to support the person of concern.

Relationship to psychosis

Psychosis is a severe mental disorder in which both thought and emotion distort reality. It is sometimes the driving factor behind targeted violence, but personality disturbances seem to play more of a role.[71] Nevertheless, caution is advised if one assumes that psychotic individuals will not be able to organize themselves enough to engage in complex and organized behavior. One early study found certain or probable psychosis in two thirds of adult mass murderers, contradicting such an assumption.[72] Recent research suggests that at least 20% of adult mass murderers were severely mentally ill.[73] In the experience of the BAU, and in the observations of researchers, deeply entrenched delusional beliefs can have the effect of focusing and driving pre-attack behaviors and propelling a would-be offender along a pathway toward violently offending.

Although likely representing a minority of cases, psychotic symptoms or disorders can be a primary influencer of target selection. For example, Mr. C drove across the country and engaged in significant violence at the U.S. Capitol. He killed two sworn U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) personnel, acting on his delusional belief that the United States was about to be annihilated by disease and legions of cannibals. After surviving the incident, he later disclosed that he went to the Capitol to gain access to "the ruby satellite," a device he said was kept in a Senate safe. As a person with paranoid schizophrenia, he was able to plan and carry out cross-country travel, and to engage in successful attack behavior. Mr. C believed the satellite was the key to putting a stop to the cannibalism. It had a means of reversing time, leading him to believe the deaths he caused were "not permanent." Although he previously communicated his beliefs to others, including multiple governmental agencies, he was unable to secure assistance with his mission to protect himself and the public from harm. In his mind, this forced him to take action on his own.

Even if the beliefs articulated by a person of concern seem clearly delusional, it is important to assess how capable the person may be of acting out violently or how fixated the person is on resolving a grievance. Is the person organized enough to attack? Is the person mobile and does he have access to weapons? Mr. C had a driver's license, a truck, access to firearms and ammunition, and had traveled several times to multiple federal agencies in the Washington, DC, area.

Family, loved ones, caregivers

Immediate family members residing in the home with a person of concern, caregivers, or anyone close to the person may be possible targets regardless of a seeming absence of grievance towards them. Homicidal violence toward such persons, in tandem with a larger attack, has occurred in too many cases to be overlooked. Motives for these pre-attack homicides range from animosity toward caregivers to wanting to shield them from the aftermath and stigma of the larger attack.

For example, Mr. D experienced lifelong, significant developmental challenges including communication and sensory difficulties and social-emotional problems. He became preoccupied with violence in elementary school, as demonstrated by graphic writings which went largely unaddressed. Crippling anxiety resulted in his placement in homebound education status in middle school. A child psychiatrist evaluated him, recommending intensive educational and therapeutic supports and expert

consultation; these recommendations went largely unheeded. His mother accommodated her son's resistance to medication, therapy and educational support. Mr. D spiraled into a life of isolation with his mother. He became fixated on mass murder, finding validation and support for this obsession from an online pseudo-community of mass murder enthusiasts. Rather than following the recommended care and treatment plan that may have helped Mr. D learn to adjust to the world, his mother created a world that adjusted to him. Her primary strategy was one of accommodation and appeasement, facilitated by a belief that she knew her son better than anyone, including the psychiatrist. Although no one but the offender was responsible for his crimes, opportunities for intervention were lost. The offender first murdered his mother, and went on to kill 20 children and six adults at a local elementary school.

Information gathering

Once a person of concern has been identified, some level of threat assessment, either triage or a 360° assessment, is the next step in determining whether the person might be on a trajectory toward targeted violence. Threat assessment is a highly detailed and nuanced process, often made extremely difficult by sparsely available information. One of the most important tasks in the process is gathering detailed information about a person of concern, the situation, the setting, and to a degree, the target. Both current and historical information is needed to form a complete picture. This section provides insight into the kinds of information assessors may consider seeking. Although there is no such thing as a global checklist to be followed in all cases, this section can serve as a general guide when initially looking at a new case. Once a picture of the person of concern begins to clarify, then specific information gathering decisions should be made. Each matter is highly unique for the simple reason that each human being is highly unique. Information gathering preferences must be determined for each case anew, taking into account the particular case under consideration.

Threat assessment teams will also have to accept that it will be the rare case indeed in which all desired information is available and no questions are left unanswered. Knowledge gaps are an unfortunate reality of threat assessment. It is critically important to gather as much information as possible, although sometimes information will simply not be available by any means. Sometimes it will be unavailable due to legal or logistical impediments, but generally speaking there is very often a great deal of information which can be accumulated in furtherance of truly understanding what is happening with a person of concern. Preliminary assessments can sometimes be offered pending development of additional information.

Assessments must be based upon fact, and if this caution is not heeded they can be distorted by assumption, speculation, and guess work. Patience is often required while research and investigation are conducted to fill in any data gaps. Inevitably, however, these gaps will occur. When they do, assessors must do the best they can without, to the extent possible, making assumptions. Partial or preliminary assessments should include caveats that indicate the information is incomplete. All should be aware of the "silo effect;"[74] data gaps may result when stakeholders do not share their information with one another. For example, if a law enforcement entity involved in a case does not share its information regarding the person of concern with the corresponding mental health institution,

important information could be missing when a critical mental health evaluation takes place, which could in turn result in less effective treatment.

When a question is asked and cannot be answered, for example if mental health records at three hospitals are known to exist but are not available through consent or other lawful means, then a threat assessment team knows and understands it has a significant information gap in the case. This is a known unknown—the team is aware that it does not have a piece of information. The advantage here is that the team knows about the gap and can try to address it through other means (e.g., interviews of past associates or loved ones could reveal facts and observations that might fill in that gap).

Another important gap is the unknown unknown—a facet of the case which the team is not even aware exists. An example would be when a threat management team knows a person of concern had been hospitalized for psychiatric care in the local community, but had no idea he had also been hospitalized twice more in the past, in distant states. The facts and circumstances of those treatment periods could be important. Did episodes of violent or threatening conduct lead to them? Were family members involved with the commitment process and therefore are potential allies in the current situation? Thorough information gathering greatly reduces the risk of unknown unknowns.

Gathering information could be somewhat intrusive into a person of concern's life and therefore a respectful approach is a must. Collecting some kinds of information may also require legal process or consent, though many privacy laws allow for disclosure of records when necessary to avert imminent violence. Although finding information is not always easy, it is also unwise to rely upon superficial data, to intentionally decide not to fill information gaps, or to disengage and do nothing. Therefore, a robust but respectful information gathering stage of inquiry is recommended before a threat assessment is conducted. It is important to put the behavior of concern into the greater context of the person's life by gathering information. Striking a balance between privacy and public safety is essential. However, a level of intrusiveness may sometimes be necessary in order to be thorough, accurate and fair.

The following behaviorally relevant information has been found helpful in targeted violence threat assessment, and can be gathered from interviews, open source research and records collection. It is by no means a comprehensive list meant to identify every potential source of information. Below, in "Data sources," information types and sources are identified. Next in "Relevance of data," further explanation about the relevance of these sources is offered. Threat assessors are cautioned against a tendency to focus only on details which support concern for violence rather than all details which include threat mitigators (See pages 21-23, "Bias").

Data sources

- Law enforcement and military
  - Criminal history and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) offline searches,[c] emergency and non-emergency calls for service related to the person of concern or his residence, non-arrest police reports
  - Military service records, if any
- Education and workplace
  - School records, including attendance, academic performance, disciplinary or counseling records and notes, writing or other expressive class assignments, interviews with teachers and other staff who personally interacted with or observed the person of concern, or any other information relevant to behavior
  - Employment and personnel records, to include attendance, disciplinary or counseling records, interviews with supervisors and coworkers, performance records, or any other information relevant to behavior
- Medical and mental health
  - Medical and mental health records, including notes by care providers
  - Interactions with social services agencies
  - Substance use or abuse, to include doctor-prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications and supplements, recreational substance use including alcohol and illicit drugs, and unconventional substances (e.g., bath salts)
  - Participation in substance treatment, behavioral treatment or other rehabilitation programs
- Expressions
  - Correspondence, particularly to/from any identified potential victims, to include electronic mail messages, letters, notes, poems, song lyrics, text messages, or graffiti
  - Journals, notes, other writings regarding topics of interest to the person of concern, especially including those which raise concerns about potential violence, although safety stakeholders are reminded that evidence of mitigators can also be found in writings
  - All online presence and activity, to include social media, blogging, research, business or professional activity
- Life and relationships
  - Nature and quality of family and social relationships
  - Descriptions of interactions with others, both when the person of concern is satisfied and dissatisfied
  - Living situation, to include cohabitants and the nature/quality of relationships with them, nature of residence and upkeep, whether residence is also used for other purposes
  - Habits, routines, opinions and views of the person of concern
  - Memberships, religious views and practice if any, hobbies and pastimes

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[c] Criminal history and NCIC offline information is typically available only to law enforcement agencies. Therefore, sharing of specifics from such reports with other members of a threat assessment team may be limited.

- Movies, television shows, video games, books and magazines, including how much time and energy is devoted to particular favorites
- Financial situation and status, as evidenced by purchasing patterns, income and losses

➢ Other
- Personal electronic devices (e.g., computers, phones, game consoles, cameras, flash drives)
- Weapons access and familiarity, attempts to access weapons, target practice and shooting club membership, concealed carry permits and ownership registration

Relevance of data

➢ Criminal history, NCIC offline searches, non-arrest law enforcement agency reports: A criminal history provides insight into a person's level of respect for laws, boundaries and limits, as well as his comfort level with negative behaviors. It may also offer insight into what a person considers to be taboo versus acceptable behavior. Interactions with law enforcement may offer insight into whether a person respects and complies with authority, and his attitude toward law enforcement. Contacts that did not necessarily result in arrest can be excellent sources of this insight, as well. Past recorded contacts may provide abundant direction regarding behavior management. As the best indicator of future behavior is often past behavior, it is important to know whether a person has engaged in past violence, and if so, what kind of violence. Defensive violence in a bar fight is much different from walking up to a coworker and punching him in the face. Not all violence may appear in a criminal history report, so it is important to ask those individuals who know the person well if he has exhibited any violent behavior in the past. Past violent behavior may also be documented in non-arrest related police reports and school records. Criminal investigation reports will usually detail behaviors which can only be inferred by a "rap sheet."

➢ Military records: Military records provide insight into a person's experience with firearms, offensive/defensive tactics, and other special skills relevant to the ability to plan and carry out an act of targeted violence. As personnel files, they can provide data related to training and certifications; commendations; mental and physical health diagnoses, treatment and care; leadership; ability to obey authority; disciplinary issues; discharge summaries; and other behavior-rich details.

➢ School or employment records: These records, while sometimes shielded from threat assessment team review by privacy considerations, can supply many kinds of relevant information. Patterns of emotional decline or improvement over time can be observed via performance, attendance, or behavioral changes if records are available for a lengthy period. Whether or not the school or job has a positive effect on the person, or if the job or school is a source of a grievance, may be detected. Clues to targeting, research and planning, preparation, emotional leakage, and more could potentially be found in such records.

➢ Medical history: These records can provide insight into injuries, chronic and acute illness, pain, treatment successes and failures, specialist referrals and more. All of these can represent enhancers and mitigators for consideration during the assessment process. Frequency of medical consultation and treatment can also offer clues to a person's level of receptivity to assistance and intervention. Regarding medication history, dosages, route of ingestion, frequency, side effects, and drug interactions could all affect behavior, emotions, and mental processing and may increase paranoid or depressed thoughts which may subsequently lead to violent action. For medications prescribed to help with an existing mental or emotional disorder, it is important to note whether the person is complying with the prescription. A general medical doctor or a psychiatrist may be consulted where necessary for assistance with understanding the effects substances may have on the person of concern's behavior and thought processes.

Head Trauma

Although not directly correlated with predatory violence, a history of head injury may be of interest because it does correlate with general violence risk factors, such as increased impulsivity, increased alcohol use, relationship instability, or others. The BAU has experienced cases in which head injury raises concern for impulsive or reactive violence in persons of concern. For example, a person of concern with a history of serious head injuries and demonstrated impulse control issues may not be at increased risk for planning a predatory attack *because of* the head injury history, but he could be at increased risk for impulsively harming a target when interactions do occur.

➢ Mental health history and diagnosis: Information about a person's mental health, declines and improvements (and what may have precipitated them), suicidal and/or homicidal ideation, medications, specific treatments that were successful and unsuccessful, notes about the person of concern's feelings about treatment, and prognosis for the future are all potentially revealed in these records. Treatment successes or failures may inform an assessment and assist in identifying effective threat management strategies.

➢ Expressions: Persons of concern may provide clues about their grievances in their expressions. Identification of a grievance can help pinpoint potential fixations. It can also offer clues about what threat management strategies might be successful, in that the grievance could be a solvable, or at least reducible, problem. If threat managers are able to understand what thoughts and feelings are driving the person of concern, they are that much closer to figuring out how to prevent violence from occurring. A person of concern may express that violence is an, or perhaps *the*, acceptable method of conflict resolution. Expressed violent ideations can also offer hints about targeting, means of potential attack, or other vital clues to the thoughts and plans of a person of concern. Threat managers should explore past or present suicidality and statements of hopelessness ("I see no way out"), as well as homicidal ideation. Social media platforms should be examined to identify the content, frequency, and type of social media use by the person of concern (See pages 49-50 "Social media and the Internet").

- Life and relationships: Details of living situation and life pattern are important. They may help identify others who could provide stability and support, or who could make the situation worse. If the person of concern lives alone, that privacy may afford isolation needed to plan and prepare to engage in violence. Residential instability is a stressor that can add to a person's burden and be a drain on coping skills. An unstable residential history could be representative of unstable personal relationships, financial stressors, unresolved mental health concerns, or other problems. Life pattern is also important. First, it will help threat managers know when the person begins to deviate or withdraw from that pattern. Additionally, knowledge of eating, sleeping, and social interaction patterns are helpful for assessing general stability and physical and mental well-being. The person of concern's financial resources should be taken into consideration because they may affect the ability to carry out a plan of targeted violence. Access to money increases the ability to purchase weapons and other gear needed for an assault, to travel, or to fund other logistical needs. Access to money could also be used in a positive manner, for example to finance hobbies or positive interests, to spend time with loved ones, to gain independence from toxic influences, or simply to enjoy life. Additionally, financial losses and hardships may be significant stressors in a person's life and should be considered in assessing current and future violence concern.

- Preoccupation with targeted violence: Many targeted violence offenders have demonstrated a preoccupation with past incidents. Quoting from other offenders, keeping statistics about notorious events, and a general captivation with violence, particularly targeted violence, all suggest a preoccupation. It may also reveal clues about potential assault methods if the person of concern has a particular interest in several events with commonalities between them. For example, if a person of concern is most interested in previous offenders who used or tried to use improvised explosive devices, then it could be that the person of concern is interested in doing the same thing.

- Weapon access and familiarity: This aspect of assessment directly relates to capacity to engage in targeted violence.

- Other: Personal electronic devices (e.g., computers, phones, game consoles, cameras, flash drives) may all hold information specifically relevant to threat assessment, such as evidence of research, planning and preparation, leakage, identification of grievances and violent ideations, and more.

Interviews

Interviews of the person of concern and those who know him can provide a wealth of information regarding the person and his motivations, plans, and risk for violence. Family members, co-workers, employers, friends, students attending the same educational institution, and others could all potentially assist threat managers who are engaged on a case. Traditional "crime-solving" interviews can be somewhat ineffective in identifying violence concern or vulnerability to violence risk, particularly where no crime has been committed. As with any investigative interview, however, interviewees may leave out crucial information because they believe the information is not important, is embarrassing, or can get them into trouble. The goal of many threat assessment interviews is to obtain a complete "360

degree," or a complete biological, psychological, and social portrait of the person. The information presented in this guide can help with appropriately structuring these interviews.

Records

Records can be a source of valuable information about current and past behaviors exhibited by a person of concern. Threat managers should collect as many relevant records as possible and should have knowledge of privacy laws and confidentiality protections in order to properly obtain them. Like all case information, they should be properly protected once obtained.

Privacy Laws

Understanding the laws protecting privacy rights of individuals is important for threat management teams. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and federal and state privacy acts are primary examples. They can be complex and time consuming to digest, but doing so is a must. A common perception appears to be that record holders must choose between blowing the whistle and risking a lawsuit, or remaining silent and risking a disaster. The reality is that privacy laws can comfortably accommodate both interests; they limit, but do not prohibit, disclosure of information to law enforcement and threat assessment teams. For example, exceptions often allow disclosure of protected information when necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety. Additionally, stakeholders should remember a person of concern always has the option of consenting to disclosure. Teams should maintain a source of expertise regarding applicable privacy laws.

Open source

Open source searches for the person of concern can identify additional family members and associates, past residences, current roommates, financial/employment information, firearm ownership, vehicle information, and electronic mail (email) addresses used by the person. Social media reviews can reveal current and past activity, assist in identifying a grievance, and identify additional friends and acquaintances, travel plans, interests or hobbies, and more.

Social media and the internet

The importance of the role of social media in threat assessment and management cannot be overstated. It saturates daily life for many people during all waking hours. Social media can be accessed on smart phones, computers and televisions, and now by wearable technology. Live internet streaming is as much a part of everyday life for some as buying groceries. It is imperative that threat management teams have on staff, or have access to, someone with cyber skills and social media acumen. Some obvious examples of current social media options which often come up in threat assessment cases include: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google+; new services are created every week and may be more generation-specific. Weblog ("blog") and commerce sites may also reveal information about a person of concern. A complete list of options would likely be impossible to catalog as the possibilities seem nearly infinite and are ever-changing. For persons of concern in any age group, it may be advisable to consult with someone in an equivalent age, social sphere, and community, for insight into which social media

platforms may be in use. However this task is accomplished, it is important that it *is* accomplished. Social media offers an often unparalleled view into the thoughts, feelings, plans and intentions of a person of concern. Social media leakage may initially be unknown to investigators, particularly where pseudonyms are used in place of a person's true name. However, once it is located it can be a very effective source of information regarding the person's mindset and future plans. Social media review should begin as soon as a case is opened, and continue until concerns are abated.

A study of targeted violence incidents at schools revealed that in over 75% of the cases studied at least one person had information that the offense was being planned. Most were peers, such as a friend, a schoolmate, or a sibling.[75] Some peers knew about the plan because the offender "leaked" it. Leakage on social media could take the form of writings, images, videos, and even "likes." An example of social media leakage occurred in a European case. Hours before a 2011 assault on a youth camp, the offender posted a video online which appeared to advocate violence toward specific religious and political groups. About 90 minutes before his offense, he posted a 1,500+ page "manifesto" online, describing two years of preparation for violence. It is worth noting that neither of these posts included a direct threat.

Online, one can readily find support and validation for even the most violent ideas and plans; for those who wish to remain anonymous the internet can offer that protection. The dominance of the internet and online life has led to the evolution of a "pronoid pseudocommunity"[76] of people who are fascinated with targeted violence incidents or even endorse them. Pronoia is a converse of paranoia: a delusional belief that others are saying good things about the pronoid person.[77] In the emotional safety of this virtual environment, the person of concern finds a home of sorts in a pseudocommunity—he can discover mutual agreement and encouragement for his feelings about himself, others, his grievance and more, no matter how abhorrent those ideas may be. Attachments formed within the pseudocommunity can replace real world ones, particularly when online friends offer validation when "real" people refuse to do so. This can foster increased senses of grandiosity and power, both of which may contribute to a sense of entitlement to engage in violence.

Another concept related to online activity is disinhibition, which is a lack of restraint demonstrated by disregard for social norms and poor ability to assess risk. Disinhibited individuals may say and do things online they would not normally do when others are able to observe them. They can easily research and view anything online without consequence. The internet is a place of infinite links, where one can burrow down through multiple sites by clicking on appealing topic after topic in a sort of "rabbit hole" effect. Some individuals may be trolling the internet and viewing violent material simply for entertainment. Some may be searching for a satisfying fantasy. A few may be looking for ideas for a plan of violence. Social media and the internet provide ease of access which can in turn accelerate violent ideation into planning or action.

Chapter 4 Management: The Prevention Plan

The recommendations contained in this chapter derive from the experience and perspective of the BAU and the symposium participants. They include passive and active strategies geared toward preventing violence and contain many valuable and actionable suggestions for threat managers. Although the intake and assessment processes are generally standardized, management plans should be unique in most instances.

Once a level of concern has been assessed in a case, the next step is management. Recognizing a threat or a concern for violence is only the beginning; doing something about it is what may change the course of events. Threat management is a carefully planned intervention or series of interventions focused around the person of concern, potential targets, the situation and/or the setting in which violence could occur. Effecting change with regard to one or more of these domains may change the course of events in a positive way. In this chapter, threat management is addressed from various standpoints, including identifying several threat management techniques which have proven successful.

Unfortunately, increasingly sparse resources and a high volume of service calls make it difficult for law enforcement agencies to expand their scope beyond enforcing criminal laws. Most are stretched thin as it is. Diverting time and energy away from criminal behavior to focus on preventing a possible event may not be the easiest leadership decision to make. It is sometimes a necessary one, however. Threat management is about diverting direction of interest, diminishing dangerous and concerning behaviors, and altering a trajectory toward targeted violence.

Safety and caretaking

Protecting public safety and caring for persons of concern are heavily intertwined. Successful management strategies embrace this reality; focusing on one of these aspects at the expense of the other is potentially hazardous. Threat management teams exist primarily to protect public safety. This is accomplished in large part through interventions intended to improve a person of concern's well-being, always keeping in mind that public safety is the ultimate goal. All recommendations for action by the threat management team, even arrest or hospitalization, should be implemented in a respectful manner. Stakeholders should ensure the person's dignity is maintained; perceived loss of dignity may only fuel or create a new grievance. Potential consequences of planned interventions should always be considered before action is taken. Public safety may be enhanced when the person's well-being is improved and the grievance is addressed; both of these strategies attempt to prevent violence at its root.

Assumption of responsibility

Once a person of concern is identified, it is important that stakeholders take ownership of the case. The threat management team will be comprised of representatives from various entities; these entities are responsible for ultimate management. See Chapter 5 for recommendations regarding team logistics and functioning.

Threat management can be short-term or long-term, with an open case ranging in duration from days to years. Some cases that may initially seem to be short-term may ultimately turn out to be long-term. They may appear to be resolved, only to require reassessment at a later date as new facts and circumstances emerge. When assuming responsibility for a long-term case, a team could end up feeling exhausted, overwhelmed and desensitized. After a management plan has been initiated, the responsibility of the team and its members, and responsible stakeholders, does not stop. The plan must be seen through, continually reassessed and adjusted as necessary. If a person of concern moves to another jurisdiction, the case and all relevant information should be transferred in a responsible manner; thorough transfer briefings and follow-up are recommended.

Accurate and effective communication to determine ownership and responsibility will serve all involved teams and organizations well. However, sharing information for the sole purpose of 'passing the buck' is not effective threat management, and may even constitute irresponsible handling of the case. An entity attempting to pass responsibility for a case may be the most logically responsible whether it wants to be or not. It could be dangerous to hand off a case without ensuring the receiving entity understands the gravity of the situation and everything that has transpired up to the point of transfer. For example, one community threat assessment team has a practice which ensures seamless transition of cases within its region. If the school district team is managing a student of concern who leaves the school system, that case automatically transfers to the community's adult threat assessment team for continued assessment and management. If the person of concern leaves the jurisdiction, the case is responsibly transferred to the appropriate threat assessment team or law enforcement agency in the new jurisdiction.

Another potential pitfall is concluding that a case is over when the person of concern is fired, expelled, or otherwise removed from the immediate situation. This is simply not so. There may be little to stop a fired employee from returning to the work site, going to the residence of a targeted coworker, or appearing at a public venue favored by other employees. An expelled former student can easily return to campus, to the home of another student or staff member, or to some other location where targets may be found. Further, removing a person of concern from the field of view in this way creates a blind spot. Once threat managers' optics on the person is lost, there is no way to know if the person is escalating. While sometimes necessary, dismissal from the setting is not a threat management strategy in itself. Ironically, once a person is barred from a place, more planning for safety is often needed or strongly recommended.

A notable case in which removal from the setting did not prevent violence was that of Student E. He was a troubled young man attending high school and he exhibited many risk factors and warning signs concerning his environment and upbringing, family, mental health, and education. After he began demonstrating concerning behaviors, school administrators referred him for homeschooling. He murdered his grandfather and his grandfather's companion before returning to school and killing seven people and injuring five others. He committed suicide before he could be apprehended by the police. Unfortunately, removing Student E from the school setting did not prevent him from offending. It did, however, shield his behaviors from visibility, further his isolation and estrangement from peers and

caring adults, and offer him enhanced free time and privacy in which to plan and initiate acts of targeted violence.

In a workplace example, Mr. F was hired and quickly became known as a problem employee. He had interpersonal conflicts with everyone with whom he worked and always blamed others for his problems; his coworkers were very uncomfortable around him and felt threatened. Mr. F was dismissed less than a year after he was hired because of volatile behavior. He yelled at co-workers after learning of his firing and refused to leave the building; police had to escort him out. The company provided security to the staffers for a time after the incident, and directed them to call 9-1-1 if he ever returned to the property. Mr. F filed numerous legal complaints against his employer, all of which were ultimately dismissed based on lack of evidence. More than two years after he was fired, Mr. F took revenge by shooting to death two former colleagues and hours later took his own life. In his suicide note he wrote that he was influenced and provoked by other shooters who had made the news in previous months.

When feasible, organizations, safety stakeholders, and threat management teams should consider maintaining access to the person of concern and retaining an optic on his behavior before and after expulsion, termination of employment, or other form of removal from the environment. Otherwise, a blind spot could be created, limiting a team's ability to effectively gather intelligence and take the appropriate actions necessary to prevent an act of violence.

Prevention, not prediction

Threat managers are not psychics and they cannot predict the future. Just as a targeted violence event cannot be predicted, the perfect threat management solution cannot be foreseen. The threat assessment and threat management relationship is one of continuous reassessment and modification. If one management strategy is not working as planned, the next steps are to reassess, modify the plan, and try again. Rarely is there only one solution for each case. The alternative is to do nothing, fail to adjust, and wait to see what happens. Unfortunately, making such a choice may only allow a bad situation to become worse.

When an act of targeted violence occurs, hindsight becomes easy. Once an act of violence has been perpetrated, the offender's situation, grievance, and violent ideation can seem obvious. Without the benefit of hindsight, however, threat managers cannot know at what point an intervention would have been effective. Prevention, therefore, is best approached in a holistic way. Thinking about the person of concern, the target, the situation and the setting in their totality increases the odds of preventing tragedy. To use an example from medicine, a cardiologist can identify patients at high risk for a cardiac event. The doctor cannot, however, predict which particular patient will have a heart attack. He knows the risk factors—high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, family history, poor diet, and no exercise—and can help the patient manage these. However, he cannot know which patient would have had a heart attack without management of risk factors. This is prevention without prediction. A similar principle applies in threat assessment and management. Effecting thoughtful and

well-planned changes can stabilize a volatile situation and reduce violence concern in the absence of an ability to foretell the future.

Management spectrum options

Multiple, concurrent management strategies are almost always appropriate. One suggestion is to identify potential strategies from each discipline represented on the threat management team; each member should look to his or her own resources to evaluate what can be leveraged toward managing the case. Signs of deterioration can be viewed as opportunities for intervention. If mental decompensation seems to be happening, is commitment or at least a mental health violence risk assessment possible? When a firearm is possessed by a juvenile, is juvenile prosecution an option?

There is no "one size fits all" approach to threat management. Instead, a threat management team should focus on case-specific, creative solutions based upon communication, partnerships, and leveraging of resources. Flexibility is the key. Options include, but are not limited to, the following:

Person of concern

- Take no further action at this time: This is a deliberate threat management option based upon articulable facts that justify the decision to take no action. This decision should rest on an assessment that the person of concern poses minimal or no risk at that particular time. This is not a strategy or solution for not knowing how to proceed.

In one case example, Student G wrote an assigned class essay about "my future career," detailing an aspiration to become an assassin. The case received attention due to a zero tolerance policy which prohibited violently themed material. A review of the essay strongly suggested it was purely fanciful in nature. Further, exploration of the student's personal history revealed no threat enhancers and many mitigators. When interviewed, Student G responded with surprise and annoyance that his essay was taken seriously, which was consistent with this student's normal attitude that life should not be taken too seriously. The BAU recommended no further action be taken on the case at that time.

- Watch and wait: A watch and wait strategy is used when someone *may* be a person of concern, but insufficient information is available upon which to base a complete assessment or implement more active management strategies. Watch and wait can include observation of the person of concern's online and in-person behaviors. This option can be implemented in conjunction with any threat management plan as a way to continuously gather information and observe changes in behavior.[78]

In one case example, Mr. H had a long history of harassing behavior and set his sights on the CEO of a large company. Mr. H authored a steady stream of harassing emails and letters to the CEO, demanding money in exchange for ideas he claimed were stolen from him. The BAU assessed Mr. H posed a low level of concern for targeted violence. Wishing the harassment to stop, the CEO requested that law enforcement interview and admonish Mr. H. The BAU's opinion was that an admonishment

would likely be ineffective; from a threat management perspective such an admonishment might elevate Mr. H's grievance with the company and could cause him to believe that the FBI was in collusion with the company against him. Unless and until Mr. H's communications suggested imminence such as evaporating patience or that his opportunity to attack was narrowing, the BAU recommended Mr. H be allowed to vent, and that stakeholders should wait to see if any escalation occurred.

In another example, Mr. I was fired from his job, lost a child custody dispute, and had been arrested twice within six months for non-violent offenses. Police found notes which he kept on current events including a recent act of targeted violence. During an interview with law enforcement, Mr. I was very inquisitive and questioned why police were making something out of nothing. Results of a search warrant on Mr. I's phone appeared to corroborate his explanation that he was interested in current events rather than conducting research and attack planning. Mr. I had begun searching for new employment and filed an appeal of the child custody decision. A preliminary assessment yielded no evidence of a grievance, warning behaviors, an identified target, or any suggestion of time or violent action imperatives. The BAU assessed that Mr. I posed a low level of concern for targeted violence, and recommended passive monitoring, including review of publically-accessible social media accounts to remain aware of any changes or escalation in his communications.

- Third-party monitoring: Third party monitoring involves identifying and enlisting a reliable and discreet individual to assist threat managers. This third party could be a family member, friend, co-worker, probation officer, or anyone who has regular contact with the person of concern. Ideally this individual will act as a supportive listener who discourages negative or violent thoughts and who acts as a positive influence. An ideal third party monitor is liked, trusted, and cognizant of the person's ups and downs. A third-party monitor is someone who will not reveal threat managers' interest unless agreed-upon, and will keep threat managers apprised of developments with the person of concern.

For example, Mr. J had a lengthy criminal history and used social media to post graphic photos of mutilated and dismembered bodies, as well as information regarding targeted violence and mass murder. He also had a long history of substance abuse as well as mental illness. When his parental rights were terminated, he developed a grievance against various persons involved in this decision. In addition to other measures, the BAU recommended the introduction of a third party monitor. Due to Mr. J's reclusive nature, he had very few friends or family members with whom he was close. He did, however, have rapport with a neighbor who was deemed to be responsible and discreet. This neighbor was recruited to gently monitor Mr. J for signs of escalation or changes in behavior, allowing threat managers to unobtrusively retain awareness.

- Third-party intervention: In this variation, the third-party monitor is also positioned, and safely able, to provide more active assistance in managing the person of concern by various means. Examples may include helping to ensure the person gets to outpatient treatment appointments or actively discouraging violent thinking or planning.

Student K was an isolated 15-year-old who was arrested for making threats. He attempted to purchase an assault weapon and body armor online, and expressed an interest in violent groups. He developed a grievance against the police who arrested him and talked about attacking them. Student K's adoptive mother did not take his behavior seriously and his adoptive father was largely absent. The BAU recommended a third party intervention strategy, with a particular emphasis on caretaking, to try to manage Student K away from purchasing weapons and ammunition. He liked and respected a track coach at his high school, who was willing to engage with Student K, discourage him from violence, and serve as a supportive listener. The coach invited Student K to work with the track team as an assistant, giving him an outlet for his time and the opportunity to be a productive member of the school community. This management technique worked extremely well. Student K felt someone was finally listening to and caring for him. He gradually became disinterested in retaliation against the police and more focused on a positive future.

- Direct interview: An interview with the person of concern can be structured in various ways to serve different purposes. Goals of an interview could include:

  - Gathering information about grievance, motivations, plans, the identity of additional interview contacts, and more
  - Redirecting the person of concern away from any known targets and away from violence
  - Offering appropriate assistance
  - Delivering an admonishment against further negative behaviors
  - Serving as an effective deterrent, in that it reveals to the person that his behavior has been noticed

Threat managers should be mindful that the interview could also cause the person of concern to begin hiding his behaviors. Exit interviews to gather information following terminations or expulsions can be particularly effective counterbalancing techniques to offset the loss of visibility once the person is removed from the immediate environment. Like any management technique, direct contact with the person of concern must always be carefully considered in terms of costs and benefits, particularly risk of aggravating the situation.

Mr. L was an employee for a large international company who was terminated for sexual harassment and inappropriate emails. Mr. L respected a court's order prohibiting further contact with the victim of his harassment and prohibiting physical approach to the company's property. Six months later, he began emailing another employee to complain about the victim, who filed a sexual harassment civil suit. He also complained about the company's unfairness in terminating him and emailed the employee a photograph of a firearm. The company became concerned that Mr. L might be considering an act of targeted violence. He had no known history of violence but did have an alcohol dependence issue. The BAU recommended an interview strategy of trying to convince him to relinquish his firearms, to seek psychological counseling, and to attend treatment for alcohol dependence; alcohol use was suspected of exacerbating his menacing and harassing behavior. Mr. L could not afford counseling, so the company offered to pay for it to assist him in becoming well. Social services and employment

counseling were also offered. Mr. L was receptive to the interview and assistance strategy, and as a result his threatening and harassing behavior ceased once he began to feel better.

- Administrative actions: These actions can include probation, suspension, expulsion, or other restrictions. Strict adherence to policies which prohibit bad behavior and provide for discipline are often a must, as habitual violation of limits and boundaries without enforcement may encourage additional bad behavior. Care should be taken to avoid creating another grievance if possible. In cases where expulsion or other removal from the environment is implemented, that entity should contact the appropriate authorities or a counterpart, such as law enforcement or a new school, and share information needed to continue effective threat management. An interview should be conducted, if feasible, to identify the person's plans and reaction to the administrative action. Regardless of the action chosen, preserving dignity should be a top priority in all interactions. Alternatives such as voluntary leave, perhaps due to medical or mental health concerns, with defined standards and conditions for return, may also be considered.

Student M was a good student who held several leadership roles in high school. However, he held a grudge for being ridiculed by other students and believed he was being persecuted by his teachers because of his sexual orientation and his racial origin. Student M authored an assigned essay about a character, who endured difficulties in school and felt betrayed by others. The paper outlined a scenario wherein this character brought a gun to school and shot multiple people, who were presumed to be actual students and faculty, before committing suicide. In response, the school told Student M he could graduate early and avoid expulsion by completing certain requirements, which included no access to firearms, no contact with school staff, and a mental health evaluation. He adhered to all conditions and was making college and career plans. Independently, local law enforcement filed misdemeanor criminal charges for disorderly conduct in relation to the essay. The BAU opined Student M posed a low level of concern for violence and that criminal charges may compromise his future and fuel his grievance. The district attorney's office offered Student M the option of entering a pretrial diversion program provided he sign another contract whereby he agreed to refrain from conduct that would result in his arrest for three years. These contracts established boundaries and served as reminders to Student M that he would be held accountable for any future bad behavior. He went on to college and successfully completed his education without incident.

In another example, Mr. N published a novel that very closely tracked real events in his life and which described a character who engaged in a workplace attack after being fired from his job. His narrative had a fantasy rehearsal quality to it, and its characters were easily identified as real-life co-workers. The graphic detail and carefully planned attack described in Mr. N's writings raised concerns that he could be considering violence himself. In the actual workplace, he appeared to "get away with" a considerable amount of bad behavior. He had been formally warned on two occasions for openly disregarding policy and supervisory instructions, and behaving disrespectfully. The BAU recommended that his employer discipline him for writing the novel as violating company policy prohibiting threatening or menacing behavior. Disciplining him set boundaries and limits on his behavior, and

communicated to him that he could not act in any manner he wished. The BAU recommended he be asked to sign a behavioral contract that clearly outlined expectations and consequences for bad behavior, which would be strictly enforced. Once Mr. N realized his behavior had to change or he risked losing his job, he stopped threatening and intimidating other employees. Continuing observation was, however, recommended for a period of time following stabilization of the situation.

- Civil actions: Options vary according to jurisdiction but include trespass warnings, restraining orders, and orders of protection, all sought under the authority of the court. Specificity in these orders is very important and should include clear boundaries, prohibitions, and consequences or legal implications for violations. Violations of a judge's order should be strictly enforced in a professional manner that preserves the dignity of the person of concern but reinforces the importance of abiding by boundaries. Threat management teams should recognize that civil orders may have the potential to inflame the person further and should thus carefully consider the implications of such action. The decision to pursue a civil order rests solely with the person or organization seeking the order.

- Criminal enforcement: These actions include arrest and prosecution under appropriate local, state, and/or federal laws, to include revocations of probation. Threat management teams should recognize that these options may have the potential to inflame the person further and should thus carefully consider the implications of such action. If criminal enforcement is chosen, further coordination and appropriate information sharing—with victims, mental health professionals, prosecutors and defense counsel, the court, pretrial services, the incarceration facility, probation and parole services—is essential. Some crimes appear simple at first glance, such as trespass, but may in reality be indicators of more complex and concerning behavior. There may be a difference between the crime committed and the violation charged, and it is imperative to understand the context of each violation before deciding on everything from charging decisions through post-conviction considerations. Each step is an opportunity to apply threat management strategies.

- Setting specific boundaries and limits: Threatening behavior is behavior that would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities to fear injury or harm. It is not limited to communication; physical actions intended to intimidate others are threatening as well. When ignored, these behaviors can escalate to more serious problems. Someone who engages in harassment, intimidation, bullying, or making threats may be doing so with intention, and the behavior may be repeated as long as it is [a] effective in supplying the person with something he wants, or [b] not stopped by an authority with the power to do so. A commonly used technique which assists with both assessment and management is setting specific boundaries and limits tailored to an individual situation and any particular threatening behaviors. As an assessment/reassessment technique, there is value in watching to see what the person of concern's reaction is to a limit that has been set. As a management technique, setting limits on behavior often works well, and the person of concern learns from that moment onward that bad behavior has consequences and will not be tolerated.

➢ 100% Enforcement: Total enforcement of all rules, limits, boundaries, laws, and orders can be effective in many cases to get a person of concern "in check" when he has established a pattern of bad behavior without consequence or challenge. As with any management strategy, 100% enforcement should only be implemented after a thorough assessment has been conducted. First, it may not be a wise approach for some volatile, psychotic, or paranoid persons of concern. Second, as noted later in this chapter, "zero tolerance" policies as blanket rules are not always suitable.

Mr. O had a pattern of harassing, stalking, and threatening a police sergeant and others, related to his perception that the sergeant had failed to investigate a case to his satisfaction. He also believed that various persons in his community were conspiring against him. Mr. O had been hospitalized numerous times, had a known history of methamphetamine use, and wrote frequent letters, blogs, and made videos about his complaints and conspiracy theories. He had an outstanding warrant for a stalking-related offense. Among the threat management strategies recommended were consistent and immediate enforcement related to all violations of the law, and arresting him on the outstanding warrant as soon as possible. The BAU also recommended that, because he demonstrated a degree of paranoia, police be as transparent as possible with him at all times, such as clearly outlining the exact procedures they would follow during and after his arrest.

➢ Mental health commitments: Hospitalization of the person of concern is sometimes necessary to protect his safety and that of others. Involuntary commitments can be quite difficult to secure. Each state has its own specifically articulated standard for commitment, but generally a showing must be made that the person of concern shows signs of mental illness and poses an imminent risk of harm to himself or others, or is unable to care for himself.[d] Decision makers may be well-advised to avoid the temptation to accept a mentally ill person of concern's agreement to voluntary commitment when he already meets the standard for involuntary commitment. If the person voluntarily commits himself, there may be nothing to stop him from checking himself out of hospitalization whenever he wants to leave. Further, a record of voluntary commitment may not have the same impact on the person's ability to legally possess firearms and ammunition.

It is essential for stakeholders to provide collateral information to the mental health provider. A person of concern could exploit the therapeutic alliance mindset by manipulating, malingering, or withholding relevant information. Telling the truth about violent intentions does not align with the goals of a person who does, indeed, truly intend harm. He may fear that truth-telling may cause him to be held longer, which is counterproductive to his goal. Evaluators should not base their decisions solely on the information provided to them by the person of concern, (e.g. "Of course I didn't mean that – I was just upset.").

Law enforcement officers are reminded that HIPAA and other privacy laws do not prohibit them from *providing information to* a mental health professional; the mental health professional may not be

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[d] One resource for identifying inpatient and outpatient standards for assisted psychiatric treatment, court-ordered assisted treatment, and emergency hospitalization by state may be found at www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org.

able to confirm patient status but may still legally accept this information. It is absolutely critical to ensure that mental health practitioners responsible for conducting intake or other evaluations have 100% of the case information available to them.

Student P was a criminal justice major with a high GPA. A high-risk admission, he had a long criminal history of alcohol and drug offenses, and a history of violence. His grievance was that he believed the faculty and students were sharing information about his criminal history. Student P sent threatening emails which caused a referral to the campus threat assessment team. When he sent a message that he was planning to commit suicide, he was involuntarily committed to the hospital for a mental evaluation. A forensic psychiatrist conducted a thorough evaluation and concluded he suffered from a delusional disorder and that his conduct would not change without treatment with antipsychotic medications. However, Student P had a long history of noncompliance with treatment and a history of self-medicating with alcohol and illegal drugs. Therefore, the treating psychiatrist recommended that he be forcibly medicated with injectable antipsychotic medications. In a similar case involving an "outpatient commitment," a person of concern was allowed the option of taking injectable antipsychotic medication because he would not comply with pills; he had to go to a local clinic for his injection once a month. While he did not legally have to submit to injections, failure to appear on the set dates would trigger immediate reassessment by the local threat management team and the potential for inpatient commitment.

- Substance abuse treatment: Options include inpatient hospitalization or outpatient drug treatment programs, random urine toxicology screens, court-ordered drug screens, and self-help programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

Mr. Q posted numerous threats directed to law enforcement and a minority group on social media. He had anti-government views, was paranoid, and had a history of alcohol and substance abuse. He was involuntarily committed for psychiatric evaluation and treatment as a teenager after assaulting his mother. He had attempted suicide at least once. He was also tied to illegal drug distribution, and was a known user of methamphetamine. A mental health professional consulted on the case and opined that Mr. Q's drug use was linked to his paranoia and threatening behaviors. Additionally, it dramatically reduced his quality of life and created additional stressors for him. Mr. Q was arrested for felony trespass in another jurisdiction during the time a threat assessment was being conducted. The BAU recommended coordination between jurisdictions and mandatory substance abuse treatment as part of any plea agreement or sentence, as a potentially highly effective threat management technique.

- Other services: Other needed services may be offered to the person of concern, depending upon his needs and circumstances. These may include counseling or outpatient mental health care, stress and anger management classes, alternatives to violence counseling, residential assistance, financial counseling, work training, and any other available options. Aside from the obvious humanitarian concerns, it is in the best interest of an organization or community that persons of concern have access to services and assistance that reduce the likelihood of violence.[79]

Student R was a middle school student who wrote concerning journal entries and drew pictures of violent characters related to depression, anger, and death. His family reported suicidal ideations and past treatment for depression. With a history of being ridiculed and bullied, he drafted a list identifying multiple students he wanted to kill and whom he believed deserved to die. According to Student R, his "other personality" would do the killing. The school initially suspended him and offered him outside counseling options, but ultimately expelled him for two years. The only way he could return earlier than two years would be to receive a psychiatric evaluation and opinion that he did not pose a threat to the school. The student's home life was unstable and neglectful and his family's relationships were strained and conflicted, providing an environment with minimal nurturing and ever-increasing isolation. He wanted to see his friends and return to school. However, he did not meet the terms set for re-admittance due to lack of both financial resources for an evaluation and any effort by his family to obtain services. To further complicate matters, the family moved to a different school district, whose staff was not very helpful to the family in navigating the system. The BAU felt the best available management plan for the student would be to place him in a structured learning environment where he could receive needed services, attention and socialization, and be exposed to healthy, positive influences. Additionally, the BAU recommended that his family be referred to a county behavioral health services program which could extend assistance to the family regarding case management, parental resources, and community organizations.

- "Outside the box" thinking: Management techniques are only limited by the team's creativity and the law—any technique drawn from a creative or new perspective must comply with local, state, and federal laws. "Thinking outside the box," or innovative thinking, can provide the opportunity to resolve grievances or disrupt planning in ways not previously experienced by the person or not considered by the team.

For example, Mr. S wrote a "manifesto" type of document containing very concerning language. Additional information subsequently led to the conclusion that he posed a high level of concern for imminent, targeted violence. Interviews conducted with his roommates, as well as evidence found at his residence, caused stakeholders to seek his immediate confinement. Although no charges were identified at that moment, law enforcement was able to detain him on a mental health hold. However, within 24 hours, the hospital planned to release him based upon his denial of violent intent, in spite of evidence strongly suggesting he should not be released; the treating psychiatrist had not reviewed all of the information provided by law enforcement. Mr. S denied any harmful intent and did not wish to comply with treatment or with boundaries on his behavior. In anticipation of his release, the now substantial multi-agency, multi-disciplinary threat management team scrambled to find additional "outside the box" solutions. Civilian prosecution was not possible at that time. One unique solution was to place Mr. S, who was a military reservist, on active duty orders as a means of enforcing limits and boundaries on his behavior. The team worked closely with his command to implement threat management planning while he was under mandatory compliance with military orders.

In another example, Mr. T was threatening Company 1. No charges could be filed because there was no law which criminalized threatening communications directed to a company as opposed to an individual. Threat managers recommended filing criminal charges as an effective means of managing Mr. T's menacing and threatening behavior. The local police chief recognized a gap in the ability to protect his community and successfully lobbied the state legislature to change the law to criminalize such threats to an institution or company.

Situation

- Address the grievance: Addressing a person's grievance is often overlooked as a management technique for various reasons, including stakeholders' notions of fairness, perceived financial or legal constraints, fatigue, or pride. However, addressing the grievance can alter a person of concern's trajectory toward violence. Many options are available to address the person of concern's grievance. Waiver of fees or debt, deadline extensions, distance learning, severance packages, alternatives to standard business practice, or other options may allow the person to achieve a goal, allow him to feel heard, or preserve his dignity. In the workplace, extension of health insurance, retirement, or other benefits, even when not legally required, may be helpful. In the school setting, allowing a student of concern to transfer to a different class, change fields of study, or to complete his studies online, could reduce tension. Addressing a grievance may not always be easy in the case of persons resistant to compromise, or palatable to stakeholders in the case of toxic or destructive individuals. However, finding a way to do so may reduce the potential for violence.

- Dual phase terminations or expulsions: When termination, expulsion, or other removal must happen, the manner in which it is done should consider the preservation of dignity and respect for the person of concern. A dual phase strategy has been used successfully to accomplish a separation with an emphasis on both safety and dignity. The first part of a dual phase strategy is notification of the separation, which should be delivered in a minimally intrusive, minimally embarrassing manner. The next phase of the process occurs at a secondary location, where a cooling off period is provided, caretaking begins, and assistance or services can be offered. This second phase can be implemented by someone similar to a well-chosen third party monitor, who will be able to establish rapport and empathy with the person of concern. This individual may be a representative of an employee assistance program, a respected mentor, a loved one or even law enforcement—anyone positioned to ensure the person of concern remains stable and feels he has options for the future. During this time, the person of concern can absorb the information provided during notification; this time also allows for observation of his reaction. An exit interview can also be conducted, if feasible, by a well-chosen interviewer. At the conclusion of this part, a successive follow-up strategy is introduced. It may take the form of scheduled or unscheduled periodic check-ins by a suitable third party monitor.

For example, Student U attended a technical college and was overheard by several students and a teacher making statements that he would bring a gun to school and kill people. By the time the case was reviewed by the BAU, the school had already decided to expel him, though it was receptive to guidance about preserving his dignity and preventing any furtherance of the grievance. A dual-phase

expulsion process was suggested, which entailed informing Student U of his expulsion in person as opposed to via telephone, email, or mail. The school initially intended to have many members of the faculty present, but the BAU expressed concern that this might appear to the student that the school was "ganging up" on him. The BAU recommended that a dean meet privately with Student U to inform him of the decision and all appeal options in a clear and concise manner. After notification, a crisis counselor who had previously worked with Student U met with him to help him process the information. This also allowed for an observation period in which any signs that he may be contemplating an act of violence or self-harm could be seen. Following the dual-phase expulsion, the crisis counselor, with Student U's permission, checked in on him later that night, and then for a logical period of time afterward in order to assist in monitoring for concerning behavior.

Setting

- Increased vigilance/target hardening: When a concern for violence rises above "low," this option may be advisable. It is particularly important when a team assesses that management options directly related to the person of concern are very limited. Examples of increased vigilance may include increased awareness by personnel in and around the environment in question, training on and adherence to security procedures, identification verifications, information sharing, and law enforcement alerts. In addition to physical preparations, potential targets should remain alert to the possibility of virtual research via their public and private networks. Target hardening can involve a thorough security process review, reduction of access points to the facility, more visible security, parking lot security and escorts, flagging the address in the "911" system, and other measures deemed appropriate.

- Organizational culture considerations: Organizational culture, or environment, is an important factor to consider when planning threat management, and modifications to culture could be recommended as part of a larger strategy. The BAU fully recognizes the potential enormity of such a task; however, organizational cultures which allow bullying, harassing or menacing behavior, and threats do exist. This type of environment is not conducive to a sense of shared responsibility for safety and respect. Healthy organizational cultures which effectively mitigate violence risk via a culture of safety and respect often share the following commonalities:

  - Everyone is treated with fairness and respect
  - The organization communicates effectively
  - Leaders set and enforce appropriate boundaries
  - Members of the organization are held accountable for their behavior
  - The organization fosters a nurturing environment
  - Bullying and threatening are not tolerated
  - Members of the organization are encouraged to report bad behavior without fear of repercussion[80]

Target

➢ Target vulnerability reduction: A target's vulnerability can often be reduced by target hardening; however, other measures could further reduce a target's exposure to violence potential. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Changes to work hours for particular individuals
- Work space relocation
- Social media privacy management
- Varying routes, routines and activities
- Parking lot escorts
- Ceasing communication with the person of concern in some cases
- Personal safety planning

In addition, potential targets should be encouraged to fully cooperate with police and organizational investigations and interventions. Sometimes, targets become frightened, angry, and impatient with the person of concern's bad behavior and do not always act with prudence. Also, targets may become fatigued from constant vigilance and lose interest in being cautious. A strong support system for targets may be necessary to prevent this from occurring; targets may also require implementation of management techniques.

Zero tolerance policies

The words "zero tolerance" sound reassuring in that they imply an absolute refusal to condone bad behavior. However, use of the term "zero tolerance" is not recommended because it can be so easily misunderstood, and research has shown that zero tolerance policies have been found to actually deter reporting of bad conduct; bystanders may fear their reports could lead to immediate and harsh repercussions without due process and possible retaliation against the reporter.[81] When zero tolerance means that the same, severe punishment is applied to similar incidents regardless of history and circumstances, it is detrimental to good threat management. For instance, when a student makes a threat and is automatically expelled, stakeholders immediately lose their optic on the student once he is homebound. In addition, this action may exacerbate the situation by isolating the student, confining him to a potentially negative home environment, and cutting off services available to the student via the school system. A flexible policy, however, permits the school to impose less harsh measures with greater latitude for promoting safety. An organization's ability to address bad behavior should include multiple options, focusing on an individualized response.

Caution against becoming the grievance/last straw

Organizational environment, administrative actions, and interpersonal communications all have the potential to inspire or deter an at-risk individual's decision to engage in planned violence. Threat managers should be mindful at all times about inadvertently creating an additional grievance or becoming a person of concern's "last straw."[82] A key consideration is to avoid furnishing the psychologically brittle person of concern with the spark that may create, sustain, or fuel a grievance. His

perception of the world typically becomes his reality, and if he feels wronged he may look to project blame onto other individuals or institutions regardless of the true reality of the situation.

For example, one case involved a student of concern who was suspended for menacing behaviors. He planned to return to school at the end of his suspension and did not want his past problems at school to be a focus of attention. School administrators felt a need to search his bag upon entry onto school grounds, which they were planning to do in public. Inasmuch as it was important to the student to remain low-profile, this tactic could have created or inflamed a grievance and led to unnecessary, additional stress. A better approach emphasizing both safety and discretion was ultimately used, in which a school resource officer conducted a bag search off-premises and then observed the student proceed directly to school.

Prior to implementing visible management techniques, threat managers should consider how their decisions, actions, and delivery may impact a person of concern's life, work, relationships and sense of well-being. Threat managers should be mindful of potentially implementing an action that, itself, is a precipitating event which either propels him toward violence or removes the last buffers deterring him. Sometimes people have to be fired or expelled, but those moments do not necessarily have to become the last straw for a person of concern. A person of concern may understand he deserves to be fired and accept it; his last straw event may come when he is fired by email rather than being given the respect of being fired in-person.

Mr. V worked as an armed security guard for a government contractor. Negative behaviors and conflict with his supervisor were raising concerns about him. During working hours, he made references to his personal life, indicating that he was having financial issues, going through the beginnings of a divorce, and loved to get drunk on the weekends. Based on poor performance at work, his supervisor sent him an email informing him that he was suspended, but did not meet with him in person to discuss the situation. The company was then faced with a choice of having to go out and retrieve Mr. V's duty weapon or ask him to return to the work site to turn it in. This was not an optimal way to process a termination, and the situation created an unnecessary safety risk. It also risked creating an additional grievance by denying him the respect and dignity of an in-person meeting.

Thinking about potential "last straws" helps stakeholders and threat managers try to see the situation from the person of concern's perspective and aspire to preserve his dignity.[83] For some offenders, perceived loss of dignity was the last straw that propelled them toward violent revenge. Using a sensitive, caretaking approach may reduce the possibility of creating or enhancing a grievance in the eyes of a person of concern.

Mental health is not "the" answer—threat management is the key

The mental health system is no longer able to be the primary response mechanism in dealing with a mentally ill person of concern. It is overrun and lacks the necessary beds to effectively treat all actively psychotic, suicidal, and homicidal individuals. This psychiatric hospital bed crisis is aptly demonstrated by the tragic case of Mr. W. Mr. W was evaluated under an emergency custody order on

a “danger to self or others” finding. Ultimately, he was released to the care of his father because no psychiatric bed was available. At that time, state law provided he could be held in emergency custody for a maximum of six hours while providers searched for a bed. When one was not found, he had to be released. Less than 24 hours later, he stabbed his father multiple times and then committed suicide by shooting himself with a rifle. This incident was the catalyst for changing the commitment law in that state.

The mental health system is simply not in a position to be responsible for long-term threat management. Beds are limited and will continue to be scarce. Mental health professionals are overwhelmed, often having time only to conduct cursory checks for suicidal and homicidal ideation and intent. Providing treatment to improve psychological well-being is their primary function, rather than organizing a long term management plan in place of key stakeholders (e.g. police, schools, or employers). Limits on information sharing make for a cumbersome process to openly discuss symptoms and treatment with others. It would be convenient if an already-in-place, well-established apparatus was positioned to take on this role, but the mental health care system is not that apparatus.

“Tarasoff” Duty

Threat assessment team members should be aware of the *Tarasoff* duties to warn and protect (See Appendix D) in their respective jurisdictions, as this knowledge can become a tool to persuade mental health providers to offer critical feedback during high-risk cases when the person of concern is in treatment. When faced with a situation that may trigger a duty to protect, providers are encouraged to discuss the case with colleagues. These situations are often nuanced and problematic to resolve, and present difficult questions such as whether a client has a violent fantasy versus a plan to harm another person. Mental health professionals should consider directly questioning the person of concern regarding his violent behavior, thoughts, and feelings. When deciding whether to breach confidentiality in order to protect others, they should not rely solely upon the person of concern’s assertions. (See discussion of the distinction of making a threat versus posing a threat, pages 15-16.) Rather, providers are encouraged to consider such factors as the person’s past history of violent and dangerous acts, personality characteristics, cognitive style and functioning, social history, history of criminal acts, current perceived stress, the nature of the social environment, means to accomplish violence, access to a victim, substance abuse, presence of anger, diagnosis, current level of functioning, and prior responses to treatment. It is equally important for the treating professionals to consider the risk presented by precipitating events such as rejection or some type of loss, or other warning behaviors.

Implement and reassess

Threat management is a dynamic process and strategies will often require adjustments to enhance success. Once a strategy is implemented, this begins a period of reassessment, during which the management plan's effectiveness is evaluated and changes can be made. The threat assessment and threat management relationship is one of continuous reassessment and modification. If one management strategy does not create the results a team is looking for, the next steps are to reassess, modify the plan, and try again. (See page 78)

Thoughtful and reasoned management strategies developed with an understanding of threat assessment and management principles usually work well and effectively mitigate violence concern; they will rarely backfire or have no effect, though every team should be prepared for these possibilities. Third party monitors can be very helpful in communicating back to the team or stakeholders about any reactions from the person of concern. This is particularly true when a plan is implemented based upon a *preliminary* assessment when there are significant information gaps present in the case. In many cases, the person's reaction to management techniques may require reassessment and a new strategy.

Long-term solutions are frequently required to successfully manage higher concern cases. Short-term techniques will often suffice to resolve lower concern matters. As time progresses, "low" persons of concern exhibiting recurring behaviors may require additional behavioral management steps. The reassessment phase will assist threat managers in identifying points of escalation. Assessors must always remember that a threat management strategy may not be as effective as initially planned and, if left on autopilot without follow up or adjustment, the person of concern and situation could deteriorate.

Family

In furtherance of efforts to manage a person of concern away from a potentially violent outcome, family members are often a primary point of contact with a threat management team's representative to both understand and manage the person. If the family unit appears to be loving, supportive, and an overall positive force, it should be considered a beneficial threat management component. Families who support interventions and enforce limits are helpful to the cause. Family members can act as third party intermediaries between the person of concern and a team trying to manage him away from violence. They should not participate in threat assessment and management strategy meetings as it would be unfair and inappropriate to subject them to a conflict of interest. However, when it is deemed appropriate and it does not add further risk, teams may wish to provide detailed information to designated family members to help them understand the true concern and nature of the threat posed by their loved one. The team should carefully consider whether its relationship with a selected family member, or any third party monitor, should be made known.

Conversely, if the family unit seems unsupportive, dangerous, or a negative influence on the person of concern, a team should carefully weigh whether or not the risk of attempting a familial third

party strategy is worth the possibly low odds of reward. For example, Student X disclosed to his parents a desire to harm others, specifically students at his high school. His parents brought him to a mental hospital where he was assessed and treated for a period of weeks. The mental health evaluators developed a safety plan for him upon his return home which included the removal of all weapons. Both local law enforcement and the school were made aware of his intention to harm others. Student X was allowed to return to school after being cleared by mental health personnel. However, he was arrested a week later, after he made plans and took steps in furtherance of committing violence at the school. His parents, who were initially upstanders, felt that law enforcement was now picking on their son merely because of the previous notification. Upon learning that law enforcement planned to conduct interviews of family members regarding Student X's plans, his parents assisted Student X in deleting text messages and social media evidence of his planning. Further, his parents withheld information about weapons present in the house. As a result, charges against the parents were contemplated.

Questions to ask when deciding whether to use a family member as part of management might include:

- Can the team accomplish the same management objectives through another third party or another strategy?
- Must the strategy also include education, therapy, or management for the family member(s)?
- Does the family promote isolation, ignore warning behaviors, and/or endorse or indulge grievance formation and violent ideation?
- Does the family have a history of violence, serious mental illness, discouraging mental health treatment, or allowing substance abuse to occur?
- Do motivations held by family members affect their perceptions of the gravity of the situation or the necessity of management?

In addition to having a potentially detrimental effect on good management, an unhealthy family dynamic can have other negative results, including the person of concern turning his direction of interest and grievance towards a loved one or caretaker. In some cases, family can actually accelerate the person of concern toward violence, for example, by supplying weapons, ammunition, or opportunities for shooting practice.

If a strategy using a family member is employed, consideration must be given to long-term goals and the possibility of fatigue. The energy expended by the family or a selected family member could be time-consuming and exhaustive. A family's perception of the person of concern can evolve or degrade over time; they can develop animosity, sympathy, or take a defensive stance regarding the person. They may justify and downplay the person's behaviors. Any one of these responses may supply the person of concern with the freedom and detachment needed to engage in threatening or violent behavior.

Threat management is like good parenting

Good threat management should reflect the same positive characteristics of good parenting. Teams should act with care and thoughtfulness; set limitations and boundaries for the person of concern; and apply appropriate consequences intended to change behavior for the better. A well-functioning threat management team:

- Understands the value of caretaking
- Plans well and understands when urgency is needed
- Cooperates and shares information well amongst members
- Sets rules and boundaries
- Provides guidance and follow-through for persons and entities carrying out the management plan
- Continually re-evaluates active cases and re-engages when necessary
- Understands that patience may be necessary during the entire process

These characteristics are akin to a healthy parenting style. A good parent has the ability to: be a caretaker, plan, cooperate, be patient, set rules and boundaries, provide guidance, follow-through, ensure consequences for rule-breaking, and continually re-evaluate how things are going to ensure the child becomes a successful member of society. The end goals of threat management are to change the person of concern's behavior and pattern of thinking for the better, avoid violence, and stabilize the situation permanently.

Chapter 5 Threat Management Team: The Set Up

The previous chapters of this guide provide information about assessing and managing persons of concern. Threats of violence are ultimately a community issue, often requiring collaboration across many entities within the community. Ideally, the threat management team will establish collaborative relationships early on and maintain ongoing interaction and dialogue with key resources over time. What follows is a description of threat assessment and management team mechanics. Questions about why and how threat management teams work, achieving and maintaining a knowledge base, and getting resource commitment and support from organizations are addressed herein.

Why threat management teams work

The threat management team model is a viable and effective method for assessing violence potential and disrupting planned attacks of targeted violence. No one person is positioned to see every single risk factor, warning behavior, or mitigator, nor is one single individual positioned to manage a threat. When a team member receives a new case for review, he may extract an important detail due to his particular skill set, whereas other team members may not initially recognize its importance. For instance, a mental health professional may recognize signs of mental decompensation, which could simply appear as a change in personal hygiene to another member. A team member may ask a question during the consultative process that prompts others to think in a different way. This in turn could lead to a more accurate assessment and a more creative, and ultimately successful, threat management strategy. Symposium participants believe that consensus, derived from individual assessments of team members acting in concert, is the most powerful method to assess and mitigate future violence concern. Open discussion and professional debates or disagreements are embraced. Diverse perspectives can generate new investigative leads and can prompt additional areas for inquiry, thus allowing for a more complete, holistic and accurate threat assessment and management.

Logistics

A threat assessment and management team is a multidisciplinary body, trained to assess and recommend management strategies for persons of concern and threats of violence. The functions of these teams are to:

- Gather all available information related to reports about a person of concern or threats of violence
- Determine, via threat assessment, whether the person of concern poses a safety threat
- Offer reasoned and thoughtful management recommendations designed to reduce targeted violence concern and promote safety for all, including the person of concern

As communities build threat management teams to address concerns about targeted violence, they must consider multiple logistical requirements. This chapter addresses a host of such considerations, ranging from the recommended composition of a team to retiring a case.

Multidisciplinary

A multidisciplinary make-up is perhaps the single most important feature of an effective threat management team. Highly effective teams facilitate collaboration, coordination, and communication across various parts of organizations or communities to address persons of concern and threats of targeted violence. They will often need to leverage the perspective, expertise, and insight of various disciplines to aid in effectively assessing concerning behaviors and to develop threat management strategies.[84] Threat management teams should be comprised of a core group of representatives from relevant disciplines, such as law enforcement, security, mental health, social services, legal, human resources or administration, or others relevant to the entity establishing the team. A threat management team with a well-rounded composition of diverse members provides a versatile team of practitioners with different perspectives, capabilities, and backgrounds to address targeted violence concerns.

Many "person of concern" cases will involve individuals demonstrating warning behaviors and exhibiting risk factors, but where no punishable violations or infractions have occurred. Alternatively, they may have occurred but a course of action involving punishment may not be wise at a given point in time. In such cases, good management may require the expertise of community-based mental health services, social services, law enforcement, and other resources to effectively address them. For example, a person of concern may have a grievance about utilities because he cannot afford to pay the bills; social services may have a unique knowledge of special funding programs which can assist. Having a multi- and interdisciplinary team of members from diverse professions in place provides specific options and flexibility to aid in addressing the situation. This approach facilitates collaboration across various parts of a community and/or organizations that is fundamental to effectively assessing and managing a person of concern.[85]

Co-deployment model

When setting up a process for making contact with high risk persons of concern, strong consideration should be given to a co-deployment model which pairs more than one discipline for both proactive and responsive calls. For example, the Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit often teams up with the police department's Mental Evaluation Unit, which co-deploys mental health clinicians with a law enforcement officer to calls. By arming the team with human resources needed to diffuse potentially explosive situations, officers are better equipped to deal with persons in the midst of a mental health crisis and clinicians are in the presence of sworn officers when dealing with the potentially violent. This model can be adapted to other situations. A local threat assessment team deciding that community services should be offered to a person of concern could choose to deploy a police officer along with the social worker to visit the person's home. A school resource officer conducting an interview of a student who has made threats may be joined by the school psychologist for the encounter. Bringing together the disciplines of law enforcement and mental health can provide an enhanced ability to assess and begin managing a person of concern.

For example, Company 2 terminated Mr. Y after he stalked several female coworkers. Following his termination, he was observed several times following employees and confronting them when they

were leaving the office. He was evaluated and diagnosed with a mental illness. A mental health court determined that he was a danger to himself and others, and determined that he could be released with the stipulation that his psychotropic medication be administered via injection at home. However, Mr. Y's behavior was so concerning that the medical staff assigned to administer his injections was too afraid to go to his home. As a result, he began to decompensate and act out in an alarming way. A potential solution could have been to co-deploy police officers with medical service personnel to ensure their safety.

Team establishment

Convincing stakeholders that "something" needs to be done with persons of concern is often not a challenge. But who should be doing it? Some communities and organizations are big enough that setting up a threat management team is easily conceived and resources are readily available to get it done. This is not true for every community or entity. In rural or other areas without abundant resources to leverage, one suggestion is to partner with the local emergency management apparatus to create a community-wide team. Although emergency management is not established and educated to conduct violence threat assessment, the discipline does have experience with mobilizing multidisciplinary resources in a cooperative manner to achieve long- and short-term objectives. Local emergency managers may be amenable to leveraging their interagency and community resources to assist law enforcement and others' efforts to stand up a team. Lack of immediate resources or infrastructure is a common obstacle, and yet these are overcome by communities every day. Additional resources may be available at the county, state, or federal level, such as established threat assessment teams including those in other jurisdictions, professional associations, publications such as this guide, or grant programs.

Core and ad hoc membership

The core members of a team will triage, assess, and manage all cases that meet the team's threshold for case initiation. They attend all meetings of the threat management team and should conduct outreach to educate their community on the value of the threat assessment and management process. As stated previously, threat management teams should be comprised of a core group of representatives from relevant disciplines, such as law enforcement, security, mental health, social services, legal, human resources or administration, or others relevant to the entity establishing the team.

Ad hoc members are those who will join a team for specific cases in which their fields of expertise are needed rather than all of them. These supplemental members should be identified and called upon as necessary based upon their subject matter expertise, placement within the environment or management structure around the person of concern, or special skills that may be required in specific cases. For example, a case may require a member with sufficient cyber skills to assist on a case involving anonymized online communications.

Some people, depending on their status and connection to the person of concern, are not appropriate for membership on the threat management team. These include, but are not necessarily

limited to, a treating mental health care provider with whom a privileged relationship has ever been established; an immediate supervisor; a student of concern's teacher; a family member, friend, or intimate partner; or clergy with whom the person of concern has a pastoral relationship. For them, participation in threat assessment and management strategy meetings would be unfair, objectivity might be lost, and it would subject them to a conflict of interest.

A recommended core composition of a threat management team can include those identified below. Composition may be different depending on the organization forming the team.

- Law enforcement: This person brings law enforcement agency representation to the table, organizational structure, record keeping abilities, and can speak to investigative recommendations and enforcement options. This representative has access to criminal history and other law enforcement information (although sharing of sensitive law enforcement information is often limited by statute). This member may be best positioned to lead the team, depending on the circumstances.

- Employee assistance/social services: These representatives will be well-positioned to provide information about services and assistance available through an employer or a community for the person of concern. He also has knowledge of the administrative burdens involved with the engagement of many management techniques, unique programs and resources available, and how to assist people in crisis.

- Facility/campus/organizational security: A security department representative is able to provide insight into safety and security measures in place at the setting in question and in relation to some potential targets or persons of concern. This representative has the power to make security related decisions or at least endorse management strategy recommendations to senior security leadership.

- Human Resources: A representative from an organization's human resources department is needed in cases which develop within the employment context. This representative can speak to employer policy, procedure, and organizational culture. This member has the power to act on management strategy recommendations or at least endorse them to executive leadership. In military contexts this might translate to an officer in the person of concern's command structure.

- Legal: An attorney can help a threat management team navigate the many legal issues which can and will arise during the course of any given case. Privacy laws, in particular, can be challenging to correctly understand and navigate. Appropriate choices for legal counsel could include, but are not necessarily limited to, school district attorneys, corporate attorneys, or jurisdictional prosecutors. It is important for the attorney to be able to identify potential legal issues and corresponding remedies. More than one lawyer could be needed for any given case, depending upon the team's needs and experience level.

- Mental health: This can include a clinical or forensic psychologist or psychiatrist with experience in treating and assessing the seriously and persistently mentally ill and/or violent individuals. Any mental health professional with significant clinical or forensic experience will be helpful. If such specialty access is limited in the geographical area, a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, clinical social worker, or other mental health professional would also be beneficial. This member should not have any past or present treatment relationship with the person of concern being assessed by the team, but rather be an objective third party who can assist the team in understanding mental health symptoms and associated behaviors, diagnoses, mental health resources and treatment, and threat management strategies.

- School administration: A representative of the school district or particular school is needed in cases which develop within an academic context. This representative can speak to school policy and procedure, the cultural climate of the school, and can assist team members in understanding the mechanics of the person of concern's daily life at the school. This member has the power to act on management strategy recommendations or at least endorse them to the administration.

New referrals

A case leader should be identified in order to have a single point of contact to promote information flow and case management. This individual will ensure all available relevant information for the case is collected, organized, and disseminated to other members of the team. That leader should coordinate additional resources and liaise with entities which can assist with the threat assessment and management.

All new case referrals to the threat management team should be triaged as soon as possible in order to assess an initial level of concern for potential violence. Naturally, cases preliminarily assessed as generating a high level of concern should be prioritized and managed appropriately. Those cases of lower concern may not require a full-blown assessment or meet the threshold for initiating a case. The triage process should also involve identification of needed resources and ad hoc team members, as well as initiate information gathering.

Process

First, consider creating a mission statement or objectives for the program. This will serve to guide all policies and actions in a coherent fashion. As an example, one team devoted entirely to students of concern in a mid-sized US metropolitan area has identified three objectives:[86]

- Identify and assess threats of potentially harmful or lethal behavior and determine the level of concern and action required
- Organize resources and strategies to manage situations involving students that pose threats to other students, staff, and the community
- Maintain a sense of psychological safety among students, teachers, and parents, thus fostering a learning environment that allows for teaching and learning that is free of the distraction caused by fear

Second, establish how the team will operate. Will it, itself, investigate and manage cases or will it perform an advisory role for those agencies on the front line? The method that works best for a team may depend on many factors including resources, legal authorities, strategic priorities, and the preferences of the agencies involved. In smaller localities, it may be necessary for threat management team members to also be those working to resolve the matter. In more populous regions with many agencies, it is more likely the team could function in an advisory capacity and the agency which presents the case to the team will retain all responsibility for managing it.

In addition, each team must identify to what extent it is capable of assessing a case. At minimum, a team should be able to effectively *triage* a case in order to determine if the matter is of low concern or if a full behavioral threat assessment is needed. If a more thorough assessment is required, does the team have the expertise and experience to conduct it or should the case be referred to an outside resource? This determination will depend upon the level of training and experience a team is able to acquire and maintain. This guide should be helpful to teams, both in assessing cases and in assessing its own capabilities.

Third, what will initiate a new case? The answer will depend upon the needs in a particular jurisdiction or organization. Predicating events may include but are not necessarily limited to:

- A threat or inappropriate communication indicative of violence concern
- A report of concerning or threatening behavior
- Issuance of a protective order
- Recognition of warning behaviors

Next, a threat management team must set up its intake process and advertise that process to the community or organization it will serve, in accordance with any applicable policy. One or more individuals should be identified as intake coordinators to whom the information should be reported. More than one intake coordinator is recommended to ensure availability of options for witnesses who have information to convey.

A meeting schedule should be devised which accommodates the operational tempo of the team and the case load. One meeting a month may be too often for some teams and not nearly enough for others. Regardless of what schedule is set, a protocol should be established for initial team review of newly received cases, so that each matter receives attention as soon as it comes in. This helps to ensure that no case will fall “through the cracks” and be forgotten.

Once a case is opened, the core members of the team should determine which, if any, ad hoc members are needed in order to complete a thorough threat assessment and to effectively manage the case. Once the team is identified for a particular case, information gathering should begin to unfold as appropriate for the circumstances. As information is acquired on any given case, the team may realize emergent need for action has evolved (see pages 23-24 “Triage versus 360° Assessment”). The team should have the flexibility to act, or recommend action, as needed prior to completing information gathering or conducting a full assessment if immediate safety concerns arise. Some cases may require

an emergent response more than once. Therefore, the team should have protocols in place for unscheduled meetings, even if only by telephone or video conference.

Similarly, protocols should be established for how a team shares case information, how a team will meet to conduct an assessment, and how its recommendations will be communicated to stakeholders. Open sharing of information among team members is quite important for this process to be effective. As referenced above (Information gathering, pages 43-44) the silo or stovepipe effect is a lack of communication and information sharing between individuals, components, and executive offices within a single organization, and can be problematic. This concept also applies to separate and independent organizations working to solve a single problem but not fully sharing information. When this happens, it can be highly detrimental to good threat assessment and management.[87] For further details about protocol and policy recommendations, see "Setting up a policy," later in this chapter.

Recordkeeping

Documentation of each assessment in accordance with individually established organizational guidelines is recommended. Records may be maintained by the overall lead agency of the threat management team or elsewhere as chosen by the team; housing them at a law enforcement agency provides significant protection and allows 24-hour access. All records should be maintained in the same place for consistency and the case leader should document the assessment. All written products should include caveats potentially encompassing the following points:

- Any limitations of the assessment, such as acknowledgment of known information gaps
- Ownership of the document and who is entitled to disseminate it, such as a statement that only participating entities (core members) are entitled to a copy and disseminations must have prior approval
- Whether the document is suitable for inclusion in administrative and/or judicial proceedings, such as a statement congruent with applicable legal guidelines
- A statement that recommendations are based upon information known to the team when the assessment was completed and a change in circumstances could alter the assessment

These caveats are intended to protect the team and its processes. The following caveat has been used by the BAU:

> The observations, opinions, and suggestions contained herein represent a product of the knowledge drawn from personal and collective investigative experience, educational background, specialized training, and research conducted by members of the BAU and others, as well as from published academic research and known case facts. This analysis is not a substitute for a thorough, well-planned investigation, and should not be considered all-inclusive.
>
> The analysis is based upon information available at the time this report was prepared and assumes that the information set forth is valid and complete. Should additional information or case materials become available at a later date, certain aspects of this analysis may be subject to modification or change. All

threats should be taken seriously, and all reasonable measures to minimize the risk of violence should be considered.

Concerning threat assessments, it is difficult to predict future behavior with certainty. This threat assessment serves as an investigative and operational tool which may assist in identifying appropriate levels of concern based on research and experience. This assessment is not evidence of violence risk or criminal wrongdoing, and is not suitable for use as the basis for testimony. Rather, the assessment is conducted and memorialized in order to guide the appropriate allocation of law enforcement resources and the prioritization of investigative tasks.

A threat assessment is only valid for the period of time assessed. Environmental changes, medical conditions, neurocognitive impairments, medication (or the lack thereof), alcohol consumption, illegal drugs, personal conflicts, psychological disorders, traumatic events, or other factors can affect the thought process of an individual. These changes can result in violent acts when none were anticipated and complicate the process of attempting to assess the likelihood of violent behavior.

Individual portions of this assessment are not necessarily severable from the whole, and therefore segments of this document should not be referenced or reproduced separate from the remainder without explicit approval from the BAU.

Each time the team meets to discuss a case, there should be documentation of who was present during the consultation or meeting, the date of the meeting and consultation, and how the meeting was conducted (in person, telephonic, or video teleconference). Assessment documentation should at minimum note:

- Sources of information reviewed
- A summary of the issues that were the focus of the team's review, highlighting those issues the team considered to be important
- A level of concern for violence and justification for that conclusion
- Potential for imminence
- Recommendations for future action items including management strategies and further investigative inquiries
- Attempts to make appropriate referrals, such as to a prosecuting attorney or to a psychologist and/or psychiatrist

A team which carefully documents meetings and protects those records will have proof that it considered certain issues, that it valued the safety and privacy of all parties involved, and that it acted reasonably in its efforts in assessing the level of concern and in offering management strategies.

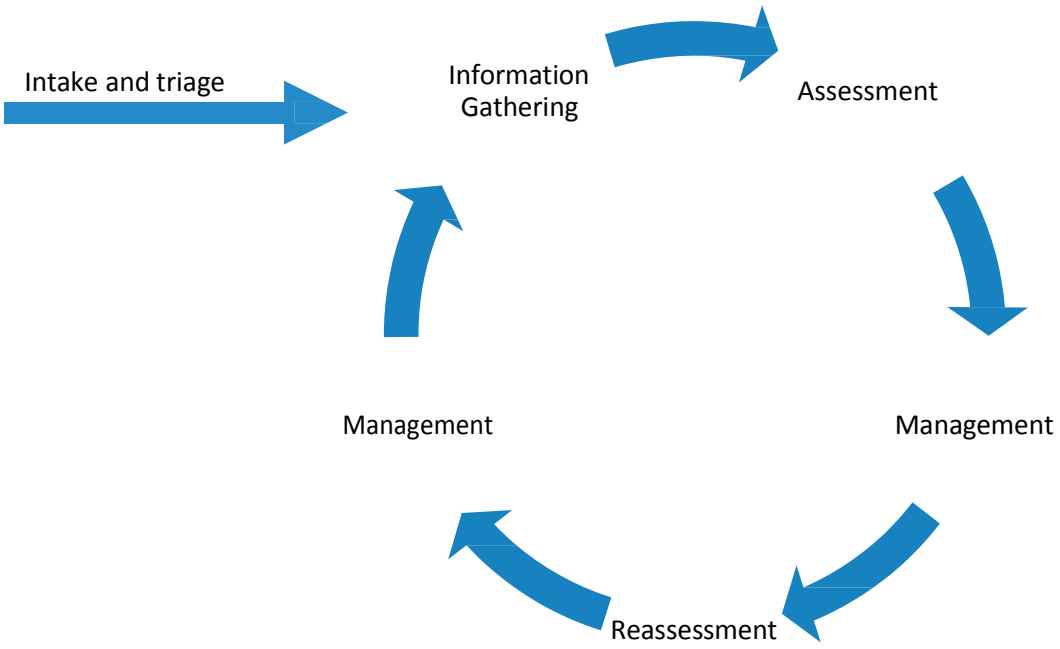
Confidentiality should be built into the process for both the reporting parties and the person of concern. Any case file should be marked and treated as confidential. It should be afforded appropriate

security and stored in a manner that limits access to those parties who have a legitimate need for the information contained in it. These protections avoid giving the person of concern a new grievance, help protect the privacy of individuals involved, and help protect the sources and methods utilized by the team.

Good record keeping over time can afford a team the ability to identify trends and patterns that speak to a larger issue. An analysis of these records in addition to published research can provide data to support recommendations for organizational change or needed programs in a community. Additionally, thorough historical record keeping can be of great value when some cases continually resurface.

Retiring or transferring a case

The decision to "retire" a case is one which the team should make thoughtfully and with careful consideration. *Potentially*, a case assessed to have a moderate or higher level of concern for violence might never be suitable for retirement. It will depend upon the success and estimated permanence of management efforts. Most cases, however, will be suitable for retirement at some point. Normally, the team will want to follow a uniform process, such as the one depicted below, keeping a case active until it no longer presents a concern justifying continued engagement by the team.



If a case is initially assessed to present a low or nonexistent concern for violence based upon analysis of enhancers and mitigators, then immediate retirement may be appropriate without the need for much, if any, management. If a case is initially assessed as presenting a moderate or higher level of

concern, and is then successfully managed to the point where concern drops to low or nonexistent, then it can be retired from active evaluation. The BAU recommends a "holding" period of at least 18 months, to allow for observation before retirement. During this period, the person of concern should remain stable at "low" concern for the entire 18 months or more, before a decision to retire a case can be made with any confidence.

If a person of concern moves out of the immediate area, it may become necessary to transfer the case to the logical threat management team or stakeholders in the new locale. Or, if additional targets or behaviors are discovered outside the immediate area, it may become necessary to collaborate with another team. For example, Mr. Z was identified by Law Enforcement Agency 1 due to inappropriate or concerning behaviors directed towards a government official; he was complaining about a court case and seeking assistance. Mr. Z's behaviors were assessed and managed over time, preventing escalation and possibly preventing violence. Over time, and for a variety of reasons, he changed his direction of interest away from the official and toward a judge who ruled against him. The case was transferred to Law Enforcement Agency 2, which was responsible for judicial security in that jurisdiction, for continued assessment and management. As Mr. Z's grievance intensified towards the judge, Law Enforcement Agency 1 continued to coordinate with Law Enforcement Agency 2. The case transfer was accomplished only after a considerable amount of discussion and coordination to make certain that both agencies agreed with the transfer and that continued communication would be in place in case he refocused on the governmental official.

Competing assessments

Teams should avoid conducting or soliciting competing behavioral threat assessments and management plans from more than one expert or threat management team. First, if an entity is attempting to manage a case and receives conflicting advice from multiple sources, it will likely cause confusion and uncertainty. Second, to the extent any conflicts between those assessments exist, it could become problematic in the event of subsequent litigation. Virtually all records may be ultimately discoverable during litigation, and the existence of differing assessments could present unforeseen and unnecessary concerns.

Becoming and staying informed

There are many resources for knowledge and training available within the threat assessment community, in addition to this guide. Currently several established, not-for-profit associations dedicated to the threat assessment discipline are the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP), the Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (CATAP), the Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals (AETAP) and the Asia Pacific Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (APATAP). Threat management teams may wish to turn to these associations for training and resources.[e]

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[e] These associations can be found at www.atap.worldwide.org, www.catap.org, www.aetap.eu, and www.apatap.org respectively.

Just as in medicine or law, it is advisable to ensure those responding to behavioral referrals are qualified to do so. Although each discipline representative on a threat management team brings a particular expertise and background to the table, threat assessment is a unique discipline grounded in a body of knowledge derived from research and experience. Team members should consider and pursue achievable ways to acquire and maintain knowledge to have a basic level of proficiency. This proficiency should allow team members to appropriately identify, assess, and manage persons of concern. This task is complex, nuanced, and often time-sensitive. Asking a person of concern if he is going to hurt someone is not a threat assessment. Advising a parent that his child has formed a grievance and demonstrated violent ideation is not threat management. Educational credentials in fields such as psychiatry, psychology, or law do not necessarily constitute expertise in threat assessment. In fact, the specialty of threat assessment is typically not taught during the training and education for these three professions. As with any specialty, it is incumbent on the participant to acquire adequate training and supervision until competent in this specialized skill.

One team, one goal

Like any effective program, threat assessment and management require a clear "top down" commitment from within the sponsoring organization or community.[88] Executive leadership endorsement cannot be passive; leaders must actively and visibly support the threat assessment and management process. This should ensure the organization:

- Designates the process as an organizational priority
- Adopts and endorses enabling policies
- Identifies and allocates sufficient resources
- Appoints appropriate personnel to the team

For ideal effectiveness, each employee, student, parent, or member must "buy in" to both the idea and the process of threat assessment and management. When training is offered, all appropriate personnel should participate. If reporting of concerning behavior is mandated, all should be encouraged to comply. As discussed above on pages 14-15, a culture of shared responsibility, safety, and respect will foster top to bottom support within an organization or community.

Setting up a policy

Organizations may need to consider establishing a violence prevention policy. Although specific guidance on the content of such a policy is beyond the scope of this guide, some general points may be considered for inclusion:[89]

- Definition of unacceptable behavior and identification of consequences
- Reporting of threatening behavior and actual violence via multiple avenues
- Promotion of conduct that supports a culture of safety and respect
- Accountability for unacceptable behavior
- Coordination with other organizational policies[90]

The BAU encourages organizations creating policy or violence prevention programs to consult with legal counsel, administration, and any other appropriate authorities regarding language and policy directives.

Conclusion

This guide results from the tremendous efforts of scholars and practitioners from many different disciplines over several decades of research and experience in threat assessment and management. Although it is not intended to be all-encompassing, it is hoped that this publication will provide a valuable resource for communities and organizations, and for novice and experienced threat managers alike. In addition, there are many sources of information which elaborate on the points summarized herein. Readers are encouraged to seek out the resources identified in the references section.

Understanding the nature of targeted violence is a necessary precursor to effective assessment and management. It is planned and purposeful, and yet could be conceived and carried out over a short period of time depending on the situation and circumstances. A person of concern's movement along a pathway to violence is often observable to others. These observers can become upstanders, who are the force multiplier of threat management. Their participation in the process of promoting public safety is crucial to success. Climates of safety and respect encourage upstander action, and promoting such a climate is a worthy goal for organizations and communities alike.

Threat management is intertwined with threat assessment—they are each part of a single discipline. One without the other may prove only partially effective at reducing or preventing targeted violence. Holistic assessment of the person is the key to a good assessment and therefore effective in devising management strategies. Not every strategy will work as intended, but thoughtful and well-reasoned prevention plans are generally effective in reducing violence. Risk factors, warning behaviors, stressors and precipitating events, and mitigators are all carefully considered. While it can be tempting to assign all blame for targeted violence on serious mental illness, the reality is that mental illness is one of a multitude of threat enhancing factors relevant to violence concern. Threat enhancing and mitigating factors can potentially be identified in nearly every aspect of a person's life. This is why a multidisciplinary and collaborative process is the recommended method.

Engaging a multidisciplinary team is perhaps the single most important thing a community or organization can do to further its prevention efforts. Professionals from various disciplines, working in concert, come together to apply a wide range of experience, expertise, and judgment to a problem that is complicated and often quite nuanced. While one discipline or another may at times take on a leading role in a case, generally speaking a good management plan draws its strength from multiple points of view and sources of expertise. A well-functioning team will recognize this and develop a practiced consultative process.

Additionally, the importance of education and awareness regarding threat assessment and management efforts cannot be overstated. A concern cannot be mitigated unless the threat management team is made aware of the concern. Informing the community that threat management resources exist is just as important as having a team. While setting up a team can seem daunting, it can be done. Cooperation, consultation, assumption of responsibility, and sharing of information are guiding principles for the establishment and functioning of a team.

Much has been proposed in recent years with regard to updates to laws and systems which impact targeted violence. Privacy, mental health, criminal and other laws, as well as rules and regulations, impact this work and potentially should be updated. Updates will require thoughtful and reasoned deliberation and debate, inclusion of many viewpoints, and a balancing of safety and privacy concerns for individuals. In the meantime, this guide may be helpful in outlining first steps or in advancing a program that is already underway. The BAU and the symposium participants recognize that this evolution is, understandably, not going to happen overnight.

New and additional research is needed on measuring the success of threat management strategies, though this may be challenged by the difficulty with measuring success. How can research confirm that one specific management technique was the one that prevented violence, versus other techniques used in the same case? How can research validate at all that a team's threat management plan, rather than the universe of other influences, prevented a person of concern from ever becoming violent? For each offender who demonstrated specific threat enhancers and mitigators before he acted, there likely are others with similar histories who will never act. Research should be pursued by those with access to sufficient information to enable them to evaluate outcomes in response to management techniques. Knowledge derived from research is and will remain a critical part of this discipline.

In conclusion, there is much work to be done in understanding the best ways to prevent targeted violence. Unknowns remain. However, what has been discovered thus far can assist communities and organizations with identifying, assessing, and managing threats of planned violence while promoting public safety.

Appendix A Levels of Concern

This Appendix is intended to serve as a generalized guide for assessing levels of concern. It includes some points to consider about threatening or menacing communications as well as persons of concern. Depending upon the situation, more or less context may exist to inform an assessment (such as an anonymous threat written on a wall versus a fully identified person of concern in a workplace setting), and therefore this appendix can be potentially helpful as a triage tool or a part of a full assessment.

"Communications of concern" sections can be used to assess communications of concern sent from unknown authors, or where little to no information is available about a known author; this would not include private thoughts such as journals, password protected materials, or other material not intended to be delivered to a third party. If more information becomes known during the course of investigation, use may then be made of the "Person of Concern" sections.

The points for consideration which are listed below are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Each case involves many pieces of information and assessors should consider the totality of facts and circumstances. No individual factor listed below should be determinative in arriving at a level of concern. Conversely, it is not necessary for each factor to be present in a case before assessors are able to assign the corresponding level of concern.

Level of Concern: Low

Communication of Concern

- A communication has been received or reported that causes some concern about potential for violence; it may be confusing, unrealistic, or make no allusions to violence at all.
- A clear grievance may not be stated or implied.
- The communication appears to be more venting about an issue than actually warning of future predatory violence.
- The communication may reference, or may itself be an attempt to resolve, an issue peacefully.
- The author may have not offered "bona fides" to establish credibility or viability of the threat.
- The communication may reference information that is inaccurate about the target, suggesting a lack of inside knowledge. Rudimentary research may or may not be evident. Little energy may have been expended in creating or delivering the communication.
- The language of the communication may suggest a lack of overall commitment to follow-through on a threat.
- The threatened action may be unrealistic or improbable (e.g., "I will plant a nuclear bomb at work.")
- The language may appear designed to *convince* the recipient of its seriousness, rather than *convey* an actual intent (e.g., "This is no joke.")

- The method of delivery may not be suggestive of a physical approach or high-risk behavior (e.g., an anonymous letter posted through the mail versus a letter hand-delivered to the target's home during waking hours.)

Persons of Concern

- The person has come to the attention of threat assessors, either directly by his actions or by concerns reported from others.
- Even though the individual may have made a threat, through his actions and language it might appear he is seeking a peaceful resolution of an issue.
- If the person seems to have developed a grievance, it may not be to the level where violence appears justified in addressing it.
- Acting out violently may not currently be an acceptable means for him to achieve justice; this may be influenced by moral codes, spiritual/religious beliefs, a fear of legal sanctions, or other reasons.
- There does not appear to be a pressing time imperative to achieve resolution.
- The threat or other behavior may serve as venting.
- The person may have evidenced few to no warning behaviors.
- The person may not have a significant number of risk factors.
- Circumstances may make it nearly impossible for the subject to carry out his threat (e.g., the person of concern is incarcerated, does not have a proxy willing to act violently on his behalf, and the target is outside the institution.)
- Evaluation of the case leads to a conclusion that mitigators far outweigh enhancers.

This level suggests that the concern for future violence is low. Additional data gathering may be desirable and monitoring for any changes in violence risk factors or warning behaviors may be appropriate.

Level of Concern: Moderate

Communication of Concern

- The communication may explain an understandable grievance and may suggest that violence is being considered as an option for redress.
- The communication may suggest the person has gathered inside information about the target, beyond that which is generally or publicly known.
- The communication may reference the person's engagement in warning behaviors.
- The communication may reference the existence of risk factors.
- There may be no sense of urgency in the communication; the person may still be pursuing peaceful alternatives to resolving his grievance. If a deadline is given, it may allow time for the recipient to respond and satisfy the grievance.

- The communication may suggest ambivalence by the author; he may not have completely made up his mind whether violence is an acceptable resolution (e.g., "This will happen either Tuesday or maybe Wednesday.")
- Threat assessors may not have complete or accurate information that would guide the assessment towards one end of the continuum or the other.

Persons of Concern

- The person may have surpassed some of the low level of concern factors, or there is an absence of significant mitigating factors.
- The person may have a grievance, and is more likely to be considering violence as an option and as a means to achieve justice.
- The person may not have made a decision about whether to act out violently.
- Others may be concerned about the person potentially acting out violently.
- The person may exhibit a cluster of warning behaviors, potentially combining both expression and action.
- The person may be engaged in the research and planning phase of a possible attack (e.g., information gathering and basic research pertaining to a target.)
- The person may have an increased number of risk factors (e.g. acting out violently, a paranoid personality disorder, substance abuse, or instability in employment and relationships). At this point in time, these factors may or may not be appropriately managed by the person or those around him.
- Stressors may be present or forthcoming in the person's life that could be considered "wild cards;" their activation or exacerbation could move the person further toward violence. Oftentimes these stressors involve financial, employment, status, family, or relationship troubles.
- There may be significant information lacking from the investigation about the person, the potential victim, the context of the threat, or other substantial aspects, which make pinpointing a level of concern difficult. Critical factors which could impact the assessment one way or another are missing.

This level suggests that violence could possibly occur, although the situation is not urgent. Violence cannot be ruled out. Monitoring and additional actions are necessary or desirable to further evaluate and respond to the situation to a point of resolution.

Level of Concern: Elevated

Communication of Concern

- The communication may reflect an increase in intensity and/or severity in the tone and content—particularly in a series of communications, as well as the person's use of multiple methods of delivery (e.g., in-person, telephone, fax, mail, electronic, etc.).

- The communication may indicate the person has conducted research on the target and has necessary inside, personal, or background information on potential victim(s). It strongly suggests he has the knowledge necessary to approach and attack.
- The communication may invoke special authority for violent action (e.g., divine sanction).
- The communication may be directed and fixated on a cause or a person.
- In a series of communications, in which the person has not acted, the most recent one may notably evidence a dramatic change in tone.
- The communication may reference a time imperative and/or suggest the person is losing patience.

Persons of Concern

- The person of concern may have surpassed all criteria for the low and moderate designations and now appears to have begun preparing for a violent act.
- Such preparations may include: weapons acquisition and training that are both contextually inappropriate and an escalation from his norm; evidence suggestive of time and energy-consuming research, such as surveillance; and/or suspicious probes or approaches to the target location.
- Increasing warning behaviors may become more evident.
- The person of concern may desire recognition and fame and believe that violence can help him achieve this.
- Stressors in the person's life appear to be escalating and his abilities to cope with them appear diminished.
- Suicidal/homicidal ideation is likely to be present.

This elevated level of concern suggests the person of concern is reaching a critical point on a pathway to violence from which he perceives it may be difficult to turn back. A threat management team and additional resources should focus on reducing his susceptibility to violence and the target's vulnerability, through guidance and enhanced security efforts.

Level of Concern: High

Communication of Concern

- The language appears less emotionally-driven and more action-oriented, suggesting that the person is operating in a predatory, as opposed to an emotional, reactive, or impulsive, mode.
- There is a *terminal* theme to the communication, as if the relationship between the communicator and his victim will soon be over.
- It may convey that action may be taken to end the grievance and achieve resolution.
- The communication may convey the person has the means and ability to carry out the threat.
- It conveys the person's willingness to accept all negative consequences resulting from violence, and/or that the person may feel violence is the only available method of achieving justice.

- Highly concerning communications do not generally name the precise time, place, or target in advance.

Persons of Concern

- The person may have virtually or actually rehearsed the attack as a means to ensure he has both the ability and the internal mettle to commit violence.
- The person has finalized his planning and preparation for a viable attack.
- The person may have attempted to breach the target's security through overt or surreptitious approach.
- The person has exhibited highly concerning warning behaviors.
- The person may exhibit a combination of serious mental illness, substance abuse or dependence, a history of violence or family of origin violence exposure, and/or other risk factors.
- The person has the means and ability to carry out a violent attack.
- The person appears willing to accept all negative consequences resulting from his violence.
- Violence appears to be the only avenue of achieving justice currently available.

This level suggests that violence is possible and could occur within the near future following any precipitating events. Immediate and continuing attention is required from threat management resources to ensure violence does not occur.

Indications of Potential Imminence

Imminence refers to a time period potentially including hours to weeks prior to a violent incident. The actual time of an incident cannot be predicted. When indicia of imminence are observed, a law enforcement response is warranted to disrupt behaviors that may be leading to violence.

Communication of Concern

- The communication suggests that all inhibitors to violence may be evaporating; circumstances in the person's life may be rapidly changing so as to force the action; a time or violent action imperative is presented.
- The communication suggests the person perceives his window of opportunity for an attack to be rapidly closing due to any number of circumstances, stressors, or precipitating events.
- The communication itself indicates that a breach or attack has begun or been completed; may contemplate that the author has already died; appears intended to claim credit for an attack, attempt to provide rationale for an attack, or establish a legacy.

Persons of Concern

- Some warning behaviors demonstrated by a person of high concern could be associated with possible imminence, such as energy burst behaviors, last resort behaviors, end of life planning, sudden cessation of medications or other substance use, and sudden withdrawal from life pattern. Examples of each may be:
    - Energy Burst: Preparing equipment, conducting spot checks of a target location, buying needed supplies, and/or repeated posting online.
    - Last Resort: Posting a YouTube video called "The Day of Reckoning," laying out how a person of concern is being tortured by the government (because he did not receive financial compensation for an imagined slight), cannot continue living with that insult, and offering the government one last chance.
    - End of Life Planning: Creating a will or giving away possessions.
    - Cessation of Medications or Substance Use: Suddenly stopping prescription psychoactive medication where normal pattern is taking the drug.
    - Withdrawal from Life Pattern: Failing to keep normal appointments or commitments and withdrawing to a position of enhanced privacy.
- The person may be attempting to establish a legacy by claiming credit or attempting to provide a rationale for a violent act; communicating that a breach or attack has begun; and/or contemplating his own death during an assault.
- The person has initiated a violent incident plan by beginning his travel/approach to the target.

This level indicates that violence is likely to occur within hours or weeks and all efforts should focus on locating, containing, and neutralizing the threat of violence.

Appendix B Tripwires and Warning Signs

Many offenders who engage in targeted violence may display certain behaviors during pre-attack planning. This appendix summarizes some which may indicate increasing concern. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, and other behaviors of concern may be evident. These behaviors may be observable to persons familiar with the person of concern and assessors should bear these in mind during encounters with him. No one behavior, standing alone, should be considered dispositive of violence concern; rather, all behaviors and circumstances should always be considered in totality. *Some* of these behaviors may include:

- Statements or behaviors which seem to indicate suicidality, end of life planning, or an interest in destructiveness toward the world at large.
- Signs of research, planning, and preparation which are contextually inappropriate in the person of concern's everyday life.
- Recent acquisition of weapons, ammunition, personal protective gear, tactical clothing, or other items, which is a departure from the individual's normal patterns; recent escalation in target practice and weapons training may also be a concern if he previously owned weapons and ammunition.
- Recent interest in explosive devices or acquisition of parts to construct one.
- Contextually inappropriate, intense interest in or fascination with previous shooting incidents or mass assaults. This may include identification with perpetrators of violence, particularly mass violence, and such identifications may be with either fictional or nonfictional persons.
- Drastic changes in appearance such as a shaved head, a large or multiple tattoos, contextually inappropriate law enforcement or military costuming, sudden weight loss or gain, cessation of hygiene, or sudden unkempt appearance.
- Sudden withdrawal from life pattern, such as retreating to temporary quarters, absence from work without explanation, or failing to appear for appointments that are normally kept.
- Sudden cessation of medications or other substance use.
- Sudden onset of reckless sexual, financial, or other behaviors that may suggest a lack of concern for future consequences.
- Preparation of "statement" or farewell writings, to include manifestos, videos, notes, internet blogs, or emails.
- Recent and significant personal loss or humiliation, whether real or simply perceived, such as a death; breakup or divorce; or loss of a job, status, or self-image.
- Recent acts of novel or experimental aggression including trespass, animal cruelty, or vandalism.
- Any effort to physically approach an apparent target or close associates, evidence of items left for the target to find even if they appear benign (such as flowers), evidence of surveillance without approach, or attempts to breach or circumvent security measures.
- Direct or indirect communications or threats using multiple methods of delivery, such as email, facsimile, hand-delivery, text-message, etc., escalating in frequency or intensity, or which

demonstrate that actual surveillance has occurred (e.g., “She looked frustrated when she left the Coffee Shop 1 in her grey coat at 6:23 a.m. today.”).

- Sudden change in social media behavior, including but not necessarily limited to use of encryption, decrease in postings, increase in postings, leakage, or novel use of different platforms.

Appendix C Threat Assessment and Management Process.

Concern Reported

- ❑ Does it involve a ***person of concern*** or a ***communication*** by an unknown author?

Triage

- ❑ Does the referral have ***validity*** in terms of raising concern for violence?
- ❑ What level of ***urgency*** is needed for the threat assessment team response?
- ❑ What expertise is needed to ***assemble a team***?
- ❑ What immediate ***protective measures*** should be implemented?
- ❑ What ***investigative steps*** are needed to ensure sufficient information is gathered to enable a thorough assessment?

Assess

- ❑ The ***results of inquiry*** are assembled to facilitate analysis.
- ❑ The ***threat enhancers*** are identified and thoroughly discussed.
- ❑ The ***threat mitigators*** are identified and thoroughly discussed.

Manage

- ❑ Take steps as needed to ***protect*** persons and property from violence.
- ❑ ***Develop strategies*** to be implemented throughout management process (e.g., treatment, discipline, detention).
- ❑ Further ***monitor*** for behavioral changes which indicate escalation or improvement.
- ❑ Continually ***reassess*** the person or situation to determine the accuracy of the assessment and effectiveness of management strategies. This process is cyclical until case retirement.

Appendix D Tarasoff/Duty to Warn and Duty to Protect

Generally speaking, privacy and privilege end where danger to the public begins. Things said by persons of concern to mental health professionals evaluating or treating them are typically protected by federal and state laws covering doctor/patient privilege, and by practitioners' ethics rules governing confidentiality. One exception to these principles—the duty to warn—arises from an effort to protect potential victims from a patient's violent behavior. This exception is rooted in a pair of California state court decisions from the mid-1970s following the death of Tatiana Tarasoff.[91] A graduate student who was infatuated with her told his therapist, before he murdered her, that he wanted to get a gun and kill her. The therapist had told campus police, but neither the police nor the therapist had warned Tatiana. In *Tarasoff I*, the California Supreme Court established a "duty to warn" rule; that is, mental health practitioners in California have a duty to warn third parties about potential violence if the victim is identifiable and the mental health professional knows or should have known that violence would occur. In *Tarasoff II,* the court created an additional "duty to protect;" that is, a mental health professional in California must use reasonable care to protect the potential victim of client violence when that provider determines that the client will harm an identifiable victim.[92] In 2004, the California court further expanded the *Tarasoff* duties to situations in which a therapist learns of a threat from a patient or a family member, which leads the therapist to believe that patient poses a risk of grave bodily injury to another person.[93]

These duties to warn and protect have been expanded to other jurisdictions outside California. There are no blanket federal duties to warn or protect, and states' laws vary in both form and function. Some states codify these duties in their legislative statutes, while in other states the duties arise out of judicial opinions or "common law." Some states create mandatory duties to warn and protect, while others merely permit a breach of confidentiality in the therapeutic relationship if a threat is present. A minority of states offer neither case law nor statutory guidance on the duties to warn and protect.[94] Thus, it is critical for threat assessment team members to know the law—or absence of legal guidance—in their respective jurisdictions[f], and to know the standard of care in their respective professions. Threat assessment teams should engage their legal counsel, including, but not limited to, local prosecutors, county attorneys, and state attorneys general, and seek guidance, clarity, and training on these legal issues.

All threat assessment team members should be aware of the *Tarasoff* duties to warn and protect in their respective jurisdictions, as this knowledge can become a tool to persuade mental health providers to provide critical feedback during high-risk cases when the person of concern is in treatment.[95] When faced with a situation that may trigger a duty to protect, mental health providers are encouraged to discuss the case with their colleagues. These situations are often nuanced and problematic to resolve, and present difficult questions such as whether a client has a violent fantasy

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[f] A table of state laws can be found on the National Conference of State Legislatures website: http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/mental-health-professionals-duty-to-warn.aspx.

versus a plan to harm another person.[96] Practitioners should consider directly questioning the person of concern regarding his violent behavior, thoughts, and feelings.[97] When deciding whether to breach confidentiality in order to protect others, providers should not rely upon the person of concern's words alone. (See discussion of the distinction of making a threat versus posing a threat, on page 15.) Rather, mental health professionals are encouraged to consider such factors as the person's past history of violent and dangerous acts, personality characteristics, cognitive style and functioning, social history, history of criminal acts, current perceived stress, the nature of the social environment, means to accomplish violence, access to a victim, substance abuse, presence of anger, diagnosis, current level of functioning, and prior responses to treatment.[98] It is equally important for the treating mental health providers to consider the risk presented by precipitating events such as rejection or some type of loss,[99] and other warning behaviors, discussed in this publication.

Appendix E Glossary of Terms

Behavioral Threat Assessment

Threat assessment is a systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience, focusing on an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, a person of concern is moving toward an attack.

Brittle Person

A psychologically brittle person seems unable to process the slights, rejections, teasing, and bullying that everyone experiences at some point in their lives. To a brittle person lacking adequate internal resources to help him appropriately process and cope, even a minor loss can be absolutely devastating.

Confirmation Bias

The tendency to look for evidence or interpret information in a way that confirms a preconceived opinion.

Directly Communicated Threat

An unambiguously stated or written threat to either a target or to law enforcement expressing intent to commit violence.

Duty to Warn/Protect

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

Energy Burst

An increase in frequency, duration, or variety of warning behaviors related to a target, even if the behaviors themselves appear relatively innocuous, usually in the days or weeks before an attack.

FERPA

Acronym for Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. This law governs the gathering, maintenance, and accessibility of educational records.

Fixation

An extreme preoccupation with another person, an activity, or an idea. In threat assessment and management cases, it is often observed to involve a grievance, personal cause, or a public figure.

Grievance

A cause of distress or reason for complaint/resentment; in threat assessment and management cases it includes a highly personal significance for the person of concern, often fueling a feeling of being wronged and generating behaviors related to a sense of mission, destiny, loss, or desire for revenge.

HIPAA

Acronym for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The HIPAA privacy rule governs protections for individuals' health records and other identifiable health information.

Impulsive/Reactive Violence

Impulsive/reactive violence is emotional and impromptu; it can be a defensive behavior in response to a perceived imminent threat.

Howlers

Howlers are individuals who, though they may have engaged in inappropriate, bizarre, or threatening contact with the target, do not currently intend to commit violence. It is often difficult to discern a howler from someone who is planning violence, based on available case facts.

Ideation

Ideas specific to the utility and acceptability of violence as a means to address a person of concern's particular grievance.

Identification Behavior

Actual or virtual behavior demonstrating a psychological desire to be a pseudo-commando, adopt a warrior mentality, identify with military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with past attackers, or to associate with advancing a particular cause or belief.

Information Silos

Information or knowledge that is kept separate, is tightly controlled, and not shared. When information about a threat or potentially threatening situation is not shared appropriately it can inhibit attempts to assess or manage it.

Intimacy Effect

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

Last Resort Behavior

Communications or actions indicating increasing desperation or distress, or that the person of concern perceives no alternatives to violence.

Leakage

Communications, expressions, or memorializations which do not directly threaten but otherwise reveal clues related to a person's feelings, aspirations, intentions, or plans, about committing violence.

Novel Aggression

This is an act of violence which appears unrelated to any "pathway" behavior and which is committed for the first time. A person of concern may be engaging in this behavior in order to test his ability to actually engage in a violent act and it could be thought of as experimental aggression.

Pathway to Violence

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

Predatory/Planned Violence

Predatory/planned violence is premeditated and serves some purpose for those who plan and conduct violent attacks. The offender is not reacting to an imminent threat.

Preparation

Part of the pathway to violence model. After deciding on a course of action and conducting the necessary background work, a would-be offender may then begin to prepare for an actual attack. This step can overlap with research and planning. Behaviors associated with this can include acquiring weapons, assembling equipment, confirming transportation routes, rehearsing attack behaviors and more.

Pseudo-commando Identity

A term that has been used to describe mass murderers who engage in planned attacks and are motivated by revenge fantasies. They are often heavily armed and may costume themselves in commando-style dress.

Research and Planning

Part of the pathway to violence model. This set of behaviors can include any thinking or information-seeking needed to form and refine a plan for engaging in an act of violence. This step can overlap with preparation. Behaviors associated with this step could include internet searches; watching news, social media or entertainment programming; conversing with like-minded others online; and more.

Risk Assessment

A calculation, based upon known variables, of a person's risk for engaging in violence. Risk level is often based upon static factors rather than warning behaviors, and frequently requires in-person evaluations in a clinical setting. This technique is not commonly used by threat assessors.

Target

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

Targeted Violence

An incident of violence where an assailant chooses a particular target prior to a violent attack.

Threat Management

Managing a person of concern's behavior through interventions and strategies designed to disrupt or prevent an act of targeted violence.

Threat Management Strategy

A coordinated plan of direct and/or indirect interventions with a person of concern which, based on current information regarding level of concern posed, is designed to reduce the likelihood of violence concern in a given situation at a particular point in time.

Threat Management Team

A multidisciplinary team which coordinates with stakeholders and other third parties to identify, assess, and manage concerns for targeted violence.

Upstander

An upstander is a bystander who reports what he knows or sees to law enforcement, human resources, school staffers, or a caring adult. An upstander can potentially intervene by various means, but most importantly by simply conveying what he knows, observes, or fears may happen.

Violence Risk Assessment

A specific tool designed to facilitate evaluation of a person of concern's probability of committing an act of violence based on personal and situational variables. These tools are utilized by individuals qualified through training, experience, or education to make risk determinations.

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Appendix G Symposium Agenda

Morven Estates
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

The Power of Prevention: Threat Management Strategies to Disrupt Targeted Shootings

Sunday, July 26, 2015 – University of Virginia Grounds

Introduction and welcome:

Andre Simons and Kevin Burton

Setting the frame: Robert Fein

Case presentation, strategic interaction: Barry Spodak

Facilitated discussion: Moderator: Robert Fein

Dinner and presentation:

Welcome and introduction: Gregory Saathoff

Opening remarks: Susan Davis

Introduction of FBI Assistant Director: Kevin Burton

Brief dinner remarks: FBI Assistant Director James Yacone

Introduction of speaker: Andre Simons

Speaker: J. Reid Meloy

"Warning Behaviors for Targeted Violence: A Typology for Risk Management"

Monday, July 27, 2015 – Morning Session

Welcome: Gregory Saathoff

Opening remarks: Leonard Johns

Case presentation: Dave Okada and John Van Dreal

Case presentation: Mario Scalora and Jeff Dunn

Facilitated discussions by group

Working lunch

Introduction: Kevin Burton

Speaker: Molly Amman

"Threat Management and Legal Realities"

Monday, July 27, 2015 – Afternoon Session

Video presentation: "The Coming Storm"

Andre Simons and Katherine Schweit

Discussion: "How can our survey results drive discussion?"

Sally Johnson and Andre Simons

Small group discussions

Small group presentations

Monday, July 27, 2015 – Evening Session

Dinner and presentation:

Introduction: Edwin Meese III

Speaker: Ronald Schouten

"The Mental Health System and Threat Management"

Tuesday, July 28, 2015 – Morning Session

Plenary review and strategic plan

Sally Johnson

Small group discussions

Working lunch: *Checking In: Final Calibrations*

Final plenary summation from working groups

Closing comments

Andre Simons and Kevin Burton

Endnotes

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