

A complex network diagram consisting of numerous black circular nodes connected by thin black lines, forming a dense web of connections. The nodes are of varying sizes and are distributed across the page, with a higher concentration on the left side.

[YOUR SCHOOL]

THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

D·PREP
SAFETY DIVISION

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INTRODUCTION

These policies, procedures, and guidelines have been created through a review of research-based approaches to identifying, analyzing, and managing threats that occur and pose a risk of violence to self or others. [YOUR SCHOOL] contracted with D-Prep Safety to consult on these policies to better protect the community.

Threat assessment and management, as a process, is most effective when operationalized within a collaborative, multidisciplinary team approach.^{1,2,3} Schools that rely only on only a police model for threat assessment and management risk creating a silo effect where “different domains of behavior are never linked together or synthesized to develop a comprehensive picture of the subject of concern, conduct further investigation, identify other warning behaviors, and actively risk-manage the case.”⁴ This keeps information compartmentalized within various departments and prevents the school from adopting a comprehensive data collection, analysis, and intervention model.

A better approach is using a multidisciplinary behavioral intervention team (BIT) or CARE team that can provide a 360-degree view of at-risk situations and develop better-informed, collaborative strategies for intervention.⁵ A team-based approach reduces isolated communication and combines efforts and experience to make the school safer.⁶ This is analogous to the development of law enforcement Fusion Centers that combine law enforcement expertise or the creation of the Department of Homeland Security with its focus on collaborative information sharing among various law enforcement entities.

1 Deisinger, G., Randazzo, M., O’Neill, D., and Savage, J. (2008). *The handbook for campus threat assessment & management teams*. Boston, MA: Applied Risk Management, LLC.

2 National Threat Assessment Center (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

3 Van Brunt, B. (2012). *Ending campus violence: New approaches to prevention*. New York, NY: Routledge.

4 Meloy, J., Hoffmann, J., Guldimann, A. & James, D. (2011). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 30(3) 256-279.

5 Van Brunt, B., Schiemann, M., Pescara-Kovach, L., Murphy, A., Halligan-Avery, E. (2018). Standards for Behavioral Intervention Teams. *Journal of Campus Behavioral Intervention*, (6). National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment.

6 Amman, M., Bowlin, M., Buckles, L., Burton, K.C., Brunnell, K.F., Gibson, K.A., Griffin, S.H., Kennedy, K. & Robins, C.J.(2015). *Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks*. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

REPORTING THREATS AND RISK OF VIOLENCE

The Importance of Reports

While reporting is a common term, when discussed with the community, it is better to describe the reporting process as “sharing a concern.” While this may seem to be an issue of semantics, the way we talk about referrals is important as it relates to the marketing and advertising of the team and the likelihood of teachers, administrators, parents, and students being willing to share concerns. Without good data, we are limited in terms of our ability to analyze and act. As mentioned earlier, threat assessment must be done contextually, which means gathering information related to the threat from multiple sources.

Building a successful referral network for threat assessment is essential. A threat analysis process will only be effective if it receives frequent information from the [YOUR SCHOOL] community. Developing a clear information conduit for students, teachers, parents, SROs, community partners, and staff is essential. These individuals have “eyes on the ground” and help ensure the team has actionable information to assess and analyze.

The best way to prevent violence from occurring is to encourage a culture of reporting concerning behavior on campus. Vossekui⁷ writes, “The U.S. Secret Service found... in 81% of their cases (n=37) at least one person knew the shooter was thinking about or planning the incident, and in 59% of the cases, more than one person knew about the planning. In 93% of the cases, the attackers engaged in some pre-offense ‘disturbing’ behavior that created concern in those around him.”⁸

[YOUR SCHOOL] reaches out to the community and encourages the sharing of concerning behaviors. This community includes faculty and student leaders who are willing to share their concerns. Kanan writes, “The need to break the code of silence that surrounds potentially dangerous behavior must be reinforced with students: telling keeps people safe.”⁹

The Reporting Process

The best way to obtain reports, referrals and information on a potential threat includes a process of sharing a concern through multiple points of entry. On initial review, it may seem better to have an easily controlled single point of entry. While this works well for categorizing the reports coming in, it does not work as well for obtaining concerns from those who are hesitant to report because of a reluctance to use technology, fear of causing the student to be separated from the school, or

7 Vossekui, B., Reddy, M., Fein, R., Borum, R. & Modzeleski, M. (2000). USSS Safe School Initiative: An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools. Washington, DC: US Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center.

8 Meloy, J. R., Hoffmann, J., Guldinann, A. & James, D. (2011). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology. Behavioral Sciences and the Law

9 Kanan, L. (2010). When Students Make Threats (pp. 24–9). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

concerns over being targeted by the student because of the report. As we receive reports in multiple formats, this helps ensure the information gets in front of key decision-makers.

Concerns can be shared through a central web portal [\[LINK TO REPORTING FORM\]](#). This allows anonymous reporting, which is considered a best practice by police, BIT, and CARE teams.¹⁰ Concerns may also be shared directly with school officials and team members. Community members may also share a concern by phone at [555-5555](tel:555-5555).

Who Shares Concerns?

All members of the [YOUR SCHOOL] community have the ability and duty to share concerns with the school officials. Being part of a community, particularly a unique community such as [YOUR SCHOOL], requires each member to take the safety and security of the community as a personal responsibility. Schools are in a unique position to advocate for students while balancing the safety and security of others in the community. Good information sharing with the team allows for a more accurate analysis and intervention steps.

What is Shared?

The easy answer to this question is anything that concerns a community member. School officials will review a concern and decide the risk and intervention plan. Even if the behavior is vague or does not warrant SRO/police intervention, sharing a concern with the officials is still encouraged. In fact, it is important to encourage someone to keep sharing information when they have shared something that is below the threshold. Having a community member feel they shouldn't have shared something with the team has a negative impact on their future reporting.

In terms of more specific information to be shared, it is helpful to provide some examples. Behaviors are separated into disruptive and dangerous categories and further described as online and in-person.¹¹ A list of example behaviors to share can be found in [Appendix A](#).

10 www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2020-06/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf
www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf

11 Van Brunt & Murphy (2018). *A Staff Guide to Addressing Disruptive and Dangerous Behavior on Campus*. Routledge. Van Brunt & Lewis (2014). *A Faculty Guide to Addressing Disruptive and Dangerous Behavior*. Routledge.

APPENDIX A: BEHAVIORS OF CONCERN

Examples of In-Person Disruption

- Misuse of technology in the classroom, such as watching loud videos on a laptop or a cell phone ringing repeatedly
- Poor personal hygiene that makes it difficult to continue a conversation
- Suspected use of alcohol or other substances
- Frequent interruption of the teacher while talking and asking non-relevant, off-topic questions after being told directly to stop
- Repeated crosstalk or carrying on side conversations while the teacher is speaking
- Raising voice at schoolmate, teacher, SRO or administrator
- Emotional outbursts or other extreme communications in common spaces that significantly affect others
- Lack of focus or paying attention to conversation; excessive sighs or eye rolls
- Entitled or disrespectful talk to teachers or other students
- Arguing points of contention or asking for special treatment after the staff, SRO, or teachers requests the student to stop
- Reading magazines, newspapers, or books, or studying for other classes/doing other homework during a conversation with you

Examples of Online Disruption

- Posting non-relevant spam or unrelated personal advertising material in email or on a website or social media page for the department
- Frequent interruption of the teacher with questions, non-relevant comments, or off-topic personal details over Zoom
- Inappropriate or overly revealing pictures shared with members of the online community (e.g., Zoom pause video profile pictures or items in chat)
- Choosing a screen name or profile name that is offensive to others, such as Smokingthedope420@school.edu or buttman69@school.edu

- Emailing or making comments while drunk or intoxicated; conducting phone calls while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- Arrogant, entitled, rude, or disrespectful emails or messages to teachers or other students
- Arguing points of contention or asking for special treatment after the teacher requests the student to stop
- Inciting other students to argue with the teachers over policy or other related expectations

Examples of In-Person Dangerous Behaviors

- Bullying behavior focused on students in common areas or school functions
- Direct communicated threats to a teacher, SRO, administrative staff, or another student, such as, “I am going to kick your ass” or “If you say that again, I will end you”
- Prolonged non-verbal, passive-aggressive behavior such as sitting with arms crossed, glaring, or staring, and refusing to respond to questions or directives
- Self-injurious behavior, such as cutting or burning self during a meeting or exposing previously unexposed self-injuries
- Physical assault, such as pushing, shoving, or punching
- Throwing objects or slamming doors
- Storming out of the office or room when upset
- Conversations that are designed to upset other students, teachers, and staff, such as descriptions of weapons, killing, or death
- Psychotic, delusional, or rambling speech
- Arrogant or rude talk to teachers or other students
- Objectifying language that depersonalizes the staff, teachers, or other students

Examples of Online Dangerous Behaviors

- Racist or otherwise exaggerated thoughts emailed or discussed on the phone, such as, “Women should be silent in public,” “Men should go back to playing football and stop thinking so hard. Leave the mental heavy lifting to the ladies in the class,” “Christians or Hindus should be wiped off the planet”
- Bullying and teasing behavior through messages, emails, or online hazing

- Direct communicated threats to a staff, teacher, administrator, SRO, or another student, such as, “I am going to beat you if you don’t agree with me” or “If you say that again, I will end you”
- Prolonged passive-aggressive behavior, such as constant disagreement with everyone and everything related to school policy, challenging a teacher’s credentials, or refusing to respond to questions or directives
- Mentioning self-injurious behavior, such as cutting or burning self or suicidal thoughts or intentions in emails or on social media
- Threats of physical assault, such as pushing, shoving, or punching
- Threats of online assaults like hacking a website, sharing personal information, or posting pictures online without permission
- Conversations that are designed to upset other students, such as descriptions of weapons, killing or death
- Psychotic, delusional, or rambling speech in an email
- Arrogant, entitled, rude or disrespectful messages to staff or other students
- Objectifying language that depersonalizes the staff or other students

APPENDIX B: TREAT ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

The threat assessment documentation is divided into five parts.

Part I: General Information collects demographic information on the student making the threat and general information about the threat itself.

Part II: Data Gathering is divided into five categories. These include a 1) student interview, 2) witness interview, 3) interview with the target of the threat, 4) teacher/staff interview, and 5) third-party information gathering. The appropriate form should be filled out for each person in that category.

Part III: Analysis of Risk describes the different levels used when rating the nature of the threat, the lethality of the threat, and the suicide risk.

Part IV: Determination of Threat Level details the three categories of risk: low, moderate, and high.

Part V: Response explains the appropriate responses based on the level of risk determined.

Part I: General Information

Form Completed By: _____ Position: _____

School: _____ Date form completed: _____

Information on the student making a threat: Name of student: _____

Date of birth: _____ Grade: _____ Gender: _____ Race: _____

Siblings: _____

Pets: _____

Parent/guardian name(s): _____

Parent/guardian employment: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Is there a history of aggressive or violent behavior in school? Yes ___ No ___ Unknown ___

Is there a history of aggressive or violent behavior away from school? Yes ___ No ___ Unknown ___

Is there a history of discipline referrals? Yes ___ No ___ Unknown ___

Additional family information from SRO: _____

Club/sports: _____

IEP: _____ 504 plan: _____

Mental health diagnosis: _____

Other information: _____

Information about the threat:

Date threat occurred: _____ Date administrator learned of threat: _____

Who reported the threat: _____

Where the threat was made: _____

What was reported (use quotation marks to identify direct quotes): _____

Information on target(s) of threat:

Has the intended target/victim(s) been identified? Yes ___ No ___

Name(s) & grade of victim(s): _____

Target(s) of the threat (check all that apply): Student ___ Teacher ___ Parent ___ Administrator ___ Other ___

Number of targets of threat: one ___ two ___ three ___ four ___ five or more ___

APPENDIX C: RESPONSE CHECKLISTS & GUIDANCE

The checklists on the following pages can be used when responding to a threat. Suggestions are based on the level of threat assessed and provide guidance for the steps to take. These are designed to ensure steps are not missed when coordinating the response phase (Part V) of the threat assessment documentation.

The following checklists provide guidance for response planning and risk mitigation.

1. The **Threat Response Checklist**, which offers system-level intervention steps needed to mitigate low, moderate, and high-risk threats.
2. The **Safety Risk Mitigation Checklist**, which looks at the general steps needed to mitigate low, moderate, and high-risk threats.
3. The **Student Support Plan**, which lists a range of problem behaviors, direct interventions for them, and system-level interventions for addressing the issues.

The ***Threat Response Checklist*** summarizes system-level interventions at the low, moderate, and high levels of threat. These offer a set of progressive action steps to be taken during low, moderate, and high-risk threats.

The **Safety Risk Mitigation Checklist** should be used to support response planning outlined in Part V of the threat documentation process. These interventions are focused on systemic interventions that are commonly applied at low, moderate, and high levels of threat. These interventions should be clearly defined and have a staff member assigned to ensure they are put into place to mitigate further escalation.

The **Student Support Plan** offers guidance to address level one classroom or school behaviors (distracting or disruptive but lacking a dangerous quality) and level two behaviors that are more concerning and move beyond simple disruptive toward dangerous. The interventions are provided in a progressive manner from least intrusive to most intrusive to the student and the classroom community. These interventions focus on specific classroom management techniques that are commonly applied at low, moderate, and high levels of threat. These interventions should be clearly defined and have a staff member assigned to ensure they are put into place to mitigate further escalation.

APPENDIX E: RISK MANAGEMENT AND REFERRAL GUIDANCE

These secondary rubrics are included in **Appendix E: Risk Management and Referral Guidance** to offer further suggestions and supports for the student involved in making the threat as well as for the target of the threat. These are general supportive documents to offer further guidance and support around threat mitigation planning

APPENDIX F: RISK FACTORS FOR TARGETED VIOLENCE

Aggrieved:⁴⁷ Here, the student blames others for most of their problems and difficulties in life. They carry resentments and escalate to make those they see as responsible pay for their actions. These actions can be perceived or actual; most commonly, they are based on some general truth.

Alone:⁴⁸ Refers to isolation and the inability to form social connections despite the desire and attempts. This escalates to feelings of hopelessness, irritability, and anger at being separated from what seems to come so easily for others. The outsider status and extreme isolation coincide with teasing and thoughts of suicide or extreme action.

Approach:⁴⁹ This term describes the movement toward a target, beginning with fantasizing about harming them and obtaining small items needed for an attack (extended magazines, research material, chains/locks). As they progress, they overcome their hesitancy and talk with others about their plan. Risk-taking behavior increases as they continue to escalate without considering their well-being. In the late stages of approach, they conduct test runs, engage in physical violence/threats, and solidify details for their full attack.

Blaze:⁵⁰ The “blaze of glory” describes a desire on the part of an attacker to end their life in a public, extreme manner that will, in their mind, justify the pain they have experienced or in the service of some perceived larger cause. There is increasing talk or posting on social media about their growing frustrations or dedication to a cause. As this reaches extremes, they are overwhelmed and trapped by pain or express a fanatical dedication to a cause. There is a detailed plan and commitment to a final action to send a message to others.

Catalyst:⁵¹ These negative events occur and act like the catalyst in a chemical reaction, speeding up the escalation, like the loss of status, opportunity (playing on a sports team or going on a field trip), relationship, or finances can act to further an attack plan. Unlike free fall, catalyst events occur more suddenly.

Checklist:⁵² A checklist becomes the physical manifestation of fantasy rehearsal and brainstorming what would be needed to punish or harm a person, place, or system. Checklists

47 Folger, R. & Baron, R. A. (1996). Violence and hostility at work: A model of reactions to perceived injustice. In G. R. VandenBos & E.Q. Bulatao (Eds.), *Violence on the Job: Identifying Risks and Developing Solutions* (pp.51–85). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

48 Lankford A. (2013). *The Myth of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, and Other Self-Destructive Killers*. (St. Martin Press, New York)

49 Meloy, R., Hoffmann, J., Roshdi, K., Glaz-Ocik, J., & Guldemann, A. (2014). Warning behaviors and their configurations across various domains of targeted violence. In J.R. Meloy & J.Hoffmann (Eds.), *The international handbook of threat assessment* (pp. 39–53). New York: Oxford University Press.

50 Bhui KS, Hicks MH, Lashley M, Jones E. (2012). A public health approach to understanding and preventing violent radicalization. *BMC Med.* 10, 16.

51 National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). (2018). *Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

52 Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP). (2006). *Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence (RAGE-V): Considerations for Assessing the Risk of Future Violent Behavior*. (ATAP, Sacramento, CA).

become increasingly informed by research and specificity around the timing and location of an attack and the materials needed. There may also be a shutting down of bank accounts, phones or social media accounts, or other recurring memberships or involvement with the anticipation of an upcoming event.

Consumed:⁵³ This reflects a set way of thinking and escalating toward action. The student has difficulty accepting alternative explanations for events, they engage in harmful debate with others and increasingly look for ways to widen their impact and solidify their viewpoint. This escalates to include a quality of obsession and a spiraling negative impact on other aspects of their work, school, social relationships, and family. The student seeks the opportunity to troll and create demonstrations to push this view on others. They not only have a hardened point of view, but this becomes a defining characteristic of their entire person. When limits are set by the workplace, school, or police, they move quickly past these, feeling justified in their actions because of their locked perspective.

Costuming:⁵⁴ As an attacker prepares, they often find clothing, tactical gear, and accessories they will need during the attack. This may start with an affiliation to a group like the Proud Boys or Atomwaffen and eventually involves purchasing ballistic plates, knee and elbow pads, harnesses, and/or ammunition containers. In some attacks, they have taken on the appearance of figures such as the Dark Knight, Joker, and characters from *The Matrix*.

Defiant:⁵⁵ At first, defiance may be a general tendency to take an alternative path when compared with how others approach those in authority. This escalates into more frequent incidents with teachers, student discipline, human resources, and society in general. Incidents then involve more substantive threats, violent actions, and conditional ultimatums.

Direct:⁵⁶ A direct threat is one made verbally or in a written format like a letter or on social media. A student may start as vague references or memes and escalate to mentions of a specific place, time, and what they will do. As they escalate, the threat is made with a sense of urgency and repeated in multiple formats.

Encouragers:⁵⁷ These are often third parties they meet on the internet, chatrooms, social media, or in-person meetings, such as local white supremacists, KKK, or other violent hate groups. The encouragement progresses from the pursuit of ideas and philosophies to support acquiring

53 Meloy, J., Hoffmann, J., Guldimann, A., & James, D. (2011). The role of warning behaviors in threat assessment: An exploration and suggested typology. *Behavioral Science Law*, 30, 256–279.

54 Van Brunt, B & Lewis, W.C. (2014). Costuming, Misogyny, and Objectification as Risk Factors in Targeted Violence. *Violence and Gender* 4, (3), 81-101.

55 ASIS International and the Society for Human Resource Management (2011). *Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention: American National Standard*. Retrieved from www.asisonline.org/guidelines/published.htm

56 United States Postal Service. (2007). *Threat Assessment Team Guide*.

57 Lankford A. (2010). *Human Killing Machines: Systematic Indoctrination in Iran, Nazi Germany, Al Qaeda, and Abu Ghraib*. (Lexington Press, Boston, MA).

weapons, developing an attack plan, and punishing those who they see as responsible for societal problems.

Free Fall:⁵⁸ Unlike catalyst events, which are more sudden, free fall describes a more general set of problems like failing supports, mental illness flair-ups, and a general sense of hopelessness. The free fall becomes more concerning as multiple, chronic problems intersect, eventually creating an inability to function and a lack of hope that things will improve.

Hopeless:⁵⁹ This describes a sense of worry and uncertainty about the future, along with difficulty focusing and pervasive feelings of sadness. As hopelessness increases, they feel trapped and eventually are unable to function and/or experience growing suicidal thoughts.

Impulsive:⁶⁰ In moving from an idea to an action, the student progresses quickly without weighing the impact of their actions. They increasingly ignore those in positions of authority or limits that have been set. In the more extreme escalation, the student acts despite a risk to their life.

Incel:⁶¹ This term stands for “involuntary celibate” and represents a range of thinking and behaviors from social awkwardness and difficulty forming connections with women to hardline misogyny and active threats to punish them for rejecting the person’s attempts at dating.

Irrational:⁶² Thinking becomes increasingly impaired due to paranoia, odd or obsessive thoughts, delusions, and/or a general separation from reality. This may include language about aliens, government organizations surveilling them, incongruent or poorly organized speech, and the experience of hallucinations (voices, visions, smells, etc.) that may command and/or demand they take violent action.

Leakage:⁶³ This refers to sharing attack details, intentionally or unintentionally, with a third party. At first, these are vague hints at frustration, growing unhappiness, and unfairness, with no mention of a specific time, place, or target of an attack. Leakage increases as they vent frustrations verbally/online and demand justice. Threats then become specific and lethal with a time and location mentioned.

Lethality:⁶⁴ The dangerousness of the attack plan is determined by the level of access to deadly weapons and materials. At the early stage, access to deadly weapons may require obtaining them

58 National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). (2018). Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

59 Calhoun, F., & Weston, S. (2009). Threat assessment and management strategies: Identifying the Howlers and Hunters. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

60 Van Brunt, B. (2012). Ending campus violence: New approaches to prevention. New York, New York. Routledge.

61 Van Brunt, B. & Taylor, C. (2021). Understanding and Treating Incels: Case Studies, Guidance, and Treatment of Violence Risk in the Involuntary Celibate Community. NY: Taylor and Francis.

62 Van Brunt, B., & Pescara-Kovach, P. (2019). Debunking the myths: Mental illness and mass shootings. *Journal of Violence and Gender*, 1(1), p. 1-11.

63 Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). The final report and findings of the safe school initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education.

64 Langman, P. (2009). Rampage School Shooters: A typology. *Aggression Violent Behaviour*, 14, 79–86.

from friends or other locations. As lethality escalates, weapons are acquired along with ammunition and secondary materials needed for an attack, like high-capacity magazines, security schedules, or counter-surveillance measures.

Location:⁶⁵ This signifies the place where an attack will occur. This may be vague and general at first, perhaps even at a place where the attacker does not have access. With escalation, the location becomes increasingly specific, and the threatener has conducted research and planning on access. They may conduct walkthroughs of the location and look at overcoming any obstacles.

Objectification:⁶⁶ There is a depersonalization regarding how others are seen, with an increasing tendency to see them as “less than” or unworthy of basic consideration. This manifests in name-calling and the use of racist, misogynistic, or bigoted language. As objectification escalates, there are increased work, school, and home conflicts, with threats and negative actions. They eventually see their target as undeserving of any consideration and simply as an object in the way of their goal.

Organization:⁶⁷ This denotes threats that move from vague and undefined to narrow and specific. Poorly organized threats are more reactive and often involve many targets and people. Escalations in organization define the attack to a singular target and are consistent and repeated.

Penetration:⁶⁸ The student begins to study the vulnerabilities of their target or targets to determine how to increase the lethality and success of their plan. As this escalates, they study security measures and develop ways to overcome them. They select a time for the attack and often create a manifesto or legacy token memorializing their study.

Planning:⁶⁹ Involves writing down or thinking about what the student may do to correct an injustice or seek revenge. Planning intensifies as the threatener focuses on details, gathering intel and acquiring the items they need for an attack. As planning escalates, the student clarifies and improves tactics to increase damage and overcome potential obstacles. Secondary sites, counter-surveillance measures, and contingency plans are developed.

Research:⁷⁰ This involves the general interest in and reading or viewing materials about past attacks. As the individual escalates, research becomes more specifically narrowed to weapons, tactical gear, scouting the location, and penetration testing (looking at vulnerabilities in security, patrols, and cameras).

65 Turner J. & Gelles M. (2003). *Threat assessment: A risk management approach*. New York: Routledge.

66 Grossman, D. (1996). *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*. Lebanon, IN: Little, Brown, and Company Back Bay Books.

67 Turner J. & Gelles M. (2003). *Threat assessment: A risk management approach*. New York: Routledge.

68 Meloy, R., Hoffmann, J., Roshdi, K. et al. (2014). Warning behaviors and their configurations across various domains of targeted violence. *The international handbook of threat assessment* Meloy, J.R. and Hoffmann, J. eds., 39–53. New York: Oxford University Press.

69 Van Brunt, B. (2012). *Ending campus violence: New approaches to prevention*. New York: Routledge.

70 Pollack, W., Modzeleski, W., & Rooney, G. (2008). *Prior knowledge of potential school-based violence: Information students learn may prevent a targeted attack*. Washington, DC: United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education.

Rhetoric:⁷¹ Refers to the student’s contextual history of writing fiction, satire, or opinion pieces that may look concerning at first but are less so, as this is a common way the student processes and vents. While the student may write vague threats and use jarring language, the overall piece is used to express pain and/or is satirical in nature. As the rhetoric concern escalates, the tone and details convey a disregard for the target, and they are written to inflict pain and insult rather than making a larger narrative point. At the extreme, the fiction/satire is seen as a poor disguise, and the real desire is clearly to weaken the target’s image and destroy the target.

Sadist:^{72,73} Here, the student takes pleasure in inflicting harm on people and/or animals. In the early stages, this may manifest as a lack of empathy or non-physical negative attacks on others. In later stages, there is a growing need to harm others physically, along with making plans and narrowing on a target.

Teased:⁷⁴ In the early stages, teasing and bullying are an occasional experience that has an impact on a student’s self-worth and social connections with others. As teasing increases, their world becomes increasingly unsafe and negative, leading to feelings of hopelessness, despair, being trapped, and eventually feelings of suicide or a desire to send a message to the oppressors through violent action.

Time:⁷⁵ This refers to when the attack will take place. In the early stages, the time may be given in months or years with the feeling of “if things don’t change at some point, this will happen.” As timing escalates, the student thinks in terms of weeks rather than months, and the attack becomes increasingly likely if the target does not change their behavior. At the final stages, the attack is imminent, planned in the next hours or days, and timing may be communicated with a verbal or online threat.

Tone:⁷⁶ Whether written or verbal, the tone is intimidating, angry, and frustrated, often with elements of anger, sadness, and pain. As the tone escalates, the attacker uses negative adverbs and adjectives to blame, harass, and intimate the target. Increased objectification of the target occurs, removing any sense of agency or humanity. In extreme stages of tone, rage and a desire for punishment are explicit and unrelenting.

71 Smith S. (2007). From violent words to violent deeds? Assessing risk from threatening communications. *Diss Abst Int.* 68, 1945B.

72 Lankford, A. (2018). Identifying Potential Mass Shooters and Suicide Terrorists with Warning Signs of Suicide, Perceived Victimization, and Desires for Attention or Fame. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 100, 471–482.

73 MacCulloch, M., Snowden, P., Wood, P., & Mills, H. (1983). Sadistic fantasy, sadistic behavior and offending. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 143: 20–29.

74 National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) (2019). Protecting America’s schools: A United States secret service analysis of targeted school violence. Washington, DC: United States Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

75 Turner J, Gelles M. (2003). *Threat Assessment: A Risk Management Approach*. (Routledge, New York, NY.)

76 Van Brunt, B. (2016). Assessing threat in written communications, social media, and creative writing. *The Journal of Violence and Gender*, 3(2), 78–88.

Vengeance:^{77,78} Seen in parallel with aggrieved, injustice, and grievance collecting, this is the action and desire to punish those they feel have caused their pain or are unfairly enjoying life in a way the attacker resents. Talking and venting eventually includes fantasies of acting out their plan and considering the time, place, and location of their attack.

Weapons Acquisition:⁷⁹ Moving beyond simple interest, they begin to purchase weapons or gain experience shooting at a range. The weapons are increasingly chosen for a specific purpose and the knowledge about the weapons becomes more directly tied to a specific attack plan. Secondary and tertiary weapons, ammunition, and gear are obtained.

Weapons Interest:⁸⁰ Here, the student explores different types of firearms, knives, explosive devices, and corresponding tactical equipment such as harnesses, night-vision goggles, expanded magazines, optics, and bullet-proof vests. As their interest progresses, they become increasingly obsessed with the topic and talk about this freely with others despite negative consequences to their friendships, work, or academics. The student may belong to several Internet discussion groups and in-person organizations and subscribe to magazines or other books or literature. As this interest escalates, there becomes an increasing focus on narrowing weapons and tactical material knowledge for a specific plan, such as a shooting at a public event, school, or workplace.

77 Knoll J. (2010). The “pseudocommando” mass murderer: Part I, the psychology of revenge and obliteration. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law*. 38, 87–94.

78 Langman, P. (2009). Rampage school shooters: A typology. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 14, 79–86.

79 Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP). (2006). *Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence (RAGE-V): Considerations for Assessing the Risk of Future Violent Behavior*. (ATAP, Sacramento, CA).

80 National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). (2018). *Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security.

APPENDIX G: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The world of threat assessment and behavioral intervention has unique language and terminology that is important to understand when communicating between departments. If a large part of the threat assessment process is building connections among departments and various stakeholders, using a common language related to threat, law enforcement, mental illness, and college and university structures is essential.

- **Actionability:** The likelihood that an individual can access the means and materials to carry out an attack.
- **Action/Time Imperative:** The time, location, and movement toward an attack location.
- **Affective Violence:** Violence driven by emotions in an impulsive and emotional response to an environmental stressor or perceived threat.
- **Americans with Disability Act:** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 established comprehensive legislation covering civil rights for people with disabilities. It is published in the United States Code and is often referred to by the titles and chapters of the code that contain the law. More information about the ADA is available at <http://www.ada.gov>.
- **Anchor:** Supportive measures that help prevent the escalation in violence. Also called protector or stabilizing factors.
- **Anchor Bias:** Having a set way of thinking that “locks in” on certain topics.
- **Approach Behavior:** The type, frequency, and intensity an attacker engages in to become physically close to the target.
- **Availability Bias:** the tendency to use readily available data to make decisions.
- **Breach:** A gap or break in security that is often exploited or circumvented in an attack.
- **Blind Spot Bias:** Having knowledge gaps in your process.
- **BIT:** Behavioral intervention team.
- **CARE:** Campus assessment, resources, and evaluation.
- **Catalyst/Domino Effect:** Refers to a series of events that set off an escalating cascade moving forward and leading to a collapse of supportive and/or anchor factors.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Deciding first and then finding facts to support it.

- **Credible threat:** A threat that is deemed actionable and substantive. A threat that is likely to occur without intervention.
- **DEI:** Diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **DOS:** Dean of students.
- **Dunning-Kruger Effect:** Over-estimating your expertise in an area based on your experience.
- **Energy Burst Behavior:** An increase in the intensity of behaviors before an attack.
- **FERPA:** Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. This federal law (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) governs the gathering, maintenance, and accessibility of educational records. Schools need written permission from the student to release educational records to anyone other than the student. Schools may disclose records, without consent, to certain parties under specific conditions, including complying with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, to appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies and to state and local authorities within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law.
- **Fixation/Focus:** Threat assessment terms that refer to a narrowing down on a particular target (e.g., fixation on women, focus on women in a sorority house).
- **HIPAA:** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires covered entities to protect individuals' health records and other identifiable health information. The security, accountability, and confidentiality of medical records covered by this act are of primary importance to threat assessment professionals. The rule permits the use and disclosure of protected health information, without an individual's authorization or permission, for national priority purposes to law enforcement officials under specific circumstances (See 45 C.F.R. § 164.512). Disclosure must also be made to someone believed to be able to prevent or lessen a threat or to law enforcement if the information is needed to identify or apprehend an escapee or violent criminal.
- **In Group/Out Group:** Favorable or unfavorably leaning the process to groups you are connected to or separate from.
- **Inhibitors:** Anything that serves to decrease the likelihood of the person escalating to violence. Also called buffers, anchors, or protective factors.
- **JACA:** Justification, alternatives, consequences, and ability. This acronym, created by Decker, helps determine the level of threat. J: Does the person feel justified in using violent means? A: Does the subject perceive that he or she has alternatives to rectify the grievance? C: How salient are the consequences of this activity to the subject? A: Does the subject believe they can carry out the intended violence?

- **Last Resort Warning Behavior:** A decision to ends one’s life and make final arrangements prior to a targeted violence attack.
- **Leakage:** When the subject shares with others, intentionally or accidentally, clues and details about their existing attack plan.
- **Legacy Token:** Writing or social media content that has a manifesto or justification for an attack quality.
- **LOA:** Leave of absence.
- **Pathway to Violence:** A series of sequential steps – from its beginning with a felt grievance, to violent ideation, research, and planning, specific preparations for violence, critical breaches of security or other boundaries, to a concluding attack – indicating that an individual is progressing towards an act of targeted violence.
- **PI:** Principal investigator or advisor.
- **POC:** Person of concern (typically used in law enforcement, though POC may also refer to a person of color outside of law enforcement).
- **Reporting Party:** Often used in sexual assault or harassment cases to refer to the person making the report. Also commonly referred to as the victim.
- **Responding Party:** Often used in sexual assault or harassment cases to refer to the person who the report is made against. Also commonly referred to as the accused or the perpetrator.
- **Silos:** Refers to when information is not shared across departments. Information silos describe a flawed process where information or knowledge is kept separate, 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.
- **SOC:** Student of concern.

APPENDIX H: THREAT PROCESS MAP

