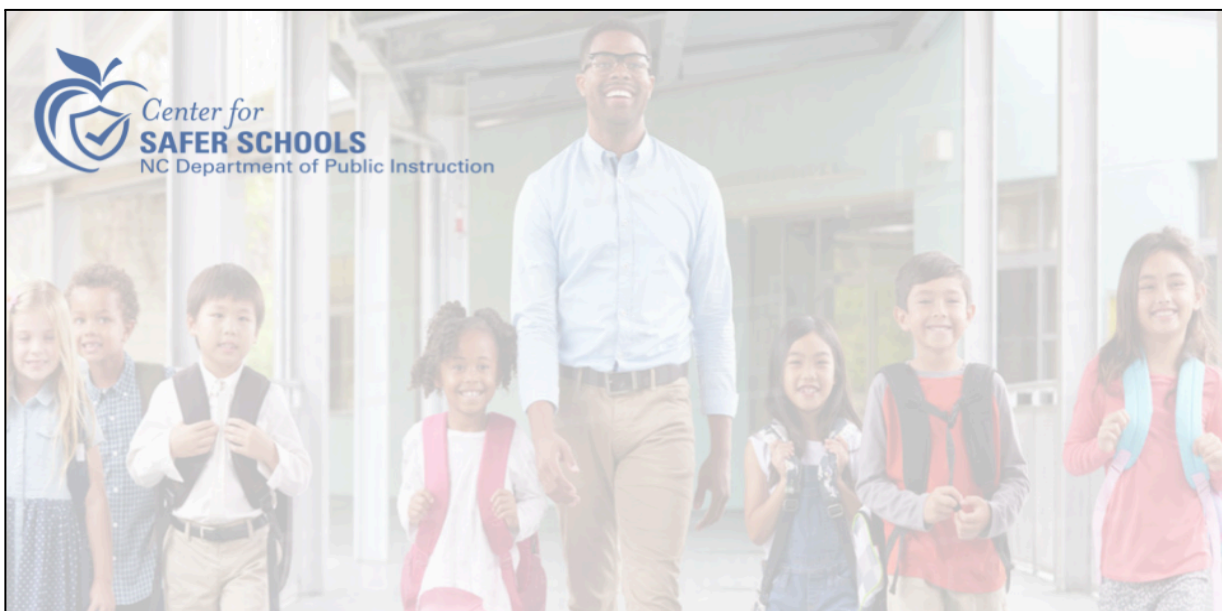




BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT:

Best Practice Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention

March 2024



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March 2024

North Carolina Center for Safer Schools
Division of District and School Support Services
NC Department of Public Instruction

301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2825



This best practice guide and the documents contained herein do not predict future violence nor are they a foolproof method of assessing an individual's or group's risk of harm to others. The guide and accompanying documents are not checklists that can be quantified. This document is designed to assist with behavioral threat assessment, which is a fact-based process of identifying, assessing, and managing individuals who may pose a risk of violence or other harm to self or others, and to assist school districts in development of a comprehensive behavioral threat assessment and management plan. Furthermore, as circumstances change, an individual's potential for violence may increase or decrease. A particular level of concern assigned by a threat assessment team at one point in time is not stagnant. Understanding this key point is paramount to remaining vigilant for signs that a level of concern may be increasing and also acknowledging when an individual has moved off the pathway toward violence in a more positive direction.

The best practice guide is a tool for Public School Units to utilize to help support their Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Processes. This guide aims to provide a framework and resources for PSUs while emphasizing the importance of local adaptation and legal compliance. This guide should be adapted based on specific needs, legal advice, and evolving best practices. This document is a resource and not a definitive word. Each PSU should seek direction from their local legal counsel.

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Message from the State Superintendent of North Carolina



NC Public Schools:

On behalf of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, I want to thank you for serving on your school's threat assessment team. Your background and expertise are vitally important to school safety efforts across North Carolina.

As you know, behavioral threat assessment is a best practice for helping to identify potential threats in K-12 schools and school districts. Behavioral threat assessment and management provides a proactive, evidence-based approach for identifying individuals who might pose a threat to themselves or others and for providing intervention before an incident occurs. It is vitally important in terms of prevention and protection, and we are grateful for your service on this important team.

You have in your possession the "Best Practice Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention." This document is guidance for North Carolina public schools to use in the formation of threat assessment teams mandated by Session Law 2023-78/HB 605. Please join me in thanking the Behavioral Health Subcommittee of the Center for Safer Schools' Multidisciplinary Team for their hard work and dedication to craft this vital resource.

It is critical that schools have a fully formed, functional threat assessment team. I realize that some of this is new to you or comes in addition to your current role. This document should give you the knowledge and confidence you need to address potential threats in your school.

As you form your threat assessment teams, keep in mind that this guidance document is just that – guidance. Schools decide for themselves what is best for them regarding their team's membership, rules and procedures. I would encourage you to consult your district's legal counsel for additional input and feedback.

I want to thank our partners at the General Assembly – including primary sponsors Reps. John Torbett, R-Gaston; Hugh Blackwell, R-Burke; and Tricia Cotham, R-Mecklenburg – for keeping school safety at the center of your work.

I greatly appreciate your patience during the process of drafting this guidance document. I hope the "Best Practice Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention" furthers your efforts to help keep your schools safer.

Sincerely,

Catherine Truitt



Every day, the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools employs school safety best practices as part of our protective mission. State Superintendent Catherine Truitt and I have advocated for behavioral threat assessment and management legislation since coming into office in 2021. Behavioral threat assessment is a best practice for helping to identify potential threats in North Carolina schools and school districts. Behavioral threat assessment and management provides a proactive, evidence-based approach for identifying individuals who might pose a threat to themselves or others and for providing intervention before an incident occurs.

On behalf of the Center and North Carolina schools, I want to thank the primary sponsors of Session Law 2023-78/HB 605: Reps. John Torbett, R-Gaston; Hugh Blackwell, R-Burke; and Tricia Cotham, R-Mecklenburg. The legislation received unanimous Senate approval (46-0) on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, and passed the House 115-4 on Tuesday, June 27, 2023.

The Center has maintained a particular focus on the prevention of targeted school violence by issuing this “Best Practice Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention.” Our school safety strategic planning experience tells us that keeping schools safe is a collaborative effort. We also know that in schools where behavioral threat assessment teams and protocols exist, educators and other staff are more likely to work collaboratively to share information about students who may pose danger to themselves or others. The goal of behavioral threat assessment and management is to intervene and help the student of concern onto a more positive pathway. Thus, the timely and appropriate sharing of information could enhance the safety of all students, including the student at risk.

My sincerest thanks to the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools Multidisciplinary Team, particularly the Behavioral Health Subcommittee, for their hard work in providing this resource guide. The Center for Safer Schools will provide additional best practice templates and additional resources at the annual RISE Back to School Safety Summit, and continued behavioral threat assessment and management training will be a focus. School safety is a top priority in North Carolina schools. Because of the hard work of dedicated educators in North Carolina, schools now have access to a resource designed to keep our students, educators and staff safe.

Sincerely,

Karen Fairley

Acknowledgements

The NC Center for Safer Schools wants to thank the CFSS Multidisciplinary Team for its support and contributions to this Best Practices Document. The Center would especially like to thank the Behavioral Health Subcommittee of the MDT for its hard work, deduction and expertise and all they contributed to this document. Please see below for the names of those who serve on these teams:

Name	Role
Karen Fairley, J.D.	Executive Director of the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Chair

NC Center for Safer Schools Behavioral Health Subcommittee and Best Practices Guidance Document for Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Lead Group

Name	Role
Stephanie L. Ellis, Ed.D., NCSP	Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member of the NC Task Force for Safer Schools Nationally Certified School Psychologist for Person County Schools NCSPA NC School Psychologist of the Year (2015) NASP National School Psychologist of the Year (2016) Averett University Distinguished Alumnus Award (2019)
Michelle H. Guarino, MSW, LCSW, RYT	Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NC CFSS Consultant NC State Senior Lecturer for School of Social Work
Heidi Austin, Ed.D., MCHES®, CFLE	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Director
Kisha Bryant, Ed.D.	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NC DPI School Counseling Consultant
Amy Lowder, NCSP	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NCSPA School Safety and Crisis Response Committee Co-Chair Director of Student Safety and Well-Being in Cabarrus County Schools NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee Member and Professional Development Co-Coordinator Nationally Certified School Psychologist
Pachovia Lovett, MSW	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NC DPI School Social Work Consultant
Tara Muller, J.D.	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Disability Rights North Carolina Policy Attorney

NC Center for Safer Schools Multidisciplinary Team

Name	Role
Karen Fairley, J.D.	Executive Director of the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools NCFSS Multidisciplinary Team Chair
Stephanie L. Ellis, Ed.D., NCSP	Co-Chair Of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member of the NC Task Force for Safer Schools Nationally Certified School Psychologist for Person County Schools NCSPA NC School Psychologist of the Year (2015) NASP National School Psychologist of the Year (2016) Averett University Distinguished Alumnus Award (2019)
Dawn S. Craft	Co-Chair of the Law Enforcement/School Resource Officer Partnership Subcommittee for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team
Claude E. Cooper, Jr., M.A.Ed, B.S. Mathematics	Board of Education Member (Former Chairman (3 years), Vice Chairman (2 years), Chairman of PR Committee (8 years), Halifax County Principal of the Year (4 times), Runner-up (2 times), Elected to Halifax County Hall of Fame (2019), Roanoke River Conference Coach of the Year (14 times), PBIS Trainer, NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member (School Climate Subcommittee)
Vidal A. Sipe	Chief of Police, City of Newton Police Department CAPC Executive Board Member, YMCA of Catawba Valley Executive Board Member, Salvation Army Board Member, YPOI Board Chair, President-Elect of Newton Conover Rotary, NCACP Member, IACP Member, NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member, CCSCI Member
Brendan O. Gartner	Chief of Operations, Onslow County Schools NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Angel Goodwine-Batts, M.S.Ed.	Integrated Academic and Behavior System (IABS)-Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) State Team Lead for North Carolina Department of Public Instruction NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Michelle H. Guarino, MSW, LCSW, RYT	Co-Chair of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NC CFSS Consultant NC State Senior Lecturer for School of Social Work
Heidi Austin, Ed.D., MCHES®, CFLE	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Director
Kisha Bryant, Ed.D.	Behavioral Health Subcommittee Member for the NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team NC DPI School Counseling Consultant
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Robert Holland	Coordinator of School Safety, Macon County Schools Former Sheriff, Macon County NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Scottie Chavis	State Highway Patrol NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Amy Marshall-Brown	Retired Administrator, Nash County Schools NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Shaneeeka Moore-Lawrence	President, NCPTA NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member
Barrett Elwood	Lieutenant, SRO Supervisor, Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office NC CFSS Multidisciplinary Team Member

Each section of this guidance document has a summary box indicating components of Session Law 2023-78/House Bill 605. Please also reference the user guide for a quick summary of requirements for public school units. Each Public School Unit will need to review this guidance document for further details for implementation.

NC SESSION LAW 2023-78/HOUSE BILL 605

Part II. Establishment of Threat Assessment Teams

The NC Center for Safer Schools memo from June 2023 can be found in its entirety [here](#).

NC Session Law 2023-78/House Bill 605 can be found its entirety [here](#). Below is a summary of the components regarding the “establishment of threat assessment teams” in North Carolina.

PART II. ESTABLISH THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS SECTION 2.(a) Article 8C of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-105.65. Threat assessment teams.

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Superintendent. – The superintendent or, if there is no superintendent, the staff member with the highest decision-making authority.
- (2) Threat assessment. – A fact-based process of identifying, assessing, and managing behavior that may pose a risk of violence or other harm to self or others.
- (3) Threat assessment team. – A multidisciplinary team that includes, but is not limited to, persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement that conducts threat assessments in a public school unit when threatening behavior has been communicated and when a student has engaged in threatening behavior that warrants further evaluation. When practicable, at least one school psychologist, one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with special needs, and one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with disabilities shall be assigned to the threat assessment team. If a school psychologist is not available, the school may assign a licensed mental

health professional instead. Members of a threat assessment team who are not employees of the public school unit may review student records as provided in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B) pursuant to a written agreement with the public school unit of the requirements and responsibilities for use of student records under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

(4) Threatening behavior. – Any communication or action that indicates that an individual may pose a danger to the safety or well-being of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behaviors that would cause harm to self or others. These behaviors may be expressed or communicated orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means and may be considered threatening regardless of whether a direct verbal threat is expressed.

(b) The Center for Safer Schools shall develop guidance for threat assessment teams for public school units and all public school units shall have access to the guidance. The Center shall develop the guidance by (i) collecting information and best practices from schools with existing threat assessment teams and (ii) consulting with the Task Force for Safer Schools, Disability Rights North Carolina, the North Carolina School Psychology Association, the State Bureau of Investigation, and relevant State government agencies. This guidance shall not reference or reveal any information that has been excluded as a public record under G.S. 115C-47(40), Part 2 of Article 8C of this Chapter, or any other relevant statute. The guidance shall include, at a minimum, the best practices for the following:

(1) Assessment of and intervention with an individual whose behavior poses a risk to the safety of school staff, students, or self, including suggested definitions of threat levels with examples of behavior that would be considered a threat under the given definitions.

(2) If the individual is a student or minor, involvement of the individual's parent or legal guardian throughout the threat assessment process.

(3) Referral to LME/MCOs, as provided in G.S. 122C-115.4(b)(9), for evaluation or treatment, when appropriate.

(4) Compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., and Article 9 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes. (5) Referral to the appropriate local law enforcement agency if the individual is not a student.

(c) The governing body of a public school unit shall develop policies for assessment and intervention by threat assessment teams, including any scale or classification system that will be used to indicate various levels of threats and the standard response to each level of threat.

These policies shall differentiate between assessment and intervention at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as appropriate. In developing these policies, the unit shall consult the guidance issued by the Center for Safer Schools released pursuant to subsection (b) of this section and with any threat assessment team in the unit. These policies shall not reference or reveal any information that has been excluded as a public record under G.S. 115C-47(40), Part 2 of Article 8C of this Chapter, or any other relevant statute. A copy of the policies shall be sent to the Center for Safer Schools.

(d) The superintendent or the superintendent's designee shall establish a committee charged with coordination and monitoring of the threat assessment teams operating within the unit, which may be an existing committee established by the unit. The committee shall include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.

(e) The superintendent of a public school unit shall establish a threat assessment team for each school within the unit. In the discretion of the superintendent, an established threat assessment team may serve more than one school in the unit. Each team shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

(1) Provide training to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition and reporting of threatening behavior that may indicate a risk of harm to the community, school, or self.

(2) Identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior shall be reported.

(3) Implement policies adopted by the governing body of the public school unit pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(4) Utilize anonymous reporting applications for students to share information about school safety concerns requiring investigation.

(5) Upon finding a credible threat, a threat assessment team may take any of the following actions:

a. Recommend that the individual involved be referred for mental health services. If the individual is a student or minor, the parents shall be notified of the recommendation and encouraged to contact the student's primary care provider, insurance, or the local Medicaid management entity or managed care organization.

b. Provide notice to individuals who are the subject of threatening behavior and, if the individual is a student or a minor, provide notice to the student's parent or legal guardian. All notices shall be in accordance with the Family Educational

Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. c. Provide notice to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

c. Provide notice to the appropriate local law enforcement agency

(e1) Any information shared among members of the threat assessment team pursuant to this subsection shall remain confidential, shall not be a public record subject to Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, and shall only be released in connection with an emergency under the standards established by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(I).

(f) Any threat assessment team may submit a request to the Center for Safer Schools, in a manner to be determined by the Center, for a training session on the implementation or operation of a threat assessment team. Within 30 days of any training conducted pursuant to this section, the Center shall send a brief to all assessment teams giving an overview of the training, including any solutions reached or lessons learned.

(g) Each threat assessment team established pursuant to this section shall report quantitative data on its activities to the Center for Safer Schools as required by the Center. The Center is authorized to share these reports with any agency it consults with to develop guidance pursuant to this section. Such data shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Number of threat assessments conducted annually and demographic information on the individuals assessed.

(2) Total number of threat assessments that resulted in a determination that the behavior being assessed posed a threat, and any information on the scale or classification of the threat, as described by the written policy required by subsection (c) of this section.

(3) All actions and the results of those actions taken in response to finding a threat.

(4) Number, subject, and solution or outcome of any technical assistance requests.

(h) No governing body of a public school unit, nor its members, employees, designees, agents, or volunteers, shall be liable in civil damages to any party for any loss or damage caused by any act or omission relating to the participation in or implementation of any component of the threat assessment team policies required by this section, unless that act or omission amounts to gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing. Nothing in this section shall be construed to impose any specific duty of care or standard of care.

- (i) Nothing in this section shall preclude public school personnel from acting immediately to address threatening behavior that is an imminent risk.
- (j) Any action taken pursuant to this section, or a rule or policy developed pursuant to this section, shall comply with the Constitution of the United States, the North Carolina Constitution, and Article 27 of this Chapter."

SECTION 2.(b) G.S. 115C-105.57(c)(2)c. reads as rewritten: "c. Threat assessment.assessment and threat assessment teams, including development of guidance pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.65(b)."

SECTION 2.(c) G.S. 122C-115.4(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(9) Each LME/MCO shall receive referrals from school superintendents or designees in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.65(b)(3) related to students who are uninsured or are covered by Medicaid and not enrolled in a prepaid health plan residing in the LME/MCO's catchment area. Within 10 calendar days after receipt of a referral, the LME/MCO shall contact the student's parent or legal guardian using the information provided on the referral and shall provide assistance with identifying appropriate existing mental health resources available to the student. The assistance shall include identifying sources of funding to assist with the cost of mental health services as well as providing referrals to appropriate mental health service providers and mental health services."

Public School Units are provided a quick overview below of the required components of [SL 2023-78/HB 605](#) and also the areas the Center for Safer Schools is requiring of each PSU. Please see the list below that serves as a summary. Each PSU is encouraged to use the bookmarked table of contents (page 4) for more details and explanation. In addition, each section of this guidance document includes a summary box of the Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 and requirements.

1. PSUs should utilize the information in this guide as it is aligned with [SL 2023-78/HB 605](#).
2. PSUs are required to establish a [multidisciplinary team](#) for behavioral threat assessment and management, including the administrator, school-based mental health professional, school resource officer, and the person with expertise in instruction.
3. PSUs should understand the [concerning and prohibited behaviors](#) outlined by [NTAC and U.S. Secret Service](#).
4. PSUs should understand the U.S. Secret Service and NTAC model outlined in this best practice guide. Please see the [NTAC Steps 1-8](#) for how to develop a comprehensive behavioral threat management program based on best practice and evidence based practice. [BTAM Steps 1-7](#) are identified in this best practice guidance document to detail the actual steps of the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Process.
5. PSUs are required to have an [anonymous reporting process](#) (i.e. Say Something). A central reporting mechanism with multiple ways of reporting is needed in each public school unit.
6. PSUs are encouraged to [develop procedures around the threshold for law enforcement intervention](#). Each PSU should consider the development of a Memorandum of Understanding that incorporates procedures and details around School Behavioral Threat Assessment and school resource officer/law enforcement involvement.
7. PSUs should establish behavioral threat assessment and management procedures that include [BTAM Steps 1-7](#):
 - a. [BTAM Step 1](#): Assemble a trained Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (BTAM) and collect details and description of initial report of threat
 - b. [BTAM Step 2](#): Gather data from a variety of information and understand how to complete inquiry steps.
 - c. [BTAM Step 3](#): Use multiple sources of data (i.e. interviews)
 - d. [BTAM Step 4](#): Organize and evaluate information through the U.S. Secret Service Questions and NTAC Themed Questions
 - e. [BTAM Step 5](#): Determine Level of Concern, Safety Steps, Duty to Warn, and Notifications
 - f. [BTAM Step 6](#): Develop and Implement a Student Support Intervention & Monitoring Plan (SSIMP).
 - g. [BTAM Step 7](#): Continue to monitor student and the effectiveness of the SSIMP Plans.

8. PSUs are required to [train school behavioral threat assessment teams](#) at a minimum of once a year. New team members that join in the school year should be trained within 60 days. PSUs should also train students on how to make reports about concerning behaviors.
9. PSUs should adhere to the timeline suggestions for [Student Support Intervention Monitoring Plans](#) (See timelines for SSIMP Plans with Levels of Concern/Low - Monitor minimum of 90 days, Moderate - Monitor minimum of 180 calendar days, High/Imminent - Monitor a minimum of 365 days).
10. PSUs should develop [data procedures as defined in this guidance document](#). More details in this section will be released at 2024 RISE Back to School Safety Summit. Procedures should also include “[Duty To Warn](#).”
11. PSUs are required to monitor school behavioral threat assessment teams. PSUs are encouraged to have at least one person assigned to oversee behavioral threat assessment and management attend the 2024 RISE Back to School Safety Summit. Please see [Fidelity and Monitoring Section](#) for more details. Per Session Law 2023-78/HB 605, each PSU is required to develop a committee to monitor behavioral threat assessment teams. This committee should include expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement to monitor the behavioral threat assessment team and implementation.
12. To support the implementation of effective threat assessment protocols and procedures, school boards should [adopt a behavioral threat assessment and management policy](#), which establishes authority for school professionals to act upon reported threats and/or concerning behaviors. While policies are specific to each public school unit, a policy addressing behavioral threat assessment and management should include the following:
 - a. Aligned with [Session Law 2023-78/HB 605](#)
 - b. Establishment of multidisciplinary behavioral threat assessment teams at the school and/or district level
 - c. Roles and duties to be performed by designated threat assessment team (Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Team) members
 - d. Expertise and training of professionals who will serve on the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Team
 - e. Awareness training for staff, students, and parents
 - f. Reporting procedures and requirements (i.e., mandatory reporters)
 - g. Threat assessment steps, procedures, and documentation, including exceptions to confidentiality
 - i. Procedures for implementation of interventions, supports, and community services
 - ii. Timeframe required to responsibly act upon the reported concern
 - iii. Engagement of school resource officers (SRO)/law enforcement in the threat assessment process, to include parameters of information sharing
 - iv. Procedures for disciplinary actions and/or change of educational placement, if warranted.

Purpose of this Best Practice Guidance Document for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention

The purpose of this **Best Practices Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention** is to provide North Carolina Public School Units with essential information and resources regarding School Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management. It aims to assist Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Teams in implementing strategies recognized by FEMA and the Department of Education as “one of the most useful tools a school can develop” (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2013, p. 62). Aligned with state law, this guide and its accompanying resources serve as valuable supplements to existing regulations. Numerous reports from various government agencies and post-incident reports – such as the Arapahoe High School post-incident reports, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission – have emphasized the importance of schools establishing threat assessment policies, procedures, and teams. By facilitating effective behavioral threat assessment and management, this guidance enhances the focus for teams on violence prevention and mitigation, improves access to counseling services and supports, and reduces the need for long-term suspensions and alternative placements (Cornell, et al., 2012). It serves as a comprehensive resource to support the safety and well-being of students and staff in North Carolina's public schools.

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (Page 2) indicated the governing body of a public school unit shall develop policies for assessment and intervention by threat assessment teams, including any scale or classification system that will be used to indicate various levels of threats and the standard response to each level of threat. The public school unit shall consult the guidance issued by the NC Center for Safer Schools when developing these policies.

To support the implementation of effective threat assessment protocols and procedures, school boards should adopt a behavioral threat assessment and management policy, which establishes authority for school professionals to act upon reported threats and/or concerning behaviors. While policies are specific to each public school unit, a policy addressing behavioral threat assessment and management should include the following:

- Aligned with [Session Law 2023-78/HB 605](#)
- Establishment of multidisciplinary behavioral threat assessment teams at the school and/or district level
- Roles and duties to be performed by designated threat assessment team (Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Team) members
- Expertise and training of professionals who will serve on the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Team
- Awareness training for staff, students, and parents

- Reporting procedures and requirements (i.e., mandatory reporters)
- Threat assessment steps, procedures, and documentation, including exceptions to confidentiality
 - Procedures for implementation of interventions, supports, and community services
 - Timeframe required to responsibly act upon reported concern
 - Engagement of school resource officers (SRO)/law enforcement in threat assessment process, to include parameters of information sharing
 - Procedures for disciplinary actions and/or change of educational placement, if warranted.

This guide focuses on handling potential threats of harm from students. However, it's crucial to recognize that workplace violence can also affect school safety. Disgruntled current or former employees, or personal relationships that become hostile and/or violent, can pose a risk to school safety. Therefore, school districts must also have a formal process for evaluating threats of violence related to the workplace. Typically, the Human Resources Department collaborates with safety, mental health resources, and law enforcement when necessary. It's important to establish protocols for conducting threat assessments, training staff on reporting procedures, following mandated reporting requirements for protective or restraining orders, and providing support to those involved. Due to an employee's right to privacy and confidentiality, information disclosed must be limited to what is reasonably necessary to protect the safety of individuals in the workplace.

This guide is developed from a synthesis of the most effective practices and widely recognized standards concerning behavioral threat assessment in schools. The guidance follows the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) model of K-12 threat assessment. NTAC conducts behavioral-based research on the prevention of targeted violence. *Targeted violence* is a term coined by the United States Secret Service to refer to any incident of violence where an attacker selects a particular target (NTAC, 2018). Behavioral threat assessment is the best practice for preventing incidents of targeted violence. The work by the United States Secret Service in threat assessment originated to prevent assassinations and has since expanded to the prevention of targeted violence in other contexts, including schools. Following the tragic shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, NTAC collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education to study 37 incidents of targeted school violence that occurred in the United States from 1974 to 2000. Key findings from the Safe Schools Initiative Final Report (Vossekuil et al., 2002) helped shape best practice recommendations for conducting school-based threat assessments (Fein et al., 2002). In 2018, NTAC released a guide called "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence." It's the first in a series offering updated research and guidance to school staff, law enforcement, and public safety partners on preventing school violence. This guide outlines eight steps for creating a comprehensive program to prevent targeted violence in schools, and these steps are used to structure the information provided in this guide.

In 2019, NTAC released "Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence," summarizing 41 incidents from 2008 to 2017. In 2021, they released "Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools," summarizing 67

averted attack plots from 2006 to 2018. NTAC, in partnership with Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), released “Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs” in 2023. This resource guides the development of trusted reporting programs for students and the community to address student wellness or safety concerns. Insights from these resources are integrated into this guide.

NTAC's studies consistently find that there's “*no single profile*” of a school attacker or targeted school type. However, certain concerning behaviors may indicate a pathway to violence. Multidisciplinary teams can use these patterns to assess the likelihood of a student or group carrying out violence.

The studies conducted by the National Threat Assessment Center have all concluded an important and consistent key finding: There is no one “profile” of a school attacker, nor is there a profile for the type of school that has been targeted. However, there is a discernable pattern of concerning behaviors that may signal an individual is on the pathway toward violence. These patterns provide a framework multidisciplinary teams may use to organize and analyze information to determine a level of concern that a student or group of students is likely to carry out an act of targeted violence. This guide is not intended to be prescriptive but rather informs the establishment of threat assessment teams and protocols in North Carolina schools. It is also important to note that behavioral threat assessment is not an exact science; it is impossible to 100 percent predict human behavior. However, there are identifiable indicators to the pathway to violence. Even more importantly, there are interventions and supports to help mitigate a potential threat to safety and help that person(s) toward a more positive pathway. Behavioral threat assessment and management is a key to keeping our schools safe.

School Safety is everyone's responsibility, and it must be the number one priority in North Carolina's schools. Everyone has a role in school safety!

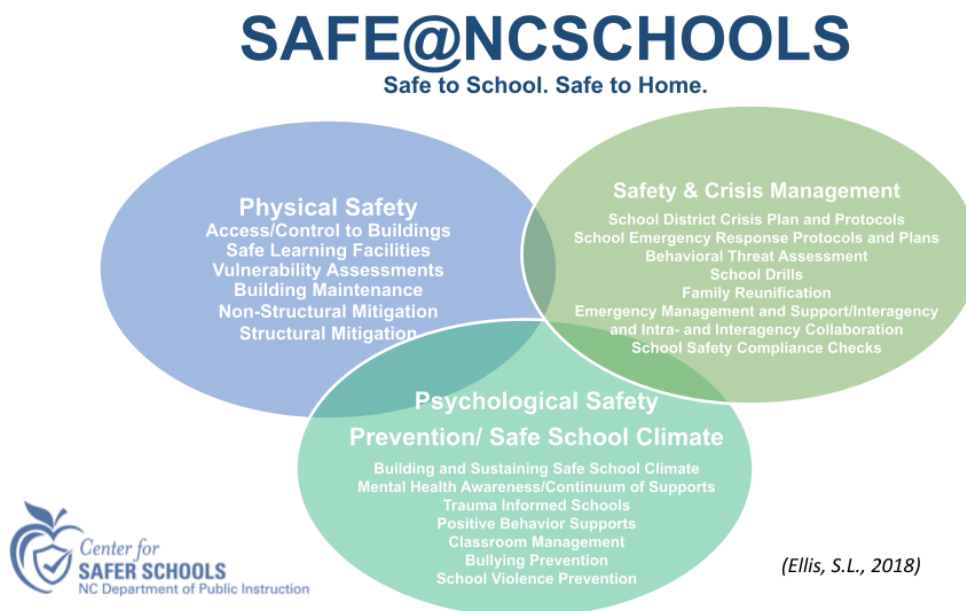
For safer schools, psychological and physical safety aren't either/or choices. We need both. School safety is a three-legged stool composed of people (students, teachers, staff, support staff, administrators, community members), place (building and campus), and practices/policies (routines and rules supporting safe activities). A proactive, comprehensive, developmentally appropriate approach to school safety involves prevention, safe learning facilities, and school safety and crisis management operations and practices.

Effective school behavioral threat assessment and management can occur only in a larger context of school safety. Cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support can help diminish the possibility of targeted violence in schools. Environments in which students, teachers, support staff, and administrators pay attention to students' social and emotional needs – as well as their academic needs – will have fewer situations that require formal threat assessments. In an educational setting where there is a climate of safety, adults and students respect each other. This climate is defined and fostered by students having a positive connection to at least one adult in authority. In such a climate, students develop the capacity to talk and openly share their concerns without fear of shame and reprisal. Cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support can help diminish threats to school safety. Ideally when this climate of safety is created, students experience a sense of emotional "fit" and of respect. Problems are raised and addressed before they become serious. As a result, the potential for school violence diminishes. When a member of the school community is exhibiting threatening behavior that may pose a risk of violence or other harm to self or others, someone is available. Young people can find an adult to trust with this information, so that it does not remain "secret" until it is too late.

The NC Center for Safer Schools believes a **comprehensive model of school safety** involves safe learning facilities; well-developed school safety and crisis management plans; and preventive educational services and supports. The three components of the framework are interconnected. The guiding principles of the framework are:

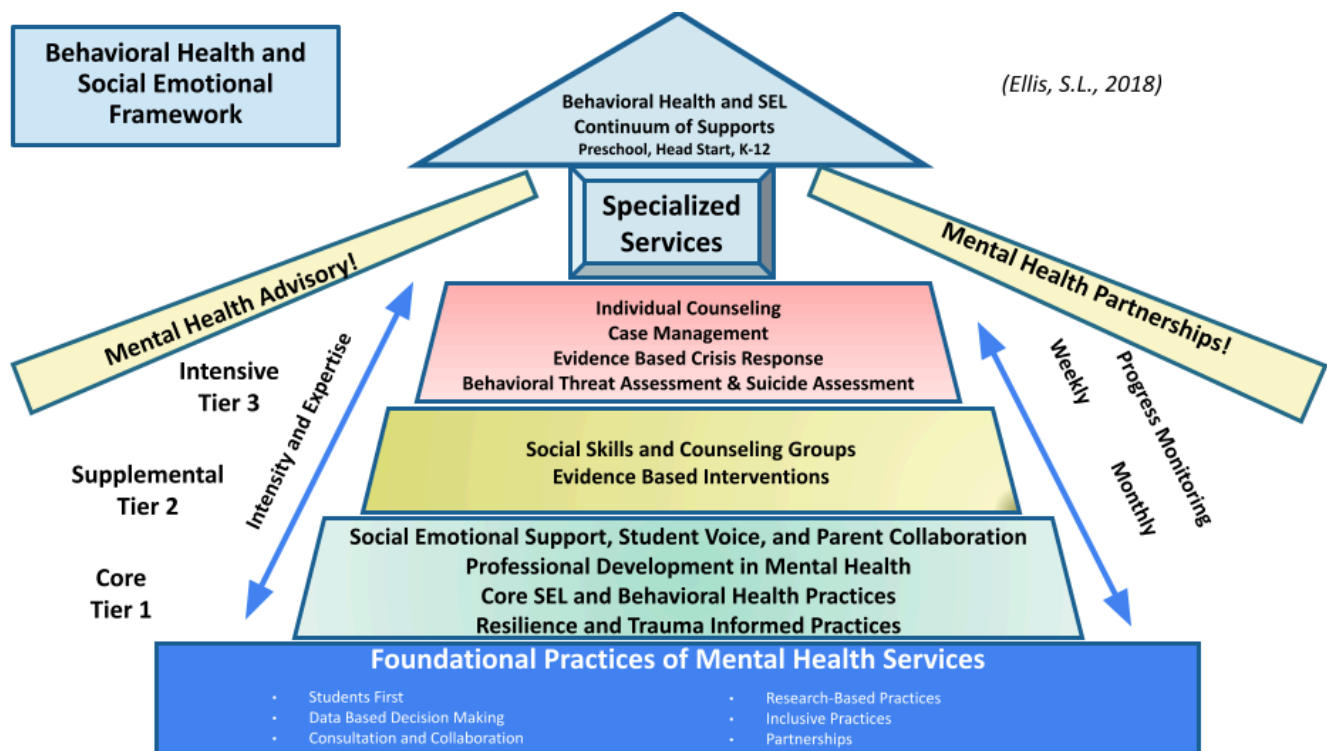
- The field should continue to focus on preventing and responding to violence in schools.
- No one-size-fits-all approach to preventing school violence exists.

- The implementation of a comprehensive framework will require all stakeholders to be actively involved.
- Each of the three components of the framework (physical safety, psychological safety, and safety and crisis management) is critically important to a comprehensive approach and is interrelated with the other components.
- Proactive policies and approaches are the best way to address the safety challenges that schools face.
- School safety policies must be balanced and reasonable. They must maintain appropriate vigilance and disciplinary structure and minimize risk of serious harm, yet also facilitate a fair and interpersonally supportive climate in the school.



The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools also includes an **effective behavioral health continuum of supports** as a critical and necessary support for each and every student in North Carolina. Effective school-based mental health programs provide a continuum of services. Each service must be aligned with each other, as well as have a clear theory of change — or logic model — that connects those services with desired outcomes. Most comprehensive school mental health programs are situated within a multi-tiered system of support that systematically identifies students' common and individual needs. At this core/universal level, also referred to as (Core) Tier 1, teachers are taught to increase their knowledge of student mental health needs and to use strategies that are trauma-informed to support psychological well-being and social and emotional development of students within their classrooms. At a more supplemental level (Tier 2), school mental health staff (i.e, counselors, psychologists, social workers) may provide consultation to teachers when working with specific students, or they may provide assistance with identifying appropriate existing mental health resources available to the student.

At Tier 3, intensive, individualized management and therapeutic strategies (e.g., counseling services) are provided to a relatively small number of students with significant treatment needs. Tier 3 services might be provided either within the school or through community mental health professionals and organizations.



Parent/Guardian involvement in their child(ren)’s mental health treatment has a significant positive effect on outcomes, yet there are many challenges to engaging parents as part of school-based efforts. Meaningful inclusion of parent/guardian and family voices in a participatory planning process will enhance the relevance and impact of any school mental health initiative. Parent participation is particularly important for populations that have been historically underserved and marginalized based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation, who may have different perspectives about needs and services, language barriers, or other preferences for how they might wish to participate.

Supportive school- and district-level administrators are critical for consistent implementation and sustainability of any school mental health initiative, and should be involved early on in planning new mental health programming. Administrator buy-in ensures that staff will be supported in delivering the program and that resources will be reallocated as needed to do so. Administrators can also create policies for systems change to support effective implementation.

The success of any school mental health program relies upon **educator knowledge** of mental health conditions, including how those conditions might manifest in school settings and how student (or staff) mental health concerns can be addressed. The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools

encourages and provides support for implementation of Youth Mental Health First Aid and additional professional development to help school staff understand students' emotional needs. Educator readiness to support students depends on their own well-being and support within the school. Teachers may need additional training for using evidence-based strategies to address students' challenging behaviors. In North Carolina, school personnel (including administrators, school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, and school resource officers) provide integral support for teachers, families, and students, and promote improved student mental health and student resilience.

School-community partnerships provide ideas, expertise, and resources to strengthen school mental health programs and enhance outcomes, which can be particularly helpful for all schools. Partnerships can also help address the highest level of students' mental health needs (Tier 3), which often exceed the expected capacity of schools for treatment and support. Partners may include community mental health and behavioral health providers, university and hospital faculty and programs, faith-based organizations, and other agencies with a shared vision and mission to improve children's mental health. Partnerships may take many forms, including agencies that provide services directly to students, mental health clinicians who provide PD to school staff or who conjointly deliver programs to students with school staff, and strong referral processes that enhance students' access to community mental health services. Businesses, public health departments, and child welfare programs have played prominent roles as nontraditional partners, making collaborative contributions to support children, their families, and school systems while building a continuum of support for each and every student in North Carolina. Ideally, community partners will be invested in long-term collaborations that prove to be mutually beneficial. Building, strengthening, and sustaining partnerships, even though it requires considerable time and energy, often yields demonstrable long-term returns on such investments.

Each K-12 public school unit (PSU) shall adopt and implement a plan for promoting student mental health and well-being and for assessing and improving upon the effectiveness of supports for the mental and social-emotional health and substance use needs of its students and staff. This was previously required as of July 1, 2021, and new updates each year are needed by each public school unit to this plan.

Memorandum of Understanding

In addition, each PSU shall offer to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO), and/or, to the extent deemed appropriate by the PSU, with local mental health and substance use providers serving the geographic area in which the PSU is located. The MOU should address the parties' respective roles and relationships and how the parties will coordinate referral, treatment, and follow-up to individual students. This requirement is not intended to impose on PSUs any obligation or responsibility to provide, or liability for failure to provide, referral, treatment, follow-up, or other services beyond those already required by state or federal law.

[School Mental Health Initiative MOA/MOU Samples](#)
[Additional Information may be found here at the NC Department of Public Instruction Website.](#)

What is Behavioral Threat Assessment and Threat Management? Summary of Research Findings

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 indicates that the NC Center for Safer Schools shall share best practices and summary of research findings on behavioral threat assessment practices, teams, and plans. This information is included in the entirety of this document. Each Public School Unit (PSU) needs to ensure their Behavioral Threat Assessment Team has received training and understands the information provided about Behavioral Threat Assessment and Best Practices that are included in this document.

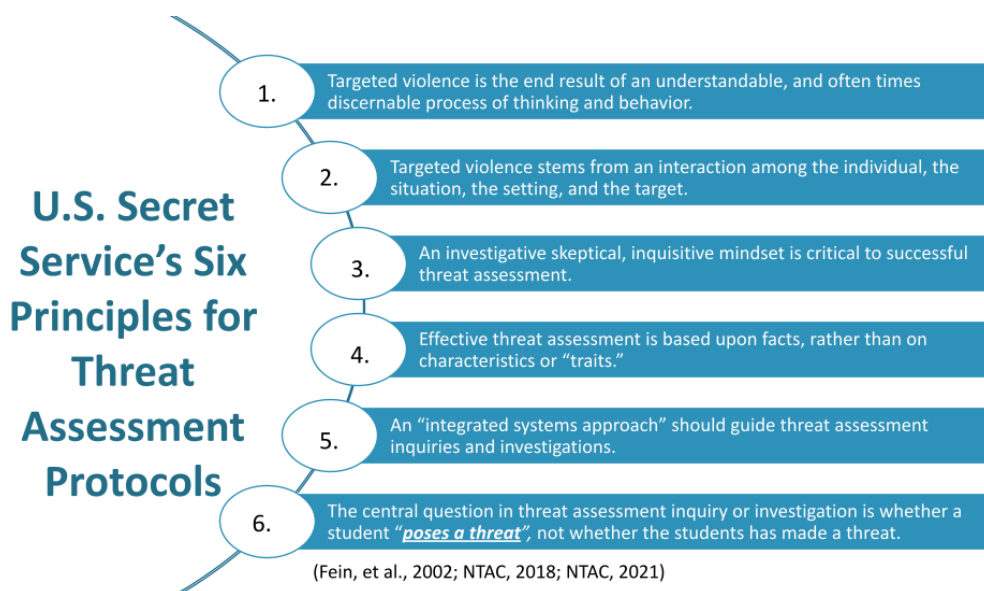
Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) is a **proactive approach to preventing violence and/or harm** and other unwanted outcomes, and the procedures outlined in this best practice guidance document from the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools incorporates best practice guidelines in the prevention of violence and threat management. Much of the research that establishes threat management best practices was conducted by the U.S. Secret Service's (USSS) National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) and the FBI's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC). Collectively, resources produced by NTAC and BTAC provide research-based guidance for school threat management teams in the identification and reporting of threatening and concerning behavior, the assessment processes, and case management. It is important to recognize that behavioral threat management is not punitive, but that a student's underlying conduct may violate laws or school district regulations. When a student violates laws or regulations it may be appropriate, or required in some cases, that punitive action occur. However, any punitive action for underlying misconduct must be distinct from and not associated with the behavioral threat assessment and management process. Also, when the student has a disability, behavioral threat assessments must be done in collaboration with parents or guardians, and staff team members who are knowledgeable about the disability and familiar with the student's behavior and history. Please view this link for a handout about BTAM At A Glance from the National Association of School Psychologists: [BTAM At a Glance](#)

The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools adheres to the principles and process established by the U.S. Secret Service threat assessment process, based upon findings from the Safe School Initiative. It is intended for use by school personnel, law enforcement officials, and others with protective responsibilities in the state of North Carolina and our schools. This guidance document provided by the NC Center for Safer Schools includes best practice guidelines for developing a threat assessment team within a school or school district, steps to take when a threat or other information of concern comes to light, consideration about when to involve law enforcement personnel, issues of information sharing, and ideas for creating safe school climates.

The primary purpose of a threat assessment is to prevent targeted violence. The threat assessment process is centered upon an analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in a given situation.

Behavioral threat assessment involves identifying, assessing, and managing behavior that may pose a risk of violence or other harm to self or others. The appraisal of risk in a threat assessment focuses on actions, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to mount an attack and is engaged in planning or preparing for that event. In a situation that becomes the focus of a threat assessment inquiry or investigation, appropriate authorities gather information, evaluate facts, and make a determination as to whether a given student poses a threat of violence to a target. It is important that the team evaluates information to identify if a student may pose a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behaviors that would cause harm to self or others. If an inquiry indicates that there is a risk of violence in a specific situation, authorities conducting the threat assessment collaborate with others to develop and implement a plan to manage or reduce the threat posed by the student in that situation.

Six principles form the foundation of the behavioral threat assessment process. These principles are:

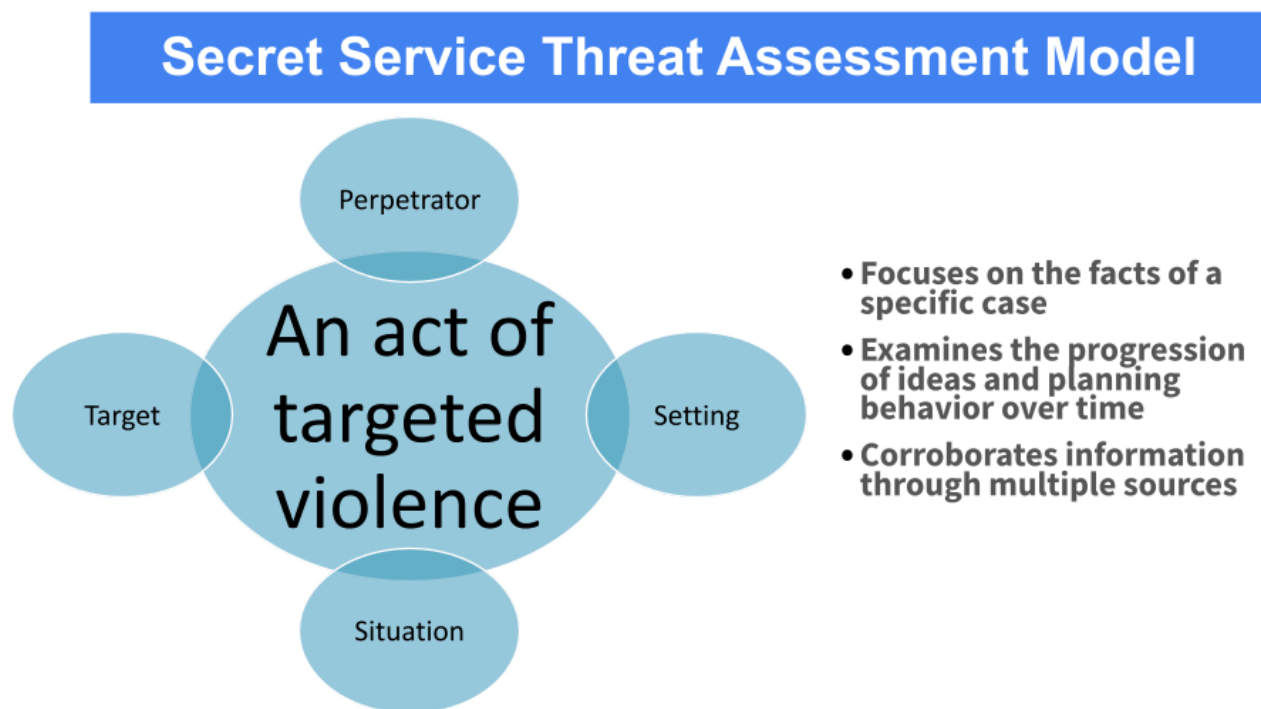


Principle 1: Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior.

Students and former students who committed targeted attacks at schools almost always thought about their attacks in advance and did not "just snap" suddenly. These findings suggest that students who carry out school attacks may consider possible targets; talk with others about their ideas and intentions; and record their thinking in diaries and journals or on a website. They may seek out weapons to use in the attack, and they may practice with these weapons in preparation for the attack. The actions of these attackers may be deliberate and occur over days and weeks, months or years.

Principle 2: Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the person, the situation, the setting, and the target.

Understanding and preventing acts of targeted violence require a focus on these four component parts and their interaction: perpetrator, situation, setting, and target.



(Borum, 2000; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998; Vossekuil, et. al, 2000); (NTAC, 2018; NTAC 2021)

- **The potential attacker:** To determine the risk of targeted violence, a threat assessor must gather information about the potential student of concern. In a threat assessment inquiry or investigation, a major question is: How has this student dealt with situations that have led him or her to see life as unbearably stressful? Individuals who in times of great stress have considered or acted upon ideas of suicide or violence toward others, or both, should be considered persons of increased concern.
- **The situation:** Investigators should examine circumstances and significant events in the life of the individual, especially recent events that have been overwhelmingly stressful. For students who engaged in school-based attacks, those events included having been bullied and humiliated, especially in public; loss of significant relationships; and perceived failures or loss of status. Almost all school shooters experienced some major situational stress at some point before their attack.
- **The setting:** The third factor to consider is the specific setting at the time that the student came to authorities' attention as possibly posing a threat of targeted school violence. Do fellow students, friends, or others say – directly or indirectly – that violence is not a solution to problems? Do these people suggest ways to get help and assistance? In a school, are there respectful connections among students and adults, networks of trusting relationships, that facilitate nonviolent problem-solving? Or is the idea of violence proposed, supported,

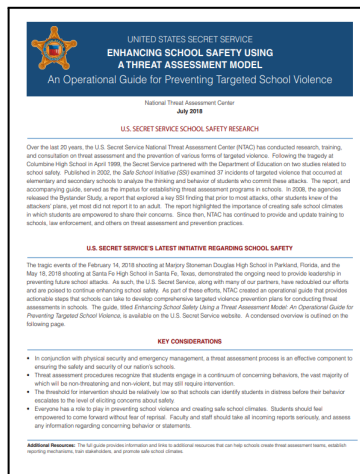
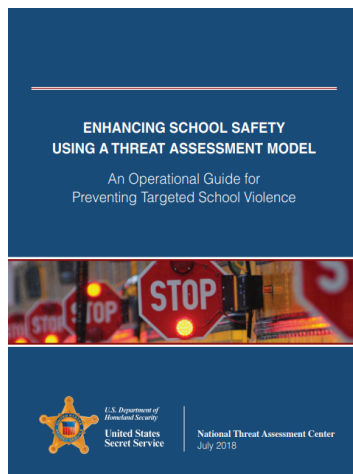
accepted, or ignored by those who know the potential attacker? In many school shootings, other young persons knew about the shooter's interest in mounting an attack. In some cases, clear warnings were dismissed or ignored. In others, friends and fellow students of the shooter encouraged or helped the attacker in his pursuit of violence. Messages about the acceptability of violence that are communicated directly or subtly to a potential attacker by students and/or adults in his or her environment may facilitate, or alternatively help to prevent, an attack.

- **The target:** When assessing the risk of an attack at school, investigators and others with protective responsibilities also must pay attention to the individual's choice of a potential target. The attacker may target a particular individual or group of individuals over some perceived injury or loss. In some cases, attackers choose a specific target, such as a particular student or teacher. In other instances, the target was more general: the school itself, or "kids in the math class."

In 2018, the U.S. Secret Service and Department of Homeland Security's National Threat Assessment Center released a school-specific guide to threat assessment titled "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence." This publication, as well as the summary brief that accompanies it, provides the foundational underpinnings of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management.

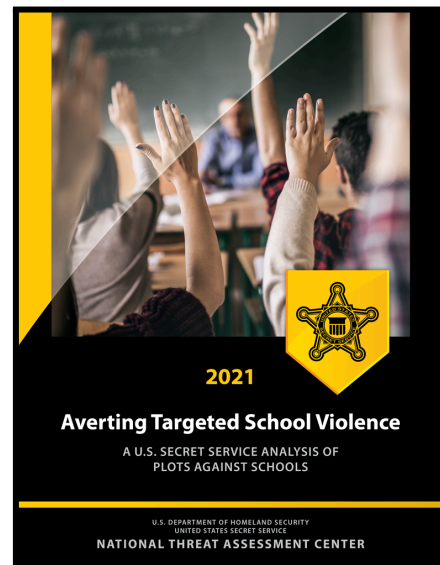
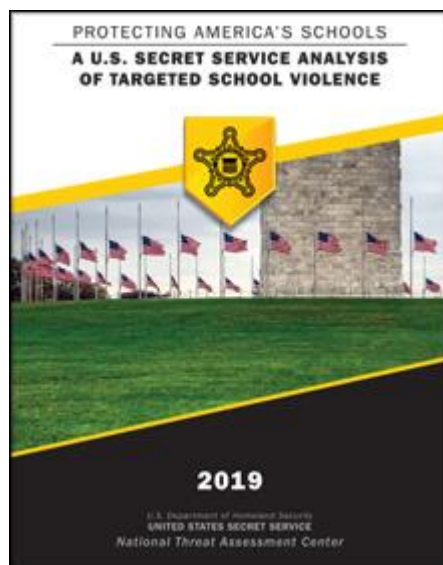
U.S. Secret Service School Safety Research Summary

Over the last 20 years, the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) has conducted research, training, and consultation on threat assessment and the prevention of various forms of targeted violence. Following the tragedy at Columbine High School in April 1999, the Secret Service partnered with the Department of Education on two studies related to school safety. Published in 2002, the Safe School Initiative (SSI) examined 37 incidents of targeted violence that occurred at elementary and secondary schools to analyze the thinking and behavior of students who commit these attacks. The report, and accompanying guide, served as the impetus for establishing threat assessment programs in schools. In 2008, the agencies released the Bystander Study, a report that explored a key SSI finding that prior to most attacks, other students knew of the attackers' plans, yet most did not report it to an adult. The report highlighted the importance of creating safe school climates in which students are empowered to share their concerns. Since then, NTAC has continued to provide and update training to schools, law enforcement, and others on threat assessment and prevention practices.



- [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#)
- [Summary Brief: Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model](#)

Keeping our schools safe involves not just responding to violent events, but also working to prevent them as well. Behavioral threat assessment and management is a means to do just that. Additional information from the U.S. Secret Service is found in the documents below and can be helpful to school behavioral threat assessment teams.



- [Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence](#) (2019)
- [Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools](#) (2021)

It is important that Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) teams are knowledgeable of the research that underlies the BTAM process. While there are many differences found among the perpetrators of targeted violence, there are some commonalities. The findings below are important to consider as teams conduct a threat assessment. If these indicators are identified within a threat

assessment, the concern for risk increases. In 2019, NTAC released an analysis of 41 incidents of targeted violence which occurred in K-12 schools from 2008 to 2017.

Below are its key findings, which mirror findings from the original study (Fein et al., 2002):

- There is no profile of a student attacker or the type of school that has been targeted.
- Attackers usually had multiple motives, the most common involving a grievance with classmates.
- Most attackers used firearms, and firearms were most often acquired from the home.
- Most attackers had experienced psychological, behavioral, or developmental symptoms.
- Half of the attackers had unusual or concerning interest in violence or weapons.
- All attackers experienced social stressors involving relationships with peers and/or romantic partners.
- Nearly every attacker experienced negative home life factors.
- Most attackers were victims of bullying, which was often observed by others.
- Most attackers had a history of school disciplinary actions, and many had prior contact with law enforcement.
- All attackers exhibited concerning behaviors. Most elicited concern from others, and most communicated their intent to attack:
- See table below for more details for concerning behaviors (NTAC, 2019):

Concerning Behaviors Displayed by Attackers (Identified in 2019 NTAC Report)	
Threats to Target or Others and/or Intent to Attack	Most of the attackers (n = 29, 83%) shared verbal, written, visual, or video communications that referenced their intent to carry out an attack, threatened the target, and/or threatened others.
Intense or Escalating Anger	Three-quarters of the attackers (n = 26, 74%) displayed behaviors or shared communications indicating significant or increasing anger. These behaviors included having angry outbursts at school and engaging in aggressive acts at home.
Interest in Weapons	Nearly three-quarters of the attackers (n = 25, 71%) stockpiled weapons or communicated about weapons in a way that indicated an unusual or concerning level of interest. For some, their interest in weapons was expressed through drawings or artwork, while others had developed a reputation among classmates for having an intense interest in guns, knives, or explosives. A few attackers had built and detonated explosives.
Sadness, Depression, or Isolation	Nearly two-thirds of the attackers (n = 22, 63%) either spoke about their sadness, depression, or loneliness, or appeared through their observable behaviors to be experiencing these feelings. Some attackers confided in others about their feelings or wrote about them online or in school assignments.

	Bystanders also observed the attackers isolating themselves, withdrawing from others, appearing sad, or crying.
Changes in Behavior or Appearance	More than half of the attackers (n = 20, 57%) exhibited observable changes in demeanor, appearance, or routine prior to the attack. Examples included increased apathy about life, decreased effort on schoolwork, withdrawing from activities, decreased personal hygiene, spending time in new places or with new people, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and changes in online behaviors (e.g., changing profile picture to something unusual for the person).
Suicide and/or Self-harm	Half of the attackers (n = 19, 54%) had communicated about, or engaged in behaviors related to, suicide or self-harm. In some cases, multiple friends knew that the attacker was suicidal. In other cases, evidence of self-harm was noted by friends, parents, and/or school staff.
Interest in Violence	About one-third of attackers (n = 13, 37%) spoke or wrote about their violent interests, including topics related to previous school attacks, Hitler/Nazism, and other violent themes. Sometimes these interests were shared openly, while in other instances the attacker was more subtle (e.g., viewing photos of previous school attacks while in the cafeteria).
Timing of Concerning Behaviors	Three-quarters of the attackers (n = 26, 74%) displayed their most recent concerning behaviors within the two days prior to their attack. Nearly all of the attackers (n = 32, 91%) shared or exhibited such behaviors within one month of their attack. It should be noted, however, that these behaviors were not necessarily new, as nearly half of the attackers (n = 14, 40%) had been displaying concerning behaviors for more than a year prior to their attack.
Other Common Themes	Other common themes among the concerning behaviors included attackers talking about being bullied (n = 12, 34%), poor grades or attendance that elicited concerns from parents or school staff (n = 10, 29%), and the attackers harassing others (n = 5, 14%). In three of the five cases involving harassment, the victim of the harassment was later targeted in the attack (NTAC, 2019).

Source: National Threat Assessment Center, 2019 (NTAC)

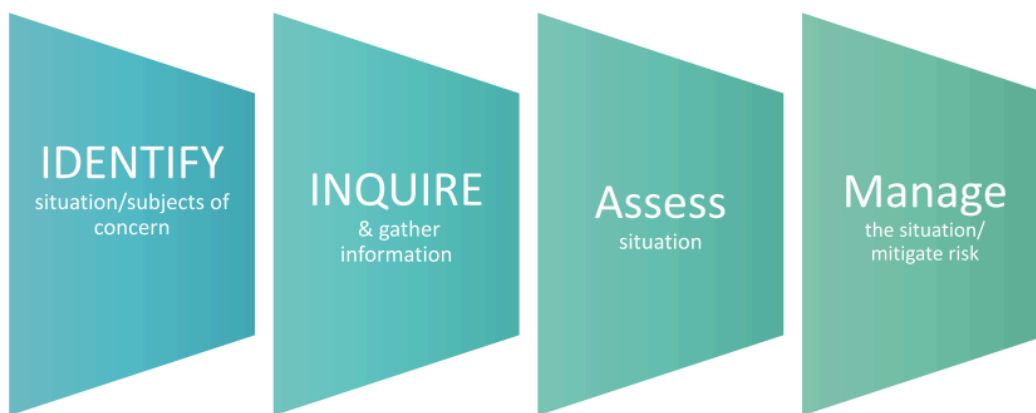
A follow-up study by NTAC released in 2021 analyzed 67 situations where school violence was averted. The findings affirm that there is no profile of an attacker, but individuals do display a variety of observable concerning behaviors as they escalate toward violence, further highlighting the importance of the development of multidisciplinary threat assessment programs. The report points out that the primary objective of a student threat assessment is not to administer discipline or introduce students into the criminal justice system. While those responses may be necessary at times, the primary objective should be providing support for students experiencing distress, thereby deescalating situations before they become violent.

Key findings and implications from the 2021 NTAC study

- Targeted violence is preventable when communities identify warning signs and intervene. In every case, tragedy was averted by members of the community coming forward when they observed behaviors that elicited concern.
- PREVENTION is KEY! Schools should intervene as early as possible. The primary function of a threat assessment is not criminal investigation or conviction. Communities should strive to identify and intervene with students in distress before their behavior escalates to criminal actions.
- Like students who perpetrated school attacks, the plotters in this study were more frequently motivated by interpersonal conflicts with classmates, highlighting a need for student interventions and deescalation programs targeting such issues.
- Students are best positioned to identify and report concerning behaviors displayed by their classmates. Unfortunately, many cases involved students observing concerning behaviors without reporting them, highlighting the ongoing need for further resources and training for students.
- Eight plots in this study were reported by family members, illustrating the crucial role families can play in addressing a student's risk of causing harm. In some cases, other parents learned of the concerning information and passed it on to the school or law enforcement. This highlights the need to educate families on recognizing the warning signs and the supports and resources available.
- In nearly one-third of the cases, an SRO played a role in either reporting the plot or responding to a report made by someone else. In eight cases, it was the SRO who received the initial report of an attack plot from students or others, highlighting their role as a trusted adult within the school community.
- Five plotters were former students who left the school within one year of the plot (expelled, enrolled in another school, graduated, or stopped attending). This indicates that simply removing a student from the school without appropriate support may not remove the risk of harm they pose.
- Consistent with prior NTAC research studying school attackers, many of the plotters in this study displayed an interest in violent or hate-filled topics, particularly the Columbine High School attack. Nearly one-third of the plotters conducted research into prior mass attackers as part of their planning. Nine also displayed interest in Hitler, Nazism, and/or white supremacy.
- Many attacks were associated with certain dates, such as the beginning/end of the school year, or April 20 (Columbine). School professionals should approach these dates with extra consideration.
- Threat assessments must examine a student's access to weapons, particularly those in the home. Similar to school attackers, in most of the cases where plotters intended to use firearms, they had unimpeded access to them (e.g., they owned them, or their parents allowed access). In other cases, they acquired firearms by prying a safe open, finding the key, or taking them when they were left out. (NTAC, 2021)

Critical Components of High Quality Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Teams

The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) has developed a best practice model for conducting school-based threat assessments that is based on over 20 years of research, training, and consultation on threat assessment and preventing targeted acts of violence in schools (2018). The eight steps below outline the critical components needed to support a high-quality BTAM assessment and program. Each school/district should ensure these eight steps are developed as part of their BTAM program.



Source: Sigma Threat Management Associates (2017)

Overview of BTAM Process

A key goal is to distinguish between making a threat and posing a threat. A threat is an expression of intent to cause harm. It may be communicated through behavior, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through other means and has the potential to significantly disrupt the school or workplace environment.

A threat may be:

- **Direct** – statement of clear, explicit intent to harm
- **Indirect** – violence is implied or phrased tentatively
- **Conditional** – made contingent on set of circumstances
- **Veiled** – vague & subject to interpretation

It is important to note that context is more important than content as most offenders do not threaten targets directly (US Department of Justice/FBI, 2017).

Elements of an effective BTAM process includes the following:

- Establishment of a multidisciplinary behavioral threat assessment and management team (BTAM)
- Establishment of integrated interagency and community partnerships
- Ongoing training for the BTAM team and awareness training for staff, students, parents, and community partners
- Clear and confidential reporting mechanisms to identify the subject(s)/situation(s) whose behavior or impact has raised concern
- Conducting an inquiry to gather additional information in a lawful and ethical manner
- Assessing information regarding situation, context, developmental, and disability factors to determine if the subject/situation poses a threat of violence or harm to self and/or others
- Managing the potential threat by implementing problem-solving supports, and if warranted, a management plan to prevent harm where possible and to reduce/mitigate impact of the situation
- It is important that a team familiar with the individual's behavior patterns and/or disabilities, if any, is paramount to ensure a thorough assessment of whether the individual poses a risk of violence or serious harm to self or others.

Principles of BTAM include understanding the following:

- There is a distinction between making a threat and posing a threat
- Targeted violence is the end result of understandable, process of thinking and behavior
- Violence stems from interaction among subject, target, environment, and precipitating events (STEP)
- Having an investigative and inquisitive mindset is critical
- Threat assessment is based upon facts and observations of behavior, not characteristics, traits, or profiles
- Behavioral Threat Assessment utilizes an integrated systems approach

Implementing the essential elements and principles of BTAM is critical to making informed decisions based upon objective data. This minimizes the risk of erroneous decisions being made based upon profiling characteristics, personal biases, or misperceptions. Threat assessment is not the same as profiling. Profiling involves making generalizations about an individual based on the individual's similarity to high-risk groups, whereas threat assessment is an individualized assessment of the person of concern, considering their particular situation at a particular point in time. Individuals "don't just snap" but engage in a process of thought and behavior that escalates.

It is important to note that a threat assessment is a safety assessment. It is NOT the same as a criminal or disciplinary investigative process, nor is it a diagnostic evaluation, special education evaluation, or

clinical evaluation. Behavioral threat assessment and management is a deductive, dynamic process that is responsive to the nature and process of the threatening situation (SIGMA Threat Management Associates, 2017).

Threat assessments conducted in schools are designed to identify if there is a safety concern and what interventions and supports need to be engaged to mitigate risk. While the results of a threat assessment may lead to the recommendation of an additional evaluation being needed, it is critical that schools and parents understand that the BTAM assessment is a safety assessment only. Please see the parent section for more details for communicating with parents about the BTAM Process. Please see the sections below this section for more details for each individual step. The flowchart below also provides an overview of the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Process.

NTAC (2018) defined steps for the BTAM process for schools to use to develop their own processes and procedures. The chart below lays out these steps and also provides further information for how the rest of this guidance document is developed:

NTAC Comprehensive Targeted Violence Prevention Plan Steps	
Step 1	Establish a Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team
Step 2	Define Concerning and Prohibited Behaviors
Step 3	Create a Central Reporting Mechanism
Step 4	Determine the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention
Step 5	Establish Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Assemble the trained Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (BTAM) and Collect details and description of the initial report of the threat • Step 2: Gather a Variety of Information and Complete Inquiry Steps • Step 3: Use Multiple Sources of Data • Step 4: Organize and Evaluate Information through the use of the U.S. Secret Service Questions and NTAC Theme Questions • Step 5: Determine Level of Concern, Safety Steps, Duty to Warn, and Notifications • Step 6: Develop and Implement a Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan • Step 7: Continue to Monitor Student and the Effectiveness of the Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan
Step 6	Develop Levels of Concerns and Options
Step 7	Create and Promote Safe School Climates
Step 8	Conduct Training for All Stakeholders and Plan for BTAM Fidelity Monitoring

(Source: NTAC, 2018)

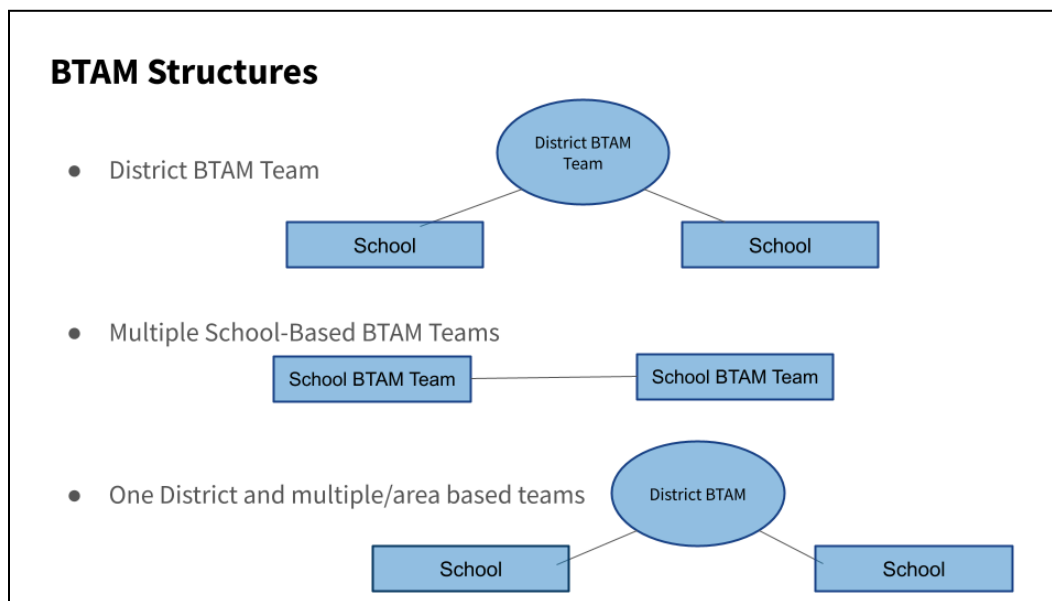
Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 requires PSU's to establish multidisciplinary behavioral threat assessment teams. A multidisciplinary team that includes, but is not limited to, persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement that conducts threat assessments in a public school unit when threatening behavior has been communicated and when a student has engaged in threatening behavior that warrants further evaluation. When practicable, at least one school psychologist, one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with special needs, and one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with disabilities shall be assigned to the threat assessment team. If a school psychologist is not available, the school may assign a licensed mental health professional instead. Members of a threat assessment team who are not employees of the public school unit may review Page 2 Session Law 2023-78 House Bill 605 student records as provided in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B) pursuant to a written agreement with the public school unit of the requirements and responsibilities for use of student records under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

North Carolina state law mandates that each school in the state identifies key staff to serve on a behavioral threat assessment team. Prior to conducting threat assessments, the BTAM team must be carefully selected and receive appropriate training.

BTAM Team Structure: Depending on the size of the district and available responses, the structure of BTAM teams may vary. Options include (see Figure 2):

- One district-level threat assessment team (District BTAM Team) that handles all threat cases, typically supported by a triage team in schools. This is more common in smaller school districts, charter schools, or in more remote areas where access to resources (e.g., mental health professionals) at the school level may be limited.
- A separate threat assessment team at each school (School Based BTAM Team).
- A combination where a District BTAM Team provides oversight, consistency, and accountability for all BTAM processes (and manages threats impacting the whole district) and individual teams at each school that address their respective cases and will consult with the district team if the situation warrants.



Source: Deisinger and Randazzo, Sigma threat Management Associates (2017)

Every school district is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the threat management process during the school year, including summer school, including assignment of the following roles and responsibilities:

District Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Coordinator (District BTAM Coordinator): A person in each school district designated by the superintendent, or lead administrator where there is no superintendent, to oversee the district's Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management program. The threat management coordinator is the direct liaison between the school district and the NC Center for Safer Schools. The District BTAM Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the fidelity of the district's behavioral threat assessment and management program, which includes ensuring that all school threat management team personnel are appropriately trained. The District Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Coordinator also helps to support schools with cases and helps to review procedures and processes for fidelity or implementation. This person may have additional duties in the district. However, one contact that coordinates training, supports, and processes is important for each public school unit. In addition, this person will report information to the NC Center for Safer Schools.

School-Based Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (School BTAM Team): Public School Units may decide to develop a district BTAM team to complete or assist school teams. Smaller districts or charter schools may only have one team for the entire local education agency. A district team must meet the same requirements in HB 605 and as defined in the School BTAM Team below.

School-Based Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (School BTAM Team): Each school (as defined in House Bill 605) will have a School-Based Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team. The School-Based BTAM Team is a multidisciplinary team at the school level and is composed of at least four members with expertise in counseling, school instruction and law

enforcement, and a school administrator. As defined in House Bill 605: “A multidisciplinary team that includes, but is not limited to, persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement that conducts threat assessments in a public school unit when threatening behavior has been communicated and when a student has engaged in threatening behavior that warrants further evaluation. When practicable, at least one school psychologist, one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with special needs, and one staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with disabilities shall be assigned to the threat assessment team. If a school psychologist is not available, the school may assign a licensed mental health professional instead. Members of a threat assessment team who are not employees of the public school unit may review *Session Law 2023-78 House Bill 605 student records as provided in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)* pursuant to a written agreement with the public school unit of the requirements and responsibilities for use of student records under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.”

Please see the definitions below of each person listed above.

- **Counseling:** The counseling team member must be a school-based mental health services provider that is able to access student mental health records. In addition, this person must be certified under the North Carolina State Board of Education [licensing requirements](#) as a school psychologist, a school social worker certified, and a school counselor. A mental health professional licensed or who is employed or contracted by a district to provide mental health services in schools may also be eligible. The school district will need to ensure they are appropriately licensed.
- **Instruction:** The instruction team member must be a person who meets the definition of instructional personnel under the North Carolina State Board of Education licensing requirements and/or someone who holds a current North Carolina Educator Certificate.
- **Administration:** The administrator team member must be a person who meets the definition of administrative personnel under North Carolina State Board of Education licensing requirements. The principal has administrative oversight of the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team.
- **Law Enforcement:** The law enforcement team member must be a sworn law enforcement officer, as defined by [12 NCAC 09B.0310](#), including a School Resource Officer, school-safety officer, or other active law enforcement officer. At a minimum, a law enforcement officer serving on a behavioral threat management team must have access to local Records Management System information, the Criminal Justice Information System, and the NC Information Center and National Crime Information Center databases. Officers serving on school-based threat management teams must also have clearance to review Criminal Justice Information and Criminal History Record Information.

Important: When the student has a disability, this team member should be familiar with the child's disability and special education needs. This includes, for example, the history of that particular student, including prior threats or other unusual behavior patterns that may or may not have resulted in violence.

Effective BTAM team members understand and value (Amman et al., 2017):

- Received training for consistent practices
- The need for urgency when responding to a concern
- The need for establishing BTAM rules and boundaries
- Collaboration among team members
- The limits of confidentiality
- The importance of providing guidance and follow-through
- Ensuring implementation of intervention and management plans
- Continually re-evaluating active cases and re-engaging when necessary
- The need for patience throughout the process
- Caretaking and interventions to support individuals

Roles and responsibilities for core BTAM team members typically include:

BTAM Team Lead

- Ensures the threat assessment process is conducted thoroughly, ethically, legally, and with fidelity
- Ensures proper documentation is completed and retained according to district guidelines, and federal and state laws
- Facilitates collaborative team discussions to ensure various perspectives are considered. This role may be filled by a school administrator or school mental health professional.

NOTE: *This person does not complete all the elements of the process. Instead, they ensure the team is staying on track and completing the process effectively with fidelity.*

School Administrator

- Consults with core team members to collaboratively determine when to conduct a full threat assessment inquiry
- Assists in conducting interviews of subjects, targets, witnesses, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians
- Assists in gathering additional information (e.g., school records)
- Determines and enforces disciplinary consequences, if appropriate
- Ensures that any threat management plan is followed and monitored
- Works closely with the public information officer or communications director to respond to community concerns and questions
- Works with public information officer/district officials to communicate safety information to the school community, if needed

School Mental Health Professional

School Mental Health Professional is defined as a School Psychologist/School Social Worker/School Counselor/School Mental Health Professional Hired by the district and who is licensed by the NC Department of Public Instruction. A person hired by the district with appropriate licensing for the mental health area may also be part of the team. If a school district does not have one of the following noted above, they must collaborate with mental health agencies through a memorandum of understanding with appropriately licensed individuals to support the BTAM process. These details would be defined in a memorandum of understanding **per NC SBE Policy SHLT-003**. [Additional Information about MOUs and SHLT-003 may be found here at the NC Department of Public Instruction Website.](#)

Consults with core team members to collaboratively determine when to conduct an initial screening versus mobilize a full threat assessment inquiry

- Leads and/or assists in conducting interviews of subjects, targets, witnesses, teachers, staff, caregivers
- Serves as a liaison with community mental health providers and LME/MCOs when appropriate
- Advises the team on school-based and community interventions and supports, including possible mental health assessments, where appropriate
- Assists with next steps and possible referrals
- May provide interventions and supports

School Resource Officer (SRO)

- Consults with core team members to collaboratively determine when to conduct an initial screening versus mobilize a threat assessment inquiry
- Helps with critical data collection, particularly social media and if there has been law enforcement contact in the community, as privacy guidelines allow
- May conduct interviews with individual of concern, targets, witnesses, teachers, staff, parents, and students (if an official law enforcement investigation is initiated, they must follow investigative guidelines for interviewing minors)
- Assists with efforts to ensure safety and security (e.g., provides safety escorts/increased supervision to and from school, in hallways, and in common areas; works with local law enforcement to ensure community safety after school hours; welfare checks)
- Conducts independent criminal investigations, as needed
- Serves as a liaison with law enforcement, court personnel, juvenile justice, probation, to help student(s) onto a more positive pathway
- Determines the need for welfare checks, weapons checks, and home searches, where permissible
- Assists with next steps and possible referrals
- Provides mentoring and community supports

Other professionals will be engaged to work collaboratively with the core team to conduct the full threat assessment. These professionals have additional specialized skill sets to help conduct the threat assessment, have knowledge of the person and/or situation of concern, and/or expertise to

develop supports and resources. These may include an additional administrator or mental health professional, or any of the following:

Educators, Coaches, and Mentors

Educators with specific knowledge and/or expertise (e.g., general education teachers, coach, behavioral specialist) to serve as ad hoc members

- A professional with knowledge of special education policies and procedures (e.g., school psychologist, special education teacher) is critical to include on the threat assessment team when assessing a youth with an identified or suspected educational disability (i.e., IEP or 504 Plan)
- Other individuals who know the person(s) of concern well and can provide information pertaining to the situation including, in the case of a student with a disability, someone familiar with that student's special needs.

District-Level or External Persons with Expertise In (if situation warrants)

- Human Resources – informed on personnel policy and practices if case involves staff
- Legal Counsel
- Threat Management Specialist – relevant education, training, and experience to assist with challenging cases, provide consultation and coaching regarding consistency and implementation of process, and provide ongoing professional development
- Independent medical/psychological evaluator – expertise in conducting clinical violence risk assessments. Ideally the district will have a pre-established relationship with at least one, and preferably two, qualified evaluators.
 - **Important Note:** This evaluation should never replace the school/district's BTAM process. It is to be used to provide additional information in mitigating risk and planning interventions if the situation requires this support.

Training

Each BTAM Team member has also received behavioral threat assessment and management training each school year provided by the school district. The NC Center for Safer Schools will provide at minimum Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Training at RISE each school year. This training will be provided to school district coordinators and teams. Each of these coordinators and district teams will then receive resources to take back to train their school district. Additional behavioral threat assessment and management training from the NC Center for Safer Schools may be conducted regionally if a school district has a request for further training. Please see Future Actions Section by NC CFSS for additional forms and best practice documents that will be released at RISE.

There is a key distinction between **making** a threat and **posing** a threat. Schools serve students with a variety of developmental ages, disabilities, and emotional maturity levels. Students may make a threat, in response to a specific frustrating situation, be stated as a sarcastic joke, or be impulsive in nature with no intent to harm; thus, do not pose a threat. Previous research suggests that as many as 70% of threats may be transient/do not pose a threat (Cornell et al., 2004). When BTAM is properly implemented and if it is determined there is no intent to harm, it can often be resolved or managed through problem-solving, conflict resolution, a restorative approach, or existing supports. This type of situation can be used as a learning opportunity to identify unmet needs and/or as an opportunity to increase support.

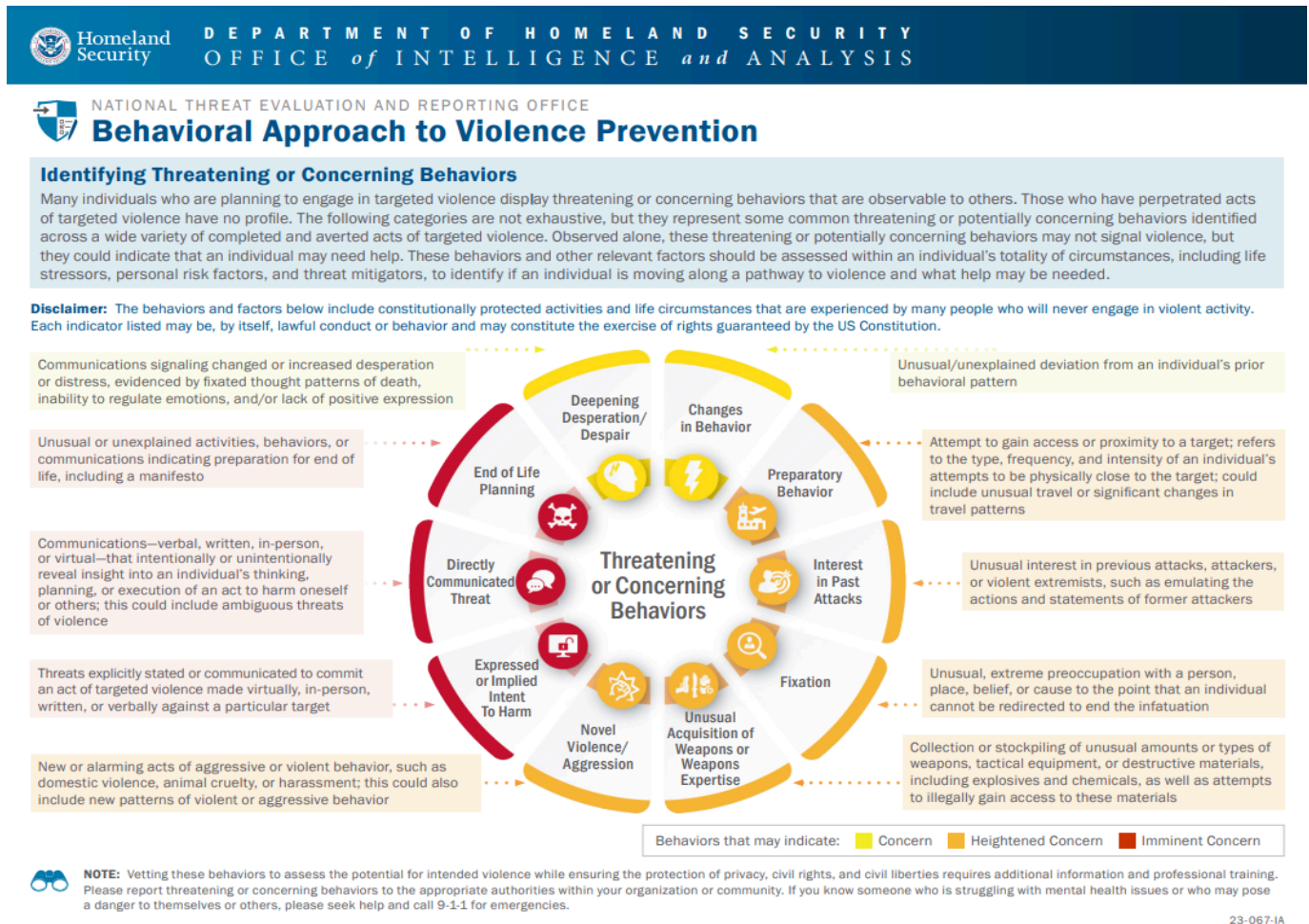
However, there are individuals who may pose a threat, and the school community needs to be educated on behaviors that are unacceptable, or “prohibitive” as the NTAC labels them (2018, p. 4). These include threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying or harassing others, or other concerning or criminal behavior. NTAC points out that concerning behaviors occur on a continuum. Some concerning behaviors are not necessarily indicative of violence but should be considered as they may warrant some type of intervention (e.g., decline in performance/attendance, withdrawal or isolation, sudden changes in behavior or appearance, substance use). Please refer to the section about key findings regarding concerning behaviors, as well as risk factors and warning signs. Students, staff, and parents need to be explicitly taught to recognize and report when someone is struggling and is at risk for potential harm to self or others. These threats have communications, context, and meaning to support a legitimate safety concern with possible intent to harm others, the person(s) on receiving end is concerned; and the threat was not perceived as a joke or taken out of context. Therefore, the BTAM assessment identifies more specifically the level of concern and actions needed to assure safety.

It is critical that the BTAM team remain objective when reviewing the facts of the case, as fear and emotions frequently affect why a person considers a threat an actual threat. Is this a threat to comfort (e.g., I am uncomfortable with how the person is dressed, acts, political views, etc., often influenced by implicit or explicit biases) or is this a potential threat to safety (e.g., concerning media post with access to weapons and a statement of desire to harm others). Thus, BTAM team decisions need to be based on objective facts, not emotions. The BTAM team also needs to take into consideration their own biases to ensure this process does not contribute to the disproportionality that can exist within disciplinary practices or influence what is perceived as a threat.

Many individuals who are planning to engage in targeted violence display threatening or concerning behaviors that are observable to others. Those who have perpetrated acts of targeted violence have no profile. The following categories are not exhaustive, but they represent some common threatening or potentially concerning behaviors identified across a wide variety of completed and averted acts of

targeted violence. Observed alone, these threatening or potentially concerning behaviors may not signal violence, but they could indicate that an individual may need help. These behaviors and other relevant factors should be assessed within an individual's **totality of circumstances**, including life stressors, personal risk factors, and threat mitigators, to identify if an individual is moving along a pathway to violence and what help may be needed. It is very important to remember that a person does not have to just make a threat to pose a threat. Prevention includes identifying these concerning behaviors and ensuring that behavioral threat assessments are completed proactively.

[Click here to access full Handout](#) (Image from Department of Homeland Security)



If you SEE something, SAY something!!!

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (Page 3) requires each PSU to utilize an anonymous reporting application for students to share information about school safety concerns requiring investigation.

When it comes to preventing and intervening in a crisis, early information is a crucial component. One of the best ways that school communities can ensure that information is given thoroughly, quickly, and effectively is to implement an anonymous reporting system and the supplemental training and practices that support full-scale use. Per [G.S. 115C-105.51](#), the NC Center for Safer Schools supports a statewide student anonymous safety tip application, the [Say Something Anonymous Reporting System](#). North Carolina school districts and charter schools statewide should be working with [Sandy Hook Promise](#) to offer training to school-level staff and students on the free online app where secure and anonymous safety concerns can be reported to help at-risk individuals before they hurt themselves or others. Statewide rollout of Say Something began in 2019, and districts and schools are required to implement some form of an anonymous reporting system that meets the same requirements as the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System. Each school district is required to have an anonymous reporting system, and students and staff should be trained on how to implement this anonymous reporting system each school year. Signs and posters provided by Say Something should be displayed throughout the school. Announcements and teaching of use of this system should be included at parent meetings, staff meetings, and during school announcements so that this tool is widely known in the school community. Any person can use this tool to report a concerning behavior.

Identifying persons and situations of concern depends, in large part, upon the willingness and ability of the school community or campus community to overcome the “*bystander effect*” and report concerns. The “*bystander effect*” is when someone sees or hears of someone in trouble, or they see a problem but fail to help, get involved, or intervene because they think someone else will.

To help bystanders be more actively engaged in supporting the safety and well-being of the school, members of the community need to know:

- It is everyone’s role and responsibility to share concerns.
- Bystanders can be students, educational staff, community members, anyone who hears concerning information that may place other in danger of harm. Everyone has a role to recognize concerns, respond in a helpful manner, and to report concerns to persons who can best help the situation.
- While there is no one list of THE behaviors that may cause concern, providing examples of concerns that the team can assist with will help community members better recognize,

respond, and report concerns appropriately. The documents below, released by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in November 2019 and March 2021 show some commonalities among individuals plotting and committing acts of targeted school violence.

Say Something Anonymous Reporting System



**Youth or Adult
submits a tip
using the SS-ARS
App, Website, or
Telephone Hotline**

**Say Something Anonymous Reporting System
Grades 6-12**

[Mobile App](#)



www.SaySomething.net
[Website](#)



[24/7 Hotline](#)



Every reporter **MUST** associate themselves with the school they attend in order to submit a tip!

Visit www.SaySomething.net!

[Please use this link to access the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System.](http://www.SaySomething.net)

Schools must also have various methods for reporting concerns. These may include directly reporting to a trusted adult, a tip line, a reporting app, email, voicemail, a link on the school/district website to report, a QR code, and/or calling 911. It is important to have more than one confidential method to report, and students, staff, and parents need to be explicitly trained on how to report, what to report, and what is not appropriate to report via these methods(e.g., difference between tattling and telling). The various methods must be constantly monitored, and all information needs to be funneled to the BTAM team. The most recent NTAC report, *Improving School Safety through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs* (2023), details several strategies, worksheets, and checklists focused on strengthening reporting systems, including:

- Conduct training for students and staff on a regular basis
- Share information on a regular basis with the school community about how to report concerning behavior
- Improve accessibility by offering multiple reporting methods, such as text messaging or a mobile application, email, phone call, and reporting to a trusted adult.
- Set operating hours that improve availability, allowing for reporting outside of school hours.
- Consider using confidential or anonymous reporting.
- Respond to reports in a timely manner and in a way that is efficient, fair, and transparent.
- Offer training that builds awareness of the reporting system.
- Build a positive school climate by fostering trust and positive relationships.

Schools need to be sensitive to concerns about policing in the schools. School resource officers (SROs) and law enforcement officers play a critical role in schools and on Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) teams. School resource officers/law enforcement officers must be properly selected and well-trained to work in schools and serve on BTAM teams. Their role is not to take punitive actions towards a student, but to serve as a resource. SRO/law enforcement involvement can range from consultation by helping to identify positive interventions and supports to help a student off the pathway to violence; to taking directive action. ***Reports Involving weapons, threats of violence, and physical violence should immediately be reported to local law enforcement.*** If the law enforcement officer is not a district staff member, it is highly recommended a memorandum of understanding (MOU) be developed that outlines the relationship between school staff and law enforcement and outlines what law enforcement responsibilities will be in the BTAM process.

In addition, when following BTAM best practices, behavior is not first reported to criminal authorities unless there is imminent risk (i.e., weapon on campus, assault, imminent threat of violence). The first step is to engage the school/district multidisciplinary threat assessment team to conduct an understanding (for which the SRO/LEO is engaged but not taking directive action unless imminent risk), followed by a full threat assessment, if deemed appropriate. If there is a significant concern for safety, the SRO/LEO will determine if an official investigation via law enforcement needs to begin and appropriate law enforcement protocols will then need to be followed. School officials routinely seek to balance the interests of safety and privacy for students. While the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) generally requires written consent from the parent or adult-aged student before a school district can disclose educational records to outside law enforcement entities, including non-district employed School Resource Officers (SROs), FERPA gives schools and districts flexibility under certain limited circumstances, including when responding to circumstances that threaten the health or safety of individuals in their school community. For further guidance on this topic, see School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (2019)

***IMPORTANT**:** If a law enforcement/school resource officer leads the questioning, they could be perceived as acting as agents of law enforcement and thus Miranda Rights may need to be read as it can be considered investigative in nature. Thus, school officials are strongly encouraged to conduct the interviews as part of the inquiry process and involve law enforcement in the questioning when information reveals a potential high or imminent safety risk. The NC Center for Safer Schools recommends that an interview be conducted by a school mental health professional or another team member other than a School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement.

NTAC Step 5: Establish Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Procedures

Schools and districts must have consistent and standardized threat assessment procedures in place. This section of the guide, along with the appendices, provides procedures and a documentation system based on the U.S Secret Service and NTAC model.

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (page 1) requires an establishment of a behavioral threat assessment team and management process. Any communication or action that indicates that an individual may pose a danger to the safety or well-being of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behaviors that would cause harm to self or others. These behaviors may be expressed or communicated orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means and may be considered threatening regardless of whether a direct verbal threat is expressed. See BTAM Steps 1-7 for a summary of what should be included in Behavioral Threat Assessment Procedures for each PSU.

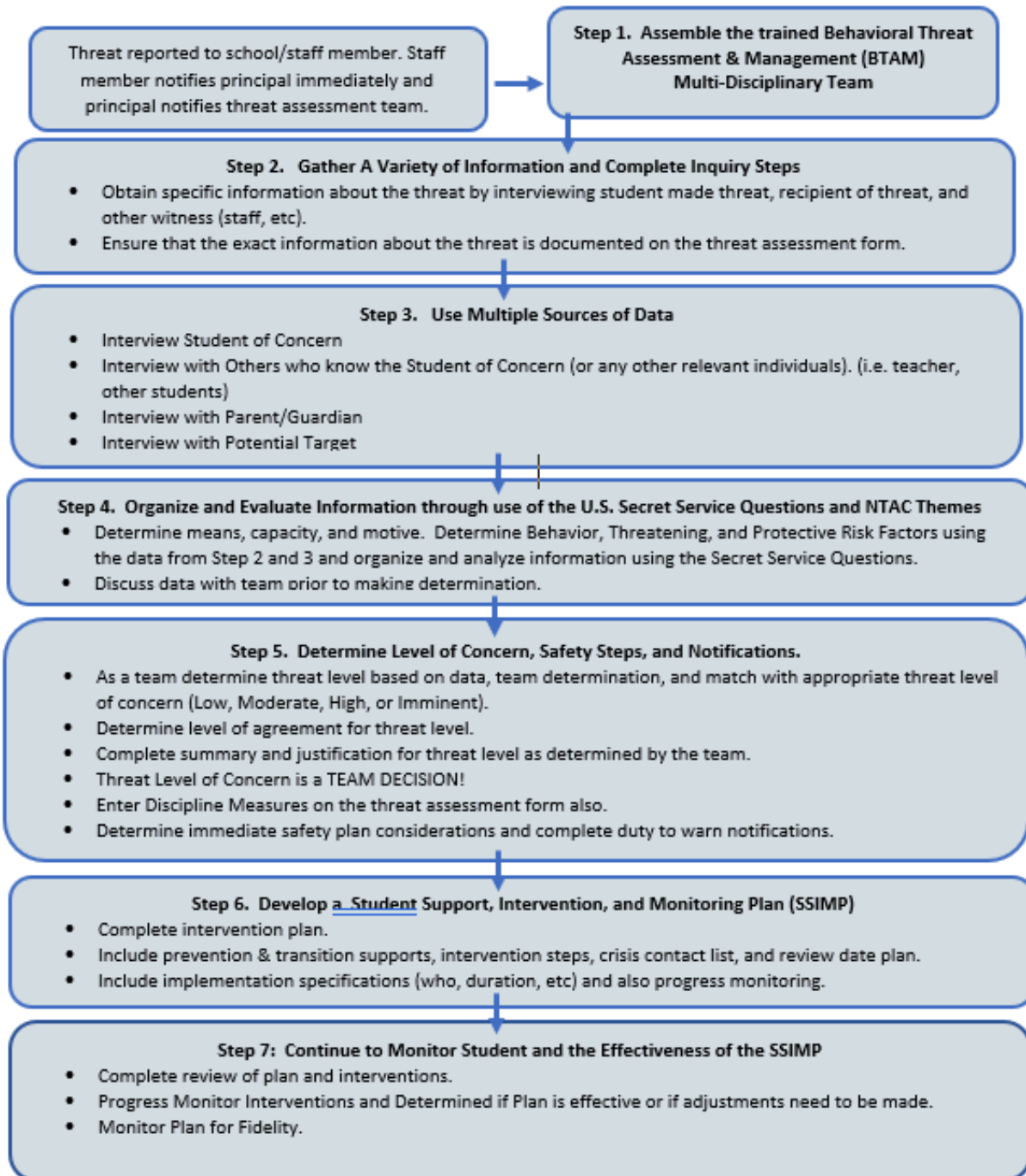
Overview of Step 5: Overview of Process (At a Glance)

1. Gather preliminary information and complete the [BTAM Considerations Tool](#) to determine whether full threat assessment is warranted.
 - **NOTE:** Some districts have developed a threat assessment screening tool that is used to help gauge whether to complete a full Behavior Threat Assessment. However, it is highly recommended that a multidisciplinary team (administrator, school-based mental health professional, and school resource officer/law enforcement) review this together to make a determination. If there is any question or hesitation, a full behavioral threat assessment should be completed. ***If a student has already had one behavioral threat assessment screener that school year, the team should consider assessing this through a full behavioral threat assessment.***
 - Please reference the [considerations page](#) in the appendix of this guide for considerations for any screeners or the tool provided can simply be used as a screener.
 - If a full threat assessment is not completed, a justification document should be recorded and details explained and submitted to the district threat assessment coordinator for review. [Please see the justification sheet in attached to the considerations page.](#)
2. Complete the BTAM Full Protocol, if warranted
 - Gather additional information from multiple sources (record review, compete interviews)
 - Organize and analyze the information (using the U.S. Secret Service questions)
 - Answer assessment questions and determine level of concern

3. Develop and implement a Student Support Intervention & Management Plan (discussed in Step 6). Please see the flow chart listed below. This describes all of the steps in Step 5 of How to develop a BTAM Process in your district. This particular flow chart provides step by step details for **Step 5: Establish Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Procedures**.



NC CFSS Behavioral and Threat Management Flow Chart



(Ellis, S. L. 2024, Ellis, S. L. 2018; Colorado School Safety Resource Center, 2017)

BTAM Procedures Step 1: Assemble the Trained Behavioral Threat Assessment Team and collect details and description of initial report of threat. If there is imminent danger, contact the SRO or local police immediately. Assign roles and data collection assignments.

When a concern is reported regarding potential targeted violence, the core team consisting of an administrator and school mental health professional will assemble to gather preliminary information. If possible, it is highly recommended the core team also consult with their school resource officer/law enforcement liaison as they may have information about community concerns the school is unaware of. The first decision is whether there is reason to believe the case may involve imminent risk (significant safety concern that requires protective actions (i.e., lockdown, immediate engagement of law enforcement due to a weapon on campus). If there is no reason to believe the case involves imminent risk, the core team can review the [considerations for threat assessment tool](#) or use their locally developed screening tool. If a screening tool or [considerations page](#) is utilized, a minimum of one school based mental health professional and administrator should complete these tools together.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please see the earlier section on multidisciplinary teams. A full behavioral threat assessment and management team should include the following per HB 605 and best practice:

- The School-Based BTAM Team is a multidisciplinary team at the school level and comprises at least four members with expertise in counseling; school instruction; law enforcement; and a school administrator. This includes at least one school mental health professional (school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor), SRO, administrator, and a person with expertise in instruction (i.e. a person familiar with the student; when applicable include someone knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with disabilities.)

Preliminary information gathered prior to completing the [considerations page](#) or a screener should include:

- Talking with the referral source(s)
- Talking with the student of concern
- A brief check-in with the student's teachers
- A brief educational record review to check for red flags in grades, attendance, discipline; also check whether the student has an educational disability (IEP or 504 Plan)
- If possible, law enforcement records
- In most cases, gathering the preliminary information will be enough to answer the questions on the considerations/screener and develop a plan for addressing the situation through problem-solving, conflict resolution, a restorative approach, mental health support, and/or current programming (i.e., supports being offered through the student's IEP or 504 Plan or revisions to those plans).

NOTE: The [considerations](#) and/or screening is more about why the team chose **NOT** to go to full assessment. In doing so, the team makes a decision regarding whether the information gathered

indicates there is “no evidence of intent to harm” vs. there is “possible intent to harm – needs further assessment.”

If a full assessment will not be conducted, the documentation must support there was no intent to harm and how the situation was addressed/resolved. This justification should be documented and provided to the threat assessment coordinator or the senior administrator of the school who is in charge of threat assessments (if a charter school). ***If there is any doubt, always err on the side of caution and proceed to full assessment.***

IMPORTANT! If there is a concern about ***weapon involvement*** and/or a threat with specificity, immediately proceed to full behavioral threat assessment and ***engage SRO/law enforcement*** in the BTAM process.

Presumptive Indicators of Intent to Harm:

- Specific, plausible details, “I’m going to shoot Mr. Bennett with my shotgun.”
- The threat has been repeated over time or the student has told multiple parties of the threat.
- The threat is reported to others as a plan, or there are suggestions that violent action has been planned, “Wait and see what happens next Tuesday in the cafeteria!”
- There are accomplices or the student has sought out accomplices.
- The student has invited peers to observe the threat.
- Physical evidence of intent to carry out the threat (e.g., written plans, lists of victims, drawings, weapons, materials).
- Indicators of pathway behaviors: ideation, planning, and/or preparation with possible movement toward implementation. In addition, consider the developmental age, credibility, and discipline record of the student who made the threat.

Judge credibility based on the student’s presentation of what happened, as well as on all other information you have about this student and accounts by other students. In general:

- An older student is more likely to demonstrate true intent/capability to harm than a younger one (but we are seeing younger students engaging in this behavior). It is important not to discount this right away.
- A discipline record of previous aggressive behavior, dishonesty or both is considered more likely to demonstrate a true intent to harm.
- A student with disabilities may not fully understand the implications of their words or actions, and/or their behaviors may be consistent with disability (e.g., difficulties managing emotions) but they pose no true intent to harm.

Obtain a detailed account of the threat, usually by interviewing the person who made the threat, the intended victim, and other witnesses. Write the exact content of the threat and key observations by each party. Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student’s intentions. Is there communication of intent to harm someone or behavior suggesting intent to harm? Please see the chart below to help provide some information about how to decipher “no intent to harm” and “intent to harm.”

No Intent to Harm	Possible Intent to Harm
<p>Threats are statements/actions that do not express a lasting harm to someone. These include statements intended as figures of speech or reflect feelings that dissipate in a short period after reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threat was in response to specific situation; perceived as a joke; no intent to harm Made a threat, but does not pose a threat No “true” threat (person on receiving end does not feel threatened) <p><i>May be resolved through problem-solving, conflict resolution, and/or current resources</i> <i>At a minimum, a justification or screener form should be completed explaining “WHY” the full threat assessment should not be completed. If this student has more than one screener completed this school year, a full threat assessment may need to be completed.</i></p>	<p>Statements that express a possible continuing intent to harm someone. Emotions/actions indicate a desire to harm someone that extends beyond the immediate incident when the threat was made. Context and meaning are more important than verbal content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context and meaning support a possible legitimate safety concern Threat communicated intent to harm others (verbal, gesture, electronic, written, pictures) Person(s) on receiving end is concerned/ threat was not perceived as a joke <p><i>Requires additional assessment to determine level of concern and actions needed</i></p>
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two students use their fingers to “shoot” at each other while playing cops and robbers “I’m gonna kill you” - said as a joke “I’m gonna kill you” - said in a competition “I’m gonna bust you up” - said in anger but then retracted after student calms down “I could break you in half” - said to intimidate but retracted after calms down “I’ll get you next time” - said after a fight but retracted after the two students reconcile “Watch out or I’ll hurt you” - intimidating manner but retracted after calms down “I oughta shoot that teacher” - said in anger but retracted after student calms down Student found with a pocket knife he accidentally left in his backpack after a camping trip. 	<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two students exchange threats and then throw rocks at each other. Students fought the day before and for revenge sent a picture of a gun and said, “I got this for you.” “I’m gonna kill you” - said with intent to injure “I’m gonna kill you” - while holding weapon with intent to harm/displaying serious anger “I’m gonna bust you up” - not retracted later “I could break you in half” - in intimidating manner, followed by stony silence “I’ll get you next time” - said after a fight and the student refuses mediation “Watch out or I’ll hurt you” - said by a student with a history of bullying “I oughta shoot that teacher” - later denies making the statement A student who threatened to stab a classmate is found to have a pocket knife in his backpack

Source: Cornell & Shears (2016)

BTAM Procedures Step 2: Gather a Variety of Information from a variety of sources using inquiry steps. Consider all of the following & check sources of information gathered. For any item checked, put the date and who collected the information and **attach** notes.

The threat assessment is only as good as the data gathered. Therefore, data collection must be thorough and corroborated to facilitate good decision making.

Specific data sources may include the following:

- Academic and discipline records; including previous threat and suicide assessments
- Previous school academic and discipline records
- Law enforcement records of student
- Search of student, locker, car (if applicable) on school property, according to district policy
- Search (or search warrant) of room/home/vehicle with law enforcement, if appropriate
- Interview with student of concern
- Parent/guardian interview
- Interview with a student's mental health professional, as permitted
- Interview with school staff and/or classroom teacher(s)
- Interview with target individual(s) of threat
- Interview with other student(s)
- Internet histories/activities; written and artistic material, etc.
- Social media history/activity
- Information from probation, juvenile diversion, social services, and/or other involved agencies
- Additional information determined necessary/helpful

Ensure that information obtained from these sources is detailed on the threat assessment (i.e. attach information or list out the source of information and any significant findings).

BTAM Procedures Step 3: Use Multiple Sources of Data through interviews and data collection.

Data collection using a multi-method and multi-source approach to conduct a contextual assessment is critical. Contextual assessment involves the STEP approach as targeted violence stems from an interaction among the Subject(s), Target(s), Environment and Precipitating Incidents (STEP). See figure below from SIGMA Threat Assessment Associates (now known as Ontic) (2018).

Violence Is An Interaction Between	
Subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Person of concern● How individual perceives and deals with life● Intensity of effort directed toward planning/preparation
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Identified Target● People Are Fearful?

Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances/Situations affecting subject • External influences encouraging/discourage violence
Precipitating Events/ Protective Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive (protective) or negative impact that accelerate risk

Source: SIGMA Threat Management Associates (Ontic) (2018)

Thus, interviews with the person(s) of concern and potential targets, in addition to those who know the subject, are critical. Interviews can gather information not always captured by observations or records. In addition, interviews allow the BTAM team to assess if the subject(s) “story” is consistent with their actions. It is strongly recommended that interviews are led by a school mental health professional as they have received specialized training in interviewing skills. In addition, they are typically not seen as disciplinarians, thus oftentimes the student will be more comfortable responding to questions.

****IMPORTANT**:** If a law enforcement/school resource officer leads the questioning, they could be perceived as acting as agents of law enforcement and thus Miranda Rights may need to be read as it can be considered investigative in nature. Thus, school officials are strongly encouraged to conduct the interviews as part of the inquiry process and involve law enforcement in the questioning when information reveals a potential high or imminent safety risk. The NC Center for Safer Schools recommends that an interview be conducted by a school mental health professional or another team member other than a School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement.

When interviewing a student, it is critical for the adult to convey a neutral perspective and calm tone. The subject of concern and potential victims must feel heard and understood. It should feel like a conversation, not an interrogation. The following guidelines may be helpful, as well as the sample questions in the tables below:

Nonverbal Behaviors	Be aware of your body posture. To convey interest and understanding, make good eye contact (be aware of cultural norms as eye contact between a student and someone of authority is not seen as culturally acceptable for some cultures), orient your body toward them, and maintain a physical posture of interest. Keep focused on the story/narrative of what the other person is disclosing.
Ask Skillful Questions	How questions are phrased can be critical to the amount of detail you receive. Questions show you are interested in their perspective. There should be a balance between open- and closed-ended questions, and avoid rapid firing of questions as you do not want the person to feel they are being interrogated. Questions should be interspersed with reflective statements, affirmations, and other ways that show the youth you are listening.

Use Open-Ended Questions	<p>The goal of open-ended questions is to get the interviewee talking and to provide more detail. It is best to start with open-ended questions the interviewee will respond to. An easy acronym to facilitate a good interviewing skill set is OARS — open-ended questions, affirmations, reflective statements, and summarizing.</p> <p>Sample Open-Ended Questions for Person of Concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me what happened as your perspective is important. • What exactly did you say and do? (write down exact words) • Why did you say (or do) that? • How are you feeling right now? • How did you think he/she feels about what you said (or did)? • What are you going to do now that you have made this threat? • How do you think your actions might affect you? Your future? • Who are the people you turn to for support? • How can we help you? the situation? <p>Sample Open-Ended Questions for Witness/Victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exactly happened? • What did you witness and/or observe? • What exactly did [student] say or do? (i.e., write down exact words, see if willing to share screenshots) • What do you think (the person of concern) meant when saying that? • What do you think led to the behaviors of concern occurring? • How do you feel about what he/she said (or did)? (note if perceived as a true threat) • Why do you think they said that or did those actions/behaviors? • How can we help you? the situation?
Closed-Ended Questions	<p>Closed-ended questions can help provide clarification and help a person who may feel uncomfortable with the interview process to still engage in a conversation. Oftentimes, closed-ended questions are followed by open-ended questions to obtain additional information. Be careful not to ask too many closed-ended questions as the dynamics can then feel like an interrogation.</p> <p>Sample Close-Ended Questions for Person of Concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know why you are here? • Are you feeling upset or angry right now? If so, with whom/why? • Did the conflict start because someone upset you? • Do you think carrying out your plan will solve all your problems? • Are you concerned about what may happen next to you because of this process? • Do you use social media? Or are there websites you enjoy surfing? If so, are you willing to share which ones?

	<p>Sample Closed-Ended Questions for Witness/Victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you concerned (scared, fearful, worried)? • Are others concerned? • Are you scared to come to school? • Are you aware of a plan to harm others? If so, what details are you aware of? • Are you aware of any others that may be involved? If so, who are those individuals and what are the dynamics like between these individuals (e.g., leader, follower)? • Do you think this can be resolved peacefully? If so, how?
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In addition, data needs to be gathered to assess risk factors and warning signs. Risk factors are variables that increase the probability of a student becoming violent. While far from perfect predictors, they signal the need to increase vigilance for warning signs. See the table below for a summary of identified risk factors.

Summary of Risk Factors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially Withdrawn • Isolated and alienated • Feels rejected • Violence/bullying victim • Feels persecuted/picked on • Low school interest and performance • Intolerance and prejudice • Drug and alcohol use • Affiliation with gangs • Expresses grievance/moral outrage • Thinking framed by ideology • Failure to affiliate with prosocial groups • Dependent on virtual communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational goals thwarted • Mental Illness (untreated or exasperated) • Poor impulse control • Access to, and possession of, firearms • History of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Violent expressions in writings and drawings ○ Serious threats of violence ○ Uncontrolled behavior ○ Impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, bullying ○ Discipline problems ○ Criminal violence ○ Cruelty to animals

Sources: Adapted from Amman et al. (2017). Dwyer et al. (1998): Meloy et al. (2011, 2014, 2015): Reeves & Brock (2017); U.S. Department of Education (2016).

Warning signs indicate a person of concern is actually considering an act of violence and is on the pathway to violence. Warning signs in isolation are concerning, but warning signs combined with a number of risk factors and stressors are especially worrisome. Direct special attention to the student who has suicidal thoughts, as such are often paired with homicidal thoughts. It is also important to note that the absence of violent behavior in one's past might be irrelevant, as some of these

individuals do not display outward signs of violent behavior before carrying out an act of violence (de Becker, n.d., 2017). Table 5 below summarizes multiple factors associated with potential warning signs, which in turn indicate the need for BTAM team action. None of these factors alone are sufficient when it comes to predicting aggression and violence; thus, it is inappropriate, and potentially harmful, to use the risk factors and warning signs in simple checklist fashion. Please see the warning signs below that may be helpful. However, these **SHOULD NOT** be used in the form of a checklist.

Summary of Warning Signs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targets identified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Persons ○ Places ○ Programs ○ Processes ○ Philosophies <p><i>*Proxies of the above</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Articulates motives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal ○ Political ○ Religious ○ Racial/ethnic ○ Environmental ○ Special interest ○ Grievances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing intensity of violence-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efforts ○ Desires ○ Planning ● Direct and/or indirect communications about violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Words consistent with actions ○ Sees violence as acceptable/only solution ● Access to weapons or methods of planned harm ● Leakage of ideations ● Social withdrawal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotional state <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hopelessness ○ Desperation ○ Despair ○ Suicidal thinking ● Feelings of being picked on, teased, bullied, or humiliated ● Increasing capacity to carry out threats ● Engagement with social media facilitating or promoting violence ● Triggering events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intimate partner problems ○ Interpersonal conflicts ○ Significant losses or personal failures

Sources. Amman et al. (2017); de Becker (n.d.); Fein et al. (2004); Langman (2009, 2015); Meloy et al., (2011, 2014, 2015); Nicoletti & Spencer (2002); Reeves & Brock (2017).

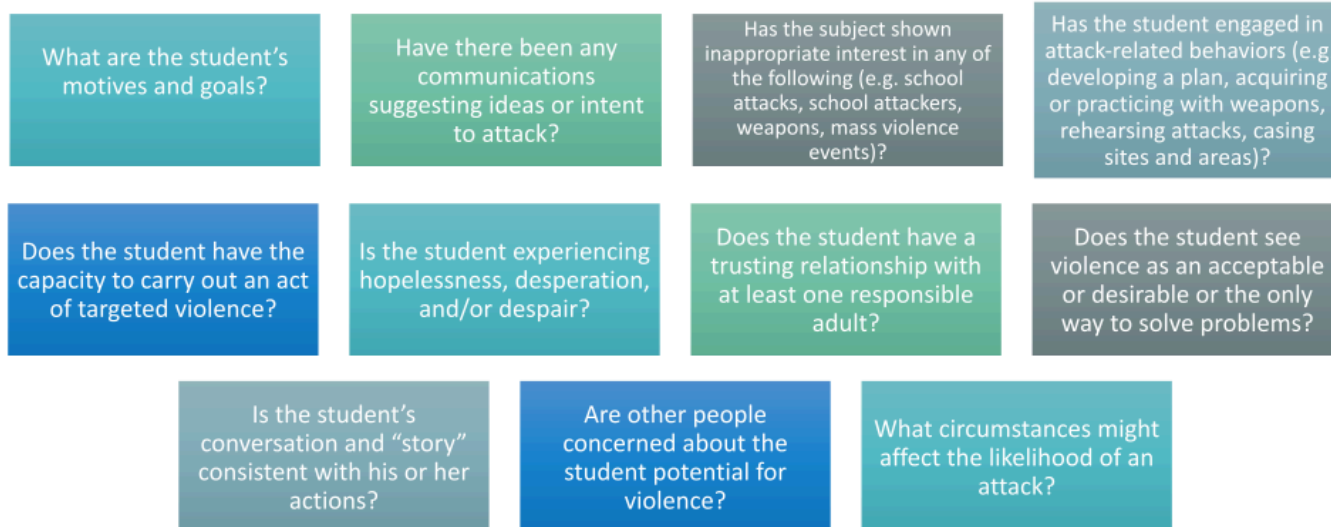
BTAM Procedures Step 4: Evaluate Information. Organize and analyze information with Secret Service questions and NTAC Themes. Summarize information below as a team from the multiple sources of data collected. Identify behavior, threatening, and protective factors. **This part of the assessment is a team discussion from the details reviewed from interviews and data collection.*

Best practice guidelines highly recommend organizing and analyzing the information by answering the Secret Service key investigative questions. It is important to note these are NOT interview questions to be asked verbatim. Below are the questions the team needs to be able to answer collectively using the totality (all) of the information collected.

Step 4A: Analyze Information through the use of the U.S. Secret Service Questions

Threat Assessment Inquiry should answer the following two questions:

- Is the behavior of the student consistent with the movement on a path toward an attack?
- Does the student's current situation or setting incline him or her toward or away from targeted violence?



(Fein, et al., 2002, NTAC, 2018)

U.S. Secret Service's 11 Questions for Threat Assessment Protocols

7

Threat Assessment Inquiry: A Summary of Secret Service 11 Essential Questions

1. WHAT ARE THE STUDENT’S MOTIVE(S) AND GOALS?

- What motivated the student to make the statements or take the actions that caused him or her to come to attention?
- Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
- Does the student have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem, and what has been the result? Does the potential attacker feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternative?

2. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY COMMUNICATIONS SUGGESTING IDEAS OR INTENT TO ATTACK?

- What, if anything, has the student communicated to someone else (targets, friends, other students, teachers, family, others) or written in a diary, journal, or website concerning his or her ideas and/or intentions?

3. HAS THE SUBJECT SHOWN INAPPROPRIATE INTEREST IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?

- School attacks or attackers
- Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon)
- Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers)

4. HAS THE STUDENT ENGAGED IN ATTACK-RELATED BEHAVIORS? THESE BEHAVIORS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Developing an attack idea or plan
- Making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons
- Casing or checking out possible sites and areas for attack
- Rehearsing attacks or ambushes

5. DOES THE STUDENT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT AN ACT OF TARGETED VIOLENCE?

- How organized is the student’s thinking and behavior?
- Does the student have the means (e.g., access to a weapon) to carry out an attack?

6. IS THE STUDENT EXPERIENCING HOPELESSNESS, DESPERATION AND/OR DESPAIR?

- Is there information to suggest that the student is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
- Has the student experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
- Is the student known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
- Is the student now, or has the student ever been, suicidal or “accident-prone”?
- Has the student engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?

7. DOES THE STUDENT HAVE A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH AT LEAST ONE RESPONSIBLE ADULT?

- Does this student have at least one relationship with an adult where the student feels that he or she can confide in the adult and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions? (Students with trusting relationships with adults may be direct away from violence and despair and toward hope.)
- Is the student emotionally connected to – or disconnected from – other students?
- Has the student previously come to someone’s attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

8. DOES THE STUDENT SEE VIOLENCE AS AN ACCEPTABLE – OR DESIRABLE – OR THE ONLY WAY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS?

- a. Does the setting around the student (friends, fellow students, parents, teachers, adults) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
- b. Has the student been “dared” by others to engage in an act of violence?

9. IS THE STUDENT’S CONVERSATION AND “STORY” CONSISTENT WITH HIS OR HER ACTIONS?

- a. Does information from collateral interviews and from the student’s own behavior confirm or dispute what the student says is going on?

10. ARE OTHER PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE STUDENT’S POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE?

- a. Are those who know the student concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
- b. Are those who know the student concerned about a specific target?
- c. Have those who know the student witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?

11. WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT AFFECT THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ATTACK?

- a. What factors in the student’s life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the student will attempt to mount an attack at school?
- b. What is the response of other persons who know about the student’s ideas or plan to mount an attack? (Do those who know about the student’s ideas actively discourage the student from acting violently, encourage the student to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with attack, etc.?)

Adapted from: Fein, R., Vossekuil, B., Pollack, W., Borum, R., Modzeleski, W., & Reddy, M. (2002). Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates. Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools Program and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center.

Step 4B: Analyze Information through the use of the NTAC Investigative Themes and Determine any Warning Signs or Risk Factors

NTAC (2002, 2018) identified a set of investigative questions and themes that serve as a framework to organize information. The original study identified 11 themes that are critical to identifying targeted school violence. In 2018, weapons access and emotional and developmental issues were added to the list of themes (however one could argue that weapon access was previously subsumed under capacity and emotional and developmental issues and considerations were considered throughout the entire BTAM process). Ultimately, these themes help the threat assessment team make a determination regarding the level of concern and potential the student will carry out a targeted act of violence. Information on each of the themes should be considered when conducting a school-based threat assessment.

Please see the chart below for investigative themes.

Investigative Themes Outlined by U.S. Secret Service & NTAC (2002, 2018, 2019, 2021)	
Motives	What motivated the student to engage in the behavior of concern? What is the student trying to solve?
Communication	Have there been any concerning, unusual, threatening, or violent communications? Are there communications about thoughts of suicide, hopelessness, or information relevant to the other investigative themes?
Inappropriate Interests	Does the student have inappropriate interests in weapons, school attacks or attackers, mass attacks, or other types of violence? Is there a fixation on an issue or a person?
Weapons Access	Is there access to weapons, especially firearms? Is there evidence of manufactured explosives or incendiary devices?
Stressors	Have there been any recent setbacks, losses, or challenges? How is the student coping with stressors?
Emotional and Developmental Issues	Is the student dealing with mental health issues or developmental disabilities? Is the student's behavior a product of those issues? What resources does the student need?
Desperation or Despair	Has the student felt hopeless, desperate, or like they are out of options?
Violence as an Option	Does the student think that violence is an acceptable, desirable, or only way to solve a problem or settle a grievance? Have they in the past?
Concerned Others	Has the student's behavior elicited concern for parents, friends, classmates, teachers, or others who know the student? Was the concern related to safety?
Capacity to Carry Out an Attack	Is the student's thinking and behavior organized enough to plan and execute an attack? Does the student have the resources?
Planning	Has the student initiated an attack plan, researched tactics, selected targets, or practiced with a weapon?
Consistency	Are the student's statements consistent with his or her actions or what others observe? If not, why?
Protective Factors	Are there positive and prosocial influences in the student's life? Does the student have a positive and trusting relationship with an adult at school? Does the student feel emotionally connected to other students?

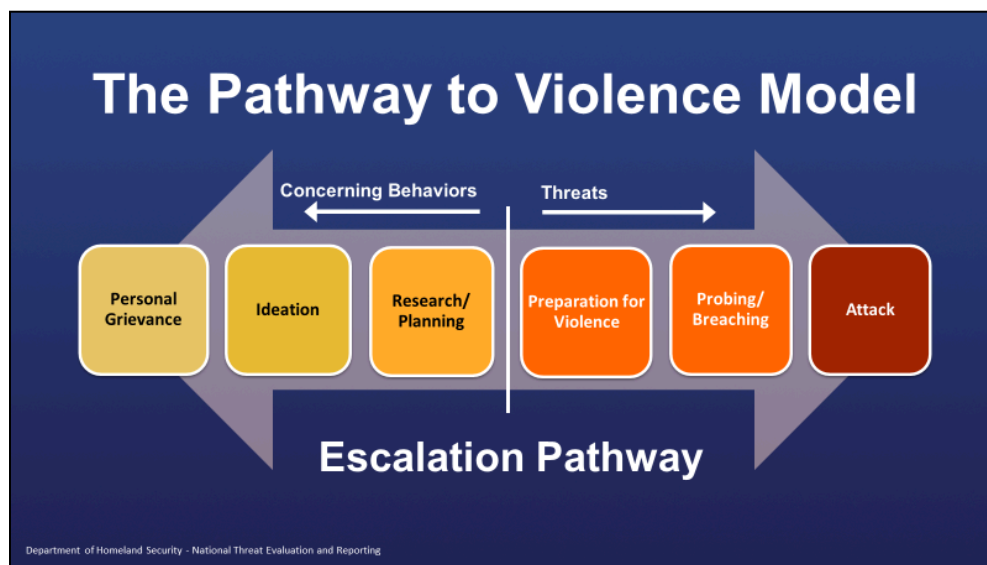
(U.S. Secret Service, 2022; NTAC, 2018, 2019, 2021)

BTAM Procedures Step 5: Determine Threat Level of Concern, Safety Steps, Duty to Warn, & Notifications.
Based on the factors listed in Steps 3 & 4 and after consideration of the Secret Service & NTAC questions, determine the level of concern.

Step 5A: Determine if the Student Poses a Threat

After the team has organized and analyzed the data, they answer the following assessment questions:

- 1) Does the person of concern POSE a threat of violence to others?
- 2) Does the person show a need for monitoring or intervention supports? When considering whether an individual poses a threat, the team considers whether pathway behaviors are observed/identified.



(Image from Department of Homeland Security)

While grievances are not the only way individuals begin entering the pathway to violence, perceived grievances were present in about half of the targeted violence and averted violence cases analyzed by the Secret Service/NTAC (2019, 2021). Often these grievances are related to bullying, feelings of victimization, personal relationship difficulties or feeling wronged. Other factors that contribute to individuals entering the pathway may include ideological, bias-related, political beliefs, psychotic symptoms, desire to kill, fame, notoriety, and other undetermined factors. The threat concern and need for directed attention increase as the situation moves further along the pathway to violence. The BTAM team is to consider ALL data, including risk and protective factors, when answering the assessment questions and determining a level of concern. In turn, these decisions guide the team in directive actions and supports to be taken. The higher the level of concern, the more directive and intensive the supports must be.

Step 5B: Determine Threat Level, Safety Steps, and Notifications

The team must view all of the data collected and the **totality of circumstances**, including life stressors, personal risk factors, and threat mitigators, to identify if an individual is moving along a pathway to violence and what help may be needed. It is very important to remember that a person does not have to just make a threat to pose a threat. Prevention includes identifying these concerning behaviors and ensuring that behavioral threat assessments are completed proactively.

Please see the levels of concern table listed below. It is important to note that levels of concern are not predictive of future behavior and are not to be used to automatically determine a change of educational placement. However, the levels of concern are helpful to design interventions and supports that are appropriate for the level of concern. The BTAM Full Protocol should be used to document the team's findings.

Threat Level of Concern Description		
Level	Description	Safety Actions Taken By BTAM Team (In addition to Creating Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Plan)
Low	<p>Individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved easily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No current or identified risk or threat• Concern is confusing, unrealistic, makes not illusion to violence• No identifiable grievance or precipitants• More “venting” but no intent to actually cause harm• Threat is vague, indirect, inconsistent, and implausible• Information contained within the threat lacks detail or realism; no “true” threat• Misunderstanding of what was communicated• Taken out of context• Student lacks developmental understanding• Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent• No identified grievances; thought was in passing to a specific circumstance/made in heat of the moment.• Subject is remorseful• Supports are available and accessible• Can be resolved with problem solving, conflict resolution, restorative approach, clarification, explanation, retraction, and/or an apology• Managed through existing educational programming already in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Principal shall be notified• Contact parents/guardian of student of concern (i.e. 2 staff members shall make the contact.)• Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents/guardians of victim(s)• Place interventions in place as needed for victims as well. (Duty to Warn)• Determine if a referral is needed and a check-in point at school• Determine if school and/or community-based referrals are needed• Determine if a release of information is needed• See that perceived threat is resolved through explanation, apology, or making amends• Notify SRO• Develop behavior and/or contract as needed• Complete student support and intervention monitoring plan (keep in review a minimum of 90 calendar days). Team can extend monitoring if needed• Teachers and individuals who teach student are aware of safety actions that are needed for student <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>

<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate potential intent for future violence or serious harm to self/others (particularly if stressors cannot be addressed); and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges violent thoughts but no intent to follow through • No specific details on plan • Person of concern does not view situation as helpless or hopeless • No intention to act upon (data confirms this) • Willing to look at other alternatives • Threat is plausible but lacks specifics • No clear indication the student has taken preparatory steps, although there may be ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility • Some grievances but does not view situation as helpless • Moderate or lingering concerns about a student's potential to act violently but willing to access supports. Open to help • Has at least some protective factors present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District administrator shall be notified • Building administrator shall be notified • Provide direct supervision of student until parents/guardians assume custody • Explain consequences of carrying out threat • Contact parents/guardian of student of concern (2 staff should make the contact) • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents/guardians of victim(s). (Duty to Warn) • Document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school • Notify SRO • Refer for mental health assessment and mental health counseling if needed • Put interventions in place as needed for victim as well • Check-in system with student should be established and intervention planning • Have parent sign a Release of Information form • Determine if detailed safety plan is needed • Safety Plan is developed and shared with teachers and staff. Teachers and individuals who teach student are aware of safety actions that are needed for student • Complete student support and intervention monitoring plan (keep in review a minimum of 180 calendar days). Team can extend monitoring if needed <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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<p>High</p>	<p>Person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm (ongoing ideation), and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan (planning and preparation); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat is specific and plausible. There is an identified target or strong indication of target(s) • Information suggests concrete steps have been taken to act on the threat and has means (e.g., acquired or practiced with weapon, has victim under surveillance) but no plans for immediate execution of plan • Information suggests a strong concern about a student's potential to act violently in absence of interventions • Strong grievance; intent on violence as only solution • Minimal to no supports; resistive to problem solving/interventions • Secret Service questions reveal data that is of high level of concern • Increase in intensity and severity in tone and content • Frequent and severe thoughts of violence, poses a threat • Communication is directed or fixated on person and/or cause • Lacks immediacy or specificity, and/or detailed plan • Escalation noted in data collection • Time and place may not be identified (potential target is named) • Violence is possible and could occur with precipitating event • Potential need for psychiatric emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent or Designee District Administrator shall be notified (based on school board policy) • Building Administrator shall be notified • Notify SRO • Provide direct supervision of student until parent/guardian assumes custody and/or student is removed from campus • Explain consequences of carrying out threat • Follow discipline measures per district student code of conduct • Threats at this level may require immediate law enforcement intervention or hospitalization • Contact parent/guardian of student of concern. Two staff members should make the contact and document • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parent/guardian of victim(s). (Duty to Warn) • Make a re-entry plan for student. (If student does not return to current school, sending school communicates with receiving school to help consult about re-entry plan) • When return to school, the student will need active case management • Safety plan with details must be developed and monitored • Have parent sign a Release of Information form • Create an intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school for a minimum of 365 calendar days <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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Imminent	<p>Person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others (movement towards implementation) that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same indicators as high risk but immediate containment is needed to address safety and/or mental health issues • Notify law enforcement immediately • Frequent and severe homicidal (potentially suicidal) thoughts • Language appears action oriented • Operating in predatory mode • Terminal theme to thoughts – appears focused on carrying through with threat • Means, desire, and ability to carry out and accepting of negative consequences • Means and desire to implement plan within a short time • Multiple risk factors and imminent warning signs • Clear pathways to escalating violence • Plan for implementation has begun • Contemplated death of self and/or others • Pathway, energy burst, last resort, fixation, and novel aggression of warning signs are most likely present • Potential need for psychiatric emergency • Law enforcement emergency, Immediate containment is necessary and protection of target 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify SRO/law enforcement per regulation to contain threat • District administrator must be notified • Building administrator must be notified • Provide direct supervision of student until parent/guardian assumes custody and/or student is removed from campus • Refer student for mental health intervention • Explain consequences of carrying out threat • Follow discipline measures per district student code of conduct • Threats at this level likely require immediate law enforcement intervention or hospitalization • Contact parent/guardian of student of concern. Two staff members shall make contact and document • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parent/guardian of victim(s). (Duty to Warn) • Make a re-entry plan for student. (If student does not return to current school, sending school communicates with receiving school to help consult about re-entry plan) • When return to school, the student will need active case management • Safety plan with details must be developed and monitored • Have parent sign a Release of Information form • Create intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school • Create intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school for a minimum of 365 calendar days <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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In summary, the team answers the two key questions below and determines the level of concern.

1. Does the subject pose a threat of violence to others? (i.e., moderate, high, imminent risk)?

NOTE: If the student poses a potential threat to self, a suicide risk assessment must also be completed.

2. Does the student need additional interventions, and ongoing supports and engagement for a period of time to mitigate risk, decrease stressors, and/or build protective factors?

If “NO” to both questions (i.e., low level):

- Document the BTAM process followed, and actions taken to resolve the concern (e.g., conflict resolution, problem-solving, restorative approach)
- If the subject shows a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care or mentoring, then provide the subject/subject’s family with appropriate referrals and document
- Monitor for 90 days through the Student Support Intervention & Monitoring Plan. Teams can monitor longer depending on need

If “YES” to one or both questions:

- Take appropriate actions
- Develop an intervention and monitoring plan, appropriate for level of concern. Monitor based on number of days minimum (Moderate - 180 days minimum; High/Imminent- 365 days minimum). Teams can monitor longer depending on need
- Provide the subject/subject’s family with appropriate mental health/support referrals
- Document the case, including referrals made
- Assign a case manager for progress monitoring, accountability, and follow-up

The data to support the team’s decisions should be documented in the BTAM Full Protocol, and all information should be attached.

NOTE: *It is recommended that public school units consult with their legal counsel to decide what information the district is comfortable including in formal educational records, sharing with parents, and potentially sharing following a FERPA request for educational records. Decisions regarding formal threat assessment documentation reside with the public school unit.*

BTAM Procedures STEP 6 & 7: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan (SSIMP) and Continue to Monitor Student and the Effectiveness of the SSIMP.

To effectively manage and mitigate potential risk, interventions and supports need to be put in place to help the person of concern off the pathway to violence. It is critical to note that punitive measures such as suspension and expulsion can increase risk! Actions that further disconnect the subject from monitoring and support can further escalate emotions and disenfranchise the person from the school and social environment. Thus, these types of consequences should be implemented only after careful team consideration and should always be paired with supportive interventions. It is important to think about keeping the student connected and supervised and also decrease the opportunity for them to be at home alone where they have more time to conduct research and plan how to carry out the act of violence. In addition, further disconnecting the student can increase grievances. [Please see an example of a Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan that is available.](#) PSU’s are welcome to modify this document to their needs or use their own document to reflect progress monitoring.

Potential Responses for Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams to Consider

Low Level of Concern Responses

- Resolve threat with conflict resolution, problem-solving, restorative approach, clarification, explanation, retraction, or an apology
- Notify intended victim's parent/guardian, if necessary; reassure situation has been resolved
- Notify subject's parents, explain situation and steps taken to resolve
- If subject to disciplinary action, ensure consequences are appropriate to level of concern; follow disciplinary due processes
- Resolve with referral to appropriate school or community-based resources, if needed
- If new information comes to the attention of team, re-assess level of concern
- Manage through existing educational programming
- Develop and implement a Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan (monitor at least 90 calendar days)

Moderate Level of Concern Responses

- Take precautions to protect potential victims; notify their parents/guardians
- Reinforce actions taken to ensure safety; may need to share identity of subject who made threat
- Subject of concern
 - Provide direct supervision
 - Explain the consequences of carrying out the threat
 - Contact parents/guardians to assume responsibility for supervision and to collaborate on management plan
- Consult with SRO or local law enforcement to assist in monitoring and supervising the subject of concern; can help determine if law enforcement action is needed
- Follow disciplinary procedures and due process; ensure consequences are appropriate to level of concern
- Provide referrals for counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce and/or address underlying conflict
- If mental health issues are a contributing factor, a mental health assessment may be conducted or recommended
- If risk potentially related to a disability, conduct appropriate review according to special education procedures/laws
- Develop and implement a Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan (monitor for at least 180 calendar days)

High Level and Imminent Level of Concern Responses

- Take precautions to protect potential victims
 - Reinforce actions taken to ensure safety and need to share identity of subject who made threat
- Subject of concern
 - Provide direct supervision
 - Explain the consequences of carrying out the threat

- Contact parents/guardians to assume responsibility for supervision or law enforcement assumes responsibility for supervision
- Engage law enforcement to help manage threat
- Follow disciplinary procedure in accordance with conduct policy; follow disciplinary due processes
- Provide referrals for counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce risk of violence and/or address underlying conflict
- If mental health issues are a contributing factor, a mental health assessment may be conducted by a qualified medical/psychological professional (mandating an evaluation conducted by non-school personnel at the parent's expense as a condition of returning to school could be considered denial of FAPE)
 - Evaluation needs to consider ALL available information and a written report needs to be provided back to the school; assessment must identify problem/conflict and recommend strategies to address the problem/conflict
 - Educational services must be provided if excluded from school during assessment process
- May be referred for special education or 504 evaluation
- School administrator or disciplinary hearing officer will determine conditions of readmission to the school (may include cooperation with a mental health evaluation) (consult public school unit legal for procedures for this)
 - A re-entry/readmission meeting is highly recommended prior to a subject's return to school
 - Threat assessment team will make every effort to obtain required signed permission for release of information to exchange information with other providers; document if parents refuse to sign a release(s) of information
 - If risk may be potentially related to a disability, appropriate review needs to be conducted according to special education procedures/laws
- Develop and implement a Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan (monitor for at least 365 calendar days)
- May need containment via emergency mental health hold or law enforcement taking into custody
- If student removed from academic setting due to violation of law, Code of Conduct, or school system policy, and/or it is determined student may pose a significant risk to health and/or safety of others, due processes for change of placement must be followed

(Reeves, 2021)

The BTAM team should develop a written Student Support Intervention and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP). To effectively manage and mitigate potential risk, interventions need to focus on building resiliency and protective factors for the subject of concern while also addressing safety concerns. The behavioral threat assessment process is designed to be collaborative in nature and interface with other processes already established in schools. This may include MTSS, PBIS, student assistance teams, mentoring, problem-solving, conflict resolution, skill-building groups, academic supports, counseling services, community-based resources, and/or the initiation or current revision of plans (e.g., Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 plan, Functional Behavioral Assessment, Behavior Intervention Plan, etc.). Environmental stressors such as bullying and discrimination may also need to be addressed by implementing universal prevention programming and positive school climate initiatives (Maryland Center for School Safety, 2018; Reeves, 2020). The goal is not to focus on punishment, but to focus on supports that lead a student toward a pathway of success and a pathway of hope. Thus, collaborative

partnerships between schools, community agencies and providers, social workers, care managers, caregivers, and students themselves, help to support successful educational and life outcomes.

In addition to the information shared above, below are various strategies to be considered to help manage threatening situations, in addition to building resiliency and protective factors for the subject. Consider existing support and resources available within the school (i.e., MTSS, PBIS, etc.), and if the student is receiving special education services, it is important to follow special education procedures and guidelines. It is important to note that completion of a threat assessment does not automatically necessitate a referral for special education and if any changes of placement or programming are to be considered for a student with an identified educational disability, which must be done by the special education team. The Student Support, Intervention, and Monitoring Management Plan should include environmental (school climate and culture) considerations as there may be dynamics occurring within the school that are contributing to an escalation of behaviors. Strategies to directly help the individual of concern include monitoring, skill development, resiliency building, relationship building, and disciplinary strategies that include alternatives to suspension and expulsion. Punishment alone does not change behavior. In addition, overly punitive consequences can escalate grievances. Thus, even when consequences are warranted, when planning them please consider consequences with care.

Progress Monitoring and Monitoring of Management Plan

Implementing and Progress Monitoring for students whom the team determined to be at a low level of concern (Tier 1/Tier 2 supports) may be sufficient. For those individuals determined to be at moderate, high, or imminent levels, more formalized progress monitoring will need to be implemented. It is highly recommended a follow-up meeting(s) is scheduled to review progress and responsiveness to interventions and supports. It is important to re-evaluate the plan and make adjustments as needed. If higher concern, progress monitoring will be more frequent (i.e., daily, weekly).

If moderate concern, progress monitoring may be every few weeks or monthly. Progress monitoring should occur as long as necessary to mitigate risk with the goal of lessening the frequency of progress monitoring as the student of concern shows growth toward management plan goals.

[Please see an example of a Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan that is available.](#) PSU's are welcome to modify this document to their needs or use their own document to reflect progress monitoring.

Closing Case/Place on Inactive Status if Risk is Resolved

Closing a case (or placing on "inactive" status), can be considered when "no" can be answered to both assessment questions. Thus, formal monitoring is no longer needed, and the subject has responded well to interventions and is on a more positive pathway. This does not mean a new threat assessment is done. We do not reassess and complete a new threat assessment (unless there is a new threat or concerning behavior). The team uses progress monitoring and determines if the threat has been resolved.

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management is most effective when embedded within a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and when a full continuum of behavioral health and social emotional supports are available. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors but require interdisciplinary collaborative partnerships that focus on prevention before there is a need for threat assessment.

The document [A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#) (Cowan, et al, 2015) specifies best practices for establishing safe and successful schools:

- Implement high-quality, rigorous curricula that address core academic competencies, character and resiliency building principles, mental and behavioral wellness, and positive behavior
- Establish a process for regularly reviewing student data (both behavioral and academic)
- Require a multidisciplinary, data-based decision-making team composed of diverse stakeholders, including principals/administrators, teachers (general and special education), parents, school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists) and other specialized instructional support personnel
- Ensure access to a range of high-quality, evidence-based interventions to address the comprehensive needs of students.

School climate and safety surveys, focus groups, and safety and wellness initiatives are also important components to assessing and building a positive school climate. Positive school climates that focus on building connections and relationships are critical to individuals “breaking the code of silence” and reporting concerns. These actions can help to identify students before they enter onto the pathway to violence and also help to identify students who need a threat assessment and additional supports.

NTAC Step 8: Conduct Training for All Stakeholders and Plan for BTAM Fidelity Monitoring

School safety is the responsibility of everyone. It takes everyone working and collaborating together to create supportive environments. Therefore direct and explicit training must take place for all stakeholders (administrators, students, teachers, support staff (including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, building engineers/custodial, front office staff), coaches, mentors, parents, community members) so they know how and when to report threats. At a minimum, this should take place at least once a year. Confidential reporting procedures must be easily accessible and monitored so concerns can be responded to quickly. Again, the effectiveness of the BTAM process relies greatly on the information coming forth.

The BTAM team needs high-quality training that focuses on the knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement the BTAM process with fidelity. When selecting high-quality training, it is important to ensure the BTAM model is validated and uses a multidisciplinary approach (e.g., Secret Service/National Threat Assessment Center Model being discussed in this guide). The model must be standardized yet flexible to meet varying resources. At minimum, administrators, school mental health professionals (school psychologists, counselors, social workers), and SROs should all be trained, preferably together in teams.

The training should focus on protocols and processes of systematic implementation and beliefs that can impact decision-making, and integrate case studies. Thus, a good BTAM process mitigates assumptions from occurring and requires a thorough analysis of the variables, context, and behaviors before making any determination. Lastly, ongoing coaching and support should be provided, as implementation of the process and learning how to effectively assess BTAM cases of concern takes time and experience. Systems should also be developed to support new members joining the team each year. In summary, an effective BTAM process integrates the above-mentioned best practice guidelines. However, learning about best practices is just a first step. Knowing how to implement BTAM effectively, and with fidelity, is critical to saving lives, enhancing school safety, and ensuring legal and ethical guidelines are followed.

Suggested Timelines for Training by the NC Center for Safer Schools

August	District BTAM Coordinator and/or Safety Contact attends RISE Back to School Safety Summit to receive Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Training. Additional training by CFSS will be provided at other times during the year.
Beginning of School Year (prior to school beginning)	Administrators, District Staff, BTAM Teams are trained on BTAM Process
Beginning of the School Year & Frequent Reminders Throughout the Year	See Something, Say Something training should be conducted every school year for students and staff. Each and every student should receive training at the beginning of every year about how to report concerning behaviors. This reporting process should be trained so that students and the school community know how to access multiple ways to report. In addition, frequent reminders should be released throughout the year.
New BTAM Team Members that Join in Middle of the Year	Formally trained within 60 calendar days of start date

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams should also plan for fidelity monitoring. Please see the next section for resources and information about fidelity monitoring of the BTAM process.

NC CFSS Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Fidelity & Monitoring Tool (NC BTAM-FMT)

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (Page 2) states that the superintendent or superintendent's designee shall establish a committee charged with coordination and monitoring of the threat assessment teams operating within the unit, which may be an existing committee established by the unit. The committee shall include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health and law enforcement.

Per Session Law 2023-78/HB 605, each PSU is required to develop a committee to monitor behavioral threat assessment teams. This committee should include expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement to monitor the behavioral threat assessment team and implementation. The NC CFSS has developed a behavioral threat assessment rubric to provide district coordinators and public school unit teams a way to monitor their behavioral threat assessment protocol and practices. It is recommended for this tool to be used at least three times a year (i.e. Fall, Spring, Summer) to allow the district to monitor their overall implementation and fidelity of behavioral threat assessment. In addition, this tool can be used to evaluate initial protocols prior to use of them to ensure all necessary components are present for the behavioral threat assessment. The use of this rubric (tool) located below is encouraged by the NC CFSS since each public school unit is developing their own tool based on this guidance document. This rubric will help provide critical details that are needed for each protocol. In addition, the rubric can help PSU's identify training needs, areas for improvement, and areas that may need to be further monitored (Ellis, 2018).

This is a research-based and evidenced-based tool that was shown to significantly improve behavioral threat assessment processes (Ellis, 2018). Please see the [Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management \(BTAM\) Evaluation Rubric: Essential Components for School Behavioral Threat Assessment Protocols and Support Plans](#). Knowing how to implement BTAM effectively, and with fidelity, is critical to saving lives, enhancing school safety, and ensuring legal and ethical guidelines are followed.

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (Page 3) states that upon finding a credible threat, a threat assessment team may take any of the following actions:

- a. Recommend that the individual involved be referred for mental health services. If the individual is a student or minor, the parents shall be notified of the recommendation and encouraged to contact the student's primary care provider, insurance, or the local Medicaid management entity or managed care organization.
- b. Provide notice to individuals who are the subject of threatening behavior and, if the individual is a student or a minor, provide notice to the student's parent or legal guardian. All notices shall be in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.
- c. Provide notice to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

Per [NC Session Law 2023-78/ House Bill 605](#), Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams are to provide notice to individuals who are the subject of threatening behavior and, if the individual is a student or a minor, provide notice to the student's parent or legal guardian. All notices shall be in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. The duty to warn arises when a person of concern has communicated an explicit threat of imminent serious physical harm or death to a clearly identified or identifiable victim or victims, and the person of concern has the apparent intent and ability to carry out such a threat.

The criteria for duty to warn is the individual threatens specific harm to another individual, the potential victim is identified, and there is something the BTAM Team can do in regard to warning the victim. Duty to warn applies whenever there is a credible threat.

The best practice guide is a tool for Public School Units to utilize to help support their Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Processes. This document is a resource and not a definitive word. Each PSU should seek direction from their local legal counsel.

[Resource from National Center for School Safety](#) on Information Sharing

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Records

Except for imminent risk to safety, there is little legal guidance on the development, storage, and retention of threat assessment records. Thus, each district should obtain guidance from their own legal counsel regarding the management of threat assessment records.

Sharing information should never be used to profile or discriminate, but rather to prevent incidents and protect students, staff, and the community. Information sharing is a crucial part of any school system because it allows transparency among staff and encourages teamwork to achieve positive results. It is also a key part of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM), and ensuring school safety.

Decisions on record keeping are important, as maintaining records establishes a legal and behavioral justification for intervention. Also, access to a students' records from prior behavioral threat assessments may be invaluable in informing current threat assessment team members about behavior patterns or any unusual behaviors or disabilities that may be mistaken as viable threats. Case law has supported that if a school had foreseeability (even the slightest inclination there was a safety concern), the school is obligated to act upon the concern; otherwise claims of negligence could be made. Thus, it is critical for BTAM teams to document the actions taken to support their good faith efforts to identify, inquire/investigate, assess, and manage threatening situations. Teams are also encouraged to retain BTAM records as long as allowed under relevant laws or regulations. Retention of such records can be important as individuals may pose an ongoing threat after leaving school, graduating, or losing employment. At minimum, school-level BTAM teams need to establish a confidential record-keeping system. Ideally, school-level BTAM teams should provide a copy of the completed BTAM protocol to a district-level coordinator/administrator. This allows for accountability that the process is being done with fidelity, creates a backup record in case the record needs to be referenced in the future, and also allows for the gathering of statistics to inform strategic investment of future needed BTAM resources. Lastly, it is important for documentation to be recorded fairly, objectively, reasonably, and timely. See the table below.

<u>Fair</u>	Seek to understand situations and give individuals an opportunity to be heard and understood
<u>Objective</u>	Seek information based on facts and observations of the case, not on speculation or bias
<u>Reasonable</u>	Engage in responses that are effective and appropriate to the level of concern
<u>Timely</u>	Quickly and responsively addresses reports of threatening behavior

Source: *Deisinger and Randazzo, SIGMA Threat Management Associates (Ontic) (2017)* ; *Reeves & Brock (2017)*

In many cases, the threat assessment record could be considered an educational record, thus FERPA guidelines must be followed. In addition, caregivers/parents may request a copy of the threat assessment record. Thus, be sure to follow the guidelines above and also ensure the documentation is a summary of the findings and the data to support those findings. Specific sources or identifying/confidential information of others are not to be included in the threat assessment record. Identification of sources could put their own safety at risk, and others will be hesitant to report safety concerns if they know they can be identified. Be cautious of just redacting names in a report, as the individual could still be identified through other contextual cues even if their name is redacted. It would be best to provide a summary to parents/guardians instead of the threat assessment protocol.

Centralized Database

Some districts are developing and maintaining a centralized database to record completed threat assessments. It is important the threat assessment record documents the thoroughness of the threat assessment, the multidisciplinary team members involved, and a summary of the data that supports the team conclusions. While written records may be developed, many districts are now investing in electronic platforms. There are many companies that have electronic platforms available for a fee, but BTAM team input should be elicited to ensure the platform meets the school/district needs and the company is reputable. A database system allows for accessibility at a later date and follow-up on specific individuals that have previously been assessed. In addition, many of the electronic platforms also come with the ability to gather incident-tracking data (to better inform prevalence and outcome data). Regardless of preference, all these records should be stored in a secure, centralized location that is accessible to members of the team but restricts unauthorized persons from having access.

Due to the sensitivity of information contained in threat assessment records, districts also need to ensure records are encrypted. If cloud storage is being used, it is important to ensure the district owns the student records (and not an off-site storage company) and that the records are encrypted. Thus, consultation with technology professionals is often warranted as districts establish record keeping protocols.

Information Sharing

“School officials with a legitimate educational interest” may access Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protected educational records (see chart below for those records considered “educational records”). Schools determine the criteria for who is considered a “school official with a legitimate educational interest”; this generally includes teachers, counselors, school administrators, and other school staff. Members of a threat assessment team who are not school employees may be designated as school officials if they are:

- Under the direct control of the school with respect to the maintenance and use of personally identifiable information (PII) from educational records

When there is a safety concern, schools must balance safety with student privacy interests. FERPA contains a “health or safety emergency exception.” This exception allows for school officials to disclose PII from educational records without consent to appropriate parties only when there is an actual, impending, or imminent emergency, such as an **articulable and significant threat**. Schools have discretion to determine the following:

- What constitutes a health and safety emergency?
- “Appropriate parties” – typically these include law enforcement/SROs (thus why a Memorandum of Understanding, MOU, is important), first responders, public health officials, trained medical and mental health personnel/provider, and parents (i.e., potential targets).

The information that is disclosed must be related to the specific presenting concern and may be disclosed only to protect the health and/or safety of students or other individuals. Within a reasonable time after a disclosure is made, a notation must be made in the student’s educational record to the **articulable and significant threat** that formed the basis for the disclosure, and the parties to whom the information was disclosed. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosure but do not need to be proactively informed that records have been disclosed.

Other considerations include:

- FERPA exception is temporarily limited to the period of the emergency and does not allow for a blanket release of PII
- Does not allow for disclosures for those emergencies that might occur (thus need to substantiate evidence that supports strong likelihood emergency will occur without disclosure)
- Only covers educational records
- Must document disclosure in subject’s educational records (basis of disclosure and to whom the PII was shared)

When Can I Share Protected Information?

According to FERPA, exceptions can be made to allow information sharing with outside entities (such as law enforcement, local educational agencies, etc.) in certain situations, including:

- Sharing during **articulable** and **significant** health and/or safety emergencies (in an emergency, disclosures can be made to any party — law enforcement, public health, medical officials, and parents of an eligible student — whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals)
- When the information being shared has no personally identifiable information (such as the student's name, names of family members, Social Security numbers, etc.)
- When a student or parent (if the student is under 18) provides written consent that is signed, dated, and specifies the records that may be disclosed, the purpose of the disclosure, and identification of to whom the disclosure may be made
- When information is personally known or observed (including notes, drawings, and pictures) and not part of any educational record (i.e., records that are directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency/institution, or by a party acting for them)
- Compliance with judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas
- Sharing to other school officials (coaches, teachers, school resource officers, etc.) with legitimate educational interest

The U.S. Department of Education would not find a school in violation of disclosing FERPA-protected information under the health and safety exception as long as the school had a rationale based upon information available at the time for making determination there was a significant and articulable threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals. It is also important to note that FERPA does not cover personal knowledge or observations, thus professionals may share their personal observations if asked about a significant safety concern (e.g., a teacher overhears a student making threatening remarks to another student, the teacher is not prohibited from sharing that information with appropriate parties.) However, if a school official learns of information about a student through his or her official role in creating or maintaining an educational record (e.g., suspension), then that information is covered by FERPA and must meet the FERPA exceptions to disclose. Misinterpretations of FERPA exceptions can hinder efforts to conduct a thorough threat assessment and provide assistance and appropriate interventions. Therefore, it is important for schools to understand when to appropriately utilize the health or safety emergency exception.

Common FERPA Misunderstandings

Information obtained through a school official's personal knowledge or observation is not protected by FERPA and can be disclosed. Specifically, observations, notes, drawings, pictures, anonymous tips, security videos, and all investigating interviews are not protected under FERPA, so a threat assessment team is not violating anyone's rights by collecting such data to drive their assessment and management of a reported threat or concern.

What is HIPAA?

HIPAA protects the privacy and security of individually identifiable health information held by health plans, health care clearinghouses, and most health care providers and their business associates. It is important to remember that confidentiality is held by the patient, not the mental health provider. In cases where HIPAA applies, the following strategies may assist threat assessment teams in eliminating potential barriers to critical data collection:

- Provide information to health and mental health professionals.
- Ask about duty to warn or duty to protect.
- Ask permission from student and parent to disclose medical records.

Serious Danger to Self or Others Exception

Medical and mental health providers may disclose protected health information when disclosure:

- Is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety of patient or others and is to someone reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat.
- May include disclosure to law enforcement, or others who can mitigate the threat and disclosure must be consistent with applicable law and standards of ethical conduct.

Common HIPAA Misunderstandings

Generally, HIPAA does not apply to student health information maintained by a school. While schools and school districts may maintain student health records, these records are in most cases not protected by HIPAA. Rather, student health information maintained at a school would be considered education records which are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Additional guidance and information can be found below:

[Balancing Student Privacy and School Safety: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Elementary and Secondary Schools](#) (click for handout from U.S. Department of Education)

Family Policy Compliance Office

U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20202-8520; FERPA@ed.gov; <http://rem.s.ed.gov/K12FERPA.aspx> – click on information sharing tab

HIPAA: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html>

IDEA:

https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/privacy/section_2d.asp#:~:text=IDEA%20protects%20the%20privacy%20of,special%20education%20and%20related%20services

U.S. Department of Education (2019). “School Resource Officers, Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)”

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/school-resource-officers-school-law-enforcement-units-and-ferpa>

Session Law 2023-78/HB 605 (Page 3) requires each behavioral threat assessment team to report and share data. Each threat assessment team established pursuant to this section shall report quantitative data on its activities to the Center for Safer Schools as required by the Center. The Center is authorized to share these reports with any agency it consults with to develop guidance pursuant to this section.

The NC Center for Safer Schools will also obtain Behavioral Threat Assessment Data Collection Information from public school units. The NC Center for Safer Schools will share data collection processes at the RISE Back to School Safety Summit. Public school units are encouraged to collect the following information per [Session Law 2023-78/HB 605](#):

- Total Number of Behavioral Threat Assessments conducted annually and demographic information.
- Levels of Concern: Total Number of Low, Moderate, High, and Imminent Threats (Total number of threat assessments that resulted in a determination that the behavior being assessed posed a threat, and any information on the scale or classification of the threat.)
- Number of Student Support Intervention & Monitoring Plans (SSIMP) that were developed at the time. (Please note that intervention and monitoring plans will need to be developed for each level of concern. Low Level – Monitor with SSIMP for a minimum of calendar 90 days; Moderate Level – minimum of 180 days; and for High/Imminent Level – minimum of 365 days with active case management.)
- All actions and results of those action taken in response to finding a threat.
- Public school units will be requested to collect demographic information associated with Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management, including Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Grade, EC/504, and where the report originated (School Staff Referral, Student Referral, Parent Referral, Say Something App, Electronic Email Tool (i.e. Gaggle), and Other)
- Each district will also report information about fidelity of the tool they are using. More information will be shared at training at RISE Back to School Safety Summit.
- Number, subject, and solution or outcome of any technical assistance requests.

All this data will be reported in a confidential manner as to not share or compare public school units to one another. This data will be used to support districts and provide and respond to training needs. It is important to note that an increase in Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management numbers are expected as public school units work to implement BTAM practices and procedures and focus more on harm prevention that these numbers will increase. Prevention of targeted violence is the key and what the NC Center and public school units should work toward.

Parental Notification

The following is recommended guidance for understanding and implementing this responsibility. BTAM teams should provide parental notification on the same day the BTAM has started.

- The district should determine how its threat assessment teams are to notify parents or guardians in an expedient and compassionate way.
- Address an emergency before anything else is done. Only after the immediate threat to life has been removed should the team notify a parent or guardian of the team's intent to conduct a behavioral threat assessment on their child. Nothing in any part of this guidance document shall prohibit PSUs from conducting suicide risk assessments and behavioral threat assessments to ensure adherence to safety protocols and policies.
- It is required to notify parents/guardians. Parents should be notified prior to or simultaneously when a Behavioral Threat Assessment is conducted. If a parent or guardian objects to a threat assessment being conducted on their child, inform the parent or guardian the district is required by law to initiate a behavioral threat assessment when it is alerted to a student exhibiting behavior that may pose a risk of harm toward self or others. PSUs should consult with their PSU legal counsel.

This **Sample Script for Notification** may be used (public school units can amend as needed):

Hello, this is [Your Name and Title]. I need to speak with [Documented Parent or Guardian Name] about an urgent matter regarding [Name of Student of Concern]. (Once you've verified you have the correct parent or guardian, you can continue in the script) This phone call is to inform you that [Name of Campus] was notified of suspected threatening behavior by your child. North Carolina law requires our school to conduct behavioral threat assessments on all reports of suspected threats of violence or harm to self or others. North Carolina law gives parents the opportunity to participate and give us information you may have regarding your child's behavior. We will also notify you upon completion of the threat assessment of the team's finding and conclusions regarding your student.

At this time, the parent or guardian will likely have clarifying questions about the threat. Once you've answered clarifying questions, you can work with the parent or guardian to conduct the interview in person or over the phone. This depends on the urgency of the threat made and the availability of the parent or guardian to be present.

Opportunity for Parent or Guardian to Participate

The Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team is required to reach out to the parent or guardian of the student of concern and provide them with the opportunity to participate in the threat assessment, either in person or remotely, and provide information regarding the student that might assist the team with conducting the assessment. *EXCEPTION:* If a student discloses abuse or neglect from the parent/guardian/primary caretaker, the team would not be required to extend the invitation to participate.

The following is recommended guidance for understanding and implementing this responsibility.

- First, teams satisfy this responsibility by conducting a parent or guardian interview. The parent or guardian interview provides part of the information collected during the threat assessment process.
- Second, please note that the parent interview process of BTAM is not stating the parent or guardian becomes a member of the threat assessment team; rather it is simply requiring the team to request the parent or guardian to participate by providing information about their child. Parents and guardians cannot be members of the threat assessment team, as school districts have a legal responsibility to ensure FERPA confidentiality of students and the original reporting district employee if they have elected to keep their identity protected.

Parental Notification of Findings and Conclusions from the BTAM Team

The Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (BTAM) should provide the findings and conclusions of the behavioral threat assessment to the parent or guardian of the student of concern once completed. The conclusion of the behavioral threat assessment is to share any needed interventions the team is recommending be put in place for the well-being of their child and the school community. It may also include district and community resources that may be useful to the parent or guardian in seeking help for their child. [Please see a sample BTAM Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations Summary Form for PSU's.](#) This is an example and PSU's may amend this document according to the needs of the student.

What is Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)?

BTAM is a **multidisciplinary, fact-based, systematic process** designed to **identify, assess, and manage** potentially dangerous or violent behaviors. **The purpose of the BTAM team is to identify, evaluate, and address potential threats to help schools distinguish between incidents where a student made a threat that is not actually legitimate (with no intent to harm) and other incidents in which the student does pose an actual threat of targeted violence.**

The systematic implementation of BTAM helps avoid impulsive and potentially harmful decisions that can lead to overmanagement (i.e., suspension and expulsion) and requires teams to take into account the context and disability rather than using a zero-tolerance approach. BTAM is not a substitute for school teams and processes that address nonviolent behaviors of concern (e.g., attentional, emotional regulation, social skills, and others), nor is it a mechanism to allow schools to remove children from school because they may have behaviors that are difficult to manage or a disciplinary process.

When BTAM best practices are utilized, the process helps prevent and reduce the overuse of restrictive placements and punitive measures for students with disabilities and students of color. The BTAM process is initiated by the threatening situation itself, and all threats must be taken seriously regardless of the cause. BTAM helps determine if the threat is valid and legitimate, with the goal of connecting students with necessary interventions and supports while simultaneously upholding student and school safety as well as a student's rights.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Disproportionality

While some research has shown an overrepresentation of students with disabilities in threat assessments (Crepeau-Hobson & Leech, 2021), this is not necessarily unexpected as the nature of some students' disabilities are related to low frustration tolerance, impulsive and aggressive behaviors and poor coping skills (Cornell et al., 2018). Preliminary research has shown that when implemented correctly, BTAM does not result in disparities among Black, Hispanic, and White students in terms of out-of-school suspensions, school transfers, or legal actions; thus, a threat assessment process may reflect a generalizable pathway for achieving parity in school discipline (Cornell et al., 2018).

Importantly, the primary goal of BTAM is to connect a student to interventions and supports (i.e., management). Biases and stereotypes – if not properly identified, understood, and mitigated – can inappropriately influence the initiation of a BTAM process on the basis of specific characteristics of the student making the threat (e.g., race, disability status, ethnicity). The behavioral threat assessment and management process should be initiated by the threatening situation itself, not because of stereotypes, labels, or diagnoses. The threat assessment process will help determine if the threat is valid and legitimate, and it takes into consideration the ways in which the student's disability may affect the validity of the threat. The BTAM team must be aware of their own implicit biases and any

potential triggers that may create a situation where their own biases negatively influence the BTAM process.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Discipline

The BTAM threat assessment process considers individual contextual factors in each case. If a student makes a threat (e.g., “I will kill you”), school staff may assume the individual is serious and actually poses a threat, and handle the situation accordingly (i.e., suspension, expulsion, notifying police). The threat assessment process helps to mitigate automatic and erroneous assumptions of danger and the application of exclusionary and unnecessary disciplinary action or police involvement by determining legitimacy and plausibility of the threat. It also takes into consideration the context of the behavior/communication as well as situational factors in the student’s life, and it can help to recommend intervention with the goal of support instead of punishment.

The BTAM process does not determine disciplinary action when a student violates a school rule or code of conduct. That decision is made by school administration with consideration of the strengths and needs identified within the BTAM process. The BTAM team should carefully consider disciplinary actions for the student who poses a threat, since disciplinary actions can provide further motive or trigger a student to engage in threatening behavior against others. A threat assessment can occur, and a determination can be made that disciplinary action is not necessary or appropriate. If disciplinary actions are deemed necessary for a student in special education, at a minimum, the IEP team is to be notified. An MDR would occur only if conditions are met that require an MDR be held; thus, not every threat assessment conducted on a student receiving special education services requires an MDR.

In summary, when BTAM best practices are followed, the process helps prevent or reduce the overuse of restrictive placements and punitive measures for students with disabilities and students of color. The threat assessment process is activated by the threatening situation itself, and all threats must be taken seriously, regardless of the cause. The threat assessment process will help determine if the threat is valid and legitimate and takes into consideration the disability while also ensuring special education policies and procedures are followed. For more information about BTAM, see <http://www.nasponline.org/btam>.

Information from this section was taken from <http://www.nasponline.org/btam> and the references below. For more detailed information please view this [link here](#) from Melissa A. Reeves, PhD, NCSP, LCMHC and Courtenay McCarthy, EdS, CTM.

Cornell, D. G., Maeng, J., Huang, F., Shukla, K., & Konold, T. (2018). Racial/ethnic parity in disciplinary consequences using student threat assessment. *School Psychology Review*, 47(2), 183–195. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0030.V47-2>

Crepeau-Hobson, F., & Leech, N. (2021). Disciplinary and non-disciplinary outcomes of school-based threat assessment in

Colorado schools. *School Psychology Review*, 1–10. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1842716>

NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee. (2020). Behavior threat assessment and management: Best practice considerations for K–12 schools. *National Association of School Psychologists*.

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/threat-assessment-at-school/behavior-threat-assessment-and-management-\(btam\)-best-practice-considerations-for-k%E2%80%9312-schools](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/threat-assessment-at-school/behavior-threat-assessment-and-management-(btam)-best-practice-considerations-for-k%E2%80%9312-schools)

Reeves, M. (2021). Behavioral threat assessment and management: K-12 schools. *National Center for Youth Issues*.

<https://ncyi.org/shop/landingpages/15-minute-focus-series/>

1. **Concerning Behavior:** An observable behavior that elicits concern in others regarding the safety of an individual or those around them. Important to determining whether behavior is concerning is whether it deviates from the person's baseline behavior. Some concerning behavior for one person may be "normal" behavior for another person. Concerning behavior is a spectrum that can include lower-level concerns, such as unusual interests in violent topics, conflicts or grievances between classmates, increased anger, increased substance use, or other noteworthy changes in behavior (e.g., depression or withdrawal from social activities), and prohibited behaviors that are objectively concerning and should trigger an immediate response, such as threats, weapons violations, and other aggressive or violent behaviors.
2. **Concerning Communications:** Unusual, bizarre, threatening, or violent communications made by an individual or group. Concerning communications may include explicit threats or allude to violent intentions; violence as a means to solve a problem; justification of violent acts; unusual interest in weapons; personal grievances; or other inappropriate interests. Concerning communications may be expressed verbally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through other means. Concerning communications may be considered threatening, even if they do not involve a direct and explicit threat of violence. Concerning communications may also allude to hopelessness or suicide.
3. **Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM):** Behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) is a multidisciplinary, fact-based, systematic process designed to identify, assess, and manage potentially dangerous or violent situations. The purpose of the BTAM team is to identify, evaluate, and address potential threats to help schools distinguish between incidents where a student made a threat that is not actually legitimate (with no intent to harm) and other incidents in which the student does pose an actual threat of targeted violence. In all cases, the goal is to pair the student with proper school and community-based intervention and supports. The systematic and proper implementation of BTAM helps avoid impulsive and potentially harmful decisions that can lead to over management (i.e., unnecessary suspension and expulsion) and requires teams to take into account the context and disability rather than using a zero-tolerance approach.
 - a. Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management is not a means to profile the next school shooter. There is no profile of a school shooter or student attacker. The threat management process focuses on behavior-based prevention, not a prediction. Because a student has been the subject of threat management, does not automatically mean the student is a potential shooter or attacker; it simply means that a threat or concerning behavior (whether minor or serious) was reported and evaluated through the threat management process.

- b. Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management is not an emergency or crisis response. If there is an indication that violence is imminent, such as when a person is at school with a gun or other weapon, school staff must take immediate action by notifying law enforcement and following the school's emergency response plans.
 - c. Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management is not a disciplinary process. School policy and procedures regarding discipline and referrals to law enforcement should be followed regardless of the threat assessment's outcome. Someone other than the threat management team will decide whether school discipline is appropriate. Information learned during the threat management process may be used in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, when appropriate.
 - d. The initial threat evaluation process may consider whether behavior constitutes a threat of self-harm because it is established that threats of self-harm may be a precursor to harm toward others. However, threat management is not to be used for suicide or self-harm assessment, services, or a mental health related safety plan. In cases where a threat to harm others may be accompanied by a threat to harm oneself, threat management should only address the harm toward others and the threat management team should coordinate with those providing self-harm intervention services.
- 4. **Education Records:** Any records or documents, including information derived from those records or documents, that are directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution, or by a party acting for the agency or institution. In most cases, this includes student health and mental health records maintained by an educational agency or institution. Law enforcement unit records are not considered education records.
 - 5. **Imminent Threat:** An imminent threat exists when a situation, including the person's prohibited objective behavior, poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward self or others that requires containment and immediate action to protect an identified or identifiable target.
 - 6. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA):** The IDEA is a federal law that makes an appropriate, free public education available to eligible children with disabilities and ensures that special education and related services are provided to those children.
 - 7. **Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** A written plan for each child eligible under the IDEA that governs how the district will educate that student. The parents, student (if appropriate) and a team of educators and professionals (known as the IEP team) develop the IEP, which details education and related services the student will receive and outlines required modifications, accommodations and behavioral interventions.

8. **Level of Concern:** The classification of an individual is based on their presenting risk and needs and balanced against protective factors. Levels of concern (also called threat levels) are classified as Low, Moderate, High, or Imminent. *Please see the BTAM procedures section for more detail.*
- Low Level of Concern
 - Moderate Level of Concern
 - High Level of Concern
 - Imminent Level of Concern
9. **Manifestation Determination:** When a student receiving special education services is being considered for a change in placement due to a behavioral issue, including a threat to others, the IEP team must determine whether the IEP was being implemented correctly at the time of the behavior, and whether the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. A manifestation means that the behavior had a direct and substantial relation to the disability.
10. **Student of Concern:** Any student reported to the Administrator, Team Lead, Team Back Up, SBTMT or DTMT who exhibits any behavior or communication that may constitute a threat or concern regarding school safety.
11. **Student Support, Intervention, and Management Plan (SSIMP):** The Student Support Management Intervention and Management Plan (SSIMP) uses direct and indirect interventions to help create an environment less likely to produce violence. The SSIMP is implemented by the threat management team, imposing requirements on the student. Under the SSIMP, a student of concern may be required to refrain from certain conduct or may be required to engage in certain actions that are designed to prevent harm to others. The SSIMP is established for a specified period based on the level of concern and is reviewed each month by the School-Based Threat Management Team.
12. **Threat:** A threat is communication or behavior indicating that an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. A threat includes communication or behavior characteristic of a person who is on the pathway to violence. The threat may be expressed or communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means. Communication or behavior is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated to the target of the threat, or to a third party, and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat. The threat may involve one or more of the following:
- Student directly or indirectly threatens to harm a person
 - Artistic, written, or symbolic expression with disturbing and/or violent content is presented
 - Belief that someone possesses a weapon on campus
 - The student is demonstrating any imminent warning signs or a cluster of early warning signs

- e. Student make a threat to harm or kill self (along with indicators of harm to others)
- f. Student has an escalating pattern of behavior that has been resistant to intervention at school

A threat is not a communication or behavior that is an obvious joke or unequivocally known by the observer to be innocuous. The school personnel's personal knowledge of the person making the statement or exhibiting the behavior, as well as the person's age and history of exhibiting such behaviors or making such statements, are factors that should be considered in determining whether the communication or behavior constitutes an actual threat.

13. **Threat Assessment Protocols:** Threat assessment protocols are used to assess concerning behavior and threats. Threat assessment protocols are a series of documents, also referred to as a "threat assessment instrument," composed of an intake and disposition interview forms; student of concern interview questions; parent/guardian interview questions; witness/target of violence interview questions; teacher interview questions; and interviews about mental health used to help evaluate whether behaviors or communications indicate that a student poses a risk of harm and what services are appropriate to mitigate that risk. The threat assessment process results in comprehensive information gathering from multidisciplinary sources, including law enforcement, mental health, and school records.
14. **Unfounded Determination:** An unfounded determination means that there is not a sufficient factual basis to support the allegation, or it can be determined that the threats were never made; what was said was clearly not a threat; or the incident/behavior of concern did not happen or rise to the level of posing a threat or concern of harm to the school community. The reporting person may simply have been mistaken about the behavior or based upon known facts about the situation, behavior, and context, no risk of violence exists. This unfounded summary disposition should only be used when it is clear and articulable that there is no basis for concern. The case should be advanced to the next step for further evaluation if there is any doubt.
15. **Acronym Listing:** The following acronyms are used in this document and may be helpful for users of this best practice guide.
 - a. BTAM: Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Team
 - b. SSIMP: Student Support Intervention & Management Plan
 - c. FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
 - d. IEP: Individual Education Plan
 - e. IDEIA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004)
 - f. PSU: Public School Unit

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Threat assessment teams must be mindful of the need to balance a student's rights afforded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) with school safety. Therefore, behavioral threat assessment and special education teams must work together to ensure their disability needs are balanced with school safety. Schools must increase efforts to intervene and provide interventions to students who have deficits in communication, self-regulation, social skills, and coping skills, as these supports have the potential to prevent violence and build positive skills. The "M" (management) in BTAM requires a strong focus on interventions and supports. If a student is receiving special education services, an expert in special education (e.g., professional who is on the special education team) must be on the threat assessment team. It is highly recommended that a person be a school psychologist, as they are well-trained and knowledgeable professionals regarding special education disabilities, legal issues, child and adolescent development, and meeting the educational, developmental, academic, and social – emotional needs of students with various disabilities. Special education expertise on the threat assessment team helps provide context and understanding regarding the potential threatening behavior, and it is critical to ensuring special education processes and protocols and the threat assessment processes and protocols are separate yet complementary. A behavioral threat assessment is NOT an educational evaluation or manifestation determination review (MDR). A behavioral threat assessment is used to analyze whether the observable, concrete behaviors presented by a student poses a risk of harm to others. Because the BTAM team is not an IEP team and, because threat assessment is not a special education function, the threat assessment team makes recommendations for next steps for students in special education with the awareness that the IEP team may make different decisions. For example, the behavioral threat assessment team may recommend a functional behavioral assessment or that changes be considered in programming, services, or resources to better address the presenting concerns, or they may provide information to be considered in an MDR, but the threat assessment team does not make decisions for students in special education, nor does the BTAM process replace special education protocols and procedures.

BTAM teams must uphold the rights afforded to students by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. BTAM teams must operate with an understanding of the impact that IDEA regulations have on decisions made during the threat assessment process for students with disabilities and how indicators of violence and disability characteristics could be related to or distinct from one another. While most individuals with an identified disability will never be violent, it is erroneous to suggest that a student with a disability or a mental health diagnosis could never pose a threat, or risk of harm, to the health and safety of the community. Thus, what initiates a threat assessment is the behavior itself, not the diagnosis or identified disability. When evaluating a threat made by a student with a disability, it is important that the BTAM and IEP team work together, in collaboration with the family, to determine and implement any additional interventions and supports. Decisions made as part of the threat assessment can

inform the IEP process, but they do not override decisions made by the IEP team. Any changes to a student's placement or educational programming must be determined by the IEP team. If the school administrator determines disciplinary action is warranted, the school must follow appropriate procedures and conduct a manifestation determination review if necessary, which is a separate and distinct process. If it is determined that a student needs additional support outside of special education and related services, members of the BTAM team (e.g., school psychologists) can help connect the student and with other school and community-based supports. Please see the table below for the difference between behavioral Threat Assessment and Management and the special education process.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management	Special Education Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goal is ensuring health and safety of all involved (i.e., subject and potential targets) ● Consider the needs of all students involved ● Multidisciplinary team of professionals who have received specialized threat assessment training and, when practicable, have knowledge of the child’s disability and special needs ● Assesses if the student legitimately poses a threat ● Parent consent is not required, but parent participation in interviews and intervention planning is highly recommended and should be solicited ● Decisions can inform special education programming, but a threat assessment does not replace or override IEP processes and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goal is meeting individual needs related to suspected or existing disability ● Consider the needs of individual students only ● Mandated engagement of educational professionals who have the appropriate professional licensure and certification to serve students who qualify for special education services ● Makes the determination if a student has a disability and qualifies for special education services ● Parent consent/participation is required ● Decisions are legally binding as part of the IEP

(Reeves, 2021)

As mentioned earlier, BTAM teams must uphold the rights afforded to students by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Thus, threat assessment and IEP teams must work together to ensure student’s rights and specific needs are balanced with school safety. The BTAM process does not remove any student’s legal rights or protections afforded through IDEA or Section 504. Threat assessment teams must operate with an understanding of the impact that IDEA regulations have on decisions made during the threat assessment process for students with disabilities. These regulations include:

- Safeguards to ensure special education procedures are followed
- Processes to assess the function of a behavior and establish supports (functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan)
- Procedures for disciplinary removals (if less than 10 days or more than 10 days) and interim alternative educational placement (45-day rule)
- Manifestation determination reviews (MDRs)
- Procedures for change in placement or programming
- Parent notification, consent, appeals/due process
- Access to records (FERPA)

It is important to train BTAM teams to better understand how indicators of violence and disability characteristics could be related to or distinct from one another. While there can be an overlap between the observable, concrete behavior related to a specific disability and the observable, concrete behavior that leads to violence, it is incorrect to imply that those behaviors are one and the same. While most individuals with an identified disability or diagnosis will never be violent, it is erroneous to suggest that a student with a disability or a mental health diagnosis could never pose a threat, or risk of harm, to the health and safety of the community. Therefore, what initiates a threat assessment is the behavior itself, not the label or disability.

After a BTAM team has analyzed the risk of harm, the team determines if the situation poses a legitimate threat and makes recommendations for next steps. The IEP team, not the BTAM team, makes the final determination about any changes to a student's placement or educational programming based on the context of the student's disability and IEP needs. However, those determinations may be better informed with input from the threat assessment process. Sometimes supports are provided outside the special education process (e.g., additional community supports for the family), and the BTAM team can help the parents engage those services. For example, if a student is receiving special education services, the threat assessment team will make the determination if the behaviors actually pose a threat. If the situation and behaviors pose a threat, that information would be shared with the IEP team.

Further, if the school team determines that suspension or expulsion is necessary, an MDR may need to be conducted. (Note: In regard to suspension, an MDR is only required if the suspension is more than 10 consecutive days or if the length of the current suspension results in an accumulation of more than 10 days of suspension for that school year). The MDR is to be conducted separately, and the results of that meeting may then be shared back with the threat assessment team to determine the best way to manage risk and provide interventions. The threat assessment team and IEP team work together, along with the parents or primary caregiver, to determine how to best support that child. It is also important to note that not all behaviors that initiate and require a manifestation meeting need to be referred to the BTAM process (e.g., if a student with autism repeatedly states that he will kill someone due to echolalia with no intent to harm others). To reiterate, the BTAM process is reserved for potential targeted acts of violence. If the student receiving special education services does not pose a threat (e.g., "You'd better give me the pencil back or I will cut you with a knife," with no evidence of intent to

actually harm), the results of the threat assessment are still shared with the IEP team in case services need to be modified (e.g., increased time receiving social skills group instruction).

The IEP team follows special education procedures to appropriately reflect the increase in those services. If a student receiving special education services does not pose a threat but other supports could be helpful outside of special education (e.g., mentoring, family support in community, engaging student in a school club or organization), the threat assessment team would work with the caregivers to access supports, if the caregivers agree. Thus, the BTAM and special education processes must complement each other and protect students from rash decisions that could negatively affect a student receiving special education services. Parents and families are partners in both processes when it comes to implementing interventions and services, and collaboration is critical throughout.

Best Practices for Interviewing Students with Disabilities

The threat management process may be intimidating for students, and there are additional considerations that should be part of the process when working with a student with a disability to make them feel comfortable and obtain accurate information. These best practices can be used in all student interactions, but may be particularly effective with students with special needs:

- Utilize adults who are familiar with the student's unique needs and levels of functioning. If possible, use adults with whom the student is already comfortable/familiar
- Stay calm, supportive, and ask the student what would make them feel most comfortable
- Consider the student's sensory needs. It may be easier for the student to function in a quiet, small environment with soft lighting and without distractions
- Ensure the environment is quiet, comfortable, and conducive to productive dialogue. Be patient and allow the person to respond without interrupting or finishing their sentence for them
- Speak directly to the student and not to an individual who may be providing assistance, such as a paraprofessional, tutor, or sign-language interpreter. Respect the student's preferred manner of communication and allow for sufficient processing time
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the student does not understand
- Gauge the pace, complexity, and vocabulary of your speech according to theirs
- Phrase questions in a neutral way to elicit accurate information. Students with disabilities may be anxious to please and may tell you what they think you want to hear. To verify responses, try repeating each question in a different way
- Provide the plan for the interview prior to beginning, if appropriate under the circumstances, to include concrete steps for the process, and offer the opportunity to ask clarifying questions
- Consider that the student may engage in some behaviors that may be interpreted as non-compliant, but may be a product of the student's disability. Work with the IEP team or others who know the student well to utilize strategies that typically work to gain their cooperation

NC CFSS Future Steps and Actions for Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams and Processes

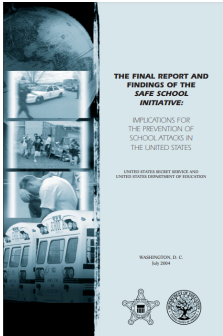
The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools will provide Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) training at the RISE Back to School Safety Summit. The CFSS requests that each district send at least one person as the District Coordinator for BTAM to this training. (If the district is able to send a team, this is ideal. However, at least one person from each district is requested to attend.) If for some reason the public school units are not able to attend RISE, the CFSS will host additional regional trainings at a later date.

The CFSS will be conducting a Behavioral Health Threat Assessment and Management Work Group that will be selected by the CFSS to help provide guidance on best practice forms that will later be released to public school units for use if public school units choose to use these forms. These will be provided at RISE as an accompaniment to this best guidance document.

This guidance document was developed in an effort to provide school teams with best practice guidance. In addition, the following tools will be developed by the CFSS Behavioral Threat Assessment Workgroup and will be released at RISE to help public school units with the implementation of House Bill 605:

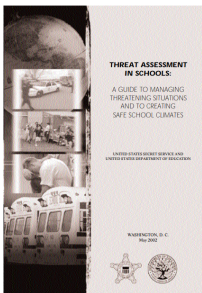
- Best Practice BTAM Protocol (sample templates)
- Sample Authorization of Release of Information
- Threat Risk Assessment – Parent/Guardian Notice
- Re-Entry Guidelines and Re-Entry Forms
- Notice from SISP Team for School Staff
- Best Practice Behavioral Threat Assessment Interview Forms for Student of Concern, Witness/Victim, Parent, Teacher and Staff, and Others
- Best Practice Screener/Considerations Forms
- Best Practice Student Support, Intervention, and Monitoring Management Plan
- Additional Forms as needed or determined by Behavioral Health Threat Assessment Workgroup
- Updated Considerations Guidance for Behavioral Threat Assessment (Form provided in this Best Practice Guidance and will be updated as needed ([See Current Considerations Guide](#)))

The following resources are tools that are very helpful for Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management and also overall school safety considerations and practices. Each of the documents below are linked in the picture and in the link beside the picture. These documents were used as part of references and information for this best practice guidance document.



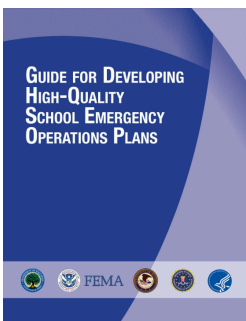
The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States (2002)

Available at: https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi_final_report.pdf



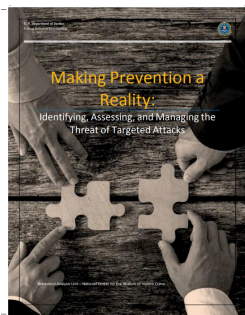
Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates (2002)

Available at:
https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi_guide.pdf



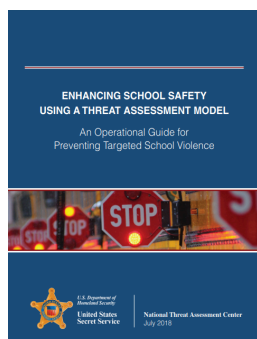
Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Plans (2013)

Available at: https://rems.ed.gov/docs/School_Guide_508C.pdf



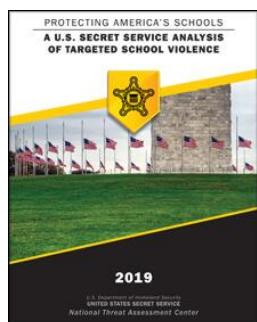
Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks (2017)

Available at: <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf/view>



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

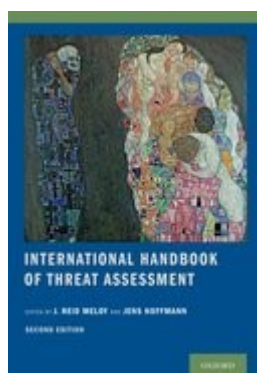
Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PEF_gI73gg0fb05s98uZWXSedynyK7jS/view



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

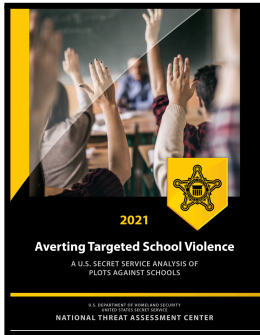
Available at:

<https://locker.txssc.txstate.edu/f40474bcbab5f025bb1570f1bfbf9f06/Protecting-Americas-Schools.pdf>



International Handbook of Threat Assessment, 2nd Edition (2021)

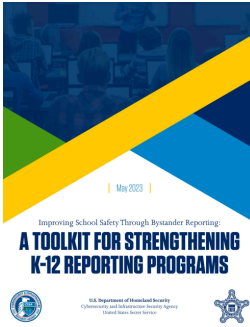
Available (for purchase) at: <https://academic.oup.com/book/30016>



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

Available at:

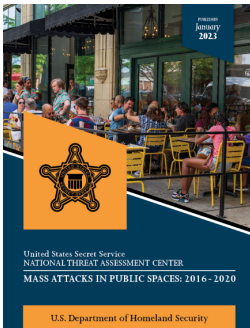
<https://locker.txssc.txstate.edu/f40474bcbab5f025bb1570f1bfbf9f06/USSS-Averting-Targeted-School-Violence.2021.03.pdf>



A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs (May 2023)

Available at:

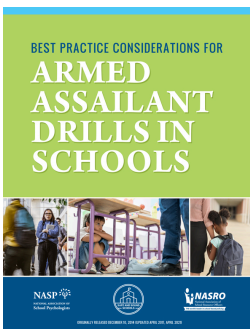
https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-05/cisa-ussc-k-12-bystander-reporting-toolkit-508_final_0.pdf



Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020 (2023)

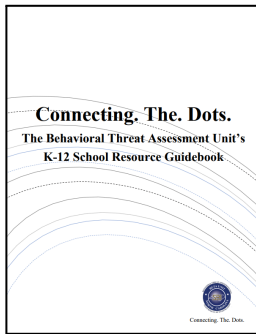
Available at:

<https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-01/ussc-ntac-maps-2016-2020.pdf>



Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/best-practice-considerations-for-armed-assailant-drills-in-schools>

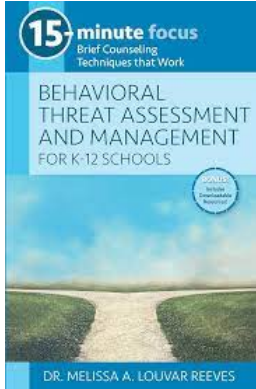


Connecting. The. Dots. The Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit's K-12 School Resource Guidebook.

NC State Bureau of Investigation

Available at:

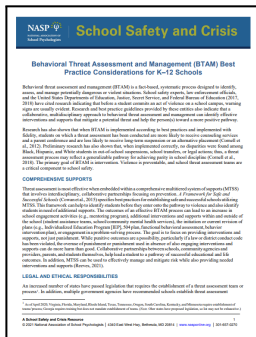
<https://www.ncsbi.gov/BeTA/School-Resources>



Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management for K-12 Schools Dr. Melissa Louvar Reeves

Available for purchase at:

<https://ncyi.org/product/15minbehavioralthreat/>



Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Best Practice Considerations for K-12 Schools

Available at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n8Gu6MbKQYd3NRnzcF3EkV5heveZYN6r/view?usp=sharing>

Additional Resources

Colorado School Safety and Resource Center

- <https://colorado.gov/CSSRC>

National Association of School Psychologist – Safety and Crisis Resources

- www.nasponline.org/btam
- www.nasponline.org/btam-sped
- <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis>
- <http://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

- [NC Center for Safer Schools](#)
- [NC School Mental Health Initiative](#)
- [School Mental Health Initiative Live Binder](#)
- [NC School Mental Health Plan](#)
- [NC Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\)](#)
- [Project AWARE/ACTIVATE Summary Reports](#)
- [NC Healthy Schools](#)

North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation BeTA Unit

- [NC SBI BETA UNIT](#)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- <https://www.pbis.org/>

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center

- <https://rems.ed.gov/>

NC CFSS BTAM Questions and Answer

Question	Answer
What additional documents will the NC CFSS provide to public school units?	<p>The following additional documents will be provided at the RISE Back to School Safety Summit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practice BTAM Protocol • Sample Authorization of Release of Information • Threat Risk Assessment – Parent/Guardian Notice • Re-Entry Guidelines and Re-Entry Forms • Notice from SISP Team for School Staff • Best Practice Behavioral Threat Assessment Interview Forms for Student of Concern, Witness/Victim, Parent, Teacher and Staff, and Others • Best Practice Screener/Considerations Forms • Best Practice Student Support, Intervention, and Monitoring Management Plan • Additional Forms as needed or determined by Behavioral Health Threat Assessment Workgroup • Updated Considerations Guidance for Behavioral Threat Assessment (Form provided in this Best Practice Guidance and will be updated as needed (See Current Considerations Guide))
When will districts receive additional behavioral threat assessment and management training from the NC CFSS?	<p>The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools has provided Behavioral Threat Assessment Training from Ontic since February 2022 (formerly SIGMA). This training was offered at no cost to all public school units.</p> <p>The CFSS will provide Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) training at the RISE Back to School Safety Summit. The CFSS requests that each district send at least one person as the District Coordinator for BTAM to this training. (If the district is able to send a team, this is ideal. However, at least one person from each district is requested to attend.) If for some reason a public school unit is not able to attend RISE, the CFSS will host additional regional trainings at a later date.</p>

<p>Resources and Tools for BTAM Planning and Management</p>	<p>When to conduct a Behavioral Threat Assessment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTAM Considerations Guide <p>BTAM Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations Summary Form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see a sample BTAM Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations Summary Form for PSU's. This is an example and PSU's may amend this document according to the needs of the student. <p>BTAM Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan (SSIMP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see an example of a Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan that is available. PSU's are welcome to modify this document to their needs or use their own document to reflect progress monitoring. <p>NC CFSS Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Fidelity & Monitoring Tool (NC BTAM-FMT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a research-based and evidenced-based tool that was shown to significantly improve behavioral threat assessment processes (Ellis, 2018). Please see the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Evaluation Rubric: Essential Components for School Behavioral Threat Assessment Protocols and Support Plans. Knowing how to implement BTAM effectively, and with fidelity, is critical to saving lives, enhancing school safety, and ensuring legal and ethical guidelines are followed.
<p>How can I contact the NC Center for Safer Schools?</p>	<p>NC Center for Safer Schools webpage: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/center-safer-schools</p> <p>Phone: 984-236-2240 Email: cfss@dpi.nc.gov</p>

Please see the “Resources and References Section” of this document with additional important documents used for this Best Practice Document.*

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The following tools listed below are provided to PSU's to assist with Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Planning. PSU's are able to utilize these tools just as they are presented below or they are able to modify to their needs. The only document that is not alterable at this time is the NC CFSS Behavioral Threat Assessment Management Fidelity & Monitoring Tool (NC BTAM-FMT).

When to conduct a Behavioral Threat Assessment?

- [BTAM Considerations Guide](#)

BTAM Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations Summary Form:

- [Please see a sample BTAM Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations Summary Form for PSU's.](#) This is an example and PSU's may amend this document according to the needs of the student.

BTAM Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan (SSIMP):

- [Please see an example of a Student Support Management Intervention & Monitoring Plan that is available.](#) PSU's are welcome to modify this document to their needs or use their own document to reflect progress monitoring.

NC CFSS Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Fidelity & Monitoring Tool (NC BTAM-FMT):

- This is a research-based and evidenced-based tool that was shown to significantly improve behavioral threat assessment processes (Ellis, 2018). Please see the [Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management \(BTAM\) Evaluation Rubric: Essential Components for School Behavioral Threat Assessment Protocols and Support Plans](#). Knowing how to implement BTAM effectively, and with fidelity, is critical to saving lives, enhancing school safety, and ensuring legal and ethical guidelines are followed.

School Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Considerations Checklist: When is a School Behavioral Threat Assessment needed?

1. Does this matter require immediate police response? Is there imminent danger to a person or place?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

❖ If **YES**, follow emergency procedures (i.e. Alert Law Enforcement, Notify Target, Notify District Contacts) and, when safe to do so, run a Behavioral Threat Assessment. If **NO**, answer additional Consideration Question #2.

2. Based on the initial report, is there a need to run a threat assessment? Answer **EACH** of the following questions, based upon the initial report:

2a. Has the person threatened violence or made any communications about intent or plans of violence?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2b. Have other behaviors raised concern about violence to others/self & others, such as sexual assault, dating violence, stalking/cyberstalking, domestic violence assault. (*If any of these behaviors are present, please notify the Title IV Coordinator.)

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2c. Is there a fearful victim or third party (i.e., someone who is taking a protective action) or is someone concerned about the behavior?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2d. Has any of the following occurred ?

- ☐ Student directly or indirectly threatens to harm person, group, and/or entire school
☐ Artistic, written, or symbolic expression with disturbing and/or violent content is presented
☐ Belief that someone possesses a weapon on campus
☐ The student is demonstrating any imminent warning signs or a cluster of early warning signs
☐ Student makes a threat to harm or kill self (with indicator to harm others)
☐ Student has escalating pattern of behavior that has been resistivity to intervention at school

2e. Are there unanswered questions or another reason to run a behavioral threat assessment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

FOLLOW these Additional Instructions and Considerations:

If **NO** to ALL parts of Question #2, document your responses and close the case. Explain why the case is being closed. Please provide details on page 3 of the threat assessment considerations worksheet.

If **YES** to ANY part of Question #2 (Question #2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, or 2e), answer the following questions below.

3) Is the student known to have a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)/Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), 504 Plan, Individualized Program (IEP), and/or health plan?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If **NO** or unknown, run a Behavioral Threat Assessment.

If **YES**, immediately notify and involve the Exceptional Children Case Manager and answer Question 3a.

3a. Is the threatening behavior a known baseline behavior? (should be documented in the plans noted above)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If **NO**, run a Behavioral Threat Assessment.

If **YES**, answer Question 3b.

3b. Can the threatening behavior be managed under the existing FBA/BIP/IEP/504 Plan? (Is data present to reflect this?)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If **NO**, run a Behavioral Threat Assessment.

If **YES**, refer to SPED/504 personnel, then document and close the matter. Explain in your documentation as to WHY you are closing the case. Please provide details on page 3 of the threat assessment considerations worksheet.

FINAL DETERMINATION: Is there a need to conduct a Behavioral Threat Assessment? Explain why if the answer is no. If yes, complete the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Process.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

School Behavioral Threat Assessment Considerations Explanation Worksheet

Please complete this considerations explanation sheet when it is determined that a behavioral threat assessment is **NOT** needed. Please submit this form to the District BTAM Coordinator. At least one administrator and at least one Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) should be completing this form together prior to submission. Please submit the considerations checklist and this form together within 24 hours of the initial report and complete centralized reporting log and indicate that a behavioral threat assessment considerations checklist and worksheet were completed.

Student Demographic Information							
Date of incident/report of threat:		Time of Incident:		Day of the Week of Report:		Time of Threat Assessment:	
Student Name:							
School:							
DOB:		Age:		Grade:	Circle if applicable:	504 Plan	EC/IEP
Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Do Not Wish to Report/Other				
Race:	<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Racial	

What was the incident? Explain **WHAT** happened in detail and **WHO** was involved in the incident:

Please explain **WHY** a full Behavioral Threat Assessment was not needed (provide details). Explain any necessary actions that did take place to address the situation.

Please list any interventions or follow up actions (if needed) that the group decided they would need for this student. Also, document parent notification as well.

Please list individuals who completed this form here: *(At a minimum, an administrator and a specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) should complete this form.)* Please list all names below:

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

CONFIDENTIAL

Student:	School:
Date of Birth:	Grade:
Parent(s)/Guardians:	Chronological Age:
Address:	Date (s) of Interviews:
BTAM Team Members:	

Sources of Information
<p><i>(List all sources of information- these are examples listed below):</i></p> <p>Review of Cumulative Folder: Review of Disciplinary History Interviews with Principal/Assistant Principal Interview with Parent Interview with Student</p>

Reason for Behavioral Threat Assessment (Include Brief Description of the Report):

Summary of Findings
<p><i>Include BTAM information from multiples sources of data (record review, interviews, observations, etc.) Provide details of plan or areas of concern and overall concern Include Observations and any specific information to help explain the totality of the circumstances (Observations, affect, mood, specific plan during interview and in response to incident)</i></p>

Conclusions

Note: The results of this Threat Assessment are not intended to predict specific episodes of violence. There is no foolproof method of assessing an individual's potential to harm others. The goal of Threat Assessment is to propose recommendations for resolving the issue(s) that led to the threatening behavior. Through a "risk management" approach, this inquiry has identified risk factors (i.e., characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, or community level associated with an increased likelihood of negative outcomes) and protective factors (i.e., characteristics associated with an increased likelihood of positive outcomes or that may reduce – or "buffer" – the negative impact of a risk factor).

The following **risk factors** were identified through this inquiry:

The following **protective factors** were identified through this inquiry:

Recommendations *(Include safety plan and resources) (Discuss when SSIMP will be developed if it has not already been developed)*

BTAM Student Support Intervention and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP)

Student Name:	School:	Grade:
Date of Birth:	Age:	
Does the student have an: <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504	Disability:	Today's Date:

****Check the boxes/interventions that are recommended for this student based on their needs. Provide details and information about implementation in addition to checking boxes.***

Monitoring Measures and Steps for Immediate Safety:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student placed on MTSS (social emotional supports) agenda for continued follow up:	How Often:	
By Whom:	When:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check In: With Whom	How Often:	When:
Back Up Adult:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Check Out: With Whom:	How Often:	When:
Back Up Adult:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing collaboration between school and parent/guardian:	How Often:	
By Whom:	When:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian will provide supervision. Specify:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing collaboration with agency: Name of Agency:		
Agency Professional:	School Professional to conduct collaboration:	
How often:	By: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Items to be Searched: Items:	By Whom:	How Often:
When:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Contract		
<input type="checkbox"/> Whereabouts on campus monitored,by whom:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Daily Schedule Modified: Specify:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Restrictions: Specify:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will be detained or placed at/by:		
<input type="checkbox"/> No contact agreement: Specify:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Permission to exchange information obtained:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Professional Agency:		Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Professional Agency:		Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Professional Agency:		Date: _____
Who will obtain this information at the school: _____		Date: _____

BTAM Student Support Intervention and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP)

Relationship Measures
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will seek support from: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral Health Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist <input type="checkbox"/> School Counselor <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator </div> <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will participate in school activities: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will participate in School Activities. Specify :
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will participate in community-based programs: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> Name of Program: Agency Involved: </div>
<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentoring Program:
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Mentor and/or Check & Connect: Name of Mentor:
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Skill Development Measures
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will begin: <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Anger Management <input type="checkbox"/> Social Skills Group <input type="checkbox"/> Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling provided by community provider: <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended <input type="checkbox"/> Being Implemented - Professional: <input type="checkbox"/> Release of Information Obtained: </div> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 5px;">Staff to be in charge of this collaboration:</div>
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling provided by school based staff : <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended <input type="checkbox"/> Being Implemented: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral Health Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> School Psychologist <input type="checkbox"/> School Counselor <input type="checkbox"/> School Social Worker </div>
<input type="checkbox"/> Student referred for a special education assessment by (date):
<input type="checkbox"/> Student will be considered for a change of placement (specify):
<input type="checkbox"/> Functional Behavioral Assessment will be conducted:
<input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral Intervention Plan to be developed. By who (team):
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Discipline Measures (these are issued by the administrator - not the BTAM Team)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Warning	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Apology
<input type="checkbox"/> Restorative Practice (Specify):	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Behavior Contract	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Meeting

<input type="checkbox"/> Detention: # of days _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Ticketed by SRO/ Law Enforcement (Specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Suspension: # of days _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Charges Filed by SRO/Law Enforcement (Specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation for Long Term: (Date) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement Diversion Program (Specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Additional Interventions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Revise IEP/504 Plan Who is in charge of setting this up: _____ Date of Meeting Scheduled: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> McKinney-Vento/Foster Care Referral: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> BHDIRT Mental Health Team Referral	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Service Referral: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Change in Transportation. Specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Additional Notes:

Documentation (Required to complete all actions in this section.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BTAM Intervention and Supervision/Safety Plan Developed on: _____ ● Plan Distributed to (list personnel on a need-to-know basis only): _____ ● *Primary School Contact/Case Manager: _____ ● *Secondary School Contact/Back Up: _____ <p><i>*These shall be the qualified school professionals, who will meet regularly with the student and monitor the BETA Intervention and Supervision Plan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If schools are changed, who will be the communicator of this information: _____ ● Plan will be reviewed on: _____ ● Reentry Date: _____ ● Actions needed for reentry: _____

Signatures:

 Administrator

 School Mental Health Professional

 Other

 Date

 School Mental Health Professional

 Other

BTAM Student Support Intervention and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP)

FOLLOW-UP Documentation

Student Name:	School:	Grade:
Date of Birth:	Age:	Identified Gender:
Does the student have an: <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504	Disability:	Today's Date:

Type of Follow Up Meeting:
<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Entry Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-Up Meeting to Assess Progress
Attendees (name and position):

Discussion Notes:

Next Steps:
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement/Continue to implement BTAM Intervention & Monitoring Plan and Monitor in BHDIRT (mental health team) <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the Intervention and Monitoring Plan. Specify: <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue BETA Intervention and Monitoring Plan as satisfactory progress has been made. Student will continue to be supported through other means. Specify: <input type="checkbox"/> Re-Entry/Follow Meeting not needed any longer

Date of Follow-Up to Review Progress (if applicable):

Signatures:

Administrator

Date

School Mental Health Professional

School Mental Health Professional

Other

BTAM Student Support Intervention and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP)

SAFETY PLAN

Student Name:	School:	Grade:
Date of Birth:	Age:	Identified Gender:
Does the student have an: <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> 504	Disability:	Today's Date:

Staff Roles/Responsibilities:

- All/Necessary school staff will be apprised of this safety plan and will make every effort to implement it successfully. Copies will be provided to teachers, school support staff, and SRO and any staff on a need-to know basis.
- Any school staff who witness or are otherwise made aware of any harassing, intimidating, bullying or retaliatory behavior toward the student will intervene immediately and will report such behavior to administration. Administration will notify the parents/guardians.
- Please have staff and student sign a document indicating that they have received, have awareness of safety plan, and have an understanding of their responsibilities.
- **Details of Safety Plan:**
 - The student will not have interactions with the accused/student engaged in bullying behavior—not face-to-face, not by phone, and not online—while this plan is in effect.
 - If a concern arises is imminent, student will go to any adult in the school building and report the concern.
 - The following have been designated as “safe spots”
_____ These persons will be a “Safe” spot the student to discuss any concerns and report any concerns.
 - Student will report any breach of this plan to his designated point of contact, teacher, or other staff person immediately.
 - The student will also report any such behavior to administration which occurs as a result of this plan off-campus and/or outside of the regular school day.
 - The classroom teacher will keep the student and the accused/student engaged in bullying behavior separated in the classroom and during all class activities. Any bullying, intimidation, harassment and/or retaliation will be addressed immediately and reported to the designated bullying investigator (administrator) as soon as possible.
 - The school will immediately report any incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation and/or retaliation to the student’s parents/legal guardians.
- This plan is in place from _____ through _____ at which time it will be reviewed, revised or continued, if necessary.

Signatures:

Administrator (required)

Date

School Mental Health Professional

School Mental Health Professional

Other

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Evaluation Rubric: Essential Components for School Behavioral Threat Assessment Protocols and Support Plans



Step 1: Assemble the Trained Multi-Disciplinary BTAM Team.	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
	1.1 The trained BTAM Team is a multidisciplinary team comprised of individuals in Session Law/ 2023-78/HB 605 (one of them being a school mental health professional, administrator, local law enforcement, or expertise in instruction) in the “2 status” description.	Multidisciplinary Team includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration who chairs the team, or designee who is trained and chairs the team. A school mental health professional, such as a school professional, such as a school psychologists, social worker, or school counselor, licensed MH provider, with training in threat assessment (may also facilitate the team). Local law enforcement contact. Expertise in instruction Other who may be able to contribute to the process (optional): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Nurse Teachers Coaches who know student well Custodial or cafeteria staff Representative from IEP team, if applicable School Based Mental Health Partner, Probation Officer, Social Service Worker, Therapists 	Suggested membership of a trained multi-disciplinary team includes 2 onsite individuals.	Records reviewed do not include parties as evidenced by signature page and data collected.	
	1.2 Description of initial report is detailed on protocol.	The threat is described and type of concern is checked. Details are provided about the report.	Description is vaguely listed or only checked. Details are not present.	Information is not listed, checked, or described.	

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Step 2: Gather A Variety of Information and Complete Inquiry Steps	Activity	Status			Total Points
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	(Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
	2.1 A thorough records review of relevant records was conducted.	Records reviewed include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline referrals • Academic records • IEP (if applicable) • Attendance • Medical/Medication History (if applicable) • (describes information/data from record review) 	Team indicates that records review was completed. However, no details or information is summarized and/or attached.	No records review appears to have been conducted.	
	2.2 The facts that drew attention to the student, the situation, and the targets is identified on the protocol.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the student come to the attention of school officials? • What were the triggering events and possible targets? • What behaviors and/or communications were reported, and by whom? • What was the situation? • Who if anyone, witnessed the reported behavior of concern? • What was the context for the reported behavior (i.e. what else was going on at the time of the reported behavior?) 	These questions were not detailed or information was not clear in response to this assessment area on the protocol.	Answers are not provided to all questions in this section.	
	2.3 Information about the student is complete on the protocol.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Information is complete. • Background Information is complete. • Current Life Information is complete. 	These questions were not detailed or information was not clear in response to this assessment area on the protocol.	Answers are not provided to all questions in this section.	
	2.4 Information about boundary probing and "attack-related" behaviors is identified on the protocol.	4. Information about boundary probing and "attack-related" behaviors <u>is</u> provided and detailed.	These questions were not detailed or information was not clear in response to this assessment area on the protocol.	Examination in this area was not assessed.	

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Step	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
Step 2: Gather A Variety of Information and Complete Inquiry Steps (continued)	2.5 Motives are identified and assessed.	Examination of motives was determined and assessed. Motives may include: (1) revenge for perceived injury or grievance, (2) yearning for attention, recognition, or notoriety, (3) a wish to solve a problem otherwise seen as unbearable, (4) A desire to die or be killed.	This area was not detailed or information was not clear in response to this assessment area on the protocol.	No examination of student motives is present.	
	2.6 Target Selection is identified and assessed.	Information about targets is assessed. Information about students' targets may provide clues to student's motives, planning, and attack-related behaviors.	This area was not detailed or information was not clear in response to this assessment area on the protocol.	No examination of student target selection is present.	

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Step 3: Use Multiple Sources of Data	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
	3.1 Interview with Student of Concern	Interview is conducted and information is attached to threat assessment.	Staff reports that interview is conducted. However, no information is attached as evidence.	No evidence that interview was conducted.	
	3.2 Interview with Others Who know the Student of Concern (or any other relevant individuals). (i.e. teacher, other students)	Interview is conducted and information is attached to threat assessment.	Staff reports that interview is conducted. However, no information is attached as evidence.	No evidence that interview was conducted.	
	3.3 Interview with Parent/Guardian	Interview is conducted and information is attached to threat assessment.	Staff reports that interview is conducted. However, no information is attached as evidence.	No evidence that interview was conducted.	
	3.4 Interview with Potential Target	Interview is conducted and information is attached to threat assessment.	Staff reports that interview is conducted. However, no information is attached as evidence.	No evidence that interview was conducted.	

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Step 4: Organize and Analyze Information with Secret Service Questions	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
	4.1 What are the student's motives?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.2 Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.3 Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in school attacks or attackers, weapons, incidents of mass violence?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.4 Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.5 Does the student have the capacity to carry out the act?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.6 Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, or despair? (Suicidal ideations are assessed and a trained professional completes suicide assessment if any are identified.)	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	

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Step 4: Organize and Analyze Information with Secret Service Questions (continued)	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
	4.7 Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4. 8 Does the student see violence as an acceptable or desirable way to solve problems?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4. 9 Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with their actions?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.10 Are other people concerned about student's potential for violence?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	
	4.11 What are the circumstances that might affect the likelihood of violence?	This question was answered on the threat assessment protocol with supporting evidence.	Brief information is listed or noted on the protocol that addressed this question. However, the information is not detailed.	No evidence that the question was addressed.	

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Step	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
Step 5: Determine Level of Concern, Safety Steps, and Notifications	5.1 Identification of Level of Concern is Determined with a Multidisciplinary Team in place using all evidence based in threat inquiry, multiple data sources, and threat assessment questions.	Threat Level is determined and the team <u>is in agreement</u> .	Threat Level is determined by team but team is not in agreement of threat level.	No Threat is determined.	
	5.2 The Justification Statement is written out for reasons threat assessment has been determined to be at the level chosen by the team.	Justification is written that details the reason "why" the level was determined with supporting details listed.	Justification statements says team agrees but no supporting details are included.	No justification statement is listed.	
	5.3 Duty to warn is completed through the threat assessment process and documented on the threat assessment protocol.	Target (s) are warned and this is clearly documented on the form. Form clearly states who is notified and by whom they received the notice. The form has at least two people from the team were present during the "duty to warn" action.	Only one person was present for duty to warn OR the form indicates this occurred but no details are listed about who provided the warning and who received the warning (parents, guardians, etc).	No evidence of duty to warn was provided.	
	5.4 Discipline information is listed (if issued or not issued) on threat assessment protocol. (Disciplinary action is not required depending on the incident– just notice indicated one way or the other.)	Infraction and consequence are identified. If no infraction or consequence is issued, this is clearly noted as well.	Consideration of disciplinary action was noted. However, no details of what the infraction, disciplinary action or inaction is detailed.	No evidence team documented this information.	

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Step	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
Step 5: Determine Level of Concern, Safety Steps, and Notifications	5.5 Parents/Guardians of person making threat are notified.	Documentation exists on protocol of who notified parent/guardian (by whom and when).	Noted on the form that parent/guardian was notified. However, no details are not listed (by whom, when).	No documentation of this notification exists.	
	5.6 School Resource Officer is notified.	Documentation exists on protocol of who notified SRO (by whom and when).	Noted on the form that SRO was notified. However, no details are not listed (by whom, when).	No documentation of this notification exists.	
	5.7 Safety plan was developed (with immediate steps). This is different from intervention plan. This plan details precautions and areas/tasks needed to keep victims and person making threat safe. (This may also include a need for Suicide Assessment as well for person making threat if suicidal ideation is expressed).	Safety steps were identified for person making threat and also for possible victims. <i>(Details of how to implement safety measures on the plan are listed.)</i>	Safety plan is referenced but no details are listed.	No documentation of this notification exists.	
	5.8 Central Office notification has occurred.	The threat assessment survey is completed by a threat assessment team member (for Imminent/High Level-CO is notified immediately.)	Listed that this has been completed (but no date and by whom was completed on the form).	No documentation of this notification exists.	

Step	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
Step 6: Develop a Student Support, Intervention, and Monitoring Plan (SSIMP)	6.1 Identify and communicate with person who will be <u>responsible for developing materials or referrals</u> that will be used to implement each part of the action plan.	Person is identified and a communication plan is in place <i>(The plan clearly documents who is responsible for developing materials/strategies that are a part of the plan and includes dates and a description of the frequency of the task, as well as other relevant info for carrying out the tasks to implement the plan.)</i> <i>(Ex. Bob will teach the replacement behaviors each Friday during intervention time using second step materials for 15 minutes for 4 weeks starting on 12/3/19.)</i>	Person is identified but no communication plan is developed	No person identified.	
	6.2 Intervention plan (SSIMP) is listed with appropriate interventions that match risk level determination.	Interventions are developed and monitoring is detailed. <i>(Details of how to implement the plan are listed.)</i>	Interventions are detailed. However, no monitoring is listed or safety plan.	No details identified.	
	6.3 Identify and communicate timelines for completing tasks necessary to <u>implement each part of the intervention plan (SSIMP)</u> . <i>(This is different from #1 because it is about implementing the plan).</i>	Task timelines are identified and communicated to appropriate stakeholders. <i>(2 points if the plan has timelines for implementation and follow up and describes how the information in the plan will be shared with staff responsible for implementing the plan.)</i>	Task timelines are identified but have not been communicated	No timelines have been identified.	

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Step	Activity	Status			Total Points (Circle Point Assigned and tally points in this column.) List anecdotal notes here as well.
		In Place= 2 points	Partially in Place= 1 point	Not <u>In</u> Place= 0 points	
Step 7: Continue to Monitor Student and the Effectiveness of SSIMP	7. 1 Identify measures to assess and monitor impact of intervention plan and staff who will implement.	Data measures for collecting progress monitoring data have been described.	Monitoring of behavior was noted. However, no detailed plan of progress monitoring procedures were identified.	No description of how progress monitoring data will be collected.	
	7. 2 Develop schedule for on-going evaluation of implementation impact (progress monitoring data)	A detailed and specific plan is developed that describes procedures for <u>collection of implementation progress monitoring data</u> (who, what, when and how) and must include <u>review dates</u> .	Implementation plan lacks details.	No implementation impact plan exists.	



(Ellis, S.L. (2024; 2018). A study to improve threat assessment processes and guidelines in response to risk of violence in schools. Doctoral Dissertation Submitted to the Stout School of Education. High Point University, High Point, North Carolina.) This form was developed in July 2018 and updated in March 2022 by Stephanie Lowe Ellis, Ed.D., NCSP, School Psychologist. Form is copyrighted. References: Colorado School Safety Resource Center (2017). Essentials of school threat assessment: Preventing targeted school violence. Retrieved from <http://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/safeschools/CSSRC%20Documents/CSSRC-Essentials-of-TA.pdf>; Fein, R.A., Vossekuil, B., Pollack, W. S., Borum, R., Modetleski, W., & Reddy, M. (2002). Threat assessment in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and creating safe school climates. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center.

