National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Program

Threat Evaluation and Reporting Overview (TERO)
The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Intelligence and Analysis reserves the right to update or edit TERO materials as necessary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-training activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and Icebreaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Violence Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathway to Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Violence Examples and Current Trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Threat Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Assessment Module Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the Warning Signs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Wrap-Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THREAT EVALUATION AND REPORTING OVERVIEW (TERO)

Welcome
INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING

DAY SCHEDULE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Targeted Violence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Behavioral Threat Assessment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Threat Assessment Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Your Community Play a Role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Should You Look For?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Threat Evaluation and Reporting Overview (TERO)
Participant Guide – Classroom Delivery

**Topics**
- Define targeted violence and threat assessment
- Identify the elements and purpose of the pathway to violence
- Behavioral Threat Assessment: Filling the Gap
- Outline the Behavioral Threat Assessment Model
- Understand key aspects of community involvement in threat assessment
- Recognize common warning signs and concerning behaviors

**What Are the Goals of This Course?**
- Empower homeland security partners to recognize threatening or concerning behavior.
- Raise awareness about targeted violence and outline the behavioral threat assessment model.
- Build state and local capacity to identify the warning signs and risk factors associated with potential acts of targeted violence.

**Topic 1 – What is Targeted Violence?**
Targeted Violence Defined

Any intentional act against a preidentified target based on that target’s perceived identity or affiliation that is intended to intimidate or coerce or generate publicity about the perpetrator’s grievance.
How Has Targeted Violence Evolved?

1. Review the photos.
2. What is the incident?
Current Trends in Mass Attacks

- 65%: Two-thirds of the attackers exhibited behaviors eliciting concern in others.
- 57%: For over half of the attackers, their behaviors resulted in others fearing for their safety.
- 41%: Two-fifths of the attackers exhibited changes in behavior that were observable to others.

Source: Mass Attacks in Public Spaces (MAAP) – U.S. National Threat Assessment Center
**Topic 2 – What is Behavioral Threat Assessment?**

**What is Behavioral Threat Assessment?**

- A systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience.
- Focuses on an individual’s patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, a subject of interest is moving toward an attack.
- A beginning process that guides a course of action to mitigate a threat of potential violence.
The History of Threat Assessment, cont.

- Safe School Initiative
- Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates
- Expansion of Threat Assessment practices into all levels of school system
The History of Threat Assessment, cont.

- These events were the catalyst for operational partners to take strides in mitigating the public security risk of targeted violence
- Making Prevention A Reality—Provides guidance to public safety officials about how to identify, investigate, assess, and manage the risk of future, planned violence
- The shift toward operational prevention advanced the field of threat assessment

Threat Assessment Model

1. Identify
2. Investigate
3. Assess
4. Manage

Subject of Interest

Why Do We Need Behavioral Threat Assessment?

- NSI is insufficient to address new threats
- Our understanding of the threat environment is changing
- Need to adapt to prevent targeted violence beyond terrorism
- Help keep communities safe
BTA: Filling the Gap

Takeaways

- Offenders don’t snap, they decide
- Targeted violence is not spontaneous, emotion-driven, impulsive crimes emanating from a person’s immediate anger or fear
- Threat assessment is a fact-based method of investigation
- A key to resolving a threat is early detection of concerning or threatening behaviors
- Behavioral threat assessment fills a gap as the threat environment changes
- Pathway to violence model helps explain why a subject may commit an act of targeted violence

End of Topic Questions
Topic 3 – How Does Your Community Play a Role?

The Importance of Community Involvement

- Targeted attacks: Pre-meditated, not impulsive
- Encourage bystanders to report

- Offenders do not just snap—they decide
- Bystander reporting: Critical component of prevention

- Opportunity for bystander observation and reporting
- Knowledge is key!

Challenging Our Own Beliefs and Attitudes about Reporting

- I don't want to get my friend in trouble.
- They're probably just joking.
- No one is going to do anything about it anyway.

- I don't want to be a snitch.
- I've been thinking about committing an act of violence.
The Importance of Community Involvement, cont.

**FACILITATING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

1. Law enforcement  
2. Prosecution  
3. Schools  
4. Social services  
5. Health care  
6. Lawmakers  
7. Courts  
8. Probation and parole  
9. Employers  
10. Family  
11. Bystanders

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**CHANGE YOUR VOCABULARY**

Attack  | Incident  
Attacker  | Assailant  
Senseless  | Offender  
Lone Wolf  | “Snap” Mass Murders  
Active Shooter  | Shooting Incident

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**Video: Maximizing Community Reporting**

ABC News: New Tool to Help Prevent School Shootings
## Topic 4 – What are the Warning Signs?

### WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Triggers and Stressors</th>
<th>Warning Behaviors</th>
<th>Warning Behaviors That Could Signal Imminence</th>
<th>Mitigators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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## RISK FACTORS

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<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td><strong>VIOLENCE HISTORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>History of Violence</strong></td>
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<td>• Between the time Cruz was three years old in January 2002 and the time he was 19 years old in January 2018, there were 69 documented incidents where Cruz threatened someone, engaged in violence, talked about guns or other weapons or engaged in other threatening or concerning behavior. Cruz was also known to have a history of killing small animals such as squirrels, toads, and lizards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VIOLENCE HISTORY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Childhood exposure to violence</strong></td>
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<td><strong>HEALTH / MENTAL HEALTH</strong></td>
<td><strong>Substance abuse or dependence</strong></td>
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<td>• Based on Commission interviews, it was determined that Cruz received extensive mental health treatment and school-based treatment from multiple providers. Over a nine-year period, Cruz regularly received hundreds of hours of therapy sessions from Henderson Behavioral Health. Moreover, Cruz also received additional educational services and behavioral care from multiple other providers for many years. To the knowledge of the Commission, Cruz did not receive any treatment for months immediately preceding the February 14, 2018, shooting.</td>
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<td><strong>PERSONALITY DISTURBANCES / DISORDER</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS</strong></td>
<td>• McVeigh’s paranoia focused on the U.S. government, believing it was colluding with the United Nations and the so-called “New World Order.” He not only believed these forces were going to confiscate people’s firearms, but he also mailed his sister a publication about the government building massive crematoria and 130 concentration camps to exterminate those who disagree with federal policies.</td>
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<td>• He also believed that the government created AIDS: “The U.S. government waged biological warfare against its citizens as a means of population control.”</td>
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<td>• In addition, he reportedly believed that infants “were being implanted with microchips as part of some kind of government experiment.” Both of McVeigh’s parents had psychological problems, with his father taking psychiatric medication and his mother having significant paranoid. There are reports that McVeigh had been treated for paranoid schizophrenia as a result of both a genetic predisposition and growing up with a mother who saw danger where it did not exist.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HISTORY OF SUICIDALITY</strong></td>
<td>• A small number of Cruz’s peers had information about Cruz being suicidal or depressed. Cruz had shown one of his classmates the scars on his arm from when he cut himself. The friend with whom Cruz was living attributed some of Cruz’s</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
depression to the death of his mother. However, another friend spoke of how Cruz thought it was funny to put his Make America Great Again hat next to the urn of his deceased mother due to her opposing political beliefs.

### WEAPONS

**Firearms and edged weapons**

- Apparently in fear for his life, McVeigh kept guns stashed all over. A friend was shocked that “in each corner of the house were loaded rifles.”

**Explosives**

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**Vehicles**

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### PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORAL HISTORY

**History of Stalking, Harassing, Threatening, or Menacing Behaviors**

- Over the years, Hodgkinson was known to act out aggressively with sudden bursts of intense anger while in the community and at home. For instance, sometime in 2002, he was banned from working with the county as a contractor due to his concerning behavior after he was found rummaging through an accountant’s desk. When caught, he erupted into an angry confrontation.

**History of non-compliance with limits and boundaries**

- In 2006, Hodgkinson was charged with battery after he and his wife tried to physically force their foster daughter to return home from a neighbor’s house. During a hearing in the case, he was removed from the courtroom due to several outbursts. This reflected a willingness to defy authority.

### SOCIAL / ENVIRONMENTAL

**Negative family dynamics and support system**

- McVeigh grew up in a home where his parents yelled at each other and his father yelled at him. McVeigh’s mother drank, had affairs, and eventually moved away. He was twice beaten and humiliated by bullies in attacks that reportedly left emotional scars on him.

**Isolation**

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Cruz changed schools often because of disciplinary issues. Cruz’s home life was very stressful. His parents passed away when he was young, and he had to move in with other families, with which he had altercations.
## TRIGGERS AND STRESSORS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **STRESSOR**<br>Health, Family, Employment, Finances | • Hodgkinson experienced various stressors in many aspects of his life that significantly impacted his thinking and behavior. According to his wife, his mood changed, and he was quick to anger after he began dealing with diabetes. Around the same time, one of the couple’s foster children committed suicide at age 17.  
• Focusing on the months just prior to the shooting, Hodgkinson was facing increased financial stress as he had reached retirement age and his business failed. Further, he and his wife were experiencing marital problems, and compounding his stress, one of their daughters moved back into the home with her two-year-old son.  
• Though it is not clear exactly how long prior to his attack, Hodgkinson began to make vague statements to family members indicating that he may not be around much longer. |

## TRIGGERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRESSOR</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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<td>Finances</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Threat Evaluation and Reporting Overview (TERO)
Participant Guide – Classroom Delivery

NOTES

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### WARNING BEHAVIORS

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<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| **FIXATION** | February 5, 2018: A note with this date/timestamp was within the Notes section of Cruz’s phone:  
  - “My love toward her grows, without her I’m nothing all this madness inside is about to Burst without her I have nothing I wish we could love, I wish we could live, but at the end to her it’s probably nothing, but that’s ok cause I love her, I love you my angel (name redacted) if I don’t die please see me it will bring happiness to me I want to love, I want to be in love with you, forever and ever with no end in sight even if I’m raped to death you will always be on my mind that’s how much my love is for you, I see you not as a person but a soul lover a love that will never be broken. I’m in love with you (name redacted) my love. you have been the sweetest, gentle being of my heart I love you, please be with me in the afterlife my dearest sweetheart. I will always dream about you even if I do stupid things your nothing but love in my life I can’t stand a day without you even after I been a worthless trash can. i wish for you to be my will with my everything I leave behind it belongs to you and my brother. The half of the cash goes to you and my brother as my hatred grows my love grows toward to one person my dear love” |

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**NOTE** For the next category, Cruz identified with White Supremacist Extremists = Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in unlawful acts of violence directed at the federal government, ethnic minorities, or Jewish people in support of their belief that Caucasians are intellectually and morally superior to other races and their perception that the government is controlled by Jewish people

| IDENTIFICATION | There were several of Cruz’s peers who knew Cruz to express hatred towards specific races or social groups. Cruz had been known to make statements such as “I wish all the Jws were dead” or in reference to the shooting at the Pulse nightclub, he said “I’m glad they killed all those gay people.” Another student said he knew that Cruz did not like black people and that he wanted to shoot them. Cruz also expressed an interest in hate groups such as Nazi’s, Hitler, and the KKK. He was known to use phrases such as “White Power.” Several people spoke of seeing swastikas drawn on his personal belongings.  
  - Corroboration of these witness statements was found on the ammunition magazines recovered from building 12 as they had swastikas etched into them. |

| NOVEL AGGRESSION | November 1, 2017: After the shooting on February 14, Blaine told BSO that Lynda Cruz had confided in her that approximately three months earlier that Nikolas Cruz had knocked out three of her teeth. |

<p>| LEAKAGE | February 5, 2016: Nikolas Cruz had posted a photograph on Instagram of himself with a gun. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The photograph had been removed and was not observed by a deputy. The post included a statement similar to “I am going to get this gun when I turn 18 and shoot up the school.”</td>
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<td>DIRECTLY COMMUNICATED THREAT</td>
<td>• Other family friends spoke of Cruz pointing guns at Lynda and threatening her. Cruz threatened a fellow student that he would kill her, rape her, and hurt her family.</td>
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<td>APPROACH BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>• When security saw Cruz on campus and identified him as the crazy kid, they knew he was not supposed to be there (or that it was concerning he was there) several minutes before the event began.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE WARNING BEHAVIORS</td>
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<td>NOTES</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Threat Evaluation and Reporting Overview (TERO)**

**Participant Guide – Classroom Delivery**

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### PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE WARNING BEHAVIORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research/Planning</strong></td>
<td>“Instagram: Firearms Inquiry”</td>
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<td>• A conversation and a post by Instagram user cruz_nikolas discussed a firearm purchase and displayed an advertisement for a Maverick Arms, model 88, 12-gauge shotgun. The user listed as cruz_nikolas said, “I plan on getting this but I need more information on it so if someone could give me advice on how much I’m spending and background checks (misspelled) please to god let me know. I plan on putting a scope on it for accuracy.”</td>
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### NOTES

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### PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE WARNING BEHAVIORS

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<th>Example</th>
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PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE WARNING BEHAVIORS

Behavior | Example
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**Preparation** | “Cruz videoed his plan”
- February 8, 2018: In the video Cruz appeared to be speaking to himself and he stated: “Alright. So here’s the plan. I’m gonna go take Uber in the afternoon before 2:40. From there I’ll go into the – onto the school campus, walk up the stairs, unload my bags and get my AR and shoot people down at the main – what is it – the main courtyard. Wait and people will die.” **It is unclear if the video was ever posted.

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### PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE WARNING BEHAVIORS

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<th>Behavior</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Probing/Breaching</strong></td>
<td>“6 months prior, [the attacker] trespassed at MSD”</td>
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<td>• Six months before his attack, Nikolas Cruz trespassed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, wearing a hoodie, carrying a backpack and mingling among students.</td>
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**NOTES**

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Threat Evaluation and Reporting Overview (TERO)
Participant Guide – Classroom Delivery

Pathway to Violence

- Personal Grievance
- Motive
- Research/Planning
- Preparation for Violence
- Provoking/Drafting
- Attack

Deviations in normal non-aggressive behavior

- End of life planning
- Last resort
- Sudden cessation of medications or other substance use
- Sudden withdrawal from life pattern
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<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| **DEVIATIONS IN NORMAL NON-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR** | February 14, 2018  
- 2:08pm–2:10pm: He told JT that he has to tell him something important soon. Cruz told his ex-girlfriend “Eat well, sleep well, and behave well my love”. She asked Cruz “You know I have a boyfriend, right? Cruz responded, “Doesn’t matter anymore…I love you.”  
- 2:10pm–2:14pm: Cruz continued to admire his ex-girlfriend saying, “Your the love of my life . . . you’re the greatest person I have ever meet.”  
- 2:16pm–3:45pm: Cruz sent two texts to his ex-girlfriend saying, “I love you”. The last outgoing texts were to JT Snead, the meaning of these texts is not understood. At 2:18:46 Cruz sent “Yo” and at 2:18:57 he sent “Tell.” |
| **END OF LIFE PLANNING** | In the months prior to the attack, Hodgkinson voluntarily dissolved his business in January 2017. He also told a neighbor he was planning to retire. Though it is not clear exactly when, he was “increasingly making vague statements [to family] about how he would ‘not be around much longer.’” He listed his motorcycle for sale prior to traveling to Northern Virginia. |
| **LAST RESORT** | |
| **SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL FROM LIFE PATTERN** | |
### WARNING BEHAVIORS THAT COULD SIGNAL IMMINENCE

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<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>SUDDEN CESSATION OF MEDICATIONS OR OTHER SUBSTANCE USE</td>
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<tr>
<td>PURSUIT OF NON-VIOLENT, LEGAL, AND SOCIALLY SANCTIONED METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLEXIBILITY OF THINKING</td>
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<td>POSITIVE, REALISTIC GOALS</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUPPORTIVE FAMILY</td>
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<td>HEALTHY SOCIAL SUPPORTS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POSITIVE COPING MECHANISMS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ACCESS AND RECEPTIVENESS TO ASSISTANCE</strong></td>
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Potential Mitigation Resources

Subject of Interest → National Resources → State and Local Resources → Community Resources

Takeaways

• Everyone can play a role in preventing violence in their community.
• Early detection and reporting of concerning or threatening behaviors are key to prevention.
• Warning behaviors should be viewed within the totality of circumstances.

Primary Sources

• A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters from 2000 – 2013, Federal Bureau of Investigation; 2018.
End of Topic Questions

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Glossary of Key Terms

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

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

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

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

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

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

Impulsive/Reactive Violence
Impulsive/reactive violence is unplanned; it can be defensive in response to a perceived threat.

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

Ideation
Ideas specific to the acceptability of violence as a means to address a particular grievance.

Want more information regarding the threat evaluation and reporting process? Interested in further resources to assist in the behavioral evaluation of tips and leads? Please contact NTER@hq.dhs.gov
Identification Behavior
Actual or virtual behavior with a nexus to violence which demonstrates a psychological desire to be a pseudo-commando, adopt a warrior mentality, identify with military or law enforcement paraphernalia, identify with past attackers, or to associate with advancing a particular cause or belief.

Intimacy Effect
The closer the interpersonal relationship between a subject and a target, the greater the likelihood is of violence. This intimacy can be based upon the subject’s perception of the relationship, including delusional perceptions.

Last Resort Behavior
Communications or actions indicating increasing desperation or distress, or that the subject perceives no alternatives to violence.

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

Mass Attack
An attack which causes harm (e.g., injury or death) to three or more persons, not including the attacker.

Novel Aggression
This is an act of violence which appears unrelated to any “pathway” behavior and which is committed for the first time. A subject may engage in this behavior to test their ability to actually engage in a violent act.

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

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

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

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Pseudo-commando Identity

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

Research and Planning

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

Risk Assessment

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

Stalking

A cluster of behaviors including unwanted communication, or approach, usually intended to threaten, harass, coerce or intimidate the target into meeting the demands of the perpetrator.

Targeted Violence

An unlawful act of violence dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources, in which actors or groups intentionally target a discernible population of individuals or venue in a manner that poses a threat to homeland security, based on (1) an apparent terrorist motive indicated by the population or venue targeted, or by the particular means of violence employed; (2) the significance of actual or potential impacts to the Nation’s economic security, public health, or public safety, or to the minimal operations of the economy and government; or (3) the severity and magnitude of the violence or harm and impact of either upon the capabilities of State and local governments to effectively respond without Federal assistance.

Threat Management

Managing a subject’s behavior through interventions and strategies designed to disrupt or prevent an act of targeted violence. Involves a coordinated plan of direct and/or indirect interventions with a subject which, based on current information regarding concern posed, is designed to reduce the likelihood of violence concern in a given situation at a particular point in time.

Threat Management Team

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

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Upstander

An upstander is a bystander who reports what they know or see to law enforcement, human resources, school staffers, or a caring adult. An upstander can potentially intervene by various means, but most importantly by simply conveying what they know, observe, or fear may happen.

Violence Risk Assessment

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

Source:

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