BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

This assessment is not a "profile" of an "active shooter" or a checklist of danger signs pointing to the next person who will bring lethal violence to a school or business.

Such profiles or checklists do not exist. *Although the risk of an actual shooting incident in any one school or business is low, threats of violence are potentially a problem in any school or business. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to it is critically important.*

Clues can take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums. They may be spoken or conveyed in stories, diary entries, essays, poems, letters, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, or videos.

It is crucial that a thorough investigation of all methods of communication take place with <u>all people, and in all places the person of concern typically spends their time</u>.

Themes may be expressed in conversation, jokes, or in seemingly offhand comments to friends, teachers, employees, parents, or siblings.

Statements may be subtle, or immediately minimized by comments such as, "I was just joking," or "I didn't really mean that."

This assessment is credited largely to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), and the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). Through their work in the School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective[1], we were able to distill/extract key elements and assemble this behavioral assessment tool for you, our country's community and law enforcement stakeholders.

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[1] https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/stats-services-publications-school-shooter-school-shooter/view

THE INTERVENTION PROCESS

A school and business cannot ignore any threat of violence. Plausible or not, every threat must be taken seriously, investigated, and responded to. A clear, vigorous response is essential for three reasons: first and most important, to make sure that students, teachers, and employees *are* safe (that is, that a threat will not be carried out); second, to assure that they will *feel* safe; and third, to assure that the person making the threat will be supervised and given the treatment that is appropriate and necessary to avoid future danger to others or himself.

It is not the purpose of this assessment to recommend any specific forms of intervention for a particular staff or student or type of threat. Disciplinary policies and appropriate treatment approaches should be determined by administrators, counseling staff, mental health professionals, and other specialists. Rather, the following information focuses on two specific issues: (1) the need for schools and businesses to adopt a well-thought-out system for responding to threats, and (2) guidelines for the role of law enforcement agencies in the threat-response process.

THREAT MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES

A clear, consistent, rational, and well-structured system for dealing with threats is vitally important. If students or staff feel that threats are not addressed quickly and sensibly, or if managers or administrators appear overwhelmed and uncertain at every threat, confidence in the ability to maintain a safe environment will be seriously undermined. This in turn can seriously disrupt a school's educational program or business's productivity, retention, and/or reputation.

An effective threat management system will include a standardized method for evaluating threats, and consistent policies for responding to them. A standardized approach will help schools and businesses construct a database, with information on the types and frequency of threats, which may help evaluate the effectiveness of school and company policies. Consistency in threat response can deter future threats if students or employees perceive that any threat will be reported, investigated, and dealt with firmly.

Here are some guidelines for establishing and implementing a threat management system:

Inform stakeholders of school/company policies: A school or business should publicize its threat response and intervention program. The school or business should clearly explain what is

expected of students and staff-- for example, students and/or staff who know about a threat are expected to inform school authorities or company administrators. Schools should make clear that if a child makes a threat of any kind, the respective parents will be contacted and expected to provide information to help evaluate the threat.

Designate a threat assessment coordinator: One person in every school or business -- or perhaps several in large schools/organizations -- should be assigned to oversee and coordinate the response to all threats. The designated coordinator may be the principal, another administrator, a school psychologist, resource officer, or any other staff member. The school or business should identify/provide appropriate threat assessment training programs for the coordinator.

When any threat is made, whoever receives it or first becomes aware of it should refer it immediately to the designated coordinator, and school/company policy should explicitly give the coordinator the necessary authority to make or assist in making quick decisions on how to respond -- including implementing the emergency response plan, if the threat warrants.

The coordinator's specific responsibilities will be determined in each school or business, in accord with the professional judgment of the principal and administrative staff. They could include: arranging for an initial assessment when a threat is received to determine the level of threat; conducting or overseeing an evaluation after the threatener is identified, developing and refining the threat management system; monitoring intervention in previous cases; establishing liaison with other school/company staff and outside experts; and maintaining consistency and continuity in the threat response procedures.

Consider forming a multidisciplinary team: As well as appointing a threat assessment coordinator, schools and businesses may decide to establish a multidisciplinary team as another component of the threat assessment system. Organizations could draw team members from school staff and other professionals, including trained mental health professionals. The team would constitute an experienced, knowledgeable group that could review threats, consult with outside experts, and provide recommendations and advice to the coordinator and school administration. **It is strongly recommended that a law enforcement representative should either be included as a member of the team or regularly consulted as a resource person.** Making threats can be a criminal offense, depending on the threat and the laws of each state. Although most threats may not lead to prosecution, school and company officials need informed, professional advice on when a criminal violation has occurred and what actions may be required by state or local laws.

IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT THAT THREATS NOT BE DEALT WITH BY SIMPLY KICKING THE PROBLEM OUT THE DOOR. EXPELLING, SUSPENDING, OR TERMINATING A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER FOR MAKING A THREAT MUST NOT BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR CAREFUL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND A CONSIDERED, CONSISTENT POLICY OF INTERVENTION. DISCIPLINARY ACTION ALONE, UNACCOMPANIED BY ANY EFFORT TO EVALUATE THE THREAT OR THE STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBERS INTENT, MAY ACTUALLY EXACERBATE THE DANGER-- FOR EXAMPLE, IF A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER FEELS UNFAIRLY OR ARBITRARILY TREATED AND BECOMES EVEN ANGRIER AND MORE BENT ON CARRYING OUT A VIOLENT ACT.

Misconceptions and Fallacies

1. "Active shooters are loners". Students and staff who threaten and/or carry out violent acts are not necessarily loners in the classic sense, and the composition and qualities of peer groups can be important pieces of information in assessing the danger that a threat will be acted on.

2. "Active shooters are victims of bullying". While bullying can be a contributor in conflict that can lead to a targeted violent attack, not all past active shooters were bullied, in fact, in some cases, the shooter(s) were considered to be a bully and bullied others.

3. "Guns are the problem". In almost every instance following an active shooting incident, the topic of gun control is a main focal point in media coverage. In considering the totality of circumstances surrounding an attack, the tool or method used to carry out the attack is less important than the decision made by the attacker to commit mass murder of innocents in the first place. While eliminating easy access to weapons to those committed to violence is critical, history shows us that a person committed to a targeted attack will find a means to carry out that attack.

4. "Violent media creates killers". While experts agree that exposure to violent media, especially in adolescents, can desensitize or even "gamify" violence, violent media alone does not create killers. Millions of violent games are sold (Grand Theft Auto 5 is the best-selling game of all time) each year, and the vast majority never confuse game play with reality. That said, exposure to violent media, and the gamification that comes with it, needs to be considered within an assessment.

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5. "Active shooters are a result of broken homes". Research into past school shootings shows that while some perpetrators of school attacks have come from broken homes, perpetrators have also come from complete homes where the families have intact and healthy marriages.

6. "Active shooters are mentally ill". In a 2017 study conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it was concluded in their research that only 25% of active shooters had ever been diagnosed with a mental illness[2].

7. "They just snapped". Those who have committed an active shooting event did not just wake up one morning and decide to go on a killing spree. These attacks are frequently planned and premeditated for weeks or months (in some cases, over a year). This is a critical element to understand when considering what kinds of clues or leakage occur along the way.

4-Prong Risk Assessment Tool

This four-Prong Risk Assessment Tool is designed to "drill down" into disconcerting behavior, leakage of threats, and risk of an impending attack. In order to effectively complete this assessment, all individuals within the immediate orbit of the concerned person (i.e., the person thought to be a potential threat), will need to be contacted and questioned.

Company or school computers and property to which the concerned person had access will need to be searched/evaluated for additional clues. Internet search histories, notes, saved websites, printed materials, pictures, etc, can all be critical clues to confirming or dispelling a threat.

Family, friends, and colleagues may be able to provide insight and investigative efforts to which school and company administrators do not have permission or access.

Throughout the investigation and evaluation, it should be understood by evaluators that some individuals may have certain knowledge or concerns of their own that they have not previously shared with others. It is the "totality of circumstances" that will guide evaluators and the threat assessment team in making an educated decision about how to proceed following the completion this assessment tool and overall investigation.

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[2] https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view

Personality Traits and Behavior - Prong 1

Has the student or employee *intentionally* or *unintentionally* revealed any of the following that may signal an impending violent attack:

(Check all that apply)

☐ Clues to feelings about attacking a place or person(s)?

☐ Thoughts of carrying out a violent attack?

☐ Fantasies about carrying out a violent attack?

☐ An attitude of approval and/or acceptance of victimization of innocent people?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of violence?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of hopelessness?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of despair?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of hatred?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of isolation?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of loneliness?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of nihilism (life is meaningless)?

☐ Recurring preoccupation with themes of an "end of the world" philosophy?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of destruction?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of violence?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of hatred?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of prejudice?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of death?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of dismemberment?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of mutilation (of self or others)?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of bleeding?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of use of excessively destructive weapons?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of homicide/murder?

☐ Are there recurrent themes of suicide?

    ☐ Has the person of concern expressed suicidal ideations?

    ☐ Has the person of concern attempted suicide in the past?

☐ Is the person of concern:

    ☐ easily insulted?

    ☐ easily angered?

    ☐ easily hurt by real or perceived injustices done by others?

☐ Does the person of concern:

    ☐ Have great difficulty tolerating frustration?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with frustration?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with criticism?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with disappointment?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with failure?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with rejection?

    ☐ Consistently show little if any ability to deal with humiliation?

☐ Has there been a circumstance within the past three months where the person of concern has been humiliated in front of their peers?

☐ Typical responses to ordinary situations are:

    ☐ Inappropriate?

    ☐ Exaggerated?

    ☐ Immature (in relation to others their same age)?

    ☐ Disproportionate?

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☐ The person of concern lacks resiliency and is unable to bounce back even when some time has passed since a frustrating or disappointing experience, setback, or putdown?

☐ The person of concern recently experienced a breakup or failed relationship?

☐ The person of concern cannot accept or come to terms with being rejected by others they would like to be in a relationship with, or have been in a relationship with?

☐ The person of concern nurses resentment over real or perceived injustices?

☐ The person of concern does not appear to "forgive and forget" those who they perceive have wronged them?

☐ The person of concern keeps a list (verbally communicated and/or written) of those who he/she feels have wronged them in the past?

☐ The person of concern shows features of depression:

    ☐ Lethargic

    ☐ Physical fatigue

    ☐ Morose or dark outlook on life

    ☐ Sense of malaise

    ☐ Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed

    ☐ Has made statements indicating depression

    ☐ Display of unpredictable and uncontrolled outbursts of anger

    ☐ A generalized and excessive hatred towards others

    ☐ Feeling of hopelessness about the future

    ☐ Unusual and prolonged sense of agitation, restlessness, inattention, or sleep

    ☐ Known to have an eating disorder

    ☐ Markedly diminished interest in almost all activities that previously occupied and interested them

    ☐ Disconnected from those they once associated closely with

The person of concern:

☐ Is "self-centered"?

☐ Lacks insight into others' needs and/or feelings?

☐ Blames others for failures and disappointments?

☐ Embraces the role of a victim to elicit sympathy and to feel temporarily superior to others?

☐ Displays signs of paranoia?

☐ Assumes an attitude of self-importance or grandiosity that masks feelings of unworthiness?

☐ Consistently behaves as though they feel different or estranged from others?

☐ Expresses feelings of isolation?

☐ Expresses feelings of sadness?

☐ Expresses feelings of loneliness?

☐ Expresses feelings of not belonging?

☐ Expresses feelings of not fitting in?

☐ Consistently fails to see others as fellow humans?

☐ View or refers to others as "non-humans"?

☐ Considers people as objects to be thwarted?

☐ Shows an inability to understand the feelings of others?

☐ Appears unconcerned about anyone else's feelings?

☐ Ridicules others when they show emotion, seeing it as weakness?

☐ Constantly expects special treatment and consideration?

☐ Reacts negatively if they do not get the treatment they feel they are entitled to?

The person of concern has a sense of being superior and presents themselves as:

☐ Smarter

☐ More creative

- [ ] More talented

- [ ] More experienced

- [ ] More worldly

- [ ] The person of concern shows an exaggerated, even pathological, need for attention, whether positive or negative, no matter the circumstances?

- [ ] The person of concern consistently refuses to take responsibility for his or her own actions?

- [ ] The person of concern typically faults other people, events or situations for any failings or shortcomings?

- [ ] The person of concern frequently seems impervious to rational argument and common sense?

- [ ] The person of concern appears to veil low self-esteem by displaying an arrogant and self-glorifying attitude?

- [ ] The person of concern avoids high visibility or involvement activities?

  - [ ] The person of concern is considered *by others* as a nonentity?

  - [ ] The person of concern considers *themselves* as a nonentity?

- [ ] The person of concern does not express anger in appropriate ways and in appropriate circumstances?

- [ ] The person of concern consistently tends to burst out in temper tantrums or melodramatic displays, or to brood in sulky, seething silence?

- [ ] The person of concern expresses anger that is noticeably out of proportion to the cause, or may be redirected toward people who had nothing to do with the original incident?

- [ ] The person of concern has unpredictable and uncontrollable outbursts of anger?

  - [ ] These outbursts are accompanied by expressions of unfounded prejudice, dislike, or even hatred toward individuals or groups?

- [ ] The person of concern often expresses racial or religious prejudice or intolerant attitudes toward minorities?

- [ ] The person of concern displays slogans or symbols of intolerance in such things as tattoos, jewelry, clothing, bumper stickers, and/or book covers?

☐ The person of concern consistently shares inappropriate humor that tend to be macabre, insulting, belittling, or mean?

☐ The person of concern consistently attempts to con and manipulate others and win their trust so they will rationalize any signs of aberrant or threatening behavior?

☐ The person of concern is untrusting and chronically suspicious of others' motives and intentions?

☐ The person of concern appears to be highly paranoid?

    ☐ They have expressed the belief that society has no trustworthy institution or mechanism for achieving justice or resolving conflict, and if something were to happen to them, they have to settle it themselves and in their own way?

☐ The person of concern is considered an introvert with relationships that are more of acquaintances rather than friends?

☐ The person of concern belongs to a small group(s) that excludes others?

☐ The person of concern has had a dramatic change in behavior

    ☐ Decline in academic or professional performance

    ☐ Has a reckless disregard for school or company rules

    ☐ Disregards school/company schedules

    ☐ Disregards school/company dress codes

    ☐ Disregards school/company regulations or SOP's

☐ The person of concern appears rigid, judgmental and cynical, and voices strong opinions on subjects they have little knowledge. Facts, logic, and reasoning that should challenge their opinion, are disregarded.

☐ The person of concern demonstrates an unusual interest in school shootings and other heavily publicized acts of violence?

☐ The person of concern has declared admiration for those who committed violent acts, or may criticize them for "incompetence" for failing to kill enough people.

    ☐ The person of concern has explicitly expressed a desire to carry out a similar act of violence?

☐ The person of concern demonstrates an unusual fascination with movies, TV shows, computer games, music videos, or printed material that focus intensively on themes of violence, hatred, control, power, death, and destruction?

☐ The person of concern incessantly watches the same movie or rereads the same book with violent content, perhaps of mass murder attacks?

☐ Themes of hatred, violence, weapons, and mass destruction recur in virtually all activities, hobbies, and pastimes?

☐ The person of concern spends an inordinate amount of time playing video games with violent themes, and seems more interested in the violent images than the game itself?

☐ The person of concern regularly uses the internet to search for websites involving violence, weapons, explosive making, and other disturbing subjects?

  ☐ There is evidence the person of concern has downloaded and kept material from these sites?

☐ The person of concern appears to be drawn to negative role models such as Hitler, Satan, or others associated with violence and destruction?

☐ The person of concern appears to be increasingly occupied in activities that could be related to carrying out a threat

  ☐ Spending an unusual amount of time practicing with firearms

  ☐ Spending an unusual amount of time on various violent websites

  ☐ The time spent performing these unusual activities has noticeably begun to exclude normal everyday pursuits such as homework, attending classes, going to work, or spending time with friends and family?

  ☐ There is suspicion that the person of concern is suffering from mental illness?

    ☐ A mental health examination has been completed by a mental health professional?

    ☐ A diagnosis of psychopathology has been established by a mental health professional?

Family/Home Dynamics - Prong 2

☐ The person of concern has a particularly difficult or turbulent relationship with family / parents

    ☐ Recent or multiple moves

    ☐ Loss of a parent or family member

    ☐ Addition of a step parent

    ☐ Recent divorce

☐ The person of concern expresses contempt for their parents and dismisses or rejects their role in their life?

☐ There is evidence of violence occurring within the home?

☐ The person of concern has been arrested or charged with a criminal offense within the past twelve months?

☐ Parents/spouse do not react to behavior that most would find very disturbing or abnormal?

☐ The parents/spouse appear unable to recognize or acknowledge problems and respond defensively to any real or perceived criticism of the person of concern?

☐ Parents/spouse appear unconcerned, minimize the problem, or reject reports altogether, when contacted by school/company officials or staff about troubling behavior even if the misconduct is obvious and significant?

☐ The family keeps guns or other weapons or explosive material in the home, accessible to the person of concern?

☐ There is evidence that weapons are treated carelessly, without normal safety precautions?

    ☐ Guns are not locked away and are left loaded?

    ☐ Parents or significant role models may handle weapons casually or recklessly and in doing so may convey to others that a weapon can be a useful and normal means of intimidating someone else or settling a dispute?

☐ The family appears to lack intimacy and closeness?

☐ Parents set few or no limits on the child's conduct, and regularly give into their demands?

☐ The person of concern insists on an inordinate degree of privacy?

☐ The family has little information about the person of concerns activities, school/work life, friends, or other relationships?

☐ Parents/spouse seem intimidated by the person of concern?

    ☐ They fear being attacked physically if they confront or frustrate the person of concern?

    ☐ Family seem to be unwilling to face an emotional outburst from the person of concern?

    ☐ Parents/spouse appear to be afraid that upsetting the person of concern will spark an emotional crisis?

☐ Traditional family roles are reversed (parent/child relationship)?

    ☐ The child acts as the authority figure, while the parents act subordinate to their child?

☐ Parents do not supervise, limit or monitor their child's television watching or their use of the internet?

☐ The person of concern has a TV in their room or is otherwise free without any limits to spend as much time as they like watching violent or otherwise inappropriate shows?

☐ The person of concern spends a great deal of time watching television rather than in activities with family or friends?

☐ Computer use and internet access is unmonitored?

☐ The person of concern is secretive about their computer or internet access use, which may involve violent games or internet research on violence, weapons, or other disturbing subjects?

☐ The person of concern has a history of abusing and/or killing animals?

☐ There is a history of domestic violence and/or abuse in the home?

School or Company Dynamics - Prong 3

☐ The person of concern appears to be detached from the school or organization, including other students, teachers, colleagues, peers, and school/company activities?

☐ The person of concern thinks the school or company does little to prevent or punish disrespectful behavior between individual students/employees or groups of students/employees?

☐ The person of concern thinks bullying is a part of the school/company culture and school/company authorities seem oblivious to it — seldom or never intervening, or doing so only selectively?

☐ The person of concern thinks the school or company atmosphere promotes racial or class divisions or allows them to remain unchallenged?

☐ The person of concern thinks the use of discipline is inequitably applied - or has the perception of being inequitably applied by administrators?

☐ The person of concern would describe the school/company culture as:

   ☐ Static

   ☐ Unyielding

   ☐ Insensitive to changes in society

   ☐ Insensitive to the changing needs of newer students or staff

☐ The person of concern thinks that certain groups of students/employees are officially or unofficially given more prestige and respect than others?

☐ The person of concern thinks school/company officials treat those in high-prestige groups as though they are more important or more valuable than other staff/students?

☐ A "code of silence" in the school/company prevails among the staff or students?

☐ Few feel they can safely tell teachers or administrators if they are concerned about another persons behavior or attitudes?

☐ Little trust exists between students and staff at school, or staff and supervisor in the company?

☐ School/company computers have unsupervised and/or unmonitored access to the internet?

☐ Staff/students are able to use computers to play violent video games or explore inappropriate web sites such as those that promote violence, hate groups, give instructions on bomb-making, etc.

☐ The school or company does *not* maintain documentation of all prior incidents or problems involving staff/students so it can be considered in future threat assessments?

Social Dynamics - Prong 4

☐ The person of concern has easy and unmonitored access to movies, television shows, computer games, and internet sites with themes and images of extreme violence?

☐ The person of concern spends a significant amount of time play "first person shooter" games such as Call of Duty or Grand Theft Auto?

☐ The person of concern is intensely and exclusively involved with a group sharing a fascination with violence or extremist beliefs?

    ☐ The group excludes others who do not share its interests or ideas?

    ☐ The person of concern spends little or no time with anyone who thinks differently and is shielded from the "reality check" that might come from hearing other views and perceptions?

☐ The person of concern uses drugs?

☐ The person of concern uses alcohol?

☐ Outside interests and hobbies have been investigated and concerning behavior has been identified?

☐ There has been a heavily publicized violent attack in the country within the past 90 days? (copycat behavior is very common).

☐ The person of concern is the subject of regular bullying?

☐ The person of concern is considered a bully by others?

ESTABLISHING THREAT LEVELS

In each case where concerning behavior is being investigated and assessment completed, the decision about whether to involve law enforcement will hinge on the seriousness of the threat: low, medium, or high, under the criteria outlined earlier in this assessment.

Low Level: A threat that has been evaluated as low level poses little threat to public safety and in most cases would not necessitate law enforcement investigation for a possible criminal offense. (However, law enforcement agencies may be asked for information in connection with a threat of any level.)

Appropriate intervention in a low-level case would involve, at a minimum, interviews with the student/employee and his or her parents, peers, associates, colleagues, and/or supervisors . If the threat was aimed at a specific person, that person should also be asked about his or her relationship with the threatener and the circumstances that led up to the threat. The response -- disciplinary action and any decision to refer the person of concern for counseling or other form of intervention -- should be determined according to school or company policies and the judgment of the responsible school or business administrators.

Medium Level: When a threat is rated as medium level, the response should in most cases include contacting law enforcement agencies, as well as other sources, to obtain additional information (and possibly reclassify the threat into the high or low category).

A medium-level threat will sometimes, though not always, warrant investigation as a possible criminal offense.

High Level: Almost always, if a threat is evaluated as high level, the school or business should immediately inform the appropriate law enforcement agency. A response plan, which should have been designed ahead of time and rehearsed by both school/company and law enforcement personnel, should be implemented, and law enforcement should be informed and involved in whatever subsequent actions are taken in response to threat.

A high-level threat is very likely to result in criminal prosecution.

Examples of Threats

  Example #1: Low-Level Threat: John Jones sends someone an e-mail message saying: "You are a dead man."

Step One -- Referral

The person who received the message brings the message to the attention of the Threat Assessment Coordinator the following morning.

Step Two -- Threat Assessment - Based on the following reasons the e-mail threat is assessed as a *low-level* threat

(1) Threat is vague and indirect: "You are a dead man."

(2) Threat lacks detail. There is no specific information on how the threat is to be carried out, on the motive or intent, or on the time and place where the threat is to be acted on.

(3) The means to carry out the threat is unknown.

Step Three -- Four-Pronged Assessment

(1) Since the threatener's identity is known, background information can be obtained from faculty members who knew the student/employee and his family/assiociates before the threat was made. They picture him as somewhat immature and prone to losing his temper, but report no seriously troubling traits or changes in behavior.

(2) Interviews with the person of concern and their associates establish that he has no access to weapons. No other information emerges to indicate that the person of concern has made any actual preparations or seriously intends to carry out the threat.

(3) The target of the threat is interviewed. His responses also suggest the threat is unlikely to be acted on: "We've had arguments before; he gets mad and says stupid things but he gets over it."

Step Four -- Evaluation and Response

Based on the evaluation of the threat and the four-pronged assessment, the **OVERALL** assessment is that this is a low-level threat. A law enforcement contact or resource person is advised of the incident, but administrative action will be determined by school/company authorities in accordance with established policies and procedures.

Example #2: Medium-Level Threat: Tom Murphy makes a video and posts it online. The video shows student actors shooting at other students on the school grounds, using long-barreled guns that appear real. On the video, the actor-students are heard yelling at other

students, laughing, and making off-color remarks, while aiming their weapons at others. Murphy's teacher is told about the video and becomes concerned.

Step One -- Referral

The teacher brings the video to the Threat Assessment Coordinator, who in turn calls a meeting of the available members of the school's Multidisciplinary Team.

Step Two -- Threat Assessment - Based on the following, the video is determined to be a medium level of threat until more information can be obtained.

(1) The threat is specific. Murphy and fellow students who are posing as shooters, are pointing weapons at other students pretending to be victims. However, it is unknown if Murphy and his friends actually intended to carry out the threat, and if the weapons displayed in the videotape are real. Some of the comments heard on the tape are explicitly threatening but all of the students are laughing and it is therefore unclear whether they are speaking seriously or joking.

(2) The guns used in the video may or may not be real.

(3) The "script" used in the video suggests that the threateners have given some thought to how the threat will be carried out regarding place and time.

(4) It is unclear if the video, with all of its detail, is a serious prelude to real threat, or a joke.

Step Three -- Four-Pronged Assessment

(1) The Threat Assessment Coordinator and members of the Multidisciplinary Team gather additional background on each of the students who appear in the video. Information is sought from faculty members who knew the students and their families prior to the incident.

(2) Students and parents are interviewed and it is determined that the guns used in the videotape were toys, and the students have no access to real weapons. No other information is provided that would elevate the level of the threat.

Step Four -- Evaluation and Response

Based on evaluation of the video and the assessment of the person(s) of concern who organized the filming, this is reclassified as a low level threat. Law enforcement officers conducted the investigation, but administrative action is left to the discretion of the school.

Example #3: High-Level Threat: A company manager receives an anonymous phone call at 7:30 a.m. The caller says: "There is a pipe bomb scheduled to go off in the front lobby at noon today. I placed the bomb in a nearby office in a hidden location. Don't worry, it's not my office. I just placed it there because I can see it from where I will be sitting -- and will know if someone goes to check on it."

<u>Step One -- Immediate Law Enforcement Involvement and Emergency Response</u>

The manager calls a designated contact in the local police department as provided in the company's emergency response plan. The emergency plan is put into effect.

<u>Step Two -- Threat Assessment - Based on the following, this anonymous threat was determined to be a high level of threat.</u>

(1) The threat is direct and specific. The caller identifies a specific weapon he will use as well as a location for the assault, and the time the threat will be carried out.

(2) The content of the threat suggests the caller has taken concrete steps to carry out the threat, i.e., he has placed the lobby under surveillance in order to determine if someone checks on it.

(3) The identity of the threatener is unknown. His means, knowledge, and resources to construct a pipe bomb are unknown.

<u>Step Three -- Because the threatener is unidentified, the Four-Pronged Assessment cannot be conducted.</u>

<u>Step Four -- Evaluation and Response</u>

Because of its specific detail and plausible nature, this is determined to be a high-level threat posing a serious danger to staff and requiring immediate intervention by law enforcement. If the threatener is subsequently identified, he is likely to be charged with a criminal offense and prosecuted.

Training: To make effective use of the assessment and intervention procedures outlined in this behavioral assessment tool, school administrators and staff members should receive additional training in the fundamentals of the threat assessment, adolescent development and violence, and other mental health issues relevant to the area of adolescent development and targeted violence. Specialized training is needed for those assigned to conduct or supervise the assessment process.

Training is also needed to educate and sensitize students and employees about "leakage" and its significance in dealing with the threat of violence. Students and employees are often in the best position to see and hear signs or cues of potential violence, and training should stress that ignoring those cues or remaining silent can be dangerous for themselves as well as others. Training should also confront the "code of silence" and the reluctance to be branded as a "snitch" or to violate a friend's confidence.

Other suggestions relating to training include:

- Establish "Internal Teams" to find ways to encourage students or employees to come forward in a confidential manner with information about threatening behavior.

- Encourage Student and Employee Assistance Programs in which concerned teachers and staff members would come together and discuss students/employees who are having academic/professional problems, behavioral problems, or problems at home.

- Establish "Peer Assistance Groups" that will encourage students and employees to come forward with information about possible threatening behavior in others, and provide support to overcome self-doubts or guilty feelings about breaking the "code of silence."

- Develop programs to help parents/spouses recognize when their child/spouse may be in emotional trouble or socially isolated or rejected, and help parents/spouses become more knowledgeable about where to get help and more willing to seek it.

CONCLUSIONS

Violence -- whether in a school, home, workplace, or on the street -- is a complex issue with complex causes and consequences. Imagining that there are easy answers and instant solutions is counterproductive: there is no easy way to attack the causes and no simple formula that can predict who will commit a violent act. It is also true, however, that *violent behavior develops progressively, that making a threat represents a stage in an evolutionary process, and that there are observable signs along the way that most of us can see if we know what to look for*.

The shock and fear generated by the recent succession of mass shootings and other violent acts in across the United States -- and by violence in society at large -- have led to intense public concern about the danger of school and workplace violence. In this atmosphere, it is critically important for schools and businesses to respond to all threats swiftly, responsibly, fairly, and sensitively, and with an understanding that all threats are not equal.

It is not enough to react only to the threatening message, whether spoken, written, or symbolic. It is also vital to assess whether the person who made the threat has the **intent**, **means**, and **motivation** to carry it out. The procedure presented in this behavioral assessment tool can help schools and businesses assess a threat and the threatener, evaluate the risk, and respond appropriately and effectively.

We know that threats will continue to be made in schools and businesses and that most will never be carried out. The use of this assessment/intervention model will help school and company authorities identify and deal with the high-risk threats that are the major concern, and respond to less serious threats in a measured way. The same distinction needs to be recognized in the larger world outside the school or business as well, for the same reasons. Threats in schools and businesses are not just the school's or businesses's problem; therefore, neither is the solution.

Forward Movement Training & Consulting

This Behavioral Assessment Tool has been generated and provided to you by Forward Movement Training & Consulting (FMTC), an Idaho based Limited Liability Company that specializes in School and Workplace Violence. We used our company's national expertise and research studies provided by the FBI, US Secret Service, and Homeland Security, in providing you this assessment tool. It is meant to be a guide in assessing concerning behavior with the intent of detecting and preventing targeted violence within a school or business. FMTC makes no claims that this assessment tool can altogether prevent targeted violence. Rather, the intent is to provide a fair, balanced, and systematic way for school and company officials, law enforcement officers, and community

stakeholders to "drill down" into concerning behavior and establish the level of a threat so an appropriate and proactive intervention process can take place.

Because understanding criminal behavior is complex and generally unknown or misunderstood by those outside law enforcement and criminal profilers, training relating to how criminals think and act is important. Gaining insight into the "minds of killers" and those who have committed targeted violence in the past, will help in conducting an assessment and assigning risk levels.

Contact Forward Movement Training & Consulting at **info@forwardmovementtraining.com** for details about our courses on the *Detection and Prevention of Targeted Violence* as well as our training on *Move, Secure, Defend* in the event of having to respond to a Targeted Act of Violence within your school or workplace.

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