

Campus Threat Assessment & Management Instrument

This instrument is designed to assist in *screening, investigating, and documenting* potential situations of targeted violence.

Remember that the assessment is of the situation a person is in, not the person.
These situations are dynamic in nature and should be constantly updated

If imminent danger exists, call law enforcement

- Examine safety concerns and threatening situations using the questions as an investigative guide.
- Complete the instrument through a multi-disciplinary approach by a team representing various areas across the institution. Generally, this team is comprised of the following members: director of public safety, dean of student services, counselor or mental health professional and legal and human resources representative.
- Other assessment instruments (i.e. domestic violence, workplace violence, suicide risk, etc.) may be used in conjunction with this instrument.
- The team might also include representatives from partnering agencies such as law enforcement and mental health.
- The team should consider all available sources for information including: instructors, students, staff, community members, and social media.

Today's date: _____ **Person reporting:** _____

Name (Subject of Concern): _____

ID #: _____ **DOB:** _____

Age: _____ **Student:** _____ **Staff:** _____ **Other:** _____

(Please mark appropriate status)

Comments:

STEP 1: SCREENING—DISCUSS, INVESTIGATE, AND DOCUMENT

Complete the following questions. Review the questions as an outline for a guided conversation investigating situational factors or concerns that suggest an increase in the risk of acted out aggression.

1. **CONCERNS:** Are others concerned about a potential for acting out aggressively (staff, faculty, students, etc.)?

Concerns may range from an odd discomfort to a complete list of reasons why caution should be taken. If violence is being considered or planned, it is difficult to hide the indicators. In fact, sometimes little care is actually taken to hide intentions, and while there may be little to no documentation of past behavioral issues, there may be several people who have been, or are, currently concerned.

Describe details of threat or dangerous situation and/or acted out behavior: _____

2. **THREAT:** Are there indications of a threat to a person, place, or organization? Please note the various threats listed below.

Threats can be direct, specific references, veiled threats, or vague warnings. What is the motive or violent intention? If threats are made but lack attack-related behaviors, motives, or a specific target(s) consistent with that threat, then risk decreases. Many threats that lack attack-related behavior are likely to be means of communicating dissatisfaction or anger, seeking attention, releasing stress, or affecting strength or power (bravado).

- **Direct threat:** straightforward, clear and explicit, (i.e. *"I am going to put a bomb in the library"; "I'm going to kill you"*)
- **Indirect threat:** tentative or implied, (i.e. *"If I wanted to, I could kill everyone in the financial aid office"; "I could make the psychology instructors disappear if I wanted to"*)
- **Conditional threat:** contingent on certain circumstances, usually contains the words "or" and "if". (*"If I can't re-take my test, you will pay"; "You better approve my financial aid or you will die"*)
- **Veiled threat:** vague and subject to interpretation, sometimes having two meanings and can come across as a joke, (i.e. *"The College would be a better place without you"; "I can see how something like Virginia Tech happened"; "You might not be at school tomorrow"*)

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

3. **LEAKAGE:** Are there indications of any "leakage" about a potential plan of attack (communication revealing clues about planned attack, verbally or through social media or homework, etc.)?

Leakage can be in various forms revealing clues about planned attack through various third parties. This can be intentionally or unintentionally disclosing information of feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. Examples of this might include: verbal communication (boasts, innuendos, and predictions), social media, homework, email, written

language exercises, essays, poems, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, videos, etc. Communication can be indirect (such as ominous warning) or even casual references to possible harmful events or previously occurring violent events (such as school shootings).

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

4. **HOMICIDAL IDEATIONS:** Are there indications of preoccupation with violent thoughts (homicidal ideations)?

Is there increased perseveration/fixation on a person or cause? Is there ongoing consideration or focus on a particular person, group, or student body? Are there indications of focused or unusual interest in acts of violence, previous school/community attacks or attackers, weaponry, or anti-social characters, notorious criminals, murderers, or gangs (historical or fictional)? This fixation can also present as “identifying” with previous attackers, military, or law enforcement (warrior mentality).

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

5. **PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS:** Are there indications of pre-attack-related behaviors (acquiring weapons, rehearsing attack, scheduling attack, stalking, etc.)?

Threatening communication becomes more concerning with behavior that suggests intent to follow through with a targeted attack (called “attack-related behavior”). Many threats are not stated directly but are indicated by vague references combined with behavior. Attack-related behavior may be, but is not limited to, the following:

- A plan (complex or simple) to carry out a targeted act of violence against a specific individual or group. The plan would have a sequence of actions necessary for its success and almost always requires a motive. The more plausible and detailed the plan, the greater the risk.
- Acquisition of a weapon, attempted acquisition of a weapon, or research about how to acquire a weapon.
- Rehearsal or simulation is often necessary before a targeted event can be completely planned and carried out. Rehearsal can be indicated through art, fantasy games, writing or film projects, video games, movies or Internet sites with themes and sequences of targeted violence, etc.
- Scheduling an attack. A scheduled attack may be clear and detailed or flexible, awaiting a triggering event (teasing, rejection, loss) that further justifies the violence as a solution.
- Novel aggression. To conduct an act of violence to see if they are capable of carrying out their plan (“try-outs”). This target could be completely unrelated to their intended target.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

6. **SUICIDALITY:** Are there indications of suicidal ideation, intent, or planning (history of suicidality)?

Is there a history of suicidal ideas, attempts, gestures, references, and intent? The wish to die, be killed, or commit suicide combined with a threat to harm others increases risk, especially if the self-destructive behavior is the last part of a plan to harm others and carry out revenge or justice. Suicidal thoughts can easily and quickly progress to homicidal ideation.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

7. **WEAPONS:** Are there indications of weapon(s) availability?

If weapons are being considered but not immediately available within the home, are they available through relatives, friends, or other means? Note your level of confidence in the source of your information.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

8. **COPING SKILLS:** Are there indications of past coping skills used to deal with stressful situations?

Are there issues related to vulnerability and coping skills not necessarily directly related to targeted aggression? Risk increases considerably when coping strategies are limited. There is little if any ability to handle frustration, criticism, disappointment, or rejection. Are there mental health issues that indicate a low reserve of coping strategies and lack of emotional resiliency?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

9. **HOPELESS:** Are there indications of hopelessness/desperation with the lack of options?

Are there indications of feeling trapped and not having options? Are there indications of giving away possessions and not having any plans for the future? As people lose hope of resolving stressful or overwhelming situations through acceptable social or coping skills, they are more likely to engage desperate solutions and last-ditch efforts to take control. It is important to note that the point of this question is to examine the perception of the person or party with whom you are concerned, not necessarily what has been observed by others (staff, parents, other students, or the community).

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

10. **CAPACITY:** Are there indications of a capacity or ability to carry out an act of targeted/planned violence?

Based upon the cognitive or adaptive capacity of the person or party of concern, what is the likelihood of a successfully organized and executed planned attack? If someone is making fairly exaggerated or complex threats but is unable to organize and execute them due to supervision, cognitive ability, or overall functioning, then feasibility drops.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

11. **EXTERNALIZING BLAME:** Are there indications of externalizing blame for behaviors and problems onto other people?

Does the person of concern have a profound sense of injustice or entitlement? Are there indications of being victimized, outcast, marginalized, or disconnected?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

12. **MENTAL HEALTH:** Are there indications of behavior/mental health concerns?

- a. Difficulties connecting with other people or lack of the ability to form intimate relationships (lacking empathy, remorse, love, and/or sympathy, etc.)?
- b. Signs of paranoia, or assumption of an attitude of self-importance or grandiosity. Is there a self-centeredness, or lack of insight into others' needs and/or feelings?
- c. Feelings of justification to act upon violent thoughts?
- d. Indications of social isolation?

A situation involving a person who lacks connection to others increases risk since there is less to lose by acting out. If a person (or group of people) lacks connection to others and is also marginalized within the student population, then intervention and connection is strongly indicated.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

13. **UPCOMING EVENTS:** Are there any upcoming, important events (grievance, lawsuit, financial aid appeal, inability to graduate, removal from academic program, break-up, loss, etc.)?

What situations agitate or trigger aggressive thinking, threats and behavior? Is there an indication that the person of concern is awaiting an event or action before making a final decision regarding violent behavior? Significant anniversary dates (either positive or negative)?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

14. **INHIBITORS:** Are there any indications of inhibitors that would decrease the likelihood of targeted violence?

Identify all positive influences that promote responsible and accountable pro-social behavior. The situation that lacks inhibitors is one of greater risk since there is less to lose by acting out and little motivation toward healthy solutions.

- Is there an indication that the person is able to form positive relationships?
- Do they have positive relationships?
- Are there indications that the person is involved in activities, events, interests, relationships, goals, organization memberships, faith-based connections, personal health?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

Other concerns/comments: _____

STEP 2 TEAM DISCUSSION

Team discussion:

1. Review all previous questions and highlight/identify responses that indicate concern or risk.

Describe _____

2. Constantly update situational information.

3. Identify your impressions and sense of urgency.

Describe _____

4. Is the potential aggression likely to cause severe or lethal injury?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

5. Do the responses identify threats (actions, specific circumstances, and/or communications) that are focused on a specific target (individual or group) for a specific reason or motive and involve planning and preparation with the capacity to carry out the event? If so, the risk of targeted aggression is clearly indicated and must be addressed immediately.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

6. Is there indication an attack has been scheduled or an identified date when an attack may happen?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

7. Is targeted aggression is indicated?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

8. Is a potential victim(s) are identified?

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

9. The potential outcome of the aggression may cause severe or lethal injury.

No Yes Unsure Describe: _____

STEP 3: PRECAUTIONARY ACTIONS

UPON CONCERN OF THREAT OF TARGETED, TAKE IMMEDIATE PRECAUTIONARY STEPS TO PROTECT POTENTIAL VICTIMS AND TAKE FURTHER APPROPRIATE ACTIONS.

Precautionary steps... may include but are not limited to:

1. If risk is imminent or anyone is in immediate danger, call law enforcement (911).
2. Seek further assessment and advisement from Law Enforcement or Community Threat Assessment Team if you are:
 - unable to confidently answer the questions on this instrument,
 - not confident that your institution can supervise the situation safely, or
3. Notify the potential target(s) regarding your concerns and the actions you are initiating.
4. Document all communication. Consider outlining and documenting a safety plan for the targeted individual(s).
5. Consider all options available to inhibit or decrease the chances of violence.

Options may also include restricting access to target(s) or campus; however, it is important to remember that removing the person who poses a threat does not necessarily decrease the risk of violence. Therefore, since the use of suspension, expulsion, or trespassing, may actually increase risk, the resulting elevated risk should be factored into the assessment.

STEP 4 POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

(Check if implemented):

College Options:

- Increase supervision in following settings:
- Warn intended victim
- Alert staff on need-to-know basis
- Provide means for the individual to safely report and discuss thoughts or intentions to harm others and receive appropriate intervention.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Community Options:

- Consultation with Willamette Valley Adult Threat Advisory Team (downtown TAT)
- Consultation with Mid-Valley Student Threat Assessment Team (STAT)
- Mental health connection
- Suicide risk assessment
- Anger management resources
- Alcohol/drug support
- Mentoring programs
- Notification to Probation/Parole officer
- Faith-based community program
- Other: _____

Notes: _____

This instrument was developed by Rebecca Bolante,, John Van Dreal, Salem-Keizer School District and Dave Okada. The questions were developed through a review of literature specific to targeted violence including works by: R.Borum, J. Cawood, G. De Becker, G. Deisinger, R.Fein, E.Johnson, M. Randazzo, W. Modzeleski, R. Meloy, K. Newman, M. O'Toole, A. Simons, B. Vossekuil, S. White (further references available upon request.). Use and copy: The authors grant consent to education institutions (public and private) to copy or use part or all of this screening instrument but requests notification at rebecca.bolante@gmail.com