

Threat Assessment and Management team (TAM)

What this handbook does:

It explains the purpose of the team and the principles for team members to follow regarding their mission to discover, identify and resolve threats to our campus. It presents a flowchart which considers each aspect of this mission, and sufficient information for the team member to use it in assessing and managing the threat.

What this handbook does not do:

It does not mandate a fixed plan in managing or referring an individual. The handbook presents options, with the understanding that the Case Manager and Counselor will tailor a plan to fit the person and situation.

Focus:

Prevent violence rather than react to it.

Get the individual help, not just identify and remove the threat.

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**Per team decision on 9/11, and approved by Head of School, Individual self-harm situations not affecting others are not in the scope of the Threat Assessment and Management team.

Threat Assessment and Management team (TAM)

I. Purpose

- A. To prevent individuals from harming others and to assist people in need. We focus on preventing violence rather than responding to it.
- B. We look for the red flags, assess the legitimacy of concerns, determine the likelihood of harm and then develop strategies to reduce the risk. After implementation, we monitor and re-evaluate.
- C. The team is multidisciplinary because the indicators may be scattered across many sources.
- D. Our goal is reduce the likelihood of harm. Not just that of school shootings, but also targeted violence, physical and cyber bullying and mental illness that risks suicide as well as substance abuse.
- E. Management is in the title because we not only identify risks, but also connect those that need help with the resources needed.
- F. We evaluate behavior. We do not attempt to profile individuals by assuming an individual possesses certain traits. We are fact-based, focusing only on the information in the individual case and whether these facts are indicative that the person is planning harm.
- G. During this process, we are committed as well to ensuring the safety of potential and actual victims.

II. Mission Statement

- A. The Threat Assessment and Management team (TAM) is committed to improving school safety through a proactive, collaborative, coordinated, objective and thoughtful approach to the identification, assessment, intervention and management of situations that may reasonably pose a threat to the safety of the school.
- B. Our mission statement will be published as official policy and disseminated to the school community. It will be stressed that our goal is to ensure that the individual find help, not simply to identify and remove the threat.

III. Guiding Principles

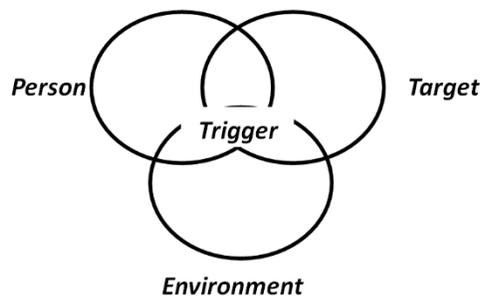
As the TAM conducts its inquiries, there are 12 principles that all TAM members must consider:

1. Targeted Violence can often be prevented. Unlike sudden acts, it is rarely spontaneous. We must attempt to intervene as the person goes downward on the path.



2. Violence is dynamic. We don't determine if someone is a "violent person." We look at the situation and decide if it can cause this person to become a threat. For this reason, we must look ahead to see if factors can increase or decrease the risk of violence. This is why we monitor and re-evaluate.

3. Targeted violence has several factors. Focus not only on the person, but on the environment/other people that can cause the behavior or violence. The threat must still be addressed, but prevention means looking at the setting and target as well.



4. Corroboration is critical. Check facts where possible. Multiple sources means multiple viewpoints. Be skeptical. Weigh credibility. Remember that we use facts and behaviors, not assumptions.
5. Behavior, not Profiles. Focus on what this person in this particular context has done.
6. Cooperate, communicate, collaborate. More eyes the better. Involve appropriate sources both inside and outside the campus. If we don't share, we may not know we have a problem. Decide the timing and type of the intervention.
7. Does the Person pose a threat? The central question. Some can make a threat, and we may determine that, while it needs to be corrected, it is not a credible threat. On the other side, some will pose a threat that have never "made a threat." Don't get tied as to whether they made a statement to determine if they are a threat.
8. Keep the victim in mind. They don't care about our assessment. They want to know steps are being taken to keep them safe. Spend time and effort in communicating with them. This applies to "witnesses" as well, who worry about retribution.
9. Early Identification and Intervention is key. Targeted violence is *the end result*. So the earlier we identify a risk, the easier it is to divert and solve the situation. The longer we wait, the greater the risk and the more draconian must be the solution.
10. Multiple and easy reporting. Ensure campus knows what they should look for, and can report it anonymously if they want. Multiple methods need to be employed, such as tip lines, emails and counselors.
11. More resources means more effective intervention. This is why the TAM team comes from different backgrounds. The management plan against a threat must be a coordinated and sustained plan to be effective.
12. Safety is the Primary Focus. Not punishment. The consequences of bad behavior must of course be applied in a reasonable and timely manner. But remember that counseling, support, confrontation, termination, forced hospitalization—are just tools. The assessment and management for each case must consider the best tools to use in order to provide the best safety for the school. A tool that simply provides punishment may also supply the trigger for violence.

IV. Team members and responsibilities

A core team will meet bi-weekly to discuss issues. As a large team would give scheduling issues, specialists for the affected Division and HR for faculty/staff issues can be included if one of the persons discussed is from their area.

A. Core members

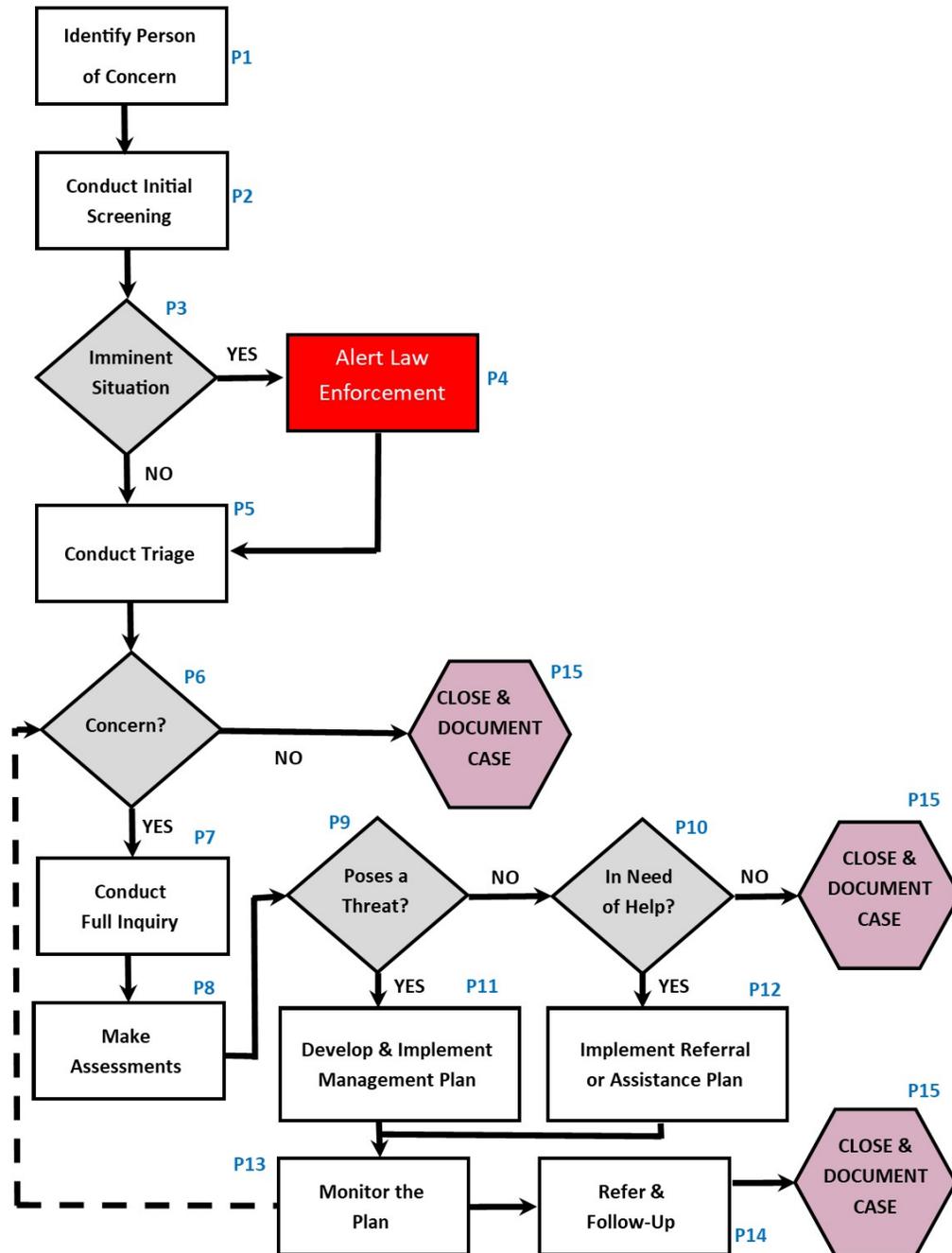
1. Director of Security (TAM Leader)
2. Campus Protection Officer
3. Director of Human Resources
4. US – Head & Counselor
5. MS – Head
6. LS – Head
7. Director of Athletics
8. Academic Dean

- This is not an exhaustive list of specialists. Others will be requested as necessary.
- The **Head of School** will attend in all cases identified as an *imminent threat*. For all other cases he has the option of attendance.

B. Case Manager – For each case introduced, a Case Manager will be assigned. This person is responsible for updating the Case Review sheet and apprising TAM members of the status of the case.

V. The Process

This is the flowchart describing the process for each case. The label next to the box, such as “P1,” references the narrative in this section that expands on each step of the process.



P1 – Identify Person of Concern

- Student, Parent, Faculty or Staff member that has engaged in threatening behavior or done something that raised serious concern about their well-being, stability or potential for violence or suicide.
- Encourage Reporting – Includes worrisome or unusual behavior. Even if it seems low-level or unclear.
- Reporting sources can include:
 - Students and Faculty
 - Parents
 - Anonymous tips
 - Law Enforcement and external community sources
 - Human Resources
 - School counselors
 - Coaches
 - Honor board
- Create a Case document: However a TAM member obtains the information, they should initiate a case document (detailed later) and bring it up to TAM members for initial screening.

P2 Initial Screening

- **Is there an imminent threat? (See P3) Contact school security and law enforcement immediately.**
- Gather initial information
 - Check your records for previous incidents
 - If there is a record, talk to previous contacts involved as they may have more information on the current situation.
 - Human Resources for faculty/staff
 - Applicable Division Heads and counselors if a student. At this point they are brought into the TAM group as a specialist for this case.
 - Campus security
 - Online searches by name for activity
 - Local law enforcement records

P3 Imminent Situation

- **Person has a weapon, has indicated a threat to use it and appears ready to act.**
- **Notify the Security on campus. (See P4)** After person is detained, then we can do further analysis. Remember that they may be released and constitute a further threat, so we need to continue the process.

P4 Alert Law Enforcement

- The Campus Security Officer will move to detain the person. The Director of Security will coordinate with LEO for further action and take alerting steps for the campus if they are necessary.
- If subject not on campus, Director of Security will coordinate with Law Enforcement for detaining an immediate threat.

P5 Conduct Triage

- Now that preliminary information is gathered, look at some specific questions to see if a full inquiry is required.
- Questions:
 - Has there been any mention of suicidal thoughts, plans or attempts?
 - Any mention of serious thoughts or plans for violence.
 - Any behaviors that cause concern for violence or self-harm?
 - Do they have access to weapons, or are trying to get access?
 - Are their behaviors significantly disruptive to the school?

P6 Concern?

- If **yes** to any of the points in P5 Conduct Triage, go to [P7 – Full inquiry](#)
- If **no** to all of these points, go to [P15- Close & Document Case](#)

P7 Conduct Full Inquiry

- We move beyond the Admin & Team members at this point to identify who in the person's life may have the information the Team needs to know.
- Conduct questions cautiously to prevent undue alarm. Remember, this is not someone that is an immediate threat.
- Emphasize that your primary purpose is to address safety concerns, and (where possible) to assist the individual in question, not to punish them.
- "Have you noticed, heard or been told anything about this person that seems out of the ordinary, troubling or concerning."
- Information sources: Many of these will be the reporting tips that brought the person to your attention. Go back and develop the situation with them. This includes:
 - All Faculty and staff. Question Maintenance & support staff as well. Many times students speak freely in front of them, or discard things they notice.
 - Bus Drivers, Coaches, Aftercare
 - Honor Councils: If person had or has a pending violation.
 - HR Grievances that could impact
 - Students/Colleagues that know the individual.
 - Health Care/Physician (for what is allowed by both HIPAA and FIRPA); in most cases this will require a routing through law enforcement.
- Person of concern:
 - Since it has become a full inquiry, this is now appropriate. If the situation is one where the person appears volatile & displays high-risk behaviors, then it **is best handled through law enforcement.**
 - For lower risk situations, the Dean or (for faculty) HR may be a better choice. The division Counselor is also integral to this inquiry.

Key inquiry questions:

Remember that a **yes** answer does not mean they pose a threat or require assistance. What we are looking for is fascination/fixation on these topics.

- What are person's motives and goals? We want to understand the context of the actions, and do those conditions still exist?
 - What motivated the statement or actions?
 - Does the situation that caused the statement/action still exist?
 - Is there a major grievance against someone?
 - What efforts did they already take to resolve the situation?
 - Did it solve any part of the problem?
 - Did they express justification for the violence?
 - Is there a lack of concern for possible consequences of violent or inappropriate behavior?
- Any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?
 - Friends "alerted" or things in a post or verbally
- Inappropriate interest in:
 - What security is in place at our school & how to defeat it
 - Weapons, including those recently acquired
 - Other school attacks, terrorism or mass violence
 - Stalking, undue interest in others
- Attack-related behaviors (behavior that advances the idea of harming)
This gives an idea how far along they've come along in their plan
 - Developing an attack idea or plan?
 - Trying to acquire weapons, or practice with weapons or other materials that can help in an attack.
 - Surveillance of possible sites or people for attack
 - Testing access to reach a target or person.
 - Rehearsing for an attack
- Does person have capacity to carry out an attack?
 - How organized is their thinking and behavior?
 - Does the person demonstrate ability to act on their thoughts?
 - Do they have the means to conduct an attack?

Remember that access to weapons should be combined with an indication of planning harm. While it is an indicator, it should be used in conjunction with other factors (ie. "He has a weapon AND now he's making plans")

- Is the person experiencing hopelessness, desperation or despair?
 - A recent failure or loss (including of status)
 - Do they normally have difficulty in times of stress?
 - Is their behavior indicative that suicide may be considered?

- Is the person’s narrative (“story”) consistent with their actions.
 - Can we confirm that what they say ties into their behavior?
 - Note: If this is the person of interest, their truthfulness may give an indicator if any treatment would require more effort to effect.
- Are other people concerned about their potential for violence?
 - Do they know a specific target or timeframe?
 - Is this person capable of violence? Remember that those closest may not *want* to see the potential for violence.
- What Peer factors can increase or decrease the potential for violence?
 - Are their peers discourage, encourage or collude on an attack?
- What environmental factors can increase or decrease the potential for violence?
 - Remember that violence is dynamic, and identifying triggering and calming variables will be needed for management.
- Finally, where is the person along the violence path. (Section III – Guiding principles)

P8 Make the assessment (using P9 & P10)

- We’ve obtained information. We’ve got answers to the questions. But to assess the threat it now boils down to two primary factors:
- **Question A: Threat of Harm (P9)**
 - Does the person’s behavior suggest that they are on the pathway to harm? Are they a threat to themselves or others?
 - Answer **Yes** if:

IMMINENT Risk
 Person is clear & immediate threat of serious violence towards self or others
 Go to **P4—Alert Law Enforcement**

HIGH Risk
 Threat of self-harm or physical violence, usually to an identifiable target, but lacks immediacy and/or a specific plan
 OR
 has a plan, but lacks a specific target
 Go to **P11—Develop & Implement a Management Plan**

- If not these, Answer **No** & go to **Question B**
- **Question B: Need for Help (P10)**
 - Does the person show a need for help or intervention, including possible mental health care?
 - Answer **Yes** if:

MODERATE Risk
 No threat at this time, but exhibits behaviors or in circumstances likely to be disruptive.
 Go to **P12 Implement Referral or Assistance Plan**

LOW Risk
 No threat at this time, and no behaviors likely to be disruptive. Possible future risk of escalation.
 Go to **P12 Implement Referral or Assistance Plan**

- If the answer is **No** then go to **P15 Close & Document Case**

P11 Develop & Implement a Management Plan

- Focus on what is working for the person and search for on and off campus resources to steer them away from current thoughts and plans.
- We are seeking assistance to address underlying problems.
- Options: (These are to be listed if used on the Case Review Sheet)
 - Engage with the person. Positively. Remove the distance they have created and listen to their concerns, assisting them with problem solving.
 - Note: If they fit the High Risk profile, ensure that Security is alerted and nearby in case of adverse interviews.
 - Monitor the situation. If not imminent or high risk, sometimes effective. However, can be active monitoring where others who know person are involved.
 - Family/Parental notification.
 - Law enforcement intervention – A heavier hand may be needed, whether it is school security emphasizing points or local law enforcement becoming formally involved.
 - Contracts and expectations: If an agreement on behavior is reached, this should be kept as part of the students TAM file & annotated on the Case Review Sheet.
 - Mandated psychological assessment or hospitalization
 - Suspension or expel of student, suspension or voluntary/involuntary leave for faculty/staff.
 - Modification of the environment, which can include change of class and circle of friends.
 - Other options as desired.
- Victim protective actions – During the intervention, it is also important to protect the victim. In many cases, this will include changing their exposure to the person and giving them information and assistance to ensure their safety.

P12 Referral or Assistance Plan

- Similar to P11 Management Plan, it differs in that no specific threat is present. The focus is on disruptive behavior and risk of escalation.
- Counseling and advisor assistance is the preferred option. Professional help could be desired.
- Family involvement is key.
- Annotate assistance on the Case Review Sheet.

P13 Monitor the Plan

- The team must keep the individual in the plan, monitoring until the person can no longer be reasonably assessed as a threat.
- Any changes must be brought to the TAM during the meeting, or earlier if it is an imminent threat.

P14 Refer and Follow-Up

- Remember that a person does not simply become a threat and then cease to be a threat. The risk level that can lead to action rises and falls, and no case truly closes.
- The team should coordinate to keep tabs on individuals who **were imminent or high threats**, in order to minimize the risk of a return threat.

P15 Close and Document Case

- While Follow-up can continue for a number of years, for those **cases of Medium or Lower** threat levels the case will eventually close.
- Once we assess the threat as no longer valid, it will be annotated on the Case Review Sheet and the case will be closed.

VI. Documentation

A. Case Review Sheet

1. The sheet consists of two parts.
 - a) Data & narrative section – detailing risk level & information about case, and including narrative stating reason for case.
 - b) Flowchart diagram: Unique to that individual, it details the steps in the process so that all TAM members know the stage we are at in the process. Circle the stage & date where we are at in the process. Update as we proceed.
2. The person assigned as Case Manager will be responsible for updating the case review sheet.
3. After every TAM meeting, the Case Review Sheets discussed is copied for the Director of Security files as a backup. They will be stored in a locked file system, or scanned in and stored on a secure server.
4. Case Review Sheet blank form
(2 sided document – attached)

