


Nebraska Community Threat Assessment Guidance

FEBRUARY 2019

NOTE: THIS GUIDANCE SHOULD ONLY BE UTILIZED BY THOSE WITH PROPER THREAT ASSESSMENT TRAINING OR CONSULTATION. 

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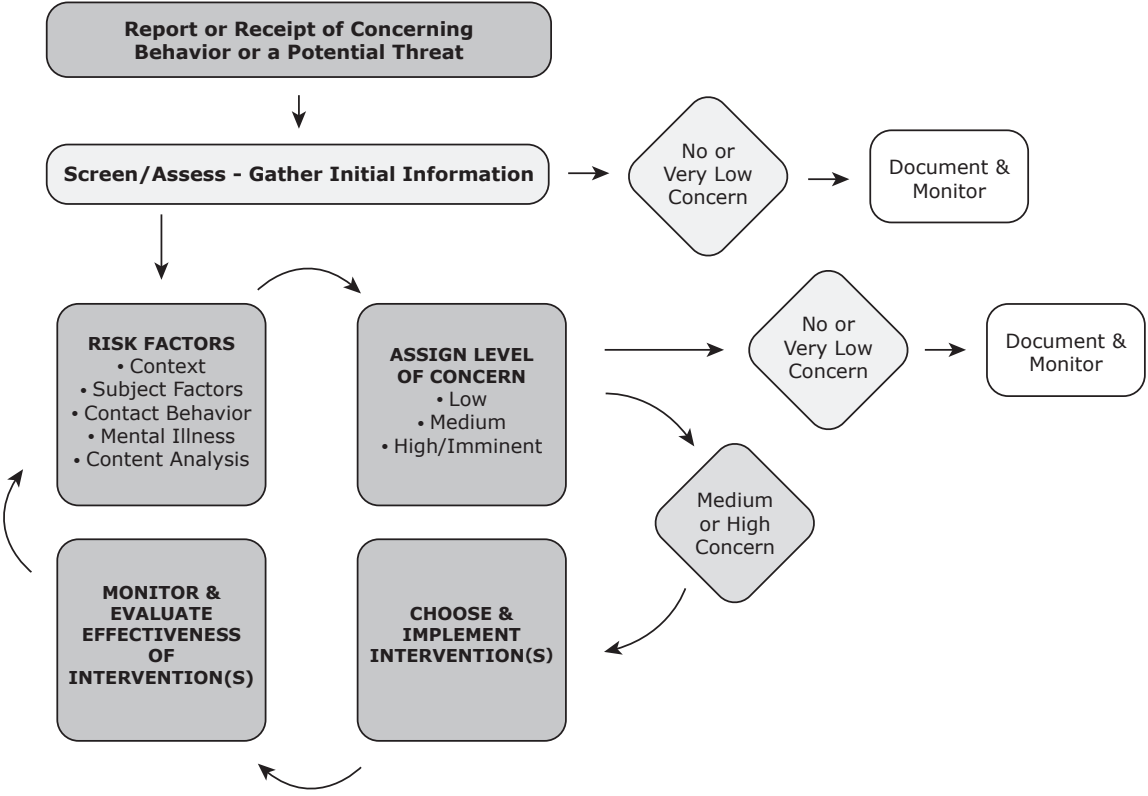
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Name of Subject: _____

Date: _____

Assessor: _____

Notes:



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PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS TO DETERMINE
IF IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NECESSARY:

Assessment of Immediacy of Threat and Accessibility of Person/Object of Focus:

- Nature and intensity of threat posed.
- Nature of the contact behavior.
- Is the subject identifiable? Subject factors.
- Why is the subject acting now?
- Is there a presence of precipitating stressors for the subject?
- Does the subject have the means to carry out the threat?
- What is the subject's proximity to the person/object of focus?
- What information is still required to properly assess the situation?
- What interagency cooperation may be required to fully assess and manage the situation?
- Initial consideration of protective actions.

Screening Considerations:

The following factors may allow for a case/situation to be screened out subsequent to a preliminary investigation:

- Behavior of concern is isolated and not part of a pattern of behavior.
- Behavior of concern is nuisance activity in nature with no threatening or intimidating activity.
- Threatened behavior or behavior of concern is vague and indirect.
- Information contained within the communicated threat is inconsistent, implausible, or lacks detail.
- Content related to the behavior of concern suggests person is unlikely to carry it out.

If concern remains after the initial screening, further assessment and investigation should address whether the following observable/behavioral risk factors are present. Note: all that apply prior to determining a further level of risk/concern.

Observable/Behavioral Threat Assessment Risk Factors

Pattern of Contacts

- Indicators of Intensity of Effort (i.e., multiple prior contacts, multiple methods of contact behavior)?
- Escalation of behavior or language?

Expression of Violent Intention

- "Leaking" -- telling friends, family, etc. about plans to attack?
- Threats expressed or simulated in written, electronic, audio, or video form announcing threats or plans for hurting others?
- Rehearsal or fantasy activity (e.g., postings, journals, video, drawings).
- Hit list? Details provided re: those targeted?
- Details provided re: how violence will be carried out?
- Enlisting aid of others or divulging plans to others in small circle?
- Evidence of attack-related behaviors and planning.
- Capacity to carry out an act of person/object of focused violence.
- Express desire/plan to approach.

Mention/Presence of Weapons

- Carrying a weapon (actual or fake) to school.
- Access to or fascination with weapons, especially guns.
- Reportedly brought a weapon to school.
- Weapon mentioned in threat?
- Weapon present or available?
- Communication about ideas and intentions.

Other Observable/Behavioral Factors Displayed by Subject

- History of grievance with person/object of focus?
- Prior arrest record or prior harassment/threat-related activity?
- Problematic contacts with other agencies?
- Recent life stressors?
- Presence of serious mental illness symptoms?

Subject's Motivation as Implied by Behaviors & Communications

- Nature of subject's motivation? *Bottom Line: the More Personal, The Higher the Concern.*
- Person/object of focus identified/held responsible?
- Motives driven by mental illness?
- Seeking revenge/retaliation for perceived injustice or harm?
- Desire for revenge communicated?

Person/Object of Focus Factors

- Subject views person/object of focus(s) as responsible for current situation or difficulties?
- Subject & person/object of focus had prior conflict?
- Consistent focus on person/object of focus?
- Sharing of grievance(s) of person/object of focus to others?
- Shift of person/object of focus?

Contextual Factors (why now??)

- Suspicious people or items and changes in typical patterns of activities surrounding school?
- Recent events elsewhere suggesting "Copy-cat effect."
- Personal anniversaries.
- Recent or upcoming crisis for subject?
- Upcoming events of concern?

Observable/Behavioral Threat Assessment Risk Factors (cont.)

References to Prior Violence

- Make reference to other acts of targeted violence? (e.g., Columbine, other school shootings, recent school shootings)
 - Nature of reference:
 - Simple mention.
 - Desire to repeat/perform own act.
- Unusual interest in targeted violence.
- Research re: prior targeted violence.

Key Communication Content

- Describes/presents feelings of hopelessness or despair (including suicidal ideation or attempts).
- Losses, real or perceived.
- Asserts that violence is a solution to his or her problems.
- Reflects anger, frustration and the dark side of life in school essays or writing projects?

Threatening Language

- Nature of threat:
 - Direct.
 - Indirect/Vague.
 - Conditional (threatens to be violent if conditions are not met).
- Threats most concerning if:
 - 1) Cases involving subjects with serious mental illness or
 - 2) Threats emerge as part of series of contacts or with prior problematic approach history.

NOTE: Simply morbid or dark content without other warning indicators may warrant a conversation to assess whether other mental health/behavioral intervention to address non-violent but other concerns is warranted.

Formulate a level of concern/risk based upon the observable/behavioral risk factors endorsed on the previous pages. When risk levels overlap, note the highest level appropriate.

Levels of Concern/Risk

LOW LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK: *Further assessment is not yet warranted*

Behavior that poses a minimal risk to the victim and community safety. Information/Investigation suggests low potential for harm to a targeted individual, group or institution. No inappropriate approach behaviors exhibited. Subject's interest can generally be considered to be at a nuisance, non-threatening and non-dangerous level.

- A non-threatening or nuisance statement found to pose minimal risk to the victim and public safety.
- Threatened behavior or behavior of concern is vague and indirect.
- Information contained within the communicated threat is inconsistent, implausible, or lacks detail.
- Threatened behavior not realistic or plausible.
- Content related to the behavior of concern suggests person is unlikely to carry it out.
- Available information suggests follow through unlikely.

MODERATE LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK: *Monitor for escalation of concern*

Moderate potential for disruptive or threatened behavior of concern. Information/Investigation suggests a moderate potential for harm or serious disruption to a targeted individual, group or institution. The subject can be considered to have threatening, inappropriate, or otherwise unusual interest toward a targeted person, and has exhibited the ability or interest to harm such person. Further investigation may be required. Though immediate risk of harm or serious disruption is not likely after initial investigation or management strategies are in place, the situation needs further monitoring.

- Subject suffers from mental illness (but stable) and has a persistent grievance.
- Threatened behavior is more direct and more concrete than a low level threat.
- Communications suggest that the subject has given some thought to how the act will be carried out.
- There is no strong indication that the subject has taken preparatory steps.
- Indications that the subject has demonstrated planning for carrying out the act.
- Other behaviors of concern exist to suggest that the threatening statements or behaviors of concern are not in isolation.

HIGH LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK: *Action required to contain likelihood of harm*

Information/Investigation indicates a likelihood of harm or serious disruption toward a targeted individual, group or institution. Further investigation is required. Imminent harm is possible. Immediate investigation is initiated with focus on obtaining collaborative data concerning the subject's location, behavior and lethality. Additional steps necessary (possibly contact law enforcement agencies or contact subject) to initiate safety measures.

- Threat is direct, specific and plausible.
- Threat suggests concrete steps have been taken toward carrying it out (e.g., statements indicating that the subject has acquired a weapon or had the victim under surveillance).
- Subject suffers from serious mental illness and has made a direct threat.
- Patterns of behaviors/communications escalated in intensity/tone from harassing to threatening.

In general, the more direct and detailed a threat is, the more serious the risk of its being acted on. A threat assessed as a HIGH concern/risk will generally require immediate law enforcement intervention.

In some cases, the distinction between levels of threat may not be as obvious and there will be overlap/fluctuation between the categories. Sometimes it may be prudent to assume a higher level of risk/concern until it is ruled out.

Threat Assessment Intervention

LOW LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK:

- Document the behavior.
- Restrict privileges if necessary.
- Connect with a trusted individual / group.
- Redefine/reassert behavior expectations.
- Give corrective/preventive feedback to subject.
- Mediate unresolved conflict.
- Problem-solve together.
- Assess validity of grievance/complaint.
- Apology and/or restitution.
- Contact Probation/Parole Officer or Caseworker

- Follow-up: Progress updates.
- Other (please specify) _____.

MODERATE LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK:

- Document the behavior.
- Psychological assessment if necessary or mental health issue raised.
- Safe Separation (minimize contact).
- Daily to weekly attitude and behavior checks.
- Ask trusted person to regularly engage with person of concern.
- Problem-solve together.
- Contact Probation/Parole Officer or Caseworker.
- Follow school or workplace discipline procedures.
- If needed, refer subject for mental health assessment.
- Assign a team member to monitor subject and status of intervention, as appropriate.
- Follow-up: Progress updates.
- Cease & Desist letter (adult subject)
- Protection Order (adult subject)
- Other (please specify) _____.

HIGH LEVEL OF CONCERN/RISK:

- Work with law enforcement to contain threat.
- Law enforcement involvement (welfare check/arrest if warranted).
- Committal if warranted (adult subject).
- Hospitalization if warranted (juvenile subject).
- Consider safe separation (minimize contact)
- Notify subject/parents of requirements for readmission to school or work.
- Daily search decreasing with time to random.
- Regular search of vehicle, locker, writings, etc.
- Follow discipline procedures.
- Contact Probation/Parole Officer or Caseworker.
- Do not allow unsupervised before/after school if subject is a juvenile.
- Follow-up: Progress updates.
- Assign team member to monitor subject and intervention/safety plan.
- Cease & Desist letter (adult subject)
- Protection Order (adult subject)
- Other (please specify)_____.



215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 401
Lincoln, NE 68588-0228

Phone: 402-472-5678
Fax: 402-472-5679
Email: ppc@nebraska.edu