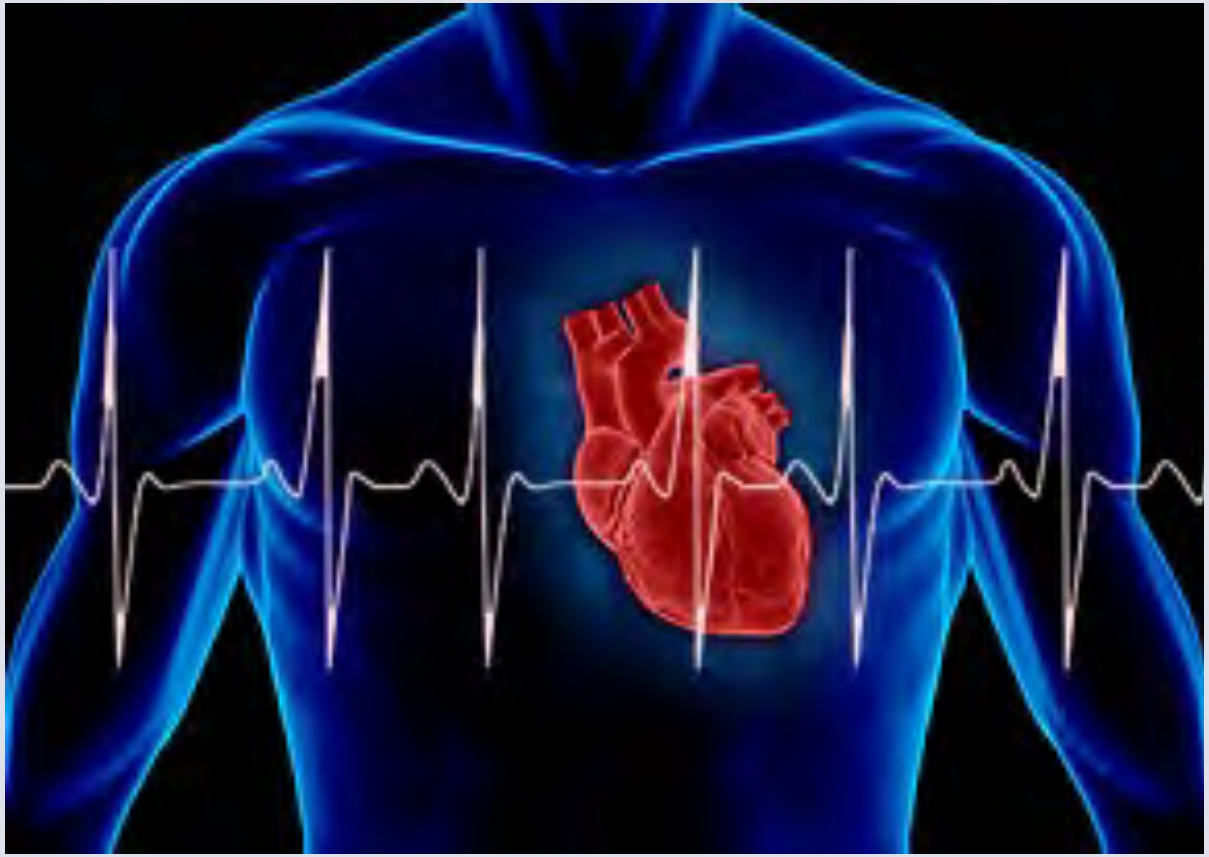
Preventing Targeted Violence

Prevention vs Prediction

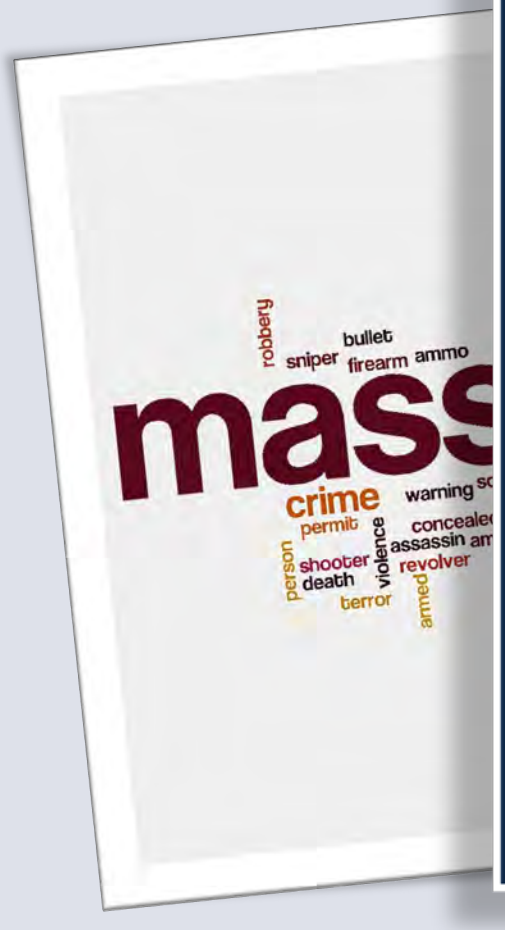
Risk Factors for Heart Attack:

- Family history
- Poor diet
- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Stress
- Physical inactivity



*To prevent acts of targeted violence, we look at risk factors and warning signs to develop a mitigation plan.

Active Shooter



IDENTIFY

ASSESS

MANAGE

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Types of Violence

Affective:

- Impromptu, impulsive and reactive
- Emotional, usually defensive in response to perceived imminent threat

Predatory:

- Targeted, planned
- Often driven by grievance
- Offenders do NOT snap
- Not spontaneous, emotion-driven, reactive crimes
- Take time to **consider, plan, and prepare** their attack… giving bystanders opportunity to **observe and report** and allow threat assessment teams to engage in a management plan.

Targeted Violence

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

OFFENDERS:

- **Consider, plan** and **prepare** in advance of attacks
- Engage in behaviors that **precede** and are **related** to their attacks

- DETECTABLE BEHAVIORS = OPPORTUNITY FOR DISRUPTION

Fein and Vossekuil (1998); Defense Science Board Task Force on Predicting Violent Behavior (2012)

What's the "profile"?

No usual suspects
No demographic profile
No single behavior

- A **“perfect storm”** develops based upon a multitude of factors and conditions.
- Assessing and managing threats is not a “one size fits all” approach.

Explaining Tragedy

How do we explain the worst?

- Guns
- Mental Health
- Bullying

Identification

Assessment

Management

Sandy Hook Promise

Identification

One of the most significant challenges for disruption and prevention

A two-fold process:

- **recognition** of concerning behaviors AND
- **reporting** to law enforcement

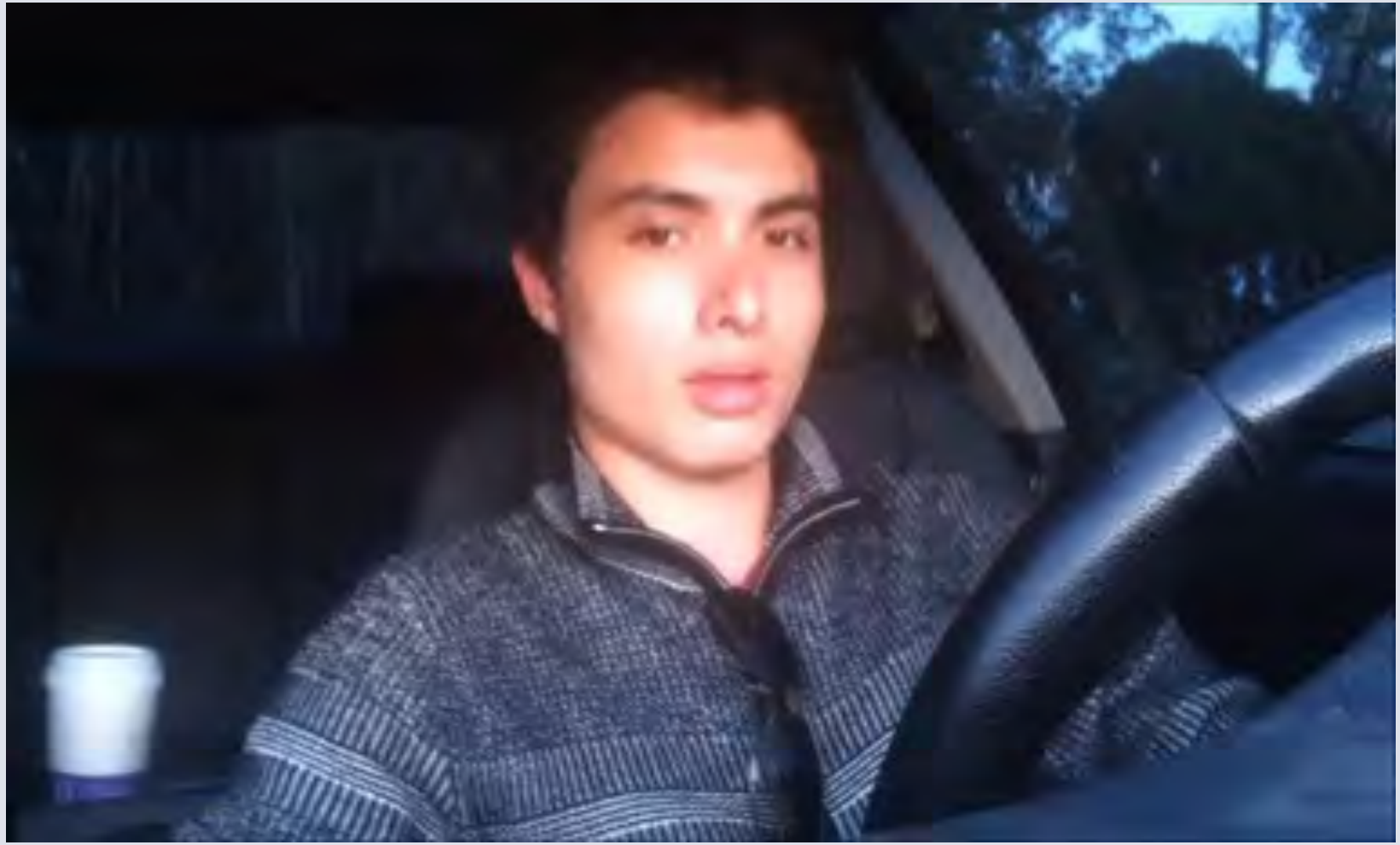
Recognition

PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE

6. Attack
5. Breach
4. Preparation
3. Research & Planning
2. Ideation
1. Grievance

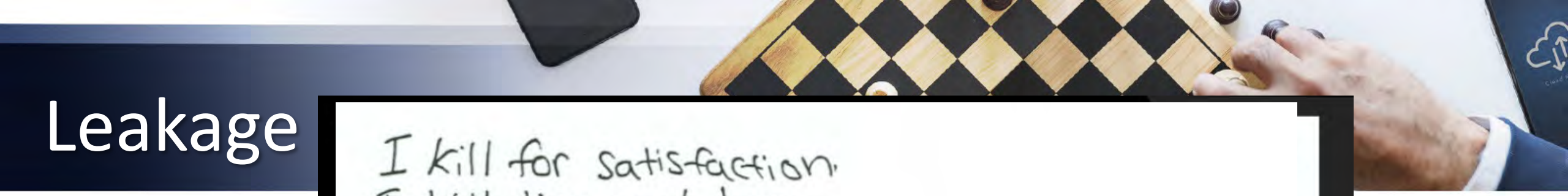
From Fein and Vossekuil (1995, 1998); Calhoun and Weston, (2003)

Grievance



Brittle People

Leakage



I kill for satisfaction.
I kill him and her.
I don't care.
thier Blood will Become wine.
Flesh into delightful meat.
Like the taste of a dog on a street.

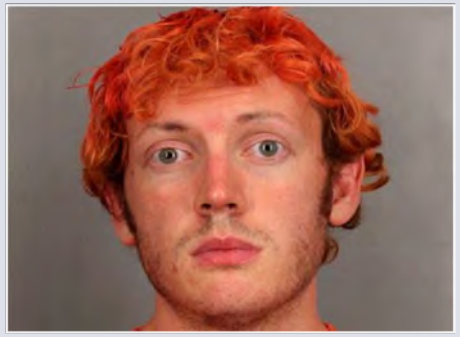
Blood will pour from thier tormented bodies.
Cries of punishment not foolishment.
Their Torso will break.
They will scream for mercy.
AND they will die!!!

This is no lie.
For the scream and cry.

Social Media

- Leakage
- Evidence of problematic interpersonal interactions
- Evidence of pathway behavior
- Announcing the attack
- Delivering legacy token

Red Zone Behaviors



Change in Appearance

Cessation of Drugs and Alcohol

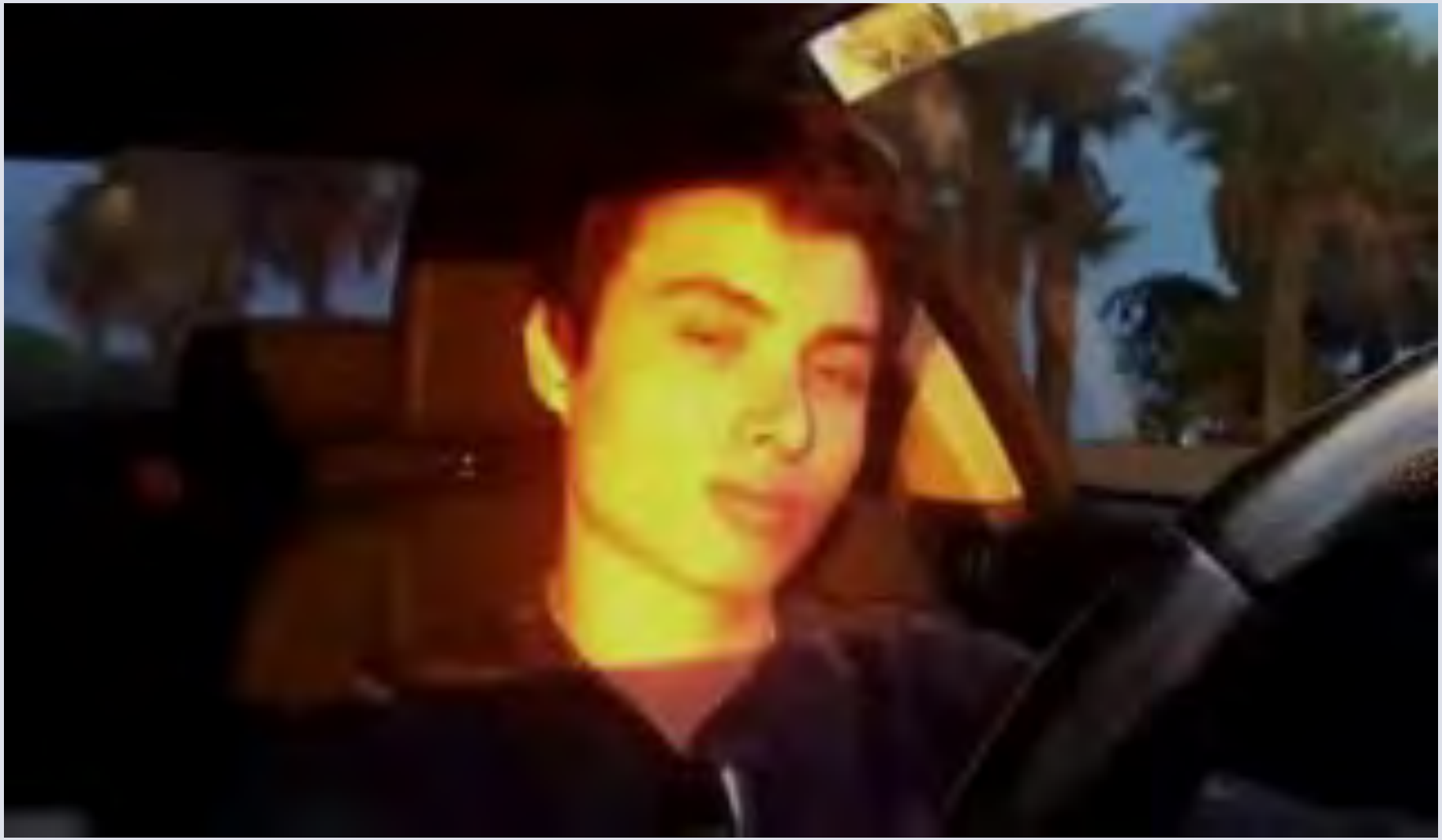
Legacy Token

Security Probing

Weapons Acquisition

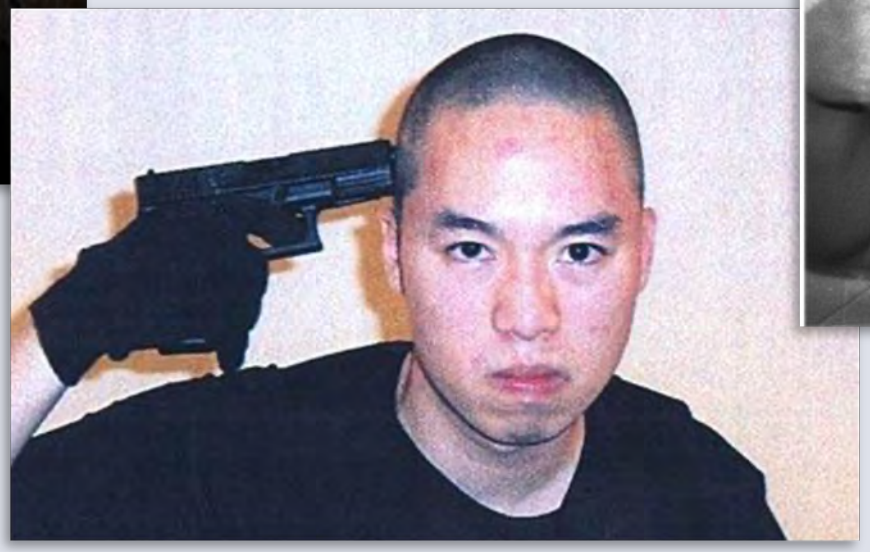
Pre-Attack Staging

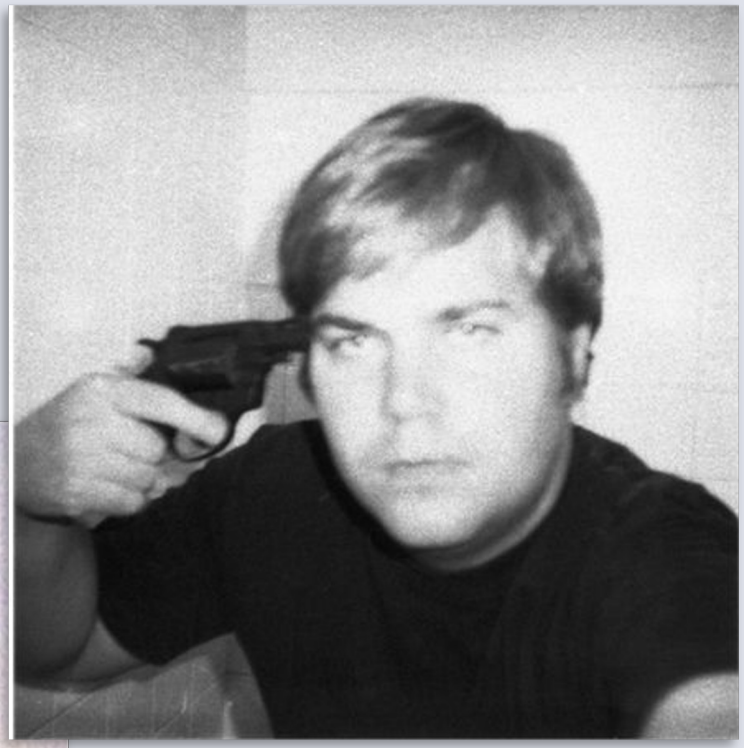
Legacy Token



Identification

Stalking & Harassment





Targeting

Target?

Object of the grievance?

Victim count?

Availability?

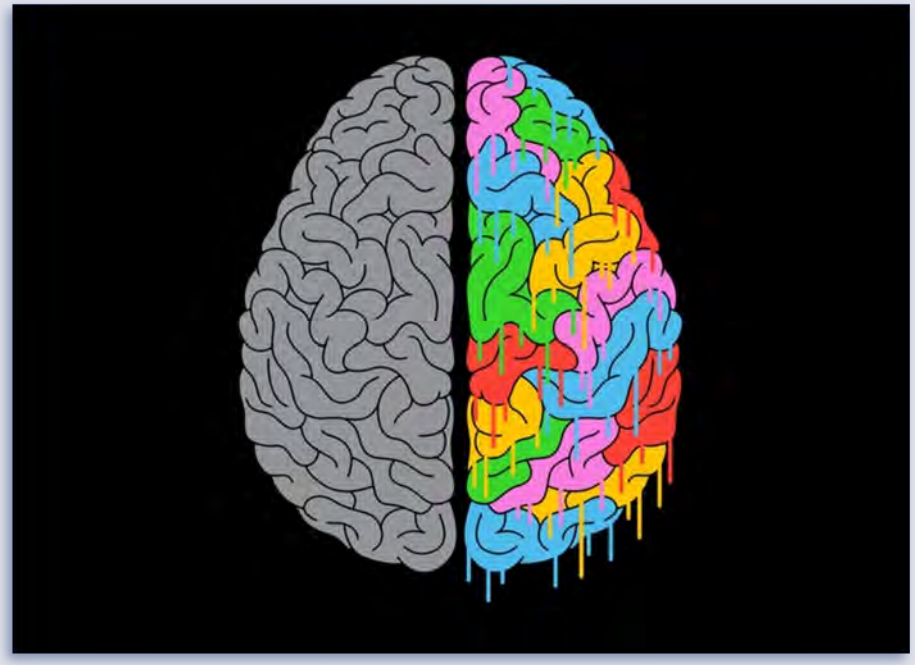
CONTEXT

The Outsider

- Desirable
- Available
- Vulnerable
- Breaching/infiltration
- Pre-attack site surveillance

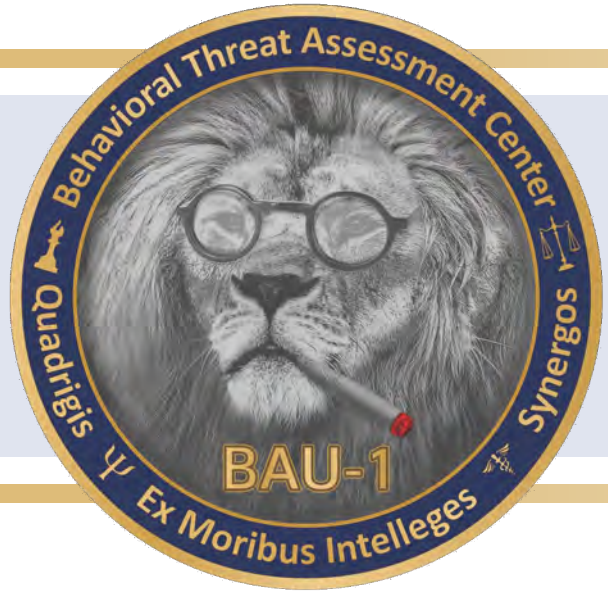
Mental Illness

"The probability of violence for severe mental illness alone is approximately the same as for subjects with no severe mental illness…"



Elbogen, E. & Johnson, S. *The Intricate Link Between Violence and Mental Disorder.* Archives of Gen. Psychiatry, Vol. 66 (No. 2) Feb 2009

Identification



Assessment

Management

Threat Assessment

Definition:
Accurately and defensibly assess the threat posed by the subject of significant and imminent violence

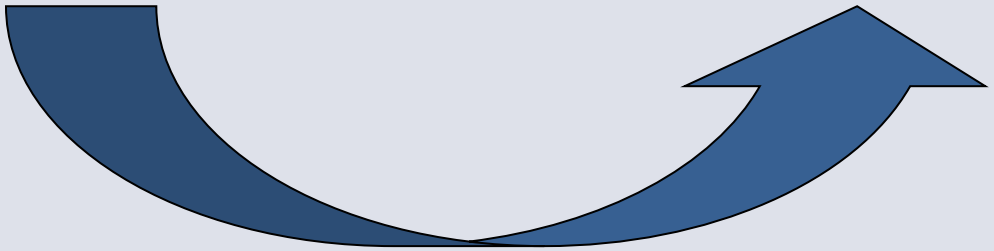
Accomplished by:
Trained threat assessment professionals, teams, and/or units

Making v Posing

Goal of Assessment:

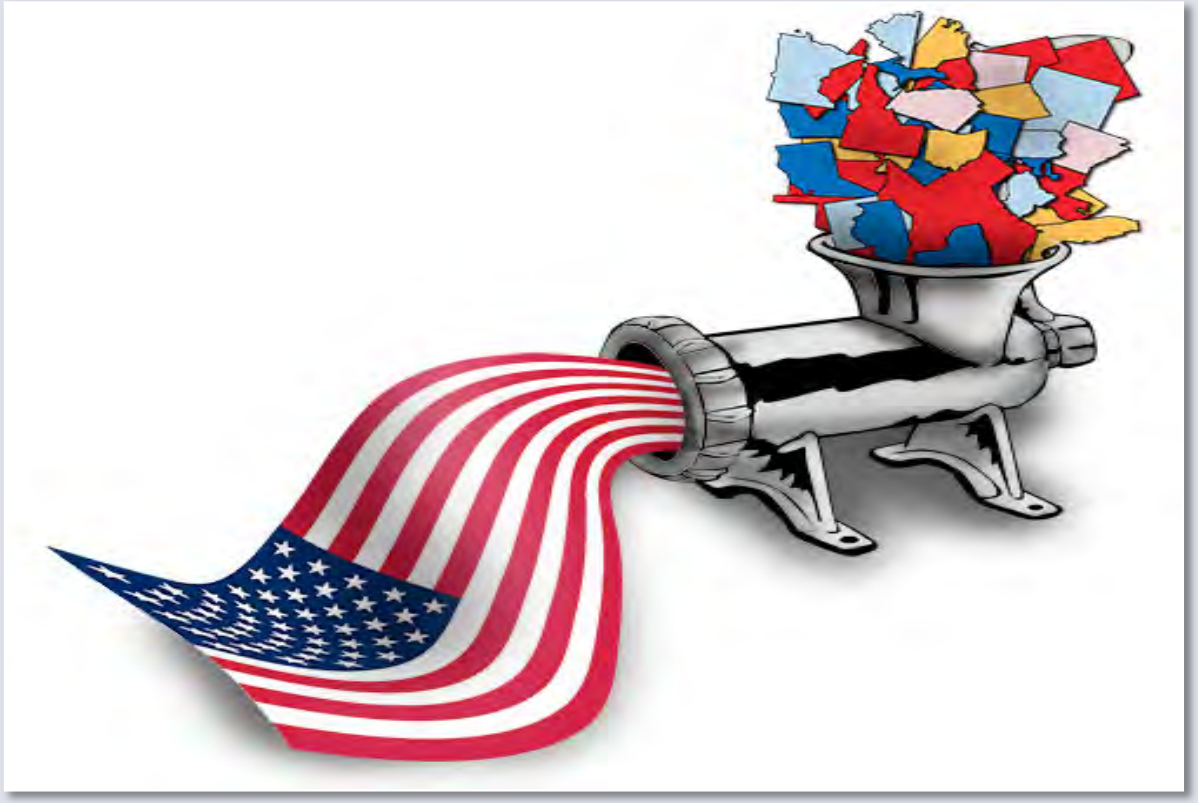
Is there evidence to suggest movement from

THOUGHT *to* ***ACTION***



Waiting for a subject to make a threat is risky because many people who pose the most concern never make a direct threat.

Assessments



If you have a case in which there is already an “assessment” consider who conducted them, for what purpose and with what information. Avoid competing assessments.

Whole Picture

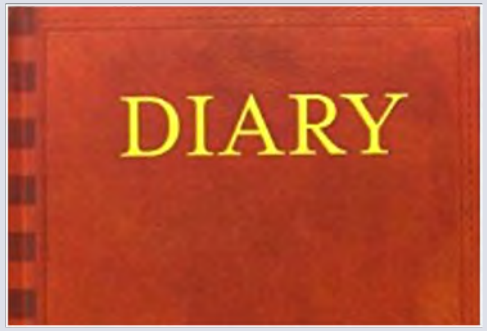
Totality of circumstance vs single points. Everyone has different aspects - work life, home life, school life, personality… the goal is to collect as much information as possible to understand the whole.

Information Gathering

Police and Military Records

School and Work Records

Medical and Mental Health Records

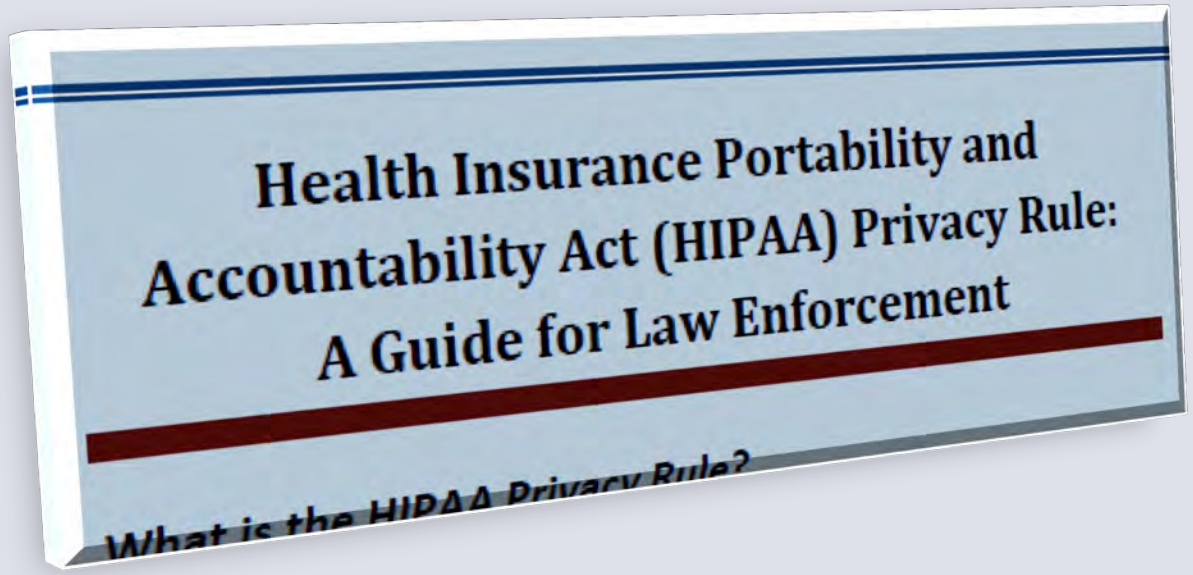


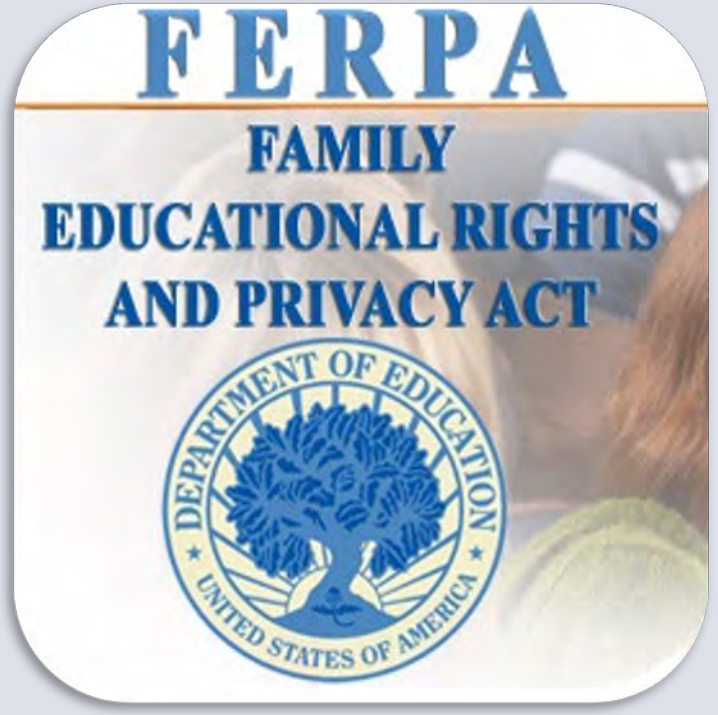
Communications and Journals

Life and Relationships

Social Media

Privacy Laws





Law enforcement exceptions often allow disclosure of protected info when necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to health or safety.

Enhancers

RISK FACTORS

Violence History

Physical and Mental Health

Weapons Access/ Explosives

Problematic Behaviors

Social and Environmental

Enhancers

WARNING BEHAVIORS

Pathway Behaviors

Fixation

Identification

Novel Aggression

Energy Burst

Leakage

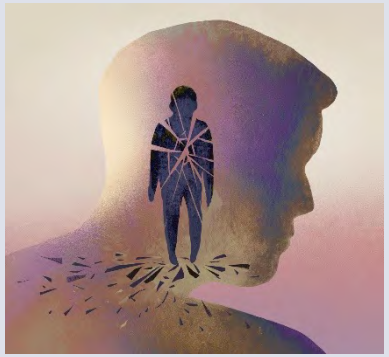
Directly Communicated Threat

Approach Behavior

End of Life Planning

Last Resort

Triggers & Stressors



Significant Loss/Death

Termination, Unemployment

Separation, Divorce

Substance Use

Medical Issues (ex. Chronic Pain)

Unstable Home Environment

Financial Distress

Humiliating Event

Mitigators

Non-Violent Alternatives

Future Oriented

Healthy Self-Esteem

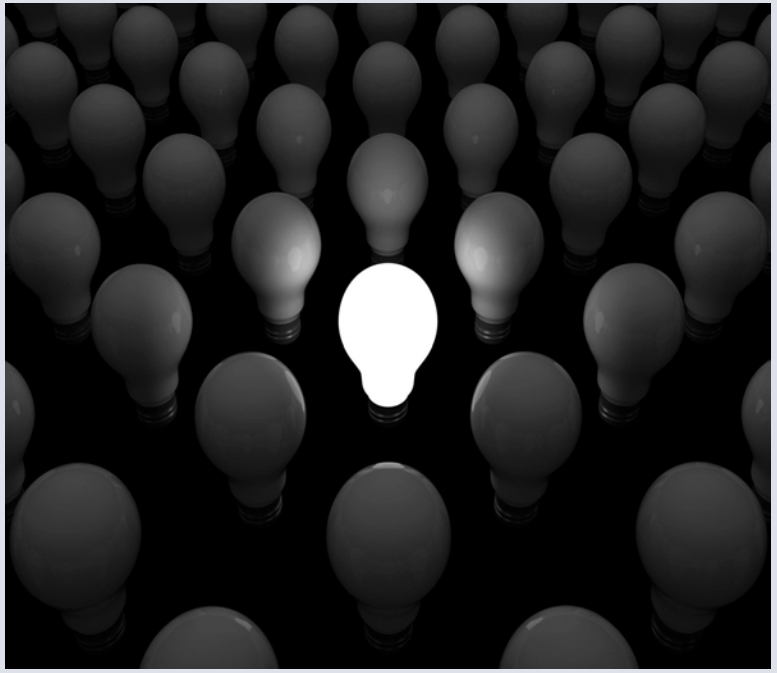
Coping Mechanisms

Access to Resources

Healthy Environment

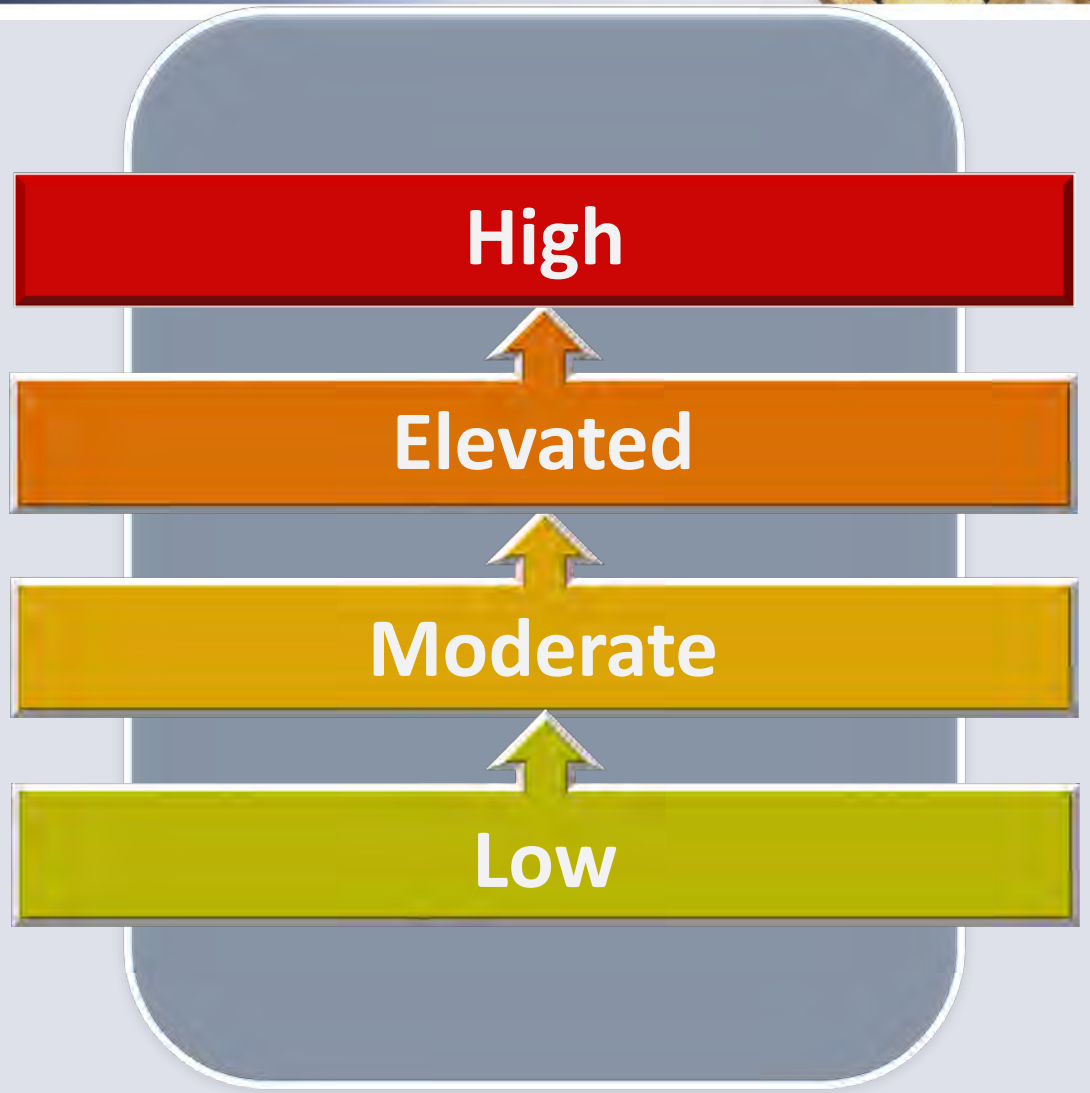
Support System

Key Questions



- What contextual risk factors have we observed?
- What triggers could move someone along a pathway to violence?
- What factors keep or deter someone from committing a targeted attack?
- How can we maintain or improve the subject's situation?

Levels of Concern



The “level of concern” reflects the dynamic nature of warning behaviors, changing circumstances and the effects of intervention.

Identification

Assessment

Management

Caretaking

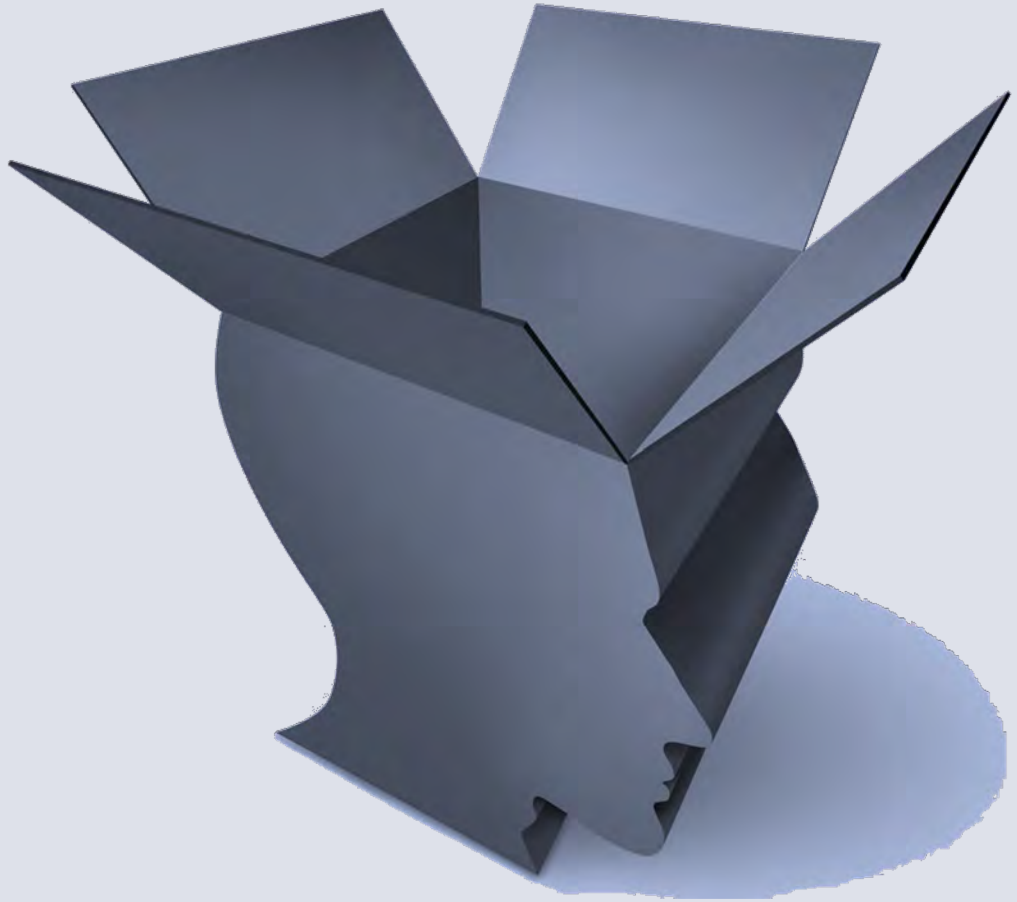
Threat management protects public safety via monitoring and interventions designed to improve a POC's well-being or even relieve their underlying grievance.

Once a POC is identified, there is a responsibility to ensure he doesn't slip through the cracks.

Management Options

Passive	Active
Direct Interview	Confinement
Third Party Monitor	Criminal Enforcement
Watch and Wait	Civil Actions
Take No Further Action	Administrative Actions

Outside the Box



A TMT should think creatively when working to prevent a violent outcome. Consider how to resolve the POC's grievance.

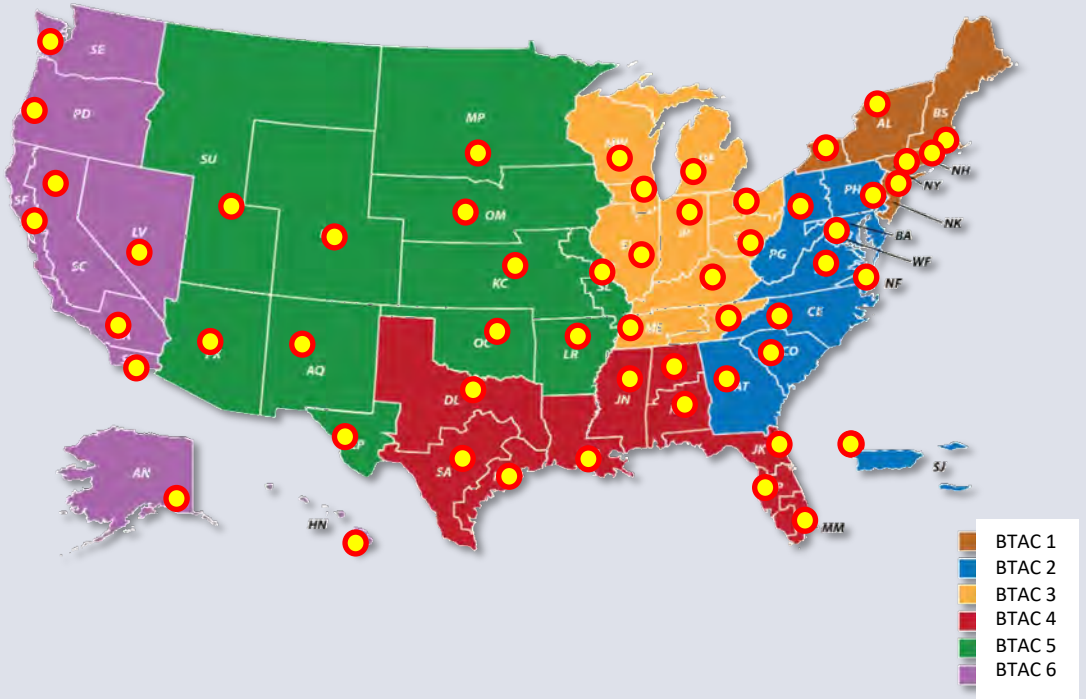
Threat management is unique to the individual. Creative thinking comes into play when resources are limited.

Management Cycle

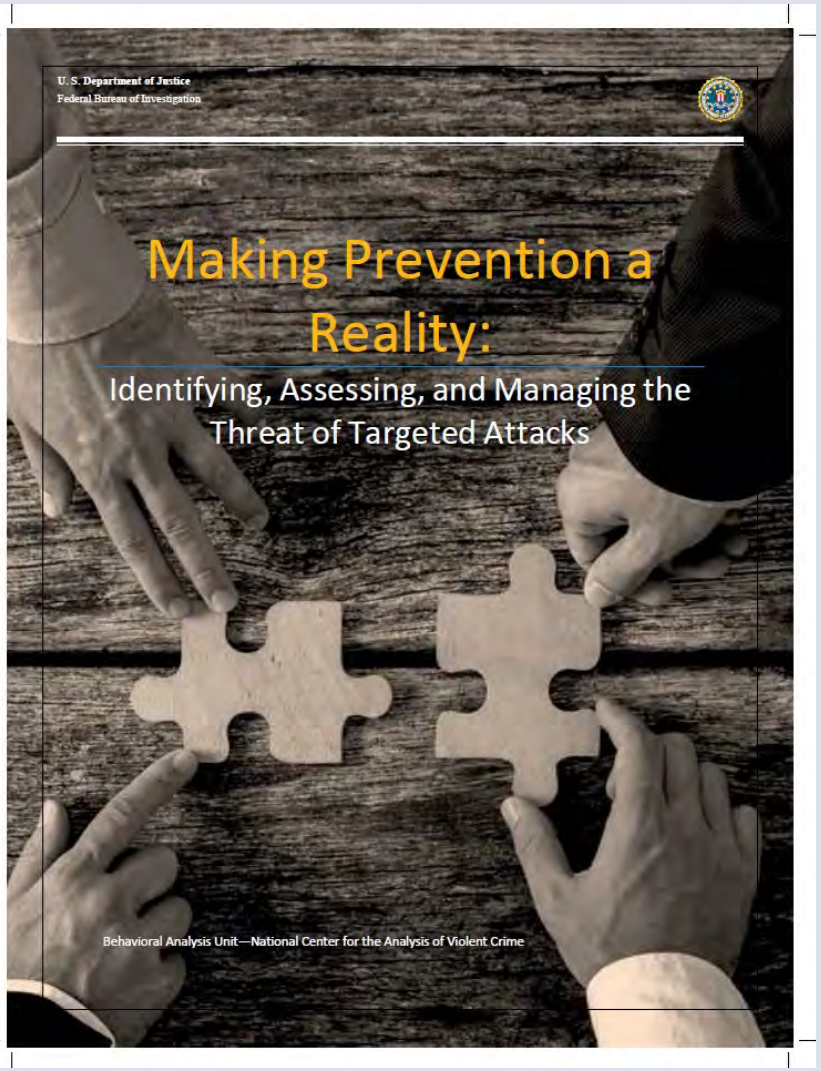
TATM Teams

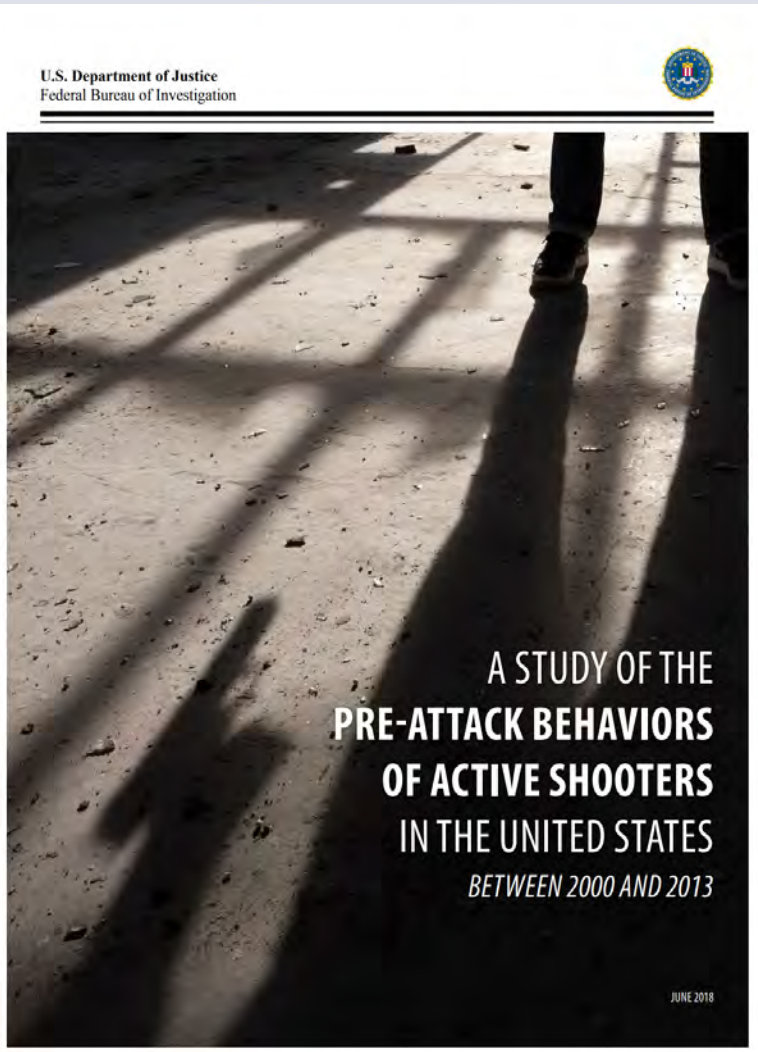
THREAT ASSESSMENT AND THREAT MANAGEMENT TEAM
LEGAL
SECURITY
MENTAL HEALTH
LAW ENFORCEMENT
HR
SOCIAL SERVICES
AD HOC

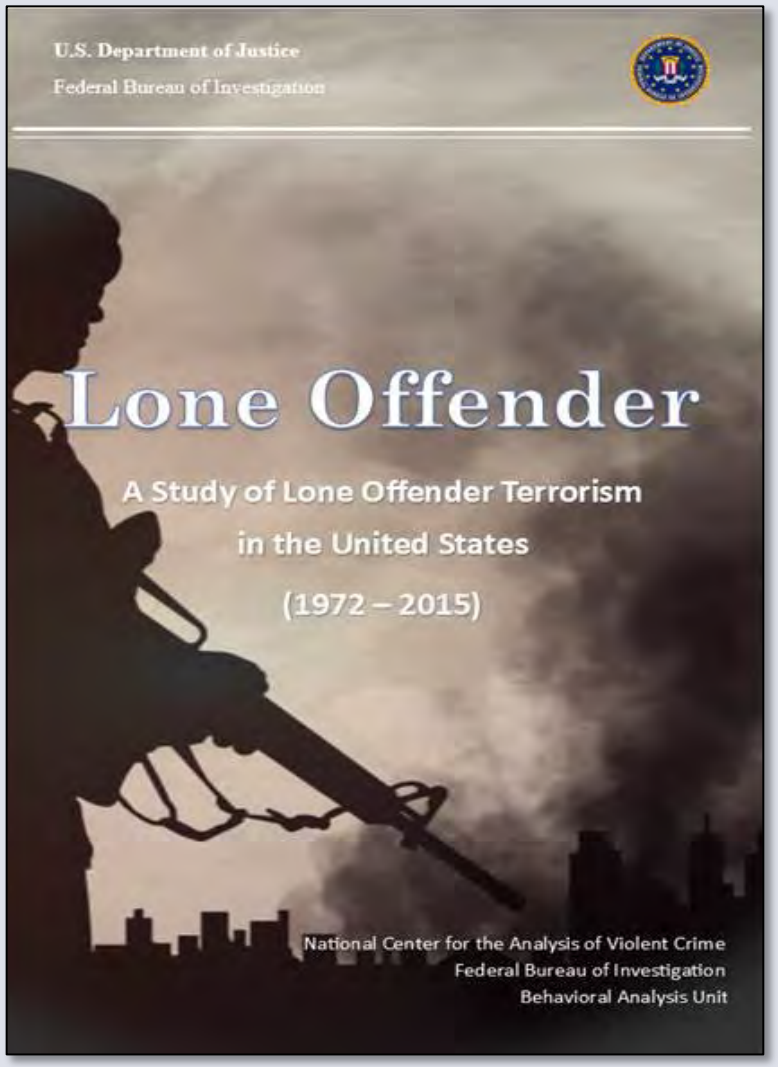
Team of Teams



FBI BAU


U. S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Making Prevention a Reality:
Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks
Behavioral Analysis Unit—National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime


U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
A STUDY OF THE
PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORS
OF ACTIVE SHOOTERS
IN THE UNITED STATES
BETWEEN 2000 AND 2013
JUNE 2018


U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Lone Offender
A Study of Lone Offender Terrorism
in the United States
(1972 – 2015)
National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Behavioral Analysis Unit

San Antonio

Regional Public Safety

Threat Assessment

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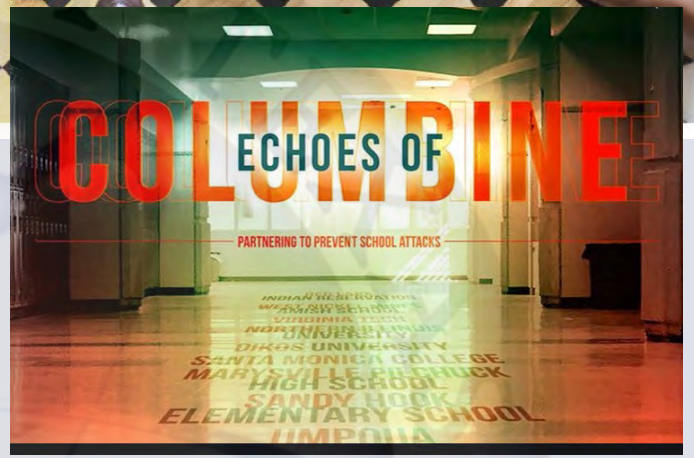

Texas Legislation Requirement

Senate Bill 11, Texas Education Code 37.115

Jan. 1, 2020

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Driving Force:
Threat Assessment Approach

Dallas, 2023
Uvalde, 2022
Midland-Odessa, 2019
El Paso, 2019
Santa Fe, 2018
Sutherland Springs, 2017
Austin PD HQ, Mexican Consulate, 2014
Ft. Hood, 2009
Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, 1999
Luby's Killeen, 1991
Fiesta Parade Sniper, 1979
UT Tower, 1966

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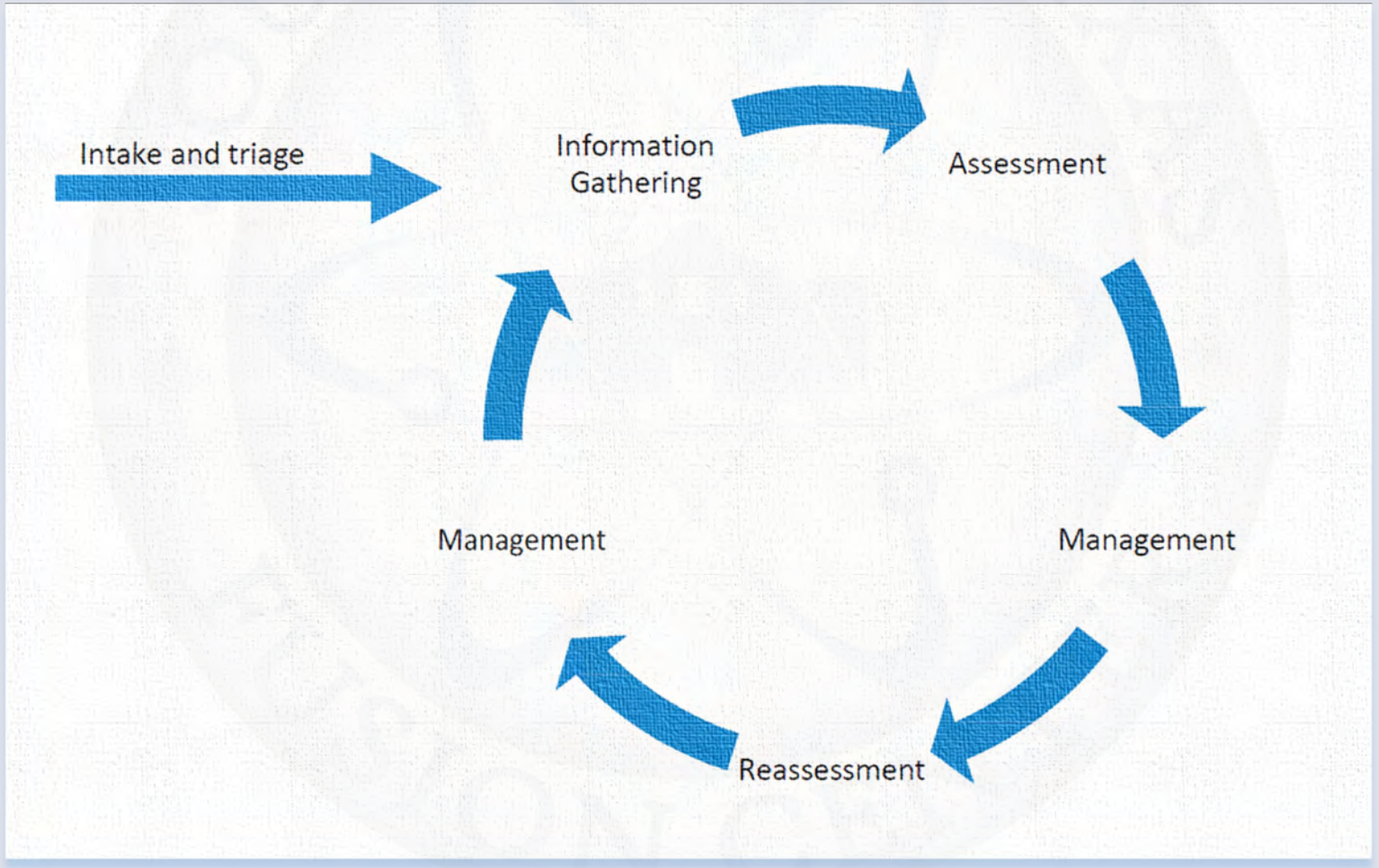
FBI- “Making Prevention a Reality”



Traditional Policing Vs. Threat Assessment Approach

Reaction vs. Prevention

Practices outside the scope of traditional policing may play a role in prevention.

- **Motives**
- **Behavioral Indicators**
- **Situational Factors**

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3 Tier Approach

P.S.T.A.G.- Monthly, Public Safety Threat Assessment Group

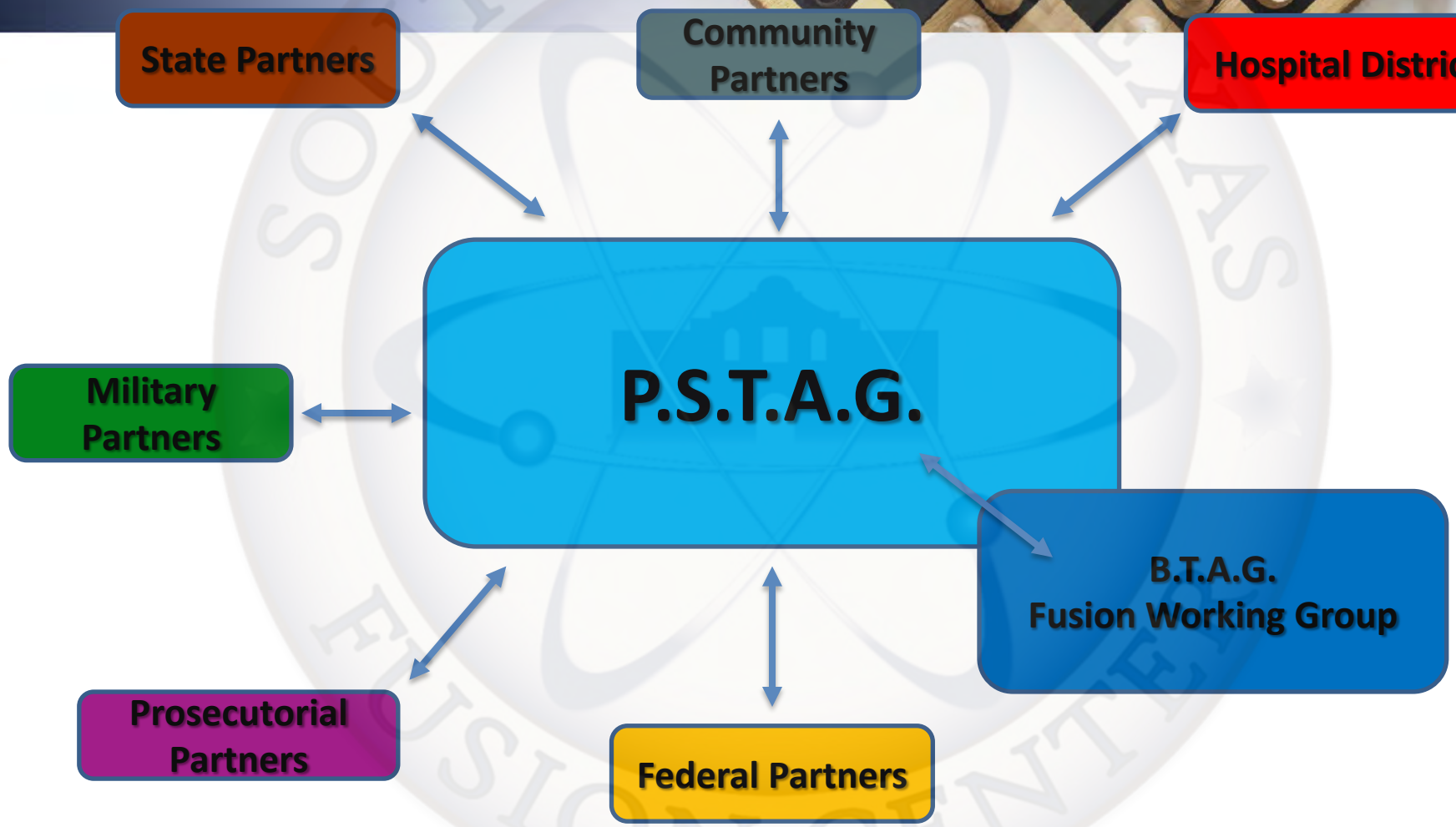
B.T.A.G. – Behavioral Threat Assessment Group

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

San Antonio, Regional Public Safety Threat Assessment

Multi-agency, multi-disciplinary collaboration of San Antonio area stakeholders in the shared ownership, and responsibility of developing threat mitigation strategies, and addressing targeted violence.

PSTAG/BTAG/TACT Model



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San Antonio, Regional

Public Safety Threat Assessment Group- P.S.T.A.G.

75+ Agencies (Federal, State, Local)

45+ Units of the 75+ Agencies

Bi-Monthly Meetings

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San Antonio, Regional
Public Safety Threat Assessment Group
P.S.T.A.G.

FORT SAM HOUSTON
RANDOLPH
LACKLAND
502D SECURITY FORCES GROUP

SAN ANTONIO POLICE

SHERIFF
THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BEXAR

THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF BEXAR

TEXAS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

SAN ANTONIO
FIRE DEPT
CLASS 1 I.S.O.

H-E-B

THE CENTER
FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES
Mental Health & Substance Abuse Solutions
Where hope and healing begin.

POLICE
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM

ESC•20
Serving the Educational Community

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PAROLE DIVISION

STRAC
Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council

BARSHOP
JCC

WHATABURGER

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FIDELITY BRAVERY INTEGRITY

USAA®

United States
Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

3 Tier Approach

P.S.T.A.G.- Monthly, Public Safety Threat Assessment Group

B.T.A.G. – Behavioral Threat Assessment Group

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

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SOUTHWEST TEXAS FUSION CENTER

B.T.A.G.- Behavioral Threat Assessment Group

Group Participants:

Mon/Wed/Fri

AT THE TABLE

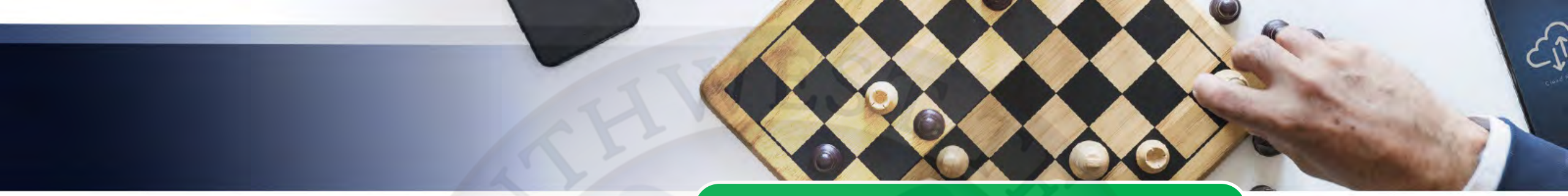
- SAPD MHU - Officers
- SAPD MHU - Detectives
- SAPD MHU - Clinicians
- SAPD Psychological Services
- SAPD Fusion Operator – Detective
- SAPD Hostage Negotiators
- SAPD Executive Protection
- SWTFC Analysts
- BCSO MHU - Deputies
- BCSO Fusion - Deputy
- SAFD Fire Fusion - Firefighters
- SAFD MIH – Firefighters
- SAFD Psychological Services
- Bexar County ADA & Investigators
- Bexar County Pre-Trial Services
- Bexar County Probation
- JBSA Intel
- DPS Intel
- PSTAG Member- Ad Hoc

SOUTHWEST TEXAS FUSION CENTER

Behavioral Threat Assessment Group- B.T.A.G.

Purpose:

Engage, as early as possible, in the assessment and management of POCs, to deter a path of violence toward others.



3 Tier Approach

P.S.T.A.G.- Monthly, Public Safety Threat Assessment Group

B.T.A.G. – Behavioral Threat Assessment Group

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

Contact Team:

SAPD or BCSO Field Supervisor
SAPD MHU Officers
SAPD MHU Detective
SAPD MHU Clinician
SAPD Fusion Operator Detective
BCSO MHU Deputies as needed
SAFD MIH Firefighters as needed
PSTAG Member - Varies, as needed

IN THE FIELD

SOUTHWEST TEXAS FUSION CENTER

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

Purpose:

Make an initial contact of a person of concern to engage as early as possible in assessment and mitigation to deter a path of violence.

T.A.C.T.- Threat Assessment Contact Team

Goals:

- Triage of behavioral characteristics
- Intel gathering of the situation and scenario
- Mental Health Assessment
- Weapon investigation, and/or discovery
- Criminal investigation upon elements of the offense
- Medical history or medical assessment
- Annotations to return to TTAG for Assessment and Management

B.T.A.G.- Levels of Concern

Level of Concern: Low

Level of Concern: Moderate

Level of Concern: Elevated

Level of Concern: High

Level of Concern: Indications of Potential Imminence

Management Matrix

B.T.A.G.- Levels of Concern, Management Matrix

TAM – Level of Concern	Assessment Update Initial Entry	Duration	Assessment - Month 3-6	Duration	Assessment - Month 6 -12	Duration	Assessment - Month 18
Low	Within 10-15 Days	3 Months	Within 30 Days	3 Months	Within 90 Days	12 Months	Consider Inactive LOC
Moderate	Within 6 -10 Days	3 Months	Consider Low LOC				
Elevated	Within 3-5 Days	1 Month	Consider Moderate LOC				
High	Daily until LOC reduced		TACT CALL OUT				

Indications of Imminence

TACT CALL OUT

Inactive LOC assessment - Sergeant approval required .
18 Months management- FBI best practice.

Southwest Texas Fusion Center

Detective Joshua Thomas

Joshua.Thomas@SanAntonio.gov

Lieutenant Isaac Alvarado

Isaac.Alvarado@sanantonio.gov

SWTXFUSION@SanAntonio.gov

210-207-7680