**THREAT ASSESSMENT (in partnership with local Law Enforcement)**

# Type of Threat DETAILS

Try to determine the following \_\_\_\_\_\_, to aid you identify the type of threat:

Suspect’s level ofemotion:

Intended target:

Weapon of choice and manner to be used:

Reasons or motivation for threat:

Time incident to occur:

Date of incident:

Method (verbal, written, Internet, graffiti):

Where threat received and location of incident:

QUOTE (as accurate as possible):

* DIRECT: Specific act against a specific target
* INDIRECT: The plan, intended victim, motivation are unclear, vague
* VEILED: Strongly implies (hints) but doesn’t explicitly threaten violence
* CONDITIONAL: Threat often seen in extortion cases

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# T.O.A.D.S.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Does the suspect have the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to carry out the threat? Describe reasons for conclusion?

* **Time**: Time to plan, prepare, overcome inhibitions: to commit act, plan, prepare, overcome inhibitions, get help /support?
* **Opportunity**: Access to target?
* **Ability**: Mental / physical capacity to follow through, skills, access to weapons, experience, creativity?
* **Desire / Motivation**: Willingness to inflict injury and/or death?
* **Stimulus**: External triggering event?

# BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Leakage:** Has student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes or intentions that may signal impending violent act?
* **Accomplices:** Has the student tried to enlist friends or classmates to help in preparation for a violent act?
* **Low Tolerance For Frustration:** Student is easily insulted, angered or hurt by perceived injustices?
* **Poor Coping Skills:** Student consistently shows little if any ability to deal with frustration, failure, rejection, disappointment or humiliation? Responses are typically inappropriate, immature or disproportionate?
* **Lack of Resiliency:** Student lacks ability to bounce back?
* **Victimization:** Has the student been bullied? What are the severity, frequency and duration of the bullying? Experienced Humiliation or shame?

Has the student been a victim of child abuse?

* **Failed Love Relationship:** Student can’t accept terms of failed relationship? Exhibited menacing, harassing or stalking behavior?
* **“Injustice Collector”:** Student nurses resentment over real or perceived injustices. Student is unable to forgive or forget those wrongs or the people who are allegedly responsible?
* **Signs of Depression:** Student shows signs of depressions such as lethargy, fatigue, morose or a dark outlook on life, a sense of malaise, and loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, (and specific to adolescents: uncontrolled outbursts of anger, excessive hatred towards others and feelings of helplessness)?

Names of Any Medications taken?

# BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Head Injury:** What was the severity of the injury and the prognosis? What is the proscribed treatment?
* **Behavior Problems or Other Mental Health Issues:** Does the student have any diagnosed behavioral problems? What is the treatment?

Names of any Medications Taken?

* **Narcissism:** Student is self-centered and lacks insight into other’s needs and / or feelings?
* **Alienation:** Student consistently behaves as though he or she is different or estranged from others. Feels isolated, loneliness, sadness, sense of not belonging and not fitting in? Has the student recently moved to the community and/or transferred into the school?
* **Dehumanizes Others:** Student fails to see others as fellow humans, characteristically views other people as non - persons?
* **Lack of Empathy:** Student shows an inability to understand the feelings of others? When other people show emotion they are considered weak or stupid and may be ridiculed?
* **Exaggerated Sense of Entitlement:** Student constantly expects special treatment and reacts negatively if it isn’t received?
* **Attitude of Superiority:** Student has a sense of superiority and presents as smarter, more creative, more talented, more experienced and more worldly than others?
* **Exaggerated or Pathological Need for Attention:** Student requires an exaggerated, even pathological, need for attention, whether positive or negative, no matter what the circumstances?

# BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Masks Low Self - Esteem:** Student may display an arrogant, self – glorifying attitude, yet conduct often appears to veil an underlying low self – esteem?
* **Externalizes Blame:** Student consistently refuses to take responsibility for actions – blames others (Scapegoats)?
* **Anger Management Problem:** Student consistently tends to have angry outbursts or tantrums rather than expressing anger in appropriate ways and in appropriate circumstances, anger may be disproportionate?
* **Intolerance:** Student often expresses racial and / or religious intolerance or prejudices? May display intolerant symbols, graffiti, tattoos or jewelry?
* **Inappropriate Humor:** Student’s humor is consistently inappropriate, i.e., macabre, insulting, belittling or mean?
* **Seeks to Manipulate / Control Others:** Student consistently seeks to con and manipulate others and win their trust so they will rationalize any signs of aberrant or threatening behavior?
* **Lack of Trust:** Student is untrusting and chronically suspicious of others’ motives and intentions (lack of trust may approach a clinically paranoid state)?
* **Closed Social Group:** Student appears introverted, associated with small exclusive group, has acquaintances rather than friends?
* **Change of Behavior:** Student’s behavior changes dramatically, academic performances may decline, friends change, mode of dress changes, music changes…? Does the student use AOD. What stage/level would that use be classified?

# BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAITS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Rigid and Opinionated:** Student appears rigid, judgmental and cynical, voices strong opinions about which h/s has little knowledge, disregards facts, logic and reasoning?
* **Unusual Interest in Sensational Violence:** Student demonstrates an unusual interest in violent acts (school shootings) and the perpetrators. May look up to perpetrators or criticize their incompetence. May express a desire to carry out a similar act?
* **Fascination with Violence** – **Filled Entertainment:** Student exhibits unusual interest or lore to violent movies, tv shows, music, computer/video games or printed material? Spends inordinate amounts of time satisfying this fascination?
* **Weapons:** Has the student brought weapons to school or is (s)he suspected of bringing weapons to school? Does the student have a fascination with weapons?
* **Negative Role Models:** Student may be drawn to inappropriate role models such as Hitler, Satan or others associated with hate, violence and destruction?
* **Behavior Appears Relevant to Carry Out a Threat:** Student appears to be increasingly occupied in activities that could be related to carrying a threat?

**MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:**

**FAMILY DYNAMICS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* **Turbulent Parent – Child Relationship:** Student’s relationship with parent(s) is particularly turbulent, has experienced multiple moves, lost a parent, addition of a step-parent – dismisses or rejects their role in h/h life?
* **Acceptance of Pathological Behavior:** Parents don’t react to behavior that most parents would find very disturbing or abnormal. If school / police contact parent about child’s behavior they may appear unconcerned, minimize the problem, reject the reports all together or defend the child’s behavior?
* **Access to Weapons:** Family keeps weapons / explosives in home? They are treated carelessly, without normal safety precautions, recklessly, may condone weapon as means of intimidation?
* **Lack of Intimacy:** Family lacks intimacy, closeness and affection. Can be described as a cold family?
* **Student “Rules the Roost”:** Parents set few or no limits on the child’s conduct and regularly give in to child’s demands. Child insists on inordinate amount of privacy – space? Are the parents intimidated by the child?
* **No Limits or Monitoring of Entertainment (Tv, internet, music…):** Parents don’t supervise, have no idea what child is watching, reading, listening to, interacting with, carry on no conversations about core values, reality or consequences of activities or entertainment?
* **Witness to Domestic Violence:** What is the duration, frequency, intensity and level of violence the student has witnessed?

**MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:**

## SCHOOL DYNAMICS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* **Students Attachment to School:** Student appears detached from school, activities, peers, teachers and other staff?
* **Tolerance for Disrespectful Behavior:** The school does little to prevent or discipline disrespectful and / or inappropriate behavior. Bullying is part of school culture and school authorities seem oblivious to it? School atmosphere promotes racial and / or class divisions or allows them to remain unchallenged?
* **Inequitable Discipline:** The use of discipline is inequitably applied – or has the perception of being inequitably applied by students and / or staff?
* **Inflexible Culture:** The school’s culture, official and unofficial patterns of behavior, values, and relationships among students, teachers, staff and administrators – is static, unyielding, and insensitive to changes in society and the changing needs of newer students and staff?
* **Pecking Order Among Students:** Certain students are officially or unofficially given more prestige, privilege and respect than others. Students and staff treat those in high – prestige groups as having more value and importance than other students?
* **Code of Silence:** A code of silence prevails among students. Few feel they can safely tell a teacher or administrator about their concerns about another student’s behavior, attitude or conduct?
* **Unsupervised Computer Access:** Access to computers and the Internet are unsupervised and unmonitored?
* **Anti-Bully, Character Building, Anti-Violence/Conflict Resolution and/or Early Intervention Programs:** What prevention programs are in place? Has the student been a victim of bullying or been identified as a bully? Has the student participated in any of the above or similar programs?

**Miscellaneous Notes**

**SOCIAL DYNAMICS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* **Media, Entertainment and Technology:** Student has had easy access to movies, television shows, music, computer / video games, Internet sites, literature that have themes of extreme violence and hatred?
* **Drugs and Alcohol:** What is known about student’s use of AOD and/or h/h attitude towards substance abuse? Note any changes in behavior involving these substances.
* **Outside Interests:** What are the students outside of school interests?
* **The Copycat Effect:** Intense media coverage of acts of violence can generate copycat violence elsewhere. Students, school personnel and law enforcement officials should be more vigilant in noting disturbing student behavior in the days, weeks and months following a heavily publicized incident.

**Miscellaneous Notes:**

# INVESTIGATORY TIPS

1. **Interview**
   1. Those who know student best: students, staff, law enforcement officials, family, friends, neighbors, work associates…
   2. Is the student’s “story” consistent and can it be corroborated?
   3. Are those who know h/h concerned that h/s might follow through? And Why?
   4. Gather as much background and investigative information as possible.
   5. Review personal writings, schoolwork, journals, diaries, computer on-line addresses, calendars, and etc.
   6. Transfer Student: Records / reports from former school & police involvement
2. **Scene Assessment**
   1. Evidence examined, photographed, documented, collected and inventoried
   2. Witnesses identified and interviewed
   3. Associates Identified and interviewed
   4. Handwriting samples collected and scrutinized
   5. Audio Tapes of Suspect’s Voice: need minimum of 25 words for FBI analysis
3. **Residence Assessment**
   1. Evidence examined… see above
   2. Evidence of practice drafts of writing found
   3. Evidence of preliminary attempts to build infernal machines found
   4. Evidence of documents, books, book - covers, notebooks, posters, games… that would provide information supporting crime attempt (hate, terrorist, mass murder related material)
   5. Firearms permits for occupant(s) of residence

## ADDITIONAL BEHAVIORS TO CONSIDER\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Verbal and Behavioral Precipitants to Violence

* + **Is there a difference in the student’s verbal and non-verbal signals**? The non-verbal communication is always more reflective of the person’s emotional state.
  + **Skeletal – Muscular**: Jaw clenching, fist clenching, rapid head movement, tightening of the body, tics, rapid eye movement, facial contortions, slow or fast movement?
  + **Respiratory and Circulation Systems:** Rapid or shallow breathing, excessive perspiration, red spots, gasping for air?
  + **Language Patterns:** Rapid or slow speech, profanity, incomplete / incoherent sentences, repeating self, verbal threats, inappropriate vocal tone?
  + **Behavioral Patterns:** Vacillating between cooperation and antagonism, gestures, entering into other’s space, no wanting other’s to enter h/h space?
  + **Thought Patterns:** Fixated thinking, circular thought patterns, excessive thoughts (can’t concentrate on here and now), sense of hopelessness, blaming self or others for problems?
  + **Warning: These are categories are only sign-posts. Persons exhibiting these signs may never initiate an act of violence.**

# ADDITIONAL BEHAVIORS TO CONSIDER\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

#### Verbal Abuse Levels

* + **Compliant:** Least threatening level, indicates cooperation and compliance.
  + **Negative:** Reflects pessimism, student frequently complains, responds negatively to helpful advice.
  + **Abusive:** As student becomes more distraught, verbal expressions can become abusive, nasty and often involve name calling.
  + **Derogatory:** Offensive language, put downs, slanderous, racist, sexist, harsh criticism of others. The worse it gets the greater the risk of violence.
  + **Verbally Assaultive / Threatening:** Most serious level. Student is clearly threatening or intimidating others, may include threats of bodily harm or death. The more bizarre, destructive and sadistic the language the greater the risk.

1. **Physical Abuse Levels**
   * **Compliant:** Fully cooperative and compliant – the least threatening level.
   * **Passive Resistant (AKA Passive Aggressive):** Subtle defiance, resistive behaviors just below the threshold of non-compliance, follow directives slowly, minimal effort.
   * **Active Resistant:** Combination of actively resisting and passive aggressive behavior. Actively resists, overt defiance, for example:slamming doors, turning over a desk, throwing objects…
   * **Assaultive:** Physical threat is high. Verbally and physically aggressive behavior, eroding impulse control, may intend to harm or destroy, attempts to gain compliance may be met with hostile resistance or attack.
   * **Deadly Assaultive:** Most extreme level and most dangerous to others. Student focuses on killing a specific target, individual or self.

### Credits

1. **“Protective Intelligence & Threat Assessment Investigations,” United States Secret Service**
2. **“The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective,” Federal Bureau of Investigation**
3. **“Violence Goes To School: Lessons Learned From Columbine,” John Nicoletti, Ph.D, Kelly Zinna, Psy.D, Sally Spencer-Thomas, Psy.D.**
4. **Lieutenant Edward W. Nolan, N.E.M.L.E.C. STARS Commander (Retired)**