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Training Resources

- [Resource Training Link](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [What Threat Assessment Is and Is Not \(NTAC\)](#)
- [Summary of Key BTAM Concepts](#)
- [Key Areas of Inquiry \(Investigative Themes\)](#)
 - [USSS – Key Themes to Guide Threat Assessment Investigations](#)
 - See pages 8-16
- [Behavioral Threat Assessment Resource Toolkit for K-12 Virginia Schools](#)
- [Behavioral Threat Assessment Resource Toolkit for K-12 Virginia Parents](#)
- [Ok2Speakout](#)

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What Are We Missing?

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A Thought to Frame our Time Today

***“The best detectors are not gun detectors;
the best detectors are human detectors.”***

– Dr. William Pollack,
PBS Documentary,
“The Pathway to Violence”



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Goals of the Session

- Understand requirements for Virginia school boards, superintendents, and threat assessment teams
- Understand why violence prevention is possible and how threat assessment works
- Understand key concepts related to targeted violence and the practice of threat assessment and management
- Understand basic legal issues relevant to threat assessment and management processes
- Develop and practice skills to identify, assess, and manage cases involving potential threats

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What’s in it for Me?

To be better prepared as behavioral threat assessors to keep your school community safe.

To ensure that your students, staff, and you go home to your loved ones at the end of each day.

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Enhancing Your Experience!

Maximize opportunities to enhance practice:

- Contribute to and learn from others
- Build collaborative networks across Virginia
 - Introduce yourself and share contact information
- **Commit to a handful of practically achievable actions when you get back to work!**



Consider this:

This icon identifies issues for consideration in maximizing your understanding and application of concepts.



Extending your learning:

Watch for the icon and the searchable internet references throughout the training.

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Why Are We Here?

Code of Virginia § 22.1-79.4 requires threat assessment teams for public schools:

- Each local school board shall adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams
 - Including the assessment of and intervention with **individuals** whose behavior may **pose** a threat to the safety of school staff or students
 - Consistent with the model policies developed by the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, in accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-184
 - New threat assessment team members shall complete an initial threat assessment training, and all threat assessment team members shall be required to complete refresher threat assessment training every three years.

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Threat Assessment Team: Membership

The superintendent of each school division shall establish a threat assessment team for each school.

- Each team **shall** include persons with expertise in:
 - Counseling
 - Instruction
 - School administration
 - Law enforcement* (*Code of Virginia* change from 2022)
- Team **may** include or consult with persons with other expertise
- Threat assessment teams may serve more than one school (as determined by the superintendent)



Who else could be included either as a core member of a TAT or as someone consulted with when specialized expertise would be of value?

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Divisional Oversight Committee

Divisional oversight committee

- Superintendent **may** establish a committee:
 - Charged with oversight of the threat assessment team(s)
 - Can be an existing committee
- If established, the committee **shall** include individuals with expertise in:
 - Human resources
 - Education
 - School administration
 - Mental health, and
 - Law enforcement


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Threat Assessment Team: Scope

Threat Assessment Teams (TATs) assess and intervene with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of the school.

Individuals who may pose a threat:

- Students: current, former, and prospective
- Employees: current, former, and prospective
- Indirectly affiliated:
 - Parents, guardians, or other family members
 - Persons who are/have been in relationships with staff or students
 - Contractors, vendors, or other visitors
- Unaffiliated persons

 What challenges do you see in addressing individuals who may have no, or limited, connection to the school community?

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Threat Assessment Team: Responsibilities

Each threat assessment team **shall**:

- Provide *guidance* to students, faculty, and staff **on recognizing threatening/aberrant behavior** that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self.
- **Identify members of the school community** to whom threats should be reported.
- Upon a preliminary determination that a **student** poses a threat of violence or physical harm to **self or others**, the team **shall**:
 - **Immediately report** its determination to the division superintendent or designee.
 - The division superintendent or designee shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian.

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Additional Reporting and Information Sharing Considerations

Upon a preliminary determination by the threat assessment team that an individual:

- poses a threat of violence to self or others or
- exhibits significantly disruptive behavior or a need for assistance

Then a threat assessment team may obtain:

- Criminal history record information per the *Code of Virginia* § 19.2-389 or § 19.2-389.1, and
- Health records per the *Code of Virginia* § 32.1-127.1:03
- No TAT member shall:
 - Redisclose any such criminal history or health information or
 - Use any such record beyond the purpose for which such disclosure was made to the team

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Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines



Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, 5th Edition (Virginia DCJS, 2023)



Consider other key resources including:

- [DCJS: Information Sharing Guide for K12 Public Schools \(2020\)](#)
- [VDOE: Suicide Prevention Guidelines for Virginia Public Schools \(2020\)](#)
- [USSS: Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence \(2018\)](#)
- [FBI: Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks \(2017\)](#)
- [Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools](#)

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Why are We Here?

Beyond the law:

- Research and practice tell us that **targeted violence is often detectable and preventable.**
- Threat assessment and management has evolved as a standard of practice for proactive approaches to prevention of violence impacting schools.
- Threat assessment and management processes are designed to identify and assist persons in need as early as possible.
- **Team members need a solid foundation for understanding violence as well as principles and practices for effective threat management.**

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
Section 1 | Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management:
Rationale, Principles, Structure and Responsibilities


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What is a Threat?


- Concerning communication or behavior
- Indicates individual may **pose** a danger to the school community
- Through acts of violence/behavior to cause harm to self or others (or both)
 - Communicated **directly** or **indirectly** to the target
 - Still considered a threat either way


Behaviorally


Visually


Orally


Written


Electronically

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What is "Threat Assessment and Management"?

Threat assessment and management is a **fact-based, systematic**, process emphasizing an **appraisal of observed** (or reasonably observable) **behaviors** to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations, to assess them, and to manage/address them. (Model Policies)

1. How do staff, parents, and students view the process?
2. Who does not understand the role and function of the threat assessment team as well as you would like?

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What is Concerning or Aberrant Behavior?

Concerning behavior:

- Behaviors or communications that cause concern for:
 - The health, safety, or well-being of the subject
 - Their impact on the health, safety, or well-being of others, or...
 - Both (for self and others)

Aberrant behavior:

- Behaviors or communications that are **unusual or atypical** for the person or situation, and that cause concern for the health, safety or well-being of the subject, others, or both.

For further consideration:

1. Do all aberrant or atypical behaviors cause concern?
2. Do various groups in the community view behaviors differently?

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Threat Assessment and Management Goal

The primary goal of the threat assessment and management process is to support and enhance the health, safety, and well-being of the **school community**.

Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia K-12 Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, 5th Edition (DCJS, 2023).

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Key Findings Regarding Targeted Violence

[Safe School Initiative](#)
(USSS & US DOE, 2002)

[A Study of Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters 2000-2013](#) (FBI, 2018)

[Protecting America's Schools](#)
(USSS, 2019)

[Averting Targeted School Violence](#)
(USSS, 2021)

[Indicators of School Crime and Safety](#)
(US DOE, 2022)

[Crime, Violence, Discipline, & Safety in U.S. Public Schools](#)
(US DOE, 2022)

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Principles of Threat Assessment

BTAM takes a holistic approach to assessment and management

- Targeted violence stems from an interaction among:
 - Subject(s),
 - Target(s),
 - Environment, and
 - Precipitating events

STEP® Framework

© Deisinger (1996);
Deisinger and Nolan (2021)

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Principles of Threat Assessment

Targeted violence is the result of an understandable and usually discernible process of thinking and behavior.


Pathway to Violence
Adapted from:
Cathoun and Weston (2003)

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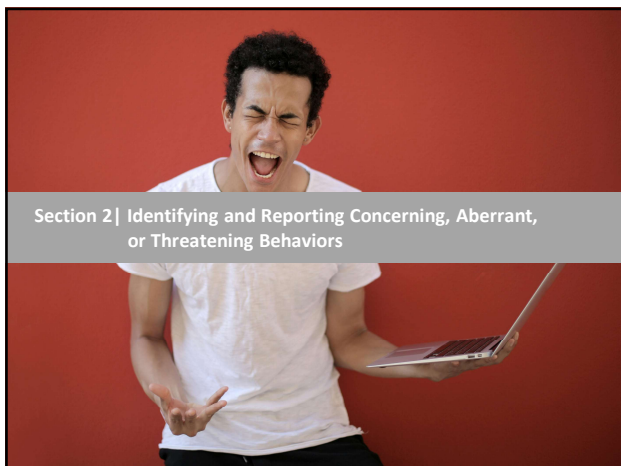
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Principles of Threat Assessment

- Threat assessment is about prevention, not prediction.
- Effective threat assessment is based on **observations of behavior** rather than on general characteristics, traits, or profiles.
- Information is likely to be scattered and fragmented. A collaborative and coordinated approach is required.
- The key is to act quickly upon an initial report of concern, gather other pieces of the puzzle, and then assemble to see what picture emerges.
- The relationship between mental illness and violence is complex but not necessarily correlative.

 [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#)

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Section 2 | Identifying and Reporting Concerning, Aberrant, or Threatening Behaviors

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Importance of Reporting

Consider the following questions:

1. What might create barriers to reporting?
2. How do we overcome these barriers?
3. How does your school/division provide ways to report concerns/threats?

Educate all stakeholders on **WHAT** to report and **TO WHOM**

*"If you know something,
say something and do something."*

Adapted from: NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority

 [How can we educate the school community on recognizing concerns and how/when to report?](#)

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Protections for Staff Reporting

Code of Virginia § 8.01-47: Grants immunity from civil liability to:

- Any person, who in good faith reports, investigates – or causes an investigation;
- That any person poses a credible danger of serious bodily injury or death to any other person on school property.

Code of Virginia § 8.01-220.1:2: Grants immunity from civil liability for:

- Any teacher regarding acts or omissions resulting from the supervision, care, or discipline of students, or
- Reporting of alleged bullying or crimes against others when such acts were within the teacher’s scope of employment and done in good faith.

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Section 3 | Conducting the Threat Assessment Process

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Steps in the Threat Assessment Process

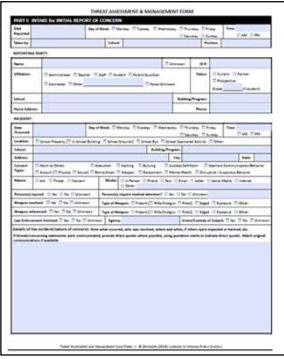
Threat assessment team:

1. Receives report of threat
 - Intake: Obtaining and processing basic information about the situation
 - **Initial triage: Assigning urgency/priority to cases**
 - **Triage and screening: Determining appropriateness, comprehensive assessment**
2. Gathers additional relevant information
3. Analyzes information and assesses threat
 - *If the team decides subject **poses** a threat:
 - Team alerts superintendent
 - Responds to manage threat
4. Monitors and re-evaluates plan
5. Follow up as appropriate



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Threat Assessment and Management Forms



Forms available via:

- Fillable PDF:** [K-12 Threat Assessment Form – Fillable pdf \(dcjs.virginia.gov\)](#)
- Word format:** [K-12 Threat Assessment Form – Fillable MSWord \(dcjs.virginia.gov\)](#)
- Guidance:** [DCJS Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines](#)

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Imminent Situation

If the situation is imminent:

- Initiate crisis response procedures according to school policy, e.g.:
 - Involve law enforcement and appropriate security personnel.
 - Initiate relevant security protocols.
 - Notify key school administrators (See *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4).
 - When safe to do so, move on to triage and assessment steps to further resolve any ongoing threat posed.

If the situation is NOT imminent:

- Continue with the triage/screening or assessment process.

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Triage and Screening

Timely and systematic review by trained personnel:

- Consider triage/screening team:
 - Minimum of two (2) members
 - Different roles/departments
- Review initial report(s).
- Consult relevant records/sources.

Triage process shall:

- Consider the nature and level of concern indicated.
- Determine if existing resources and mechanisms are sufficient to address those concerns.
- Determine whether the entire team needs to further assess and manage the situation.**
- Initiate any crisis responses as appropriate.

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Inquire/Gather Information

Review relevant records based on lawful and ethical access to information, such as:

- **Prior threat assessment team contacts**
- Work or school performance history
- Special education or disability accommodations
- Disciplinary or personnel actions
- **Law enforcement or security contacts: school and community**
- Critical involvement with mental health/social services
- Current or historical stressors, grievances, or losses
- Written materials/communications
- **Online searches: internet, social media, email, etc.**

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Inquire/Gather Information

Consider interviews:

- Initial interviews to verify the report:
 - Person(s) reporting threat
 - Person(s) receiving report of threat
 - Target/recipient(s) of threat
 - Witness(es)
 - Subject of concern
- Other potential sources:
 - Peers: Friends/co-workers
 - Employers, teachers, other staff
 - Parents/guardians
 - Relational partners
 - Local or state law enforcement
 - Community services

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Corroboration of information across these sources will be powerful in helping to assess the level and nature of the threat...
What might significant differences in the information provided by these sources reveal?

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Documentation

Record keeping

- Consult with school administration and school board legal counsel regarding:
 - Record creation, storage, access, information sharing, and destruction
- Consider:
 - **Electronic database** of threat assessment team cases
 - Documentation of the subject's *exact words and actions*
 - Documentation of target reactions and protective actions
 - Copies of emails, memos, voicemails, assignments, etc.
 - Agenda and minutes of team staffing and consultations
 - Data
 - Assessment
 - Plan

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Key Areas for Inquiry

- NTAC’s “Investigative Themes”
- [Key Areas of Inquiry \(Investigative Themes\)](#)
 - [DCJS Threat Assessment and Management Form, Part III](#)
 - **STEP**
- These are the **OUTCOMES** the team is seeking
- Determines the case priority level
- Guides the development of the **case management plan**

Adapted from: * Meloy, et al. (2011). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment. **FBI (2017) Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks; USSS NTAC (2018). Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence.

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Key Areas for Inquiry



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Key Areas for Inquiry – Subject

Does the subject have *protective factors*, stabilizers, or buffers that inhibit the use of violence?

- Views violence as unacceptable/immoral
- Respects reasonable limits and expectations
- Values life, job, relationships, freedom
- Maintains and uses effective coping skills
- Sustains trusted and valued relationships



Adapted from: FBI (2017). Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks; National Threat Assessment Center (2018). Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence.

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Key Areas for Inquiry – Target

Are targets (or others) indicating vulnerability or concern about the subject’s potential for violence?

- Are others concerned that the subject may take action?
- Are others concerned for the well-being of the subject?
- Do targets have adequate support resources?
- Notifications



Adapted from: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2020); FBI (2017). Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks.

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Key Areas for Inquiry – Environment

Are there environmental/systemic factors that are impacting the situation?

- Systemic policy or procedural problems
- Silos, gaps, or delays in reporting of concerns
- Poor supervisory skills or oversight in key areas
- School climate concerns
- Lack of support resources in the community
- Home, work



Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2020); FBI (2017). Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing and Managing Threats of Targeted Attacks.

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Key Areas for Inquiry – Precipitating Events

Are there precipitating events that may impact the situation currently and in the foreseeable future?

- Loss, failure, or real/perceived injustice
- Key dates/events
- Triggers and reminders of any of the above



Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2020)

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Additional Key Areas for Inquiry

What is the consistency, credibility, and completeness of information about the situation?

- Are the subject’s conversation and “story” consistent?
- Do collateral sources confirm or dispute each other?
- What gaps exist in understanding of the situation?
- What biases or misperceptions may be present?

Source: Deisinger (1996); Deisinger and Nolan (2020)

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Threats to Self: The Nexus Between Threat Assessment and Suicide Risk Assessment

Benefits of utilizing the TAT within the suicide risk assessment process:

- Consistency
- Legal access to information
- Broader scope of information to guide the process
- Confidentiality
- **The trained mental health professional takes the lead on the suicide risk assessment.**
 - Reports information back to the TAT
- If it is a threat to harm self and others, TAT must complete a threat assessment

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Section 4 | Assessing and Classifying Cases

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Facilitating Case Discussions

Fostering effective case discussions:

- **Seek active participation by all team members**
- Keep the discussion focused on the case
- **Minimize bias** in decision-making
 - Consider the totality and context of information available
 - Consider information sources, **credibility**, and relevance
 - Corroborate critical information; resolve discrepancies
 - Avoid generalizations or stereotypes, **focus on behaviors**
 - Consider the impact of the unknowns
- Focus on active problem solving
- Consider the **STEP** Domains



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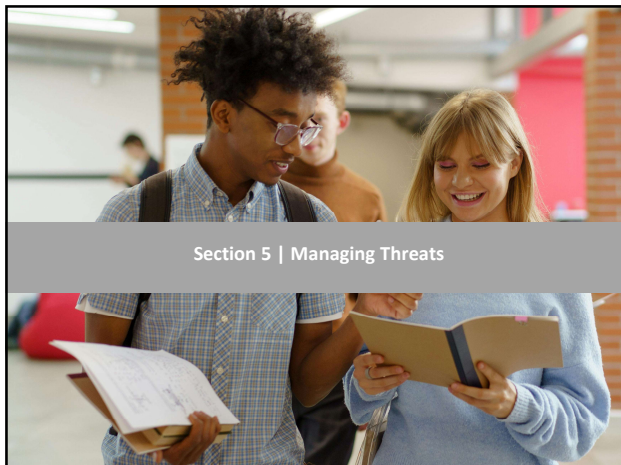
Classifying/Prioritizing Cases

(Click [HERE](#) for Priority Level Definitions)

- Priority 1: Critical Level of Concern/Imminent**
- Priority 2: High Level of Concern**
- Priority 3: Moderate Level of Concern**
- Priority 4: Low Level of Concern**
- Priority 5: Routine/No Known Concerns**



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Develop a Case Management Plan

Subject(s) Strategies – De-escalate, contain, or control the individual(s) who may take violent action.

Target(s) Strategies – Decrease vulnerabilities and provide support for the target.

Environment Strategies – Address environment and systems to minimize impact, escalation, or recurrence.

Precipitating event(s) Strategies – Prepare for and mitigate against precipitating events that may trigger adverse reactions.



These 4 domains are also used to organize and implement a Case Management Plan.

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Considerations Regarding Subject Removal

Leave, suspension, or termination options that focus solely on removing the subject of concern do not address the long-term challenges of:

- Moving the subject away from thoughts and plans of, and capacity for, violence and/or disruption
- Connecting subject to resources (where needed)
- Mitigating environmental/systemic factors
- Monitoring the subject when they are no longer connected to the organization

Use removal strategies with intentionality, awareness of limitations, and anticipation of consequences.

Source: Detinger (1996); Detinger and Nolan (2020)

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Re-Entry Planning and Preparation

Prepare for re-integration of subject to the school environment:

- Establish conditions for return.
- Evaluate the subject’s readiness to safely and effectively return to participate in school or work experience.
- Develop a proactive case management plan:
 - Align ongoing interventions.
 - Coach subject about re-entry.
 - Anticipate environmental aspects that may impact the subject.
 - Prepare the community for the subject’s re-entry.
 - Consider precipitating events.
- Monitor, re-assess, and intervene as appropriate.

Source: Detinger (2011); Detinger and Nolan (2020)

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Summary

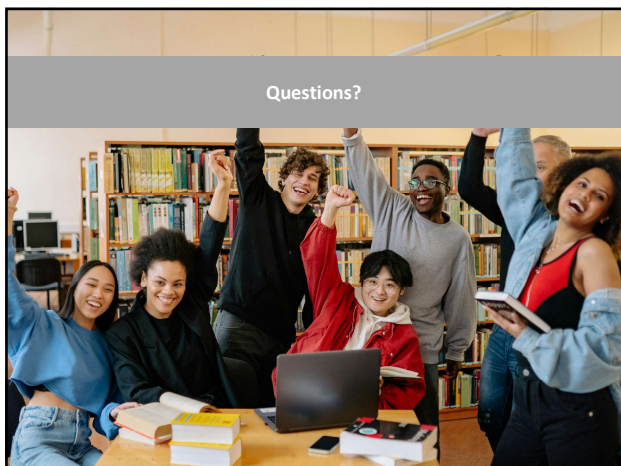
- Virginia law requires threat assessment teams, policy, and reporting.
- Threat assessment is an established standard of practice to support school violence prevention.
- DCJS model policies, procedures, and guidelines offer guidance consistent with Virginia and federal law, peer-reviewed research, and standards of practice.
- Consult with VCSCS, colleagues, and threat assessment experts regarding concerns.



[Request for Service Form: Technical Assistance for Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Virginia Schools](#)

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Questions?



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Resources and Contact Information

DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety
[K-12 Behavioral Threat Assessment Resources](#)

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