

TOOLKIT

FOR ENTITIES REQUESTING CONSULTATION

ABOUT VIOLENCE RISK OR BEHAVIORAL
THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT



TOOLS FOR ENTITIES REQUESTING CONSULTATION

About Violence Risk or Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management is a method of investigating and assessing behaviors of concern to prevent or manage targeted violence. BTAM is based on observable behaviors and risk factors and is used to quickly determine a level of concern that will guide interventions. Threat assessment may be done by a team or small group of individuals with varying expertise. For example, a school administrator, social worker, and school resource officer may work together on a threat assessment team to assess potential threats in a school community.

Mental health clinicians may be asked to serve on a BTAM team or consult with individuals engaged in BTAM. Usually, the role of the clinician is to provide behavioral health expertise and contribute to the group's formulation of their level of concern and potential interventions. Some BTAM groups will ask the clinician to sign a confidentiality agreement so the information cannot be taken out of context or used in any clinical records. The clinician treating the individual who is the subject of the threat assessment is not asked to provide any information specific to the client unless there is a release of information in place to allow it.

Learn more about BTAM here: ppcta.unl.edu

Violence risk assessment (VRA) focuses on an individual's probability of committing an act of violence based on personal and situational variables. Results of a VRA are used in legal proceedings, to help schools create safety plans, or as part of a larger evaluation of a specific individual. Violence risk is assessed using a variety of psychological tests and tools to compare an individual's future violence risk to others with similar characteristics in similar situations.

Behavioral health clinicians routinely engage in assessments related to treating and diagnosing individuals. This usually involves screening and assessment of the risk of suicide and other general risk factors. Few clinicians receive graduate-level training in violence risk assessment, so the skills needed to do this type of assessment must be obtained via professional development. Assessing the risk or threat of violence toward specific entities or targets requires even more specialized experience and involves integrating BTAM principles in the assessment.

There are key differences between violence risk assessment and behavioral threat assessment. VRA is slow and usually used to identify how to manage someone. BTAM is rapid and used in the field to prevent violence by flexibly managing behaviors. The quality of

a VRA report improves if the requesting entity shares as much information as possible about the questions they need answered by the assessment and the context of their concerns.

External consultation in violence risk or behavioral threat assessment is encouraged when you need an opinion from a professional not available in your organization, or you want the perspective of someone not connected to the situation. The most common experts used in threat consultation are mental health and threat assessment professionals.

Mental health professionals include a wide range of licensures and varying levels of expertise related to the assessment and management of violence risk. You will get a better outcome with a consultant if you are very specific about what you want from the consultation. For example, if you ask for a psychological evaluation, you will likely get information about mental status and diagnosis. You will not get information about risk for engaging in targeted violence or suggestions for interventions to make your organization safer. However, if you ask for an evaluation, assessment, or consultation to specifically address violence risk and potential interventions to lessen that risk, you will likely get something more useful and actionable.

Consultants may wish to know up front who they are working for. Be clear about who is going to be paying their fee, how much you can pay, and how you want to receive the invoice for their services. Be clear about the service you are expecting, deliverables (such as reports or written feedback), and timelines for the consultation.

HINT: You can request consultation or names of potential consultants via a web-based form at the bottom of this webpage: ppcta.unl.edu

Requesting a Violence Risk Assessment (VRA)

Nebraska law enforcement, education agencies, and behavioral health organizations may access a list of mental health clinicians in their area who have had violence risk assessment training and agreed to be on a list. This list contains contact information for clinicians forming the Nebraska "VRA Cadre". The list may be accessed through the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center or through the Emergency Systems person in the State Division of Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services. You are responsible for choosing and contacting the clinician(s). When making the request for the list, please:

- Include the county in Nebraska where the service will be delivered as part of your request.
- Be specific about who you want the list sent to. (See the example below)

Please send a list of clinicians from the VRA cadre who can serve Any County, Nebraska. Send it to Any County Sheriff Jane Doe. Her contact information is 456-456-1234 - SheriffDoe@AnyCounty.gov Thank you. **EXAMPLE ONLY**

Nebraska state employees who have had violence risk assessment training are kept on a separate list that is available only to state agencies. Specify if you represent a state agency when you make a request.

Requesting a Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Process Consultation

Nebraska has a list of Certified Threat Managers (CTMs) who may be available to consult with you or your team about the **process** you are using to assess and manage a potential threat. CTMs can be professionals from fields such as mental health, law enforcement, education, or domestic violence. The certification is based on completion of an exam and meeting criteria associated with years of threat assessment and management experience. The CTM will not do the threat assessment for you. Instead, they are skilled at helping you think through your processes and may suggest additional areas of inquiry, additional partners to involve, or potential interventions to consider. They will focus on your process in their consultation.

When requesting a CTM consultation please note the primary contact details and include their phone number and email address. Be as specific as possible with your consultation request. *(See the example below.)*

Please contact John Doe, Principal of Anytown School to discuss options related to planning for a student's re-entry after their emergency exclusion ends. The student posed a threat and was excluded this week for three days while we gathered more information. We would appreciate contact with a CTM by close of business tomorrow (Thursday) if possible. John Doe can be reached at 123-456-1234 or JohnDoe@AnytownSchool.org
Thank you. **EXAMPLE ONLY**

Templates for the Requester

The Appendix contains two templates that may be replicated or adapted for use by the entity requesting a violence risk assessment or external consultation for a behavioral threat assessment and management team. The **Consultant Request Template** helps structure the request. The **Confidentiality Agreement Template** can be adapted for use by BTAM teams when external partners participate in team discussions. This helps ensure the information discussed during meetings does not end up in external records.

References

ATAP Certification program body of knowledge, January 1, 2025.

Borum, R., Scalora, M., Otto, R., Schneider, K., Kennedy, K., VanBerschot, J., Mix, E., & Jaros, S. (2022). Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) tools: A reference guide for Counter-Insider Threat (C-InT) hubs. Defense Personnel and Security Research Center (PERSEREC).

Nguyen, Tin L.; Scalora, Mario J.; and Bulling, Denise, "Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Programs: Practitioner-Informed Baseline Capabilities" (2024). Reports, Projects, and Research. 100. <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/ncitereportsresearch/100>

Scalora, M. & Bulling, D. (2024). *Operational components related to the development, implementation, and sustainability of behavioral threat assessment and management programs*. National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center.

Scalora, M. & Van Male, L. (2019). *Violence risk assessment & threat assessment: fundamental of operational implementation*. Presentation.

Websites:

- Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Webpage ppcta.unl.edu
- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals atapworldwide.org

Urgent Issue?

Call law enforcement or NIAC (NEfusioncenter@nebraska.gov or phone 402-479-4049).

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Template: Requesting a Consultation

VRA Cadre lists. Nebraska law enforcement, education agencies, and behavioral health agencies may request a list of clinicians in their area who have had violence risk assessment training and agreed to be on a list.

- 1) You are responsible for contacting and making arrangements with the clinician.
- 2) Include the county in Nebraska where the service will be delivered as part of your request.
- 3) Be specific about who you want the list sent to.

Use this guide to structure your request to the VRA Cadre Clinician:

What specifically do you want to know? (Examples: Under what conditions would violence risk increase? Recommend ways to effectively monitor behavior.)

How do you want the results communicated to you? (Examples: written report – formal or informal, oral report via phone or virtually, in-person meeting)

What is your timeline? (Example: within a week, within a month, etc.)

Who is paying for the assessment? (Example: school district, parents, lawyer, etc.)

If you are NOT paying for the assessment but ARE requesting it – What releases need to be in place to allow the assessment results to go to you?

What behavioral information can you share with the assessor?

- Schools – FERPA does not protect behavioral observations – it pertains to the educational record. You can share behavioral observations without violating FERPA.
- Law enforcement – Clinicians treating an individual may listen and read anything you provide them. HIPAA privacy rules govern what they can tell you.
- CCBHCs – Internal clinical assessors may have access to your records. External assessors may ask that a release of information be in place to facilitate communication.

Threat Assessment / Management Process Consultation.

Certified Threat Managers (CTMs) can consult with you or your team about the **process** you are using to assess and manage a potential threat.

- 1) CTMs can help you think through your process and suggest other areas for you to probe or potential interventions to explore. They will focus on your process.
- 2) When requesting a CTM consultation please note the primary contact details and include their phone number and email address. Be as specific as possible with your consultation request.

Use this guide to structure your request for CTM consultation:

What specific aspect of the process are you asking for assistance with? (Examples: Do you want the CTM to sit in on your BTAM meeting? Do you want to review the information gathering process to see if you missed something? Would you like to test intervention ideas with the CTM?)

How urgent is the request? (Example: same day, within a week, etc.)

What is the best way for you to receive the consultation? (virtual, by phone, in-person)

Remember that the CTM helps you think through your process. They are not able to do the process for you.

Template: Confidentiality Agreement

1. The confidentiality policies of the consultant's agency apply.
2. The consultant agrees not to document threat assessment team proceedings in their own agency's records unless agreed upon by the team members.
3. The consultant agrees to share the results of any action taken as part of their agency's role when it applies to the shared threat assessment or management case.
4. The consultant agrees to keep team proceedings confidential.

Sign Name**Title/Agency****Date**

PRINT Name