

OCS

ONslow
COUNTY
SCHOOLS



Behavioral Threat Assessment

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Threat Assessment

Threat assessment is a fact-based process of identifying, evaluating, and managing behavior that may pose a risk of violence or other harm to self or others

N.C.G.S. 115C-105.65(a)(2)

Threat Assessment

- Threat assessment is a “tool” for assessing behavior & and is a proactive approach to prevent harm
- The threat assessment process is not designed to:
 - Profile individuals as “school shooters”
 - Direct actions to be taken in a crisis
 - Dictate specific disciplinary outcomes
 - Diagnose the mental health needs of students
 - Assess whether a student may be suicidal

Threat Assessment Teams

The NC Center for Safer Schools Procedures refer to teams as
"Behavioral Threat Assessment &
Management" Teams.

"BTAM" Team.

- District Level
 - Human Resources
 - Education
 - School Administration
 - Mental Health Specialist
 - Law Enforcement
- School Level
 - Counseling
 - Instruction
 - School Administration
 - Law Enforcement

When practicable, the following shall be assigned to the threat assessment

team:

- At least one school psychologist;
- One staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with special needs; and
- One staff member knowledgeable about and experienced in working with students with disabilities.

If a school psychologist is not available, the school may assign a licensed mental health professional instead.

Duties and Responsibilities of BTAM Teams

- Training students, faculty, and staff on recognizing and reporting threatening behavior that may indicate a risk of harm to the community, school, or self.
- Identify to whom threatening behavior shall be reported.
- Implement Board policies on threat assessments.
- Utilize anonymous reporting applications for students to share information about school safety concerns requiring investigation.

Why Threat Assessment?

- Allows schools to proactively identify individuals who may be a risk to safety, understand the severity of the risk, and take preventative measures to mitigate any identified risks
- Essential to any school safety plan

When are Threat Assessments Done?

N.C.G.S. 115C-105.65(a)(3):

- Threatening behavior has been communicated
- A student has engaged in threatening behavior that warrants further evaluation.

Threat Assessment – The Basics

- To help minimize school threats:
 - Develop the capacity to pick up on and evaluate *available or knowable* information that might indicate that there is a potential risk
 - Employ the results of these risk evaluations, or "threat assessments," and develop strategies to prevent violent acts from occurring
- To support these strategies:
 - Ten key findings on school violence
 - Six principles of threat assessment

Principles of Threat Assessment

The threat assessment process involves identifying, assessing, and managing individuals who might pose a risk of violence to an identified or identifiable target

Implementation of a threat assessment process is informed by six underlying principles

Principles of Threat Assessment

Principle 1: Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior

Principle 2: Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the person, the situation, the setting, and the target

Principles of Threat Assessment

Principle 3: An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment

Principle 4: Effective threat assessment is based on facts, rather than characteristics or "traits."

Principles of Threat Assessment

Principle 5: An integrated systems approach should guide threat assessment investigations

Principle 6: The central question of a threat assessment is whether a student is a threat, not whether the student made a threat

What is “Threatening Behavior”?

Any communication or action that indicates that an individual may pose a danger to the safety or well-being of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behaviors that would cause harm to self or others.

Threatening Behavior

There are key distinctions between making and posing a threat

Making a Threat

- In response to a specific frustrating situation
- As a sarcastic joke
- Being impulsive in nature
- with no intent to harm

Posing a Threat

- Threatening or engaging in violence
- Bullying or harassing others
- Other concerning or criminal
- Behavior
- Bringing a weapon to school

Communication of Threatening Behaviors

- Behaviors may be expressed or communicated:
 - Orally
 - Visually
 - In writing
 - Electronically
 - Through any other means.
- Behaviors may be considered threatening regardless of whether a direct verbal threat is expressed.

Handling Credible Threats

- Recommend the individual be referred for mental health services
 - If the individual is a student or minor, notify parents of the recommendation and encourage them to contact the student's primary care provider.
- Provide notice to individuals who are the subject of threatening behavior and, if the individual is a student or minor, provide notice to their parent or guardian.
- **Notify local law enforcement.**

Handling Credible Threats

Notice to Mental Health

- The Team may refer the student for potential mental health services
- The parents must be notified immediately and encouraged to contact the following:
 - Primary care provider
 - Insurance provider
 - Local Medicaid management entity or MCO

Handling Credible Threats – “Imminent Threats”

- Notice to Parents of Identified Students & Law Enforcement
 - BTAM must provide notice to individuals who are the subject of threatening behavior and, for minors, notice to their parents or legal guardian
- Standard for Notice: An explicit threat of imminent serious physical harm or death to a clearly identified or identifiable victim and the person communicating the threat has the ability to carry out such a threat
- This standard satisfies the FERPA exception for disclosure to protect the health or safety of another based upon an articulable and significant threat
- The exception includes the ability to notify law enforcement.

Handling Credible Threats – Record Keeping

- Record Keeping and Notice to Parents of Accused Party
 - Within a reasonable time after disclosure, a notation must be made in the student's educational record
 - Must list the "articulable and significant threat" that led to disclosure
 - Must list the parties notified
 - Parents of minor students have the right to inspect their student's record including information on disclosures upon request
 - Parents of accused students do NOT have to be specifically notified of disclosures in advance or afterwards.

Handling Credible Threats - FERPA

- Any information shared among members of the BTAM team shall remain confidential and shall not be a public record.
- Information may be shared only in connection with an emergency when such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or others.

Handling Credible Threats - FERPA

- Any District employee with a legitimate educational interest has a right to any confidential student information
- This applies to every employee who:
 - Gives information to a BTAM team
 - Participates on a BTAM team
 - Needs to know the outcome (including details of any safety plan) to keep others safe after the BTAM team makes a final decision

Handling Credible Threats - FERPA

- Members of a BTAM team who are not employees of the district may review student records pursuant to a written agreement with the public school unit of the requirements and responsibilities for use of student records.
- Takeaway:
 - If your BTAM team includes non-school employees, either 1) obtain parent permission for their participation or 2) have them sign a FERPA compliant agreement regarding the performance of an institutional service and preserving student confidentiality.

Reporting Requirements

- Number of threat assessments conducted annually and demographic information on the individuals assessed.
- Total number of threat assessments that resulted in a determination that the behavior being assessed posed a threat, and any information on the scale or classification of the threat.
- All actions and the results of those actions taken in response to finding a threat.
- Number, subject, and solution or outcome of any technical assistance requests.

Schools and their employees, as well as members of the threat assessment teams, are not liable for civil damages due to their participation in or implementation of threat assessment team policies UNLESS they were grossly negligent, engaged in wanton conduct, or committed intentional wrongdoing

Threshold for Law Enforcement Involvement

- Reports that should immediately be made to law enforcement:
 - Weapons
 - Threats of violence
 - Physical violence.
- Unless one of these 3 applies, the first step should be to engage the school threat assessment team to conduct an understanding, followed by a full threat assessment, if deemed appropriate.

Best Practice – Consideration of Threat Assessment

- Gather preliminary information and complete the Considerations Tool to determine whether a full threat assessment is warranted.

CFSS - Considerations Tool

- If warranted, complete full protocol, including:
 - Gathering additional information from multiple sources
 - Organizing and analyzing the information
 - Answering assessment questions and determining level of concern
- Develop and implement a Student Support Intervention & Management Plan

NTAC Comprehensive Targeted Violence Prevention Plan Steps	
Step 1	Establish a Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team
Step 2	Define Concerning and Prohibited Behaviors
Step 3	Create a Central Reporting Mechanism
Step 4	Determine the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention
Step 5	Establish Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Assemble the trained Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team (BTAM) and Collect details and description of the initial report of the threat • Step 2: Gather a Variety of Information and Complete Inquiry Steps • Step 3: Use Multiple Sources of Data • Step 4: Organize and Evaluate Information through the use of the U.S. Secret Service Questions and NTAC Theme Questions • Step 5: Determine Level of Concern, Safety Steps, Duty to Warn, and Notifications • Step 6: Develop and Implement a Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan • Step 7: Continue to Monitor Student and the Effectiveness of the Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Management Plan
Step 6	Develop Levels of Concerns and Options
Step 7	Create and Promote Safe School Climates
Step 8	Conduct Training for All Stakeholders and Plan for BTAM Fidelity Monitoring

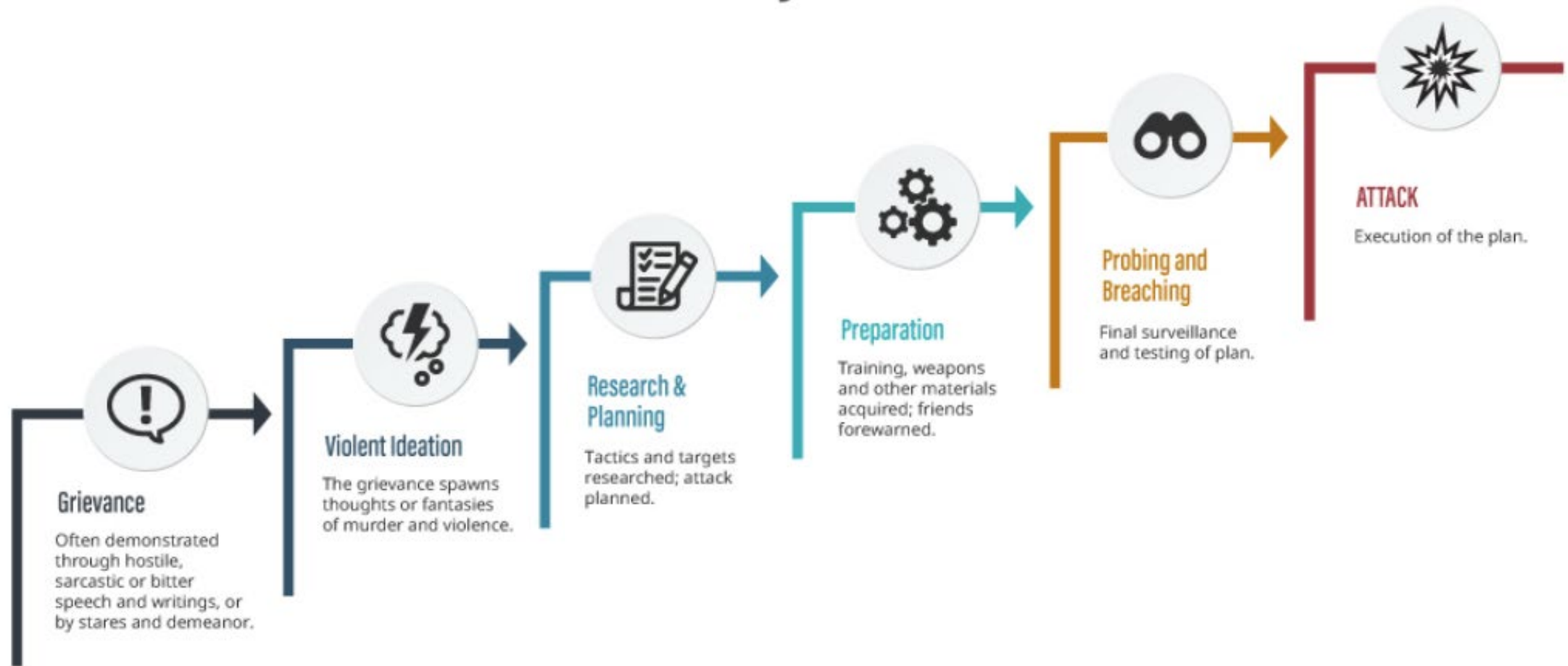
Evaluating Information

- Threat Assessment Inquiry should answer the following two essential questions:
 - Is the behavior of the student consistent with the movement on a path toward an attack?
 - Does the student's current situation or setting incline him or her toward or away from targeted violence?

Does the Student Pose a Threat?

- After organizing and analyzing, answer the following questions:
 - Does the person of concern POSE a threat of violence to others?
 - Does the person show a need for monitoring or intervention supports?

The Pathway to Violence



Does the Student Pose a Threat?

Potential threats are divided into four categories:

Low

Moderate

High

Imminent

Low Threat

Level	Description	Safety Actions Taken By BTAM Team (In addition to Creating Student Support, Intervention, & Monitoring Plan)
Low	<p>Individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved easily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current or identified risk or threat • Concern is confusing, unrealistic, makes not illusion to violence • No identifiable grievance or precipitants • More "venting" but no intent to actually cause harm • Threat is vague, indirect, inconsistent, and implausible • Information contained within the threat lacks detail or realism; no "true" threat • Misunderstanding of what was communicated • Taken out of context • Student lacks developmental understanding • Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent • No identified grievances; thought was in passing to a specific circumstance/made in heat of the moment. • Subject is remorseful • Supports are available and accessible • Can be resolved with problem solving, conflict resolution, restorative approach, clarification, explanation, retraction, and/or an apology • Managed through existing educational programming already in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Principal shall be notified • Contact parents/guardian of student of concern (i.e. 2 staff members shall make the contact.) • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents/guardians of victim(s) • Place interventions in place as needed for victims as well. (Duty to Warn) • Determine if a referral is needed and a check-in point at school • Determine if school and/or community-based referrals are needed • Determine if a release of information is needed • See that perceived threat is resolved through explanation, apology, or making amends • Notify SRO • Develop behavior and/or contract as needed • Complete student support and intervention monitoring plan (keep in review a minimum of 90 calendar days). Team can extend monitoring if needed • Teachers and individuals who teach student are aware of safety actions that are needed for student <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>

Moderate Threat

Moderate	<p>Person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate potential intent for future violence or serious harm to self/others (particularly if stressors cannot be addressed); and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledges violent thoughts but no intent to follow through• No specific details on plan• Person of concern does not view situation as helpless or hopeless• No intention to act upon (data confirms this)• Willing to look at other alternatives• Threat is plausible but lacks specifics• No clear indication the student has taken preparatory steps, although there may be ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility• Some grievances but does not view situation as helpless• Moderate or lingering concerns about a student's potential to act violently but willing to access supports. Open to help• Has at least some protective factors present	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District administrator shall be notified• Building administrator shall be notified• Provide direct supervision of student until parents/guardians assume custody• Explain consequences of carrying out threat• Contact parents/guardian of student of concern (2 staff should make the contact)• Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents/guardians of victim(s). (Duty to Warn)• Document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school• Notify SRO• Refer for mental health assessment and mental health counseling if needed• Put interventions in place as needed for victim as well• Check-in system with student should be established and intervention planning• Have parent sign a Release of Information form• Determine if detailed safety plan is needed• Safety Plan is developed and shared with teachers and staff. Teachers and individuals who teach student are aware of safety actions that are needed for student• Complete student support and intervention monitoring plan (keep in review a minimum of 180 calendar days). Team can extend monitoring if needed <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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High Threat

<p>High</p>	<p>Person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm (ongoing ideation), and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan (planning and preparation); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat is specific and plausible. There is an identified target or strong indication of target(s) • Information suggests concrete steps have been taken to act on the threat and has means (e.g., acquired or practiced with weapon, has victim under surveillance) but no plans for immediate execution of plan • Information suggests a strong concern about a student's potential to act violently in absence of interventions • Strong grievance; intent on violence as only solution • Minimal to no supports; resistive to problem solving/interventions • Secret Service questions reveal data that is of high level of concern • Increase in intensity and severity in tone and content • Frequent and severe thoughts of violence, poses a threat • Communication is directed or fixated on person and/or cause • Lacks immediacy or specificity, and/or detailed plan • Escalation noted in data collection • Time and place may not be identified (potential target is named) • Violence is possible and could occur with precipitating event • Potential need for psychiatric emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent or Designee District Administrator shall be notified (based on school board policy) • Building Administrator shall be notified • Notify SRO • Provide direct supervision of student until parent/guardian assumes custody and/or student is removed from campus • Explain consequences of carrying out threat • Follow discipline measures per district student code of conduct • Threats at this level may require immediate law enforcement intervention or hospitalization • Contact parent/guardian of student of concern. Two staff members should make the contact and document • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parent/guardian of victim(s). (Duty to Warn) • Make a re-entry plan for student. (If student does not return to current school, sending school communicates with receiving school to help consult about re-entry plan) • When return to school, the student will need active case management • Safety plan with details must be developed and monitored • Have parent sign a Release of Information form • Create an intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school for a minimum of 365 calendar days <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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Imminent Threat

Imminent	<p>Person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others (movement towards implementation) that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same indicators as high risk but immediate containment is needed to address safety and/or mental health issues • Notify law enforcement immediately • Frequent and severe homicidal (potentially suicidal) thoughts • Language appears action oriented • Operating in predatory mode • Terminal theme to thoughts – appears focused on carrying through with threat • Means, desire, and ability to carry out and accepting of negative consequences • Means and desire to implement plan within a short time • Multiple risk factors and imminent warning signs • Clear pathways to escalating violence • Plan for implementation has begun • Contemplated death of self and/or others • Pathway, energy burst, last resort, fixation, and novel aggression of warning signs are most likely present • Potential need for psychiatric emergency • Law enforcement emergency, immediate containment is necessary and protection of target 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify SRO/law enforcement per regulation to contain threat • District administrator must be notified • Building administrator must be notified • Provide direct supervision of student until parent/guardian assumes custody and/or student is removed from campus • Refer student for mental health intervention • Explain consequences of carrying out threat • Follow discipline measures per district student code of conduct • Threats at this level likely require immediate law enforcement intervention or hospitalization • Contact parent/guardian of student of concern. Two staff members shall make contact and document • Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parent/guardian of victim(s). (Duty to Warn) • Make a re-entry plan for student. (If student does not return to current school, sending school communicates with receiving school to help consult about re-entry plan) • When return to school, the student will need active case management • Safety plan with details must be developed and monitored • Have parent sign a Release of Information form • Create intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school • Create intervention plan and document referrals to mental health resources. Include active case management at school for a minimum of 365 calendar days <p><i>*Administrators determine discipline measures. This is not part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Policy. Each Public School Unit Administrator should consult their School Discipline Policy and Student Code of Conduct and work with their own legal counsel for discipline processes.</i></p>
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Student Monitoring

- Length of monitoring should be based on level of concern:
 - Low – Monitor minimum of 90 days
 - Moderate – Monitor minimum of 180 days
 - High/Imminent – Monitor a minimum of 365 days

Closing a Case

- Closing a case can be considered when "no" can be answered to both
- assessment questions:
 - Does the person of concern POSE a threat of violence to others?
 - Does the person show a need for monitoring or intervention supports?
- Closing the case should only be done when formal monitoring is no longer needed, and the subject has responded well to interventions and is on a more positive pathway
- Do not reassess and complete a new threat assessment to close a case unless it is needed



Finance



Purchasing



Payroll



Operations &
Facilities



About Operations &
Facilities



Operations
Departments



Auxiliary
Services



School
Transportation



Maintenance



Threat Assessment Resources

Threat assessment in schools is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the broader school community. By identifying and addressing potential threats early, schools can prevent violent incidents, minimize harm, and create a safer learning environment. A proactive approach to threat assessment allows administrators to assess the severity of potential risks, implement appropriate interventions, and connect students with the support they need. Moreover, it fosters a culture of vigilance and collaboration among educators, law enforcement, and mental health professionals, ensuring that threats are not only identified but also addressed in a timely and effective manner. This comprehensive strategy plays a key role in creating a secure and supportive atmosphere where students can focus on their education without fear.

The links below are resources for Behavior Threat Assessment Teams to aid in their efforts to provide a safe and secure environment for our students.

[Behavioral Threat and Management Guide](#) - Best Practices from the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools

[U.S. Secret Service Analysis of School Violence](#)

[U.S. Department of Education Safe Schools Initiative](#)