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Considerations for an Effective Prevention Framework

An Introduction to Workplace Violence and Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)

In Coordination With

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Introduction

Targeted workplace violence remains one of the most complex and consequential risks facing organizations today. Recognizing this growing challenge, Allied Universal®, in partnership with Spheres of Safety (SOS) Global Consulting, Inc., has launched a nationwide SAFEMINDS Preparedness Tour to equip leaders with the frameworks, tools, and confidence needed to recognize potential threats before they escalate.

SAFEMINDS encourages leaders to look beyond reactive responses and instead focus on identifying indicators of concern as they emerge. This eBook complements that mission by providing foundational concepts that support a prevention-focused culture. It reinforces the same core elements understanding behaviors of concern, strengthening collaboration across functions, and applying a consistent framework to help manage and reduce risk.

By combining Allied Universal's global expertise in security services with SOS's deep insight regarding behavioral threat assessment and management, we remain united in our commitment to supporting safer workplaces, stronger communities, and more resilient organizations.

This eBook is intended for educational and informational purposes only. It provides general guidance regarding the development and implementation of a Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) team designed to reduce the risk of targeted workplace violence. It is not a substitute for legal advice, medical advice, psychological assessment, law enforcement guidance, or organizational policy development tailored to a specific institution or organization.

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Understanding the Need for a Prevention Framework

Workplace violence — especially targeted acts where an individual or group intentionally seeks to cause harm within a corporate environment — represents a complex threat to employee safety, organizational resilience, reputation, and financial stability. While violence can range from harassment and threats to assault and active assailants, its impacts are consistently profound: psychological trauma, loss of productivity, heightened turnover, insurance costs, and legal exposure. Even when violence is nonfatal, the direct and indirect costs to organizations are substantial.

Addressing this risk requires a coordinated, multidisciplinary strategy that brings together risk management, human resources, security, occupational health, legal counsel, and executive leadership. This eBook outlines considerations to identify, assess, and manage workplace violence, with particular focus on preventing targeted violence incidents.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) is widely recognized as the most effective evidence-based framework for prevention. By identifying concerning or threatening behaviors early, evaluating risk in a structured and objective manner, and implementing appropriate interventions, organizations can interrupt pathways to violence before escalation occurs.
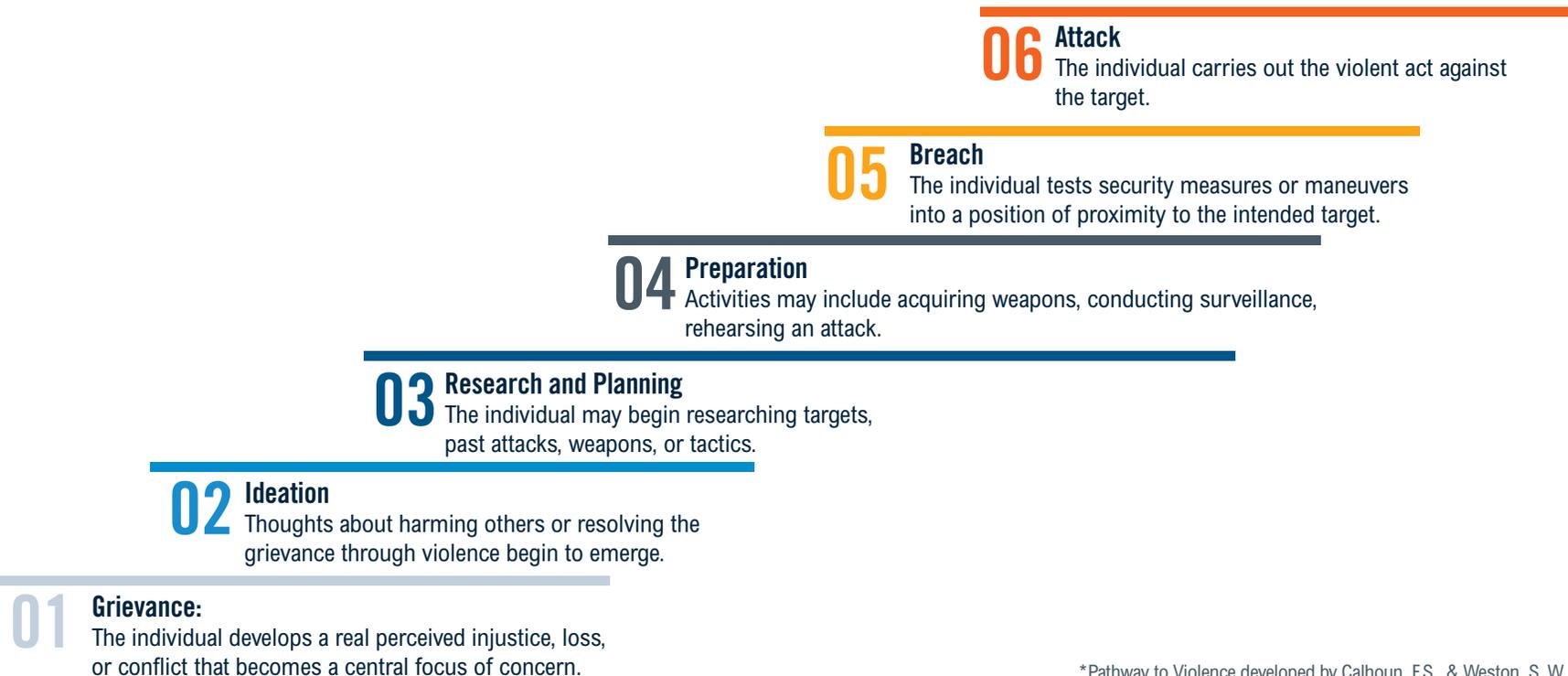
Corporate leaders who adopt and implement BTAM principles demonstrate not only regulatory compliance but a commitment to help safeguard their workforce, operations, and community.

The objective is prevention, not punishment. A BTAM team must be positioned and communicated as a protective resource for the entire workforce, not as a disciplinary mechanism used by management.

Understanding the Pathway to Violence

Targeted violence rarely occurs without some warning. Research on workplace violence incidents shows that individuals who engage in such violence typically follow an identifiable pathway of escalating behaviors rather than acting impulsively.

This is referred to as the Pathway to Violence: a behavioral model of how individuals move from grievance toward planning, preparation, and ultimately carrying out an act of violence. While every case is unique, many follow a progression similar to the following:

06 Attack
The individual carries out the violent act against the target.

05 Breach
The individual tests security measures or maneuvers into a position of proximity to the intended target.

04 Preparation
Activities may include acquiring weapons, conducting surveillance, rehearsing an attack.

03 Research and Planning
The individual may begin researching targets, past attacks, weapons, or tactics.

02 Ideation
Thoughts about harming others or resolving the grievance through violence begin to emerge.

01 Grievance:
The individual develops a real perceived injustice, loss, or conflict that becomes a central focus of concern.

*Pathway to Violence developed by Calhoun, F.S., & Weston, S. W.

For prevention planning, it's critical to note that people often engage in observable behaviors along this pathway, including concerning communications, fixation on grievances, threatening statements, significant behavioral changes, or indications of planning.

Understanding this progression provides the foundation for building an effective Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) program that may help identify and assess these behaviors early and allow for intervention before violence occurs.

Organizations can translate this understanding into prevention by establishing systematic BTAM processes and multidisciplinary teams designed to identify, assess, and manage concerning behaviors.

#1: Secure Executive Commitment for Establishing a Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Team

- Make sure leadership formally prioritizes workplace safety as a strategic objective.

- Conduct a comprehensive workplace risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities, hazards, and areas of concern.

- Obtain clear, visible, and ongoing commitment from senior leadership to allocate the necessary resources — including staffing, training time, and technology — acknowledging that strong executive support is critical to the team's long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

- Consider team branding to reflect the culture of the workplace.

#2: Identify Members for a Multidisciplinary Team

- Create a multidisciplinary team with clearly defined authority and reporting structure. The composition should be tailored to the organization's size, industry, risk profile, and operational complexity.
- Optimizing team size to maintain effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.
- Standardized team member selection and on-boarding processes.
- Leverage diverse expertise to provide a comprehensive and balanced evaluation of behavioral concerns.

Core representation might include:

Human Resources (HR)	Security	Legal Counsel
Mental Health/Behavioral Health Professional(s)	Operations and/or Facilities Management	Risk Management
Communications/ Public Affairs	Information Technology and Cybersecurity	Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Representatives

- Integrate Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) capabilities (internally and/or externally), emphasizing the importance of monitoring publicly available information in accordance with legal and ethical guidelines. When assessing cases and developing management strategies, consider online postings and digital behaviors.

- Engage subject matter experts on an as-needed basis (ad hoc), such as external consultants, labor and employment counsel, forensic psychologists/psychiatrists, or other specialists relevant to a particular case.

Define clear roles and responsibilities:

1. Determine the position of the BTAM Team within the organization's chain of command, including the individual or role responsible for supervising the team (i.e. HR, Security, etc).

2. Document each member's responsibilities throughout the BTAM process — from intake and assessment to intervention and case management.

3. Appoint a team leader to provide consistency, coordination, and proper documentation. Responsibilities should include:
   a. Establish a meeting cadence (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly, etc).
   b. Prepare agendas and materials for regularly scheduled meetings.
   c. Convene team members promptly in response to emerging or urgent concerns.

4. Identify alternates or backup members to maintain continuity if primary members are unavailable.

- Integrate BTAM into existing organizational programs and frameworks, including:

  1. Workplace violence prevention initiatives
  2. Executive Protection
  3. Insider Threat Programs
  4. HR employee relations processes
  5. Crisis management and business continuity planning

- Develop strategic partnerships with peer organizations, industry groups, and local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies — including Fusion Centers — to facilitate timely information sharing and awareness of emerging local and global threat trends.

- Promote the well-being of BTAM team members.

Note on Team Membership and Program Alignment

In practice, Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) programs often draw from the same multidisciplinary expertise required for other types of insider threat management, and many organizations already maintain teams responsible for that area.

Rather than creating entirely new structures, organizations may choose to leverage existing personnel from functions such as security, human resources, legal, information technology, and risk management. In many cases, these individuals already participate in insider threat or crisis response teams, making them well positioned to contribute to behavioral threat assessment efforts.

Where insider threat programs already exist, organizations should consider aligning governance structures, information-sharing processes, and case management practices to ensure coordination across related risk areas.
For additional guidance on establishing or strengthening an insider threat management program, see our companion guide: "Introduction to Insider Threat Management."

#3: Define the Team's Mission, Scope, and Authority

- Identify clear guidelines for handling threats, investigations, and emergencies:

  1. Establish robust violence prevention policies, reporting procedures, and roles and responsibilities. These policies should be distributed across the organization and reinforced by leadership. This approach aligns with business risk management strategies, treating violence prevention as a critical operational risk.

  2. Define different levels of concern to support consistent case triage, assessment, intervention, and documentation.

  3. Develop documented protocols that define the scope of the BTAM team, outlining how concerning or threatening behaviors are identified, assessed, and managed.

  4. Clearly outline the process from the initial report to the closing of a case, detailing each step.

  5. Gain alignment with existing emergency operation plans to provide continuity of operations in the event of an imminent threat.

- Reference OSHA standards to make sure that the team is equipped to handle all workplace threats:

  1. Type 1 – Criminal Intent

  2. Type 2 – Customer / Client

  3. Type 3 – Worker-on-Worker

  4. Type 4 – Personal Relationship

  5. Type 5 – Ideological[1]

- Evaluate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it can be ethically used to identify potential threats of targeted violence and support data-driven decision-making.

[1]It is not currently part of OSHA's workplace violence typologies, but it should be a consideration for organizations as they develop their BTAM teams' capabilities.

#4: Develop Reporting Mechanisms

- Implement reporting channels that are anonymous and confidential to encourage early disclosure of concerning or threatening behaviors.

- Create accessible and secure reporting options for employees, such as hotlines, online forms, or direct communication with a trusted manager. Foster a workplace culture that promotes shared responsibility for safety and educates employees on the types of behaviors they should report.

- Monitor reporting channels continuously 24/7/365.

- Timely and appropriate responses are important for all reports.

- Provide training for managers on handling reported concerns and support proper escalation.

- Monitor the privacy of information:

  1. Provide compliance with applicable laws and regulations regarding privacy in your jurisdiction.

  2. Define the system used for storing BTAM information:
     a. Determine who has authorized access to this data.
     b. Establish protocols for sharing this data internally and/or externally.

- Standardized forms are used to collect consistent and reliable information from all reports.

- Reinforce commitment to non-retaliation so that employees feel safe when reporting concerns.

#5: Create Training and Awareness

- **Employee Recognition and Reporting**

  Employees must be able to recognize warning signs of potential threats and know the proper channels for reporting concerns.

- **Training on Threat Assessment Principles**

  Provide the BTAM team with comprehensive training on threat assessment principles, identifying concerning or threatening behaviors, and utilizing evidence-based assessment tools. Incorporate regular scenario-based exercises and continuing education to sustain proficiency, strengthen decision-making, and enhance team coordination.

- **Workforce Training Programs**

  Training initiatives that emphasize violence awareness, de-escalation strategies, reporting procedures, and bystander intervention strengthen employee readiness and build confidence in responding effectively to potential threats.

- **Cultivating a Safety Culture**

  Prevention efforts are most successful when they are integrated into an organizational culture that values safety, encourages transparent communication, and supports proactive reporting without fear of retaliation.

- **Continuous Monitoring and Review**

  Workplace violence risk is not static — it changes over time. Continuous monitoring through employee surveys, incident reporting data, performance and safety indicators, and routine reassessments helps ensure prevention strategies remain responsive and effective. These efforts should be embedded within the organization's overall risk management and quality improvement frameworks to support long-term sustainability and impact.

#6: Implement a Structured BTAM Process

Utilize a structured professional judgment approach to systematically evaluate and manage risk. The process should include the following components:

- Identification: Receive and acknowledge reports of concern through designated channels (e.g., app, web portal, email, tip line, etc.).

    1. Make sure each report is acknowledged, reviewed, and addressed promptly.

    2. Conduct timely triage and screening to determine whether there is an imminent threat to life and to identify if other resources are better suited to address the situation.

- Inquiry: Collect relevant information from multiple sources to understand the full context, contributing stressors, potential risk factors, and mitigating conditions. This may include interviews and records review.

    1. Clearly designate who will conduct interviews and verify their qualifications and training.

    2. Make sure all information gathering complies with legal and ethical standards.

Organizations with established insider threat programs may already have processes for gathering and analyzing behavioral, digital, and organizational indicators associated with employee risk. BTAM teams can often leverage these existing investigative practices, particularly when evaluating patterns of concerning or threatening behavior, workplace grievances, or misuse of organizational systems. For additional guidance on building structured insider risk monitoring and investigative capabilities, see our companion resource, "Introduction to Insider Threat Management."

- Assessment: Analyze the information to determine the level of concern, potential for violence, and available protective factors that may help stabilize the individual, those potentially affected, and the workplace.

    1. Consider using validated Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) tool(s) to inform and support management decisions.

        a. Help ensure personnel using SPJ tools are properly trained.

        b. Maintain and use the most current version of the tool.

        c. Understand the tool's intended use, limitations, and applicability.

- **Management:** Develop and implement appropriate intervention strategies, support services, and monitoring plans to mitigate risk and address the needs of the individual and others impacted. Strategies may include:

  1. HR corrective action
  2. Supervisory engagement
  3. Mental health referral
  4. Security planning
  5. Adjustments to access controls
  6. Legal actions (e.g., restraining orders)
  7. Coordination with law enforcement, when appropriate
  8. Fear management

- **Monitor, Evaluate, and Document:** Thorough documentation supports effective case management, program evaluation, and legal defensibility:

  1. Continuously assess the effectiveness of the team's processes and interventions.
  2. Utilize a centralized case management system.
  3. Document all reports received, actions taken, decisions made, and interventions implemented.

Conclusion

The prevention focused principles highlighted throughout this eBook align with the concepts presented during the SAFEMINDS Preparedness Tour, where Allied Universal and Spheres of Safety (SOS) Global Consulting, Inc. offered leaders a structured, evidence-based mindset for recognizing early indicators of concern and strengthening organizational preparedness.

By implementing the principles of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM), organizations can proactively identify concerning behaviors, evaluate potential risk, and take informed steps to support individuals while helping to safeguard the broader workforce. This eBook provides a foundation for initiating or refining your BTAM efforts and establishing a consistent, prevention driven approach across the organization.

A well-executed BTAM process builds a safer and more resilient workplace by promoting early awareness, informed decision-making, and coordinated response — values reinforced by the SAFEMINDS approach and the expertise shared by Allied Universal and SOS.

Learn more:
Allied Universal www.aus.com
Spheres of Safety (SOS) Global Consulting, Inc. sosglobalconsulting.com

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