

# Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management at a Glance

---

## Definition

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) is a form of **violence risk assessment** that assesses individuals who have threatened harm.

In a school context, a multidisciplinary team works together to **promote safety and prevent violence** that may impact the school community.

The process involves **gathering information** to assess the nature and seriousness of the threat and **implementing interventions** to reduce the risk that the threat will be carried out.

## Quick Facts - BTAM is:

- Part of a comprehensive approach to school safety plans.
- A fact-based approach that is case specific.
- Early intervention.
- Violence prevention.
- Compassion-based and student-focused.

## Misunderstandings - BTAM is Not:

- Zero tolerance, leading to overly punitive or intensive interventions (i.e. suspension, law enforcement).
- A criminal investigation or conviction.
- A site survey, or security audit.
- Profiling based on traits or characteristics.
- Violence prediction.



## Did You Know:

- When done appropriately, threat assessment can **reduce the likelihood of violence**.<sup>3</sup>
- Threat assessment can **improve the ability to address the mental and behavioral needs** of students. A study of schools using the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG) found that students receiving a threat assessment were more likely to receive counseling services and parent conferences.<sup>4</sup>
- Threat assessment **promotes more fair outcomes**. A study of CSTAG showed that schools using threat assessment saw substantial reductions in the racial disparity in long-term suspension. Another study of CSTAG showed that students receiving special education services also did not receive disproportionately higher rates of school suspensions when threat assessment was used.<sup>5,6</sup>

## References

1. Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002) *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* | Office of Justice Programs (No. 195287; p. 63). US Department of Education and United States Secret Service Safe School Initiative. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/final-report-and-findings-safe-school-initiative-implications>
2. Cornell, D. G., Gregory, A., & Fan, X. (2011) Reductions in long-term suspensions following adoption of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(3) 175-194 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636511415255>
3. National Threat Assessment Center. (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence* | CISA. U. S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/enhancing-school-safety-using-threat-assessment-model-operational-guide-preventing>
4. Cornell, D. G., Allen, K., & Fan, X. (2012). A randomized controlled study of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines in kindergarten through grade 12. *School Psychology Review*, 41(1), 100-115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2012.12087373>
5. Cornell, D. G. & JustChildren. (2013). *Prevention v. Punishment: Threat assessment, school suspensions, and racial disparities*. University of Virginia
6. Kaplan, S. G., & Cornell, D. G. (2005). Threats of violence by students in special education. *Behavioral Disorders*



## Contact Us

For additional resources and trainings, visit [nc2s.org](https://nc2s.org)

Questions? Email [schoolsafety@umich.edu](mailto:schoolsafety@umich.edu)

## Contributors

Carolyn Seiger  
Instructional Designer  
National Center for School Safety

Aysha Lonich, MEd, BCBA  
School Safety Specialist  
National Center for School Safety

Allison Schreiber, MAIR  
School Safety Specialist  
National Center for School Safety

Sarah Mason, MPH  
Research Assistant  
National Center for School Safety

Heather Murphy, MA, LPC, NCC  
School Safety Specialist  
National Center for School Safety

Erin Wyatt  
Marketing Communications Specialist  
National Center for School Safety

## About the National Center for School Safety

The National Center for School Safety (NCSS) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded training and technical assistance center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. As a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional center focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence, the NCSS team is composed of national leaders in criminal justice, education, social work, and public health with expertise in school safety research and practice. NCSS provides comprehensive and accessible support to Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence grantees and the school safety community nationwide to address today's school safety challenges. NCSS serves as the national training and technical assistance provider for the STOP School Violence Program.

## Funding Disclaimer

This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement No. 2019-YS-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office of Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S Department of Justice.

Published January, 2023

Copyright © 2023 Regents of the University of Michigan