

## **SECRET SERVICE: 11 KEY THREAT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

A threat assessment inquiry should seek to answer the key questions below identified by the Secret Service. BTAM teams need to examine all evidence for behaviors and conditions that suggest the individual of concern POSES a threat by planning and preparing for an act of violence or to cause harm to self or others.

### **1. What are the subject's motive(s) and goals? / What first brought him/her to someone's attention?**

- Does the subject have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
- Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result?
- Does the subject feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternatives?
- Has the subject previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

### **2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas, intent, planning or preparation for violence?**

- What, if anything, has the subject communicated to someone else (targets, friends, co-workers, others) or written in a diary, journal, email, or Web site concerning his or her grievances, ideas and/or intentions?
- Do the communications provide insight about ideation, planning, preparation, timing, grievances, etc.?
- Has anyone been alerted or "warned away"?

### **3. Has the subject shown any inappropriate interest in, fascination, and/or identification with other incidents of mass or targeted violence (e.g., terrorism, rampage violence, school/workplace shootings, mass murderers):**

- Previous perpetrators of targeted violence
- Grievances of perpetrators
- Weapons / tactics of perpetrators
- Effect or notoriety of perpetrators

### **4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors?**

- Developing an attack idea and plan
- Making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons
- Investigating possible sites
- Rehearsal

### **5. Does the subject have (or are they developing) the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?**

- How organized is the subject's thinking and behavior?
- Does the subject have the means (e.g., access to a weapon) to carry out an attack?
- Are they trying to get the means to carry out an attack?
- Have they developed the will and ability to cause harm?
- Are they practicing or rehearsing for the violence?
- What is the "intensity of effort" expended in attempting to develop the capability?

**6. Is the subject experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?**

- Is there information to suggest that the subject is feeling desperation and/or despair?
- Has the subject experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
- Is the subject having significant difficulty coping with a stressful event?
- Has the subject engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?

**7. Does the subject have a positive, trusting, sustained relationship with at least one responsible person?**

- Does the subject have at least one friend, colleague, family member, or other person that he or she trusts and can rely upon for support, guidance or assistance?
- Is that trusted person someone that would work collaboratively with the team for the well-being of the subject of concern?
- Is the subject emotionally connected to other people or becoming more socially isolated?

**8. Does the subject see violence as an acceptable, desirable – or the only – way to solve a problem?**

- Does the subject identify alternatives to violence to address their grievances?
- Does the setting around the subject (friends, colleagues, family members, others) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
- Has the subject been “dared” by others to engage in an act of violence?
- Has the subject expressed sentiments of finality or desperation to address grievances?

**9. Are the subject’s conversation and “story” consistent with his or her actions?**

- Does information from collateral interviews and from the subject’s own behavior confirm or dispute what the subject says is going on and how they are dealing with it?
- Is there corroboration across sources or are the subject’s statements at odds with their actions?

**10. Are other people concerned about the subject’s potential for violence?**

- Are those who know the subject concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
- Are those who know the subject concerned about a specific target?
- Are persons around the subject engaging in protective actions (e.g., distancing, avoiding, minimizing conflict, etc.)?

**11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an escalation to violent behavior?**

- What events or situations in the subject’s life (currently or in the near future) may increase or decrease the likelihood that the subject will engage in violent behavior?
- Are threat assessment team interventions escalating, de-escalating, or having no effect on movement toward violence?
- What is the response of others who know about the subject’s ideas or plans?
  - Actively discourage subject from acting violently,
  - Encourage the subject to attack,
  - Deny the possibility of violence, and/or
  - Passively collude with an attack, etc.?