Emergency Management
NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

TVTP

NORTH CAROLINA TARGETED VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM PREVENTION STRATEGY

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Executive Summary

With a strong commitment by Governor Roy Cooper to prevent acts of targeted violence and terrorism, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) Secretary Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr. led the charge in developing and implementing a State Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Strategy. The goal of this State TVTP strategy is to protect the people of North Carolina from the risks of increasing attacks and to promote the public safety and wellbeing of our communities and community members.

Although there is no singular definition of targeted violence, it often refers to an act of violence that is premeditated and directed at a specific person, group, or at a designated location, usually driven by an extreme ideology. Targeted violence can occur anytime and in any place. In 2019, North Carolinians witnessed a mass casualty attack on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, which resulted in the tragic loss of life of two students and injuries to four others. In 2022, five individuals were killed and two people sustained injuries during a mass shooting in the Hedingham subdivision of Raleigh. The same year, gunfire attacks destroyed critical power grid substations in Moore County. In 2023, on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a doctorate student allegedly shot and killed his professor, which forced the campus into a multi-hour lockdown situation. This year (2024), we experienced the loss of four law enforcement professionals (total of eight shot, four of which succumbed to their injuries) who were perceived to be targeted when ambushed while attempting to serve a warrant in Charlotte. The aforementioned incidents are examples of targeted violence and terrorist attacks.

As you delve into the contents of this document, it is our hope that you garner a baseline understanding of targeted violence, its impact on the safety and wellbeing of our communities, and the measures that can be taken to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. Prevention efforts are not solely the responsibility of law enforcement professionals. It takes a whole-of-community and whole-of-government approach to confront this crisis.

In an effort to address this crisis from a public health and public safety approach, we scanned the state for leaders in relevant fields to engage in the development of this strategy. NCDPS hosted a State Strategy Workshop to enhance collaboration and communication between community organizations and institutions and public health and public safety practitioners. This workshop was followed by facilitated training from the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) with a selected writing team from NCDPS. Following a series of writing sessions, this team outlined a strategy with the goals of proactive integration of state resources and relative partners, to educate and inform, and to increase state Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAMs).

This strategy represents a multidisciplinary public health and public safety approach to addressing targeted violence with a focus on awareness, training, governance/funding, and research/data.

NCDPS is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those who, live, work, study, and travel in North Carolina. This strategy is a continuation of our efforts to reduce targeted violence and terrorism within our communities.

Introduction

PURPOSE

This strategy employs a multidisciplinary public health and public safety informed approach sufficiently agile as to evolve with evidence-based practices in addressing targeted violence and terrorism threats in North Carolina.

SCOPE

The strategy serves as a framework through which a multidisciplinary consortium of public and private practitioners can work together to develop, strengthen, share, and implement prevention activities and initiatives at the individual, community, and state levels addressing awareness, research, training, governance, and funding.

VISION

Through implementation of this strategy, North Carolina will systematically develop, strengthen, and fortify targeted violence and terrorism prevention and intervention measures through investment in programming and resources across the public health, public safety, and human services sectors to ensure a safe and secure North Carolina.

MISSION

The State of North Carolina, with a whole-of-community approach, will collaborate to strengthen targeted violence and terrorism prevention measures through utilization of evidence-based methodologies within the public and private landscape.

What is Targeted Violence and Terrorism?

A premeditated violent act manifested in the mindset, through a variety of negative influences and grievances, of an individual or group, whose beliefs and behaviors exhibit animosity directed at specific individuals, groups, or locations.

Targeted violence and terrorism encompasses several sub-categories across the ideological and non-ideological spectrum, including: domestic violent extremism, homegrown violent extremism, bias-motivated/hate crimes/identity-based violence, public spaces targeted violence, workplace targeted violence, and school targeted violence.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM)

Behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) is a systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience. It focuses on an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, an individual is moving toward violence. BTAM aims at interrupting an individual on the pathway to violence and results in threat management, which focuses on providing non-punitive interventions to move an individual off the pathway to violence.
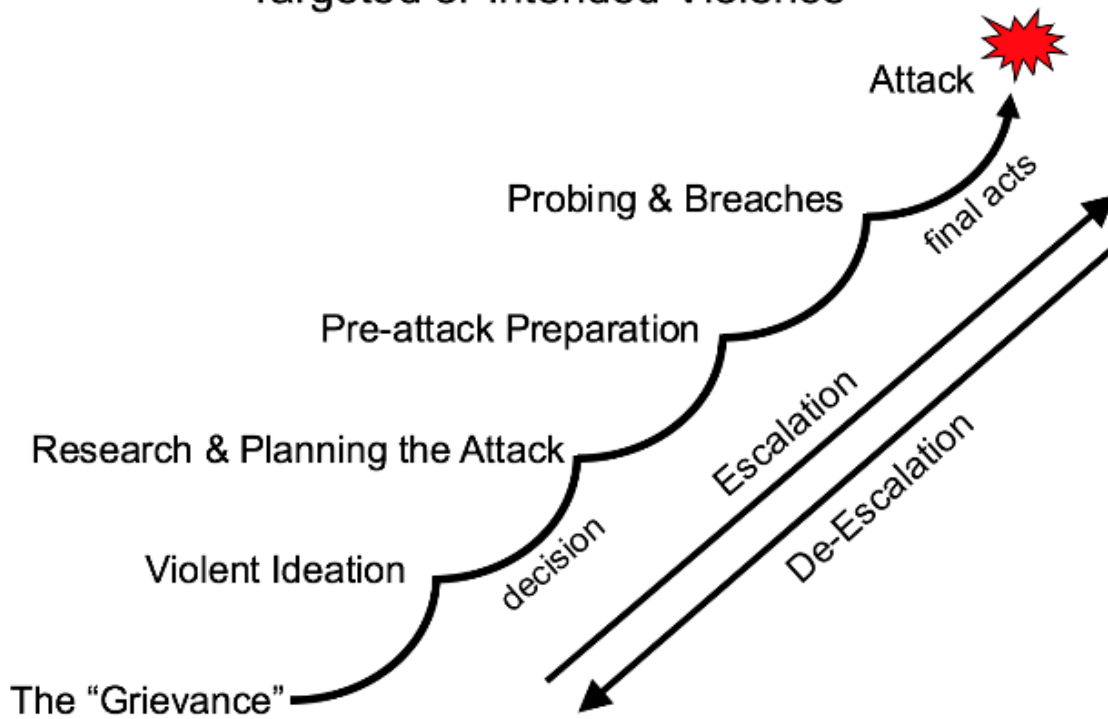
BTAM is not predictive of an individual's capacity to conduct violence and is not profiling – there is no demographic profile of a targeted violence offender. BTAM promotes the protection of privacy, civil rights and civil liberties by focusing on the facts about an individual and situation at a specific point in time, without including demographic information or making assumptions about the future. Utilizing multiagency teams to conduct BTAM, also ensures appropriate information sharing across disciplines while adhering to specific privacy laws and regulations, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Criminal Justice Information (CJI).

The Pathway to Violence

Many individuals engaging in targeted violence tend to move along an identifiable pathway before initiating an attack. The Pathway to Violence, illustrated in the figure below, often begins with a real or perceived grievance based on ideological, personal, or other factors such as biases or conspiracy theories. In this phase, the individual often perceives themselves as a victim or part of a victimized group, blaming an out-group for their grievance (e.g., job loss, financial stress) and seeking a likeminded in-group, often in online spaces. The ideation phase is where the individual determines violence is an acceptable or even necessary means to address their grievance. From there, individuals will often begin the process of mobilizing to violence in the research and planning phase, to include selecting possible targets. The preparation phase involves acquiring the equipment, skills, and/or resources necessary to carry out the attack. The breach phase often includes surveillance, "dry runs," or other activities in advance of a formal attack. Ultimately, the Pathway to Violence represents escalating behaviors, with each step providing critical opportunities to de-escalate threats using a variety of programs to redirect or interdict and mitigate an attack.

The Pathway to Violence is a framework to identify and understand concerning actions and behaviors potentially leading to targeted violence. However, it is important to note that not every individual who holds radical or extreme beliefs will pose a threat or commit an act of violence. Further, not every individual seeking out violence will follow this exact process – an individual's timeline may not follow this pathway in a linear fashion, may skip steps entirely, and can be prolonged or expedited depending on the individual and their situation. Early intervention and the identification of risk factors and indicators is essential in recognizing those exhibiting violent behaviors.[i]

Pathway to Workplace and Campus Targeted or Intended Violence

Attack

Probing & Breaches

final acts

Pre-attack Preparation

Escalation

De-Escalation

Research & Planning the Attack

decision

Violent Ideation

The "Grievance"

Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary threat management: A practical guide for identifying, assessing and managing individuals of violent intent.*
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Current Initiatives

The State of North Carolina conducts various activities to further programmatic goals and addresses the needs of the community and partners. Current initiatives within North Carolina include, but are not limited to:

988 Suicide and Crisis Prevention Hotline

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You are not alone – anyone who is depressed, going through a hard time, needs to talk, or is thinking about suicide can access crisis services.[ii]

Co-Responder Models for Behavioral Health Crisis Response

State agencies, state and federal grant programs, and local initiatives have started the spread of co-responder models across North Carolina. Co-responder models vary in practice, but generally involve law enforcement and clinicians working together in response to calls for service involving a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The model provides law enforcement with appropriate alternatives to arrest as well as additional options to respond to non-criminal calls. The model develops a crisis continuum of care that results in the reduction of harm, arrests, and use of jails and emergency departments and that promotes the development of and access to quality mental and substance use disorder treatment and services.[iii]

Behavioral Threat Assessment (BeTA) Unit

Developed by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI) to take a proactive approach to prevent violence in our communities. Staffed by law enforcement officers, intelligence analysts and mental health professionals, the BeTA Unit mission is to identify, investigate, evaluate, and manage person(s) of concern within North Carolina who are recognized as having motive and means to develop, or act on an opportunity to commit a targeted attack.[iv]

BTAM in Public School Units

A program enacted by NC Session Law 2023-78/House Bill 605 to establish threat assessment teams in public school units. The North Carolina Center for Safer Schools created and distributed a Best Practice Guidance for North Carolina Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Teams for Harm Prevention to assist public school units and their governing bodies in adopting such teams that works best with their student body and resources.

Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAAC)

The North Carolina Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAAC) works with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism and criminal activity by sharing information. ISAAC develops actionable intelligence on immediate and emerging threats and shares it with its first responders, private sector, emergency management, critical infrastructure, and federal, state, local, and tribal partners in a timely manner.[v]

Mobile Outreach, Response, Engagement and Stabilization (MORES)

MORES is a team-based crisis response intervention for children and adolescents ages 3-21 years experiencing escalating emotional and/or behavioral needs. MORES can provide the following support: (1) Access to a licensed clinician trained in child and adolescent interventions. (2) Access to a Family Support Partner who provides support and resources to the youth and family. (3) Access to psychiatric consultation. (4) Access to care management to provide connection to needed resources. (5) Up to 4 weeks of follow-up care after the on-site crisis response to assist the family and youth in obtaining services and supports.[vi]

NCCARE360

Many North Carolinians struggle every day with food insecurity, housing instability, lack of transportation access, or other non-medical social needs. NCCARE360 is the first statewide coordinated care network that better connects individuals to local services and resources. NCCARE360 provides a solution to a fragmented health and human services system by connecting providers and organizations across sectors in a shared technology network. In the NCCARE360 network, providers can electronically connect individuals and families who have unmet social needs to community resources. NCCARE360 also allows for easy feedback and follow-up to help close the care loop for individuals and families seeking help.[vii]

North Carolina Secure All Firearms Effectively (NC S.A.F.E.)

A statewide initiative designed to raise awareness of the importance of safe firearm storage. Established in 2023, the program provides resources on best practices for firearm storage and safety. NC S.A.F.E. is not associated with any advocacy-based initiatives related to gun laws or regulations. There is an urgent need for North Carolinians to safely secure their firearms to decrease childhood deaths, decrease firearm thefts, and increase the safety of homes and communities.[viii]

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Proactive Integration of State Resources and Relevant Partners

Awareness

- Publicize resources that are available for entities and organizations to develop strategies, planning, and risk management related to targeted violence and terrorism prevention (e.g., standard operating procedures, guidance, grants, trainings).

- Provide and reinforce ongoing education of crisis intervention, violence prevention, and public safety practitioners in the public and private sectors about adopting a "call them in, not call them out" approach to connecting individuals with support services.

Training

- Establish an overarching training strategy which incorporates a variety of practitioners working on targeted violence prevention and response.

- Provide professional development for public and private practitioners in TVTP space (e.g., trainings and/or certifications delivered or subsidized at the state level).

Governance/Funding

- Collaborate with the Office of Violence Prevention by supporting the authority, funds, and staff to lead growth and optimization of North Carolina's public-health informed approach to crisis intervention and violence prevention.

- Integrate public health and support service professionals and institutions into broader public safety strategies, planning, and training such as tabletop exercises.

Research/Data

- Integrate information hubs with public and private sector organizations with standard operating procedures to proactively collect and share information between those multidisciplinary partners across North Carolina.

Strategic Goal 2: Educate and Inform

Awareness

- Develop a communication strategy with agencies and institutions within the public and private sectors about North Carolina's public health informed approach to addressing and preventing targeted violence and terrorism.

- Produce bystander and public awareness support campaigns to educate the public about the pathway to violence, warning signs, and resources.

Training

- Develop a vetted and authorized list of vendors and training providers.

- Provide opportunities for joint training and preparedness efforts between health and human services, public safety, and law enforcement (e.g., vulnerability assessments, tabletop exercises, red teaming).

Governance/Funding

- Invest in training programs, certifications, and projects to expand community-based non-law enforcement crisis and violence prevention and intervention programs.

Research/Data

- o   Establish partnerships with North Carolina research institutions and centers of excellence to identify best practices, construct guidance, and make other technical assistance products available to institutions and communities pursuing targeted violence and terrorism prevention strategies.

Strategic Goal 3: Increase State Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAMs)

Awareness

- Work with North Carolina SBI Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit to set clear baseline standards for BTAMs to foster common approach between schools and districts (e.g., training, personnel, communication).

- Increase engagement with wrap-around service providers such as MORES.

Training

- Set measurable and attainable training goals to successfully scale BTAM growth across the state.

- Provide state-supported, delivered, or subsidized continuing training and education for BTAM units to ensure effective and updated approaches are utilized

Governance/Funding

- Explore authority and funding potential to provide SBI's BeTA Unit with sufficient resources to scale to have greater oversight and accountability of active BTAM investigations and training initiatives.

- Support the SBI and law enforcement intelligence analysis resources to effectively train, attract, and retain talent.

Research/Data

- Research and supply best practice guidance on BTAM case initiation to practitioners within different environments (e.g., K-12, houses of worship, higher education, private sector, employer workplaces).

Strategic Goal 4: Increase Access to and Use of Support Services

Awareness

- Identify terminology to be used in reference to crisis intervention, targeted violence, and prevention to improve collaboration among segments of the violence prevention landscape.

- Define multidisciplinary roles and responsibilities related to targeted violence and prevention for practitioners and common institutions across communities (e.g., school BTAMs, health and human service departments, law enforcement, medical centers, etc.).

Training

- Integrate a community health worker certification training program or a comparable public health certification.

- Identify opportunities to strengthen collaboration (e.g., training courses, personnel exchanges, tabletops) among public health and public safety networks and boost awareness of relevant support services, programs, and resources.

Governance/Funding

- Develop a violence prevention technical assistance toolkit that prioritizes best practices and focuses on scalability for communities and institutions to adopt.

Research/Data

- Develop guidance and standard operating procedures for collecting, managing, and sharing data/information between crisis intervention and violence prevention practitioners.

Conclusion

The comprehensive strategy outlined in this document represents a pivotal advancement in North Carolina's efforts to address and mitigate targeted violence and terrorism. By leveraging a multidisciplinary approach that integrates public health and public safety, the strategy aims to foster a collaborative environment where public and private entities can effectively develop, implement, and sustain violence prevention initiatives. Through its strategic goals—ranging from enhancing awareness and training to improving governance and increasing access to support services—this plan is designed to create a safer, more secure North Carolina.

The ongoing commitment to evidence-based practices, coupled with a robust framework for behavioral threat assessment and management, provides a solid foundation for preventing violence and addressing emerging threats. Current initiatives, such as the Behavioral Threat Assessment Unit, co-responder models, and NCCARE360, exemplify the State's proactive stance and dedication to innovation in crisis response and intervention.

As North Carolina moves forward, it is essential for all stakeholders to remain engaged and adaptable by continuously refining strategies in response to new data and evolving threats. By fostering an environment of collaboration and continued education, North Carolina can build on its progress, ensuring that its communities are well-equipped to prevent and respond to targeted violence and terrorism effectively. The strategy's success will ultimately depend on the collective efforts and ongoing dedication of its diverse partners, aiming to safeguard the well-being and security of every individual across the state.

The next step is to create an implementation plan that will serve as the counterpart to this strategic plan. The implementation plan will provide a step-by-step guide for how the above-mentioned goals and objectives will be achieved to ensure an efficient and effective approach to targeted violence and terrorism prevention.

Footnotes

[i] "Targeted Violence Prevention Strategy 2023." Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, 2023. https://www.dhses.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/04/2023-nys-tvp-strategy.pdf.

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