Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Programs

Practitioner-Informed Baseline Capabilities

September 2024

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FOREWORD FROM DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Intelligence & Analysis

Science & Technology

Securing Our Communities: Practitioner-Informed Baseline Capabilities in Behavioral Threat Assessment

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was founded to protect the American people from foreign terrorist threats. In the 23 years since these attacks, the Department has faced a constantly evolving threat environment. The U.S. has experienced individuals with a wide array of ideological and personal grievances targeting our houses of worship, schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

Ensuring the safety of the American people remains paramount to the Department's core mission. We recognize that, to succeed in this mission, we must continue to adapt our tools, embrace a whole-of-community approach, and support local efforts to prevent all forms of terrorism and targeted violence. The importance of empowering our state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners to prevent targeted violence in their communities cannot be overstated—everyone has a role to play.

The Department's recognition of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) as a best practice approach to targeted violence prevention is a welcomed evolution in national efforts to safeguard our communities. This evidence-based approach for identifying, assessing, and managing individuals exhibiting threatening or potentially concerning behaviors was pioneered by the U.S. Secret Service to protect the nation's highest elected officials. Today, BTAM is creating opportunities for communities nationwide to be proactive in identifying threatening or potentially concerning behaviors—enabling interventions to help prevent acts of targeted violence and move individuals off a pathway to intended violence.

Our homeland security partners have recognized the value and begun implementing BTAM in schools, workplaces, and community organizations with the support of DHS training and resources. As we look to continue to share information and enhance our partners' capacity in this space, it is crucial that we establish a common BTAM framework that is adaptable across different sectors—from law enforcement, to healthcare, to education—and demonstrates the core capabilities needed for effective targeted violence prevention. In 2024, to help address this need, DHS National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program Office and the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) led a research study with the University of Nebraska National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center to conduct a mixed method study that identified essential elements of BTAM implementation.

This study identified 15 practitioner-informed baseline capabilities, which will further enable DHS, and state and local programs, to help communities understand, build, operate, and sustain BTAM programs in a variety of operating environments. The framework provided by these reports is a critical first step towards better understanding and assessing our nationwide capabilities, enabling us to provide more comprehensive and informed training, tools, and assistance in furtherance of our collective mission to protect the American people.

We encourage all of our state, local, tribal, and territorial partners to continue raising awareness of BTAM in their communities, to include taking advantage of the NTER bystander awareness trainings at https://www.dhs.gov/foundations-targeted-violence-prevention, as well as other terrorism and targeted violence prevention resources available from NTER, S&T, and across DHS.

Sincerely,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE) conducted a work analysis to understand the core program-level elements of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) implementation in support of BTAM research and capacity-enhancing efforts by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program Office.

This report outlines fifteen practitioner-informed baseline capabilities for BTAM programs based on analysis of semi-structured interviews (n=20), a subject matter expert meeting (n=18), and a virtual feedback webinar (n=14) with BTAM experts from a variety of operating contexts, including education, workplace, healthcare, and law enforcement settings in urban and rural communities. The following capabilities were noted by the sample of BTAM experts as contributing to BTAM program defensibility and sustainability across a range of contexts:

Personnel capabilities are the collective knowledge and skills that support the BTAM process. These include foundational BTAM knowledge; knowledge of local BTAM needs, resources, and constraints; tiered expertise to identify, report, assess, and manage concerning behaviors; knowledge of available strategies for intervening to disrupt targeted violence; and awareness of legal, ethical, and local policy considerations for defensible practice.

Structural capabilities guide BTAM practice and sustain operations amidst turbulence and change. These include formal and informal institutional support; multidisciplinary involvement; tools and flexible structures for receiving, documenting, assessing, and monitoring case information; routine BTAM training and education; and work management.

Fidelity to a defensible and sustainable BTAM process involves collective commitment among BTAM personnel and partners to perform core BTAM activities. This includes facilitating bystanders' commitment to pre-incident reporting and information sharing; shared mission and trust among BTAM collaborators; multidisciplinary integration; commitment to systematic and ongoing BTAM practice; and care for well-being.

These capabilities do *not* reflect professional standards of practice or comprehensive guidance for conducting BTAM, but rather, offer a framework to guide practitioners' thinking about BTAM implementation. In addition, although the capabilities are broadly defined for cross-sector applicability, specific elements of BTAM programs will differ in their form and relevance based on the operating environment, overall program maturity, and available resources at hand.

Recommendations for DHS

1. The BTAM program capabilities can be incorporated into DHS's efforts to educate, resource, and research BTAM.
2. DHS should recognize the diversity in BTAM implementation within and across settings.
3. DHS could design BTAM program self-diagnostic tools to help nascent BTAM programs identify operational needs and strengthen capabilities within their resource constraints.

SUMMARY OF BASELINE BTAM PROGRAM CAPABILITIES

BTAM Program Capability	Definition
Personnel Capabilities	
1. Foundational BTAM knowledge	Familiarity and basic knowledge of BTAM goals, guiding principles, terminology, and strategies
2. Localized knowledge	Knowledge of sector- and community-specific BTAM needs (including scope of BTAM activities), resources (for assessment or intervention), and operating constraints
3. Tiered threat assessment expertise	Collective knowledge and skills (depending on involvement in BTAM process) for identifying behaviors of concern within the decided scope of BTAM activities, gathering relevant information, and evaluating information to formulate threat risk
4. Threat management expertise	Shared knowledge and awareness of appropriate safety and intervention steps based on available sector-, organization-, and community-based resources
5. Legal, policy, and ethics knowledge	Understanding of BTAM-relevant legislation, policy, and ethical considerations for defensible practice
Structural Capabilities	
1. Institutional support	Formal policies and/or informal supports that enable and justify the existence of a BTAM program
2. Multidisciplinary involvement	Established avenues for obtaining multidisciplinary capability or supports for the BTAM process
3. Operational tools and flexible structures for the BTAM process	Operational tools and structured, evidence-informed approaches that support processes for bystander reporting, triage, threat assessment, interventions, and case management
4. Routine BTAM training and education	Regular access to onboarding, refresher, and continuing education programs for BTAM to ensure appropriate knowledge for all levels of BTAM involvement
5. Work management	Capacity to organize, distribute, and complete BTAM activity sustainably (i.e., limiting staff burnout)
Fidelity to a Defensible and Sustainable BTAM Process	
1. Facilitating BTAM partners' commitment to pre-incident reporting	Bystanders' (and other BTAM partners') awareness and commitment to recognizing and reporting early behavioral signs of risk to those involved with BTAM
2. Shared mission and trust among BTAM collaborators	Unity and interpersonal trust, cooperation, and coordination for effective and efficient BTAM collaboration without interference from personal bias and ego
3. Multidisciplinary integration	Shared understanding and appreciation for the limits and utility of different disciplines for BTAM
4. Commitment to systematic and ongoing BTAM practice	Use of appropriate interventions to protect all parties involved based on dynamic assessments of potentially evolving circumstances
5. Care for well-being	BTAM practitioners' commitment to supporting and maintaining worker well-being amidst failures and other traumatic exposures

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OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) uses a public health-informed approach to preventing targeted violence and terrorism. Under this approach, DHS components with violence prevention missions have developed programs for training the violence prevention workforce, educating the public about early indicators of violence, and funding research to inform such efforts. In particular, DHS's Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program Office have devoted considerable resources to research and public education, respectively, on behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM), a method for proactively evaluating concerning behaviors and intervening when appropriate to ensure the safety and security of all relevant parties from threats of self-harm or targeted violence (Fein et al., 1995; Fein & Vossekuil, 1998).

Implementation of BTAM

The practice of BTAM has been implemented across a variety of contexts, such as education (K-12, higher education), workplace (e.g., healthcare, corporate, government, other work settings), law enforcement units, and community settings. Although experienced BTAM practitioners typically follow a systematic process for investigating, assessing, and managing threats based on a set of evidence-informed practices (Meloy et al., 2021), the composition and operations of BTAM activity differ widely depending on context needs and practitioner preferences (e.g., Cornell, 2018; Gelles, 2021; Seaward et al., 2024; Van Dreal & Okada, 2021; Wilson et al., 2021). For example, some BTAM practitioners may enact a structured BTAM process individually with multidisciplinary expert consultation, whereas others may find themselves in BTAM programs with access to teams and an established set of operating guidelines. As a result, there is utility in outlining core BTAM program capabilities for novice practitioners across a variety of operating contexts (and with varying resources) to understand factors that support defensible and sustainable BTAM implementation.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to collect and analyze practitioner insights to better understand baseline BTAM program capabilities. Through a series of expert interviews, an expert forum, and a virtual feedback webinar, the NCITE team conducted a program-level work analysis to derive a framework of personnel, structural, and process capabilities that could be broadly applied across sectors, communities, and levels of BTAM program maturity, from small-scale operations to mature, formalized programs. The resulting framework summarizes expert advice and is intended to organize thinking around BTAM implementation with common language across operating contexts. It is not intended as a measure of professional standards or comprehensive guidance for how to conduct BTAM. Finally, for more detailed information on steps for BTAM setup, operations, and sustainability, please refer to the accompanying guide available on NCITE's website, authored by NCITE affiliates at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (NUPPC), Scalora and Bulling (2024).

METHODS

Phase 1: Interviews

Sample and Method

Thirty-two BTAM professionals (i.e., technical experts and job incumbents) with at least a decade of experience in threat assessment and threat management practice were recruited for participation in semi-structured virtual interviews. Reliance on seasoned BTAM professionals ensured more accurate and complete work analysis information than would otherwise be possible using novice or mid-level practitioners (Hunter, 1986; Morgeson & Diedorff, 2011), especially for work that may differ meaningfully across operating contexts (Katz & Kahn, 1987; Sanchez & Levine, 2000). Of the 32 practitioners recruited, 20 agreed to participate in the research study (62.5% response rate). The final sample included 9 women (45%) and 11 men (55%) with experience spanning variety of sectors: education (K-12, higher education), healthcare, workplace, community, and law enforcement (local, state, federal). Threat assessment professionals were interviewed using semi-structured question format, beginning with two primary questions:

1. In your view, what are components of an effective BTAM program?

2. In your view, what is required for a BTAM program to operate sustainably in your working context?

Open-ended follow-up questions were asked to probe for additional information about program-level knowledge and skill requirements, discrete activities, supporting infrastructure, and context considerations. Each interview was transcribed by at least one notetaker, and interviews lasted from 27 minutes to 51 minutes (Mean = 34 minutes).

Analytic Approach

Interview transcripts were qualitatively analyzed using work analysis methods, which involve identifying work- and worker-oriented content related to a job or family of jobs within a field of practice (Morgeson & Diedorff, 2011). The work analysis relied on hybrid approach to qualitative data analysis: contextualist reflexive thematic analysis situated within an industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology framework (i.e., of workforce, occupation, and context characteristics). That is, process of work analysis involved the use of surface-level semantic codes (i.e., what people say) and latent codes constructed through interpretation by the researcher (i.e., what people seem to mean), with specific attention to work- and worker-oriented content and the central goal of developing BTAM program capabilities (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Initial BTAM capabilities themes were developed, evaluated, refined, and organized under three overarching topic categories: personnel capabilities, structural capabilities, and fidelity to a defensible and sustainable BTAM process.

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Phase 2: Expert Forum

Sample and Method

Twenty-nine BTAM professionals (i.e., technical experts and job incumbents) with at least a decade of experience in threat management practice were recruited for participation in a moderated expert forum. The expert forum was designed to gather input from leading BTAM experts to refine existing themes for relevance to BTAM practitioners, rather than an exercise in reaching data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Of the 29 practitioners recruited, 18 were willing and able to attend (62.1% acceptance rate) the event. The final sample included 8 women (44.4%) and 10 men (55.6%) with experience spanning variety of sectors: education (K-12, higher education), healthcare, workplace, community, and law enforcement (local, state, federal).

The expert forum was organized into four main topic discussions based on expert input and the BTAM capabilities categories previously identified from the interviews. Specifically, the event began with a level-setting discussion of BTAM goals, followed by conversation around BTAM personnel capabilities, structural capabilities, and fidelity to a sustainable and defensible BTAM process. Example discussion questions and sub-questions included:

- What are the primary goals of threat assessment and management? What constitutes a successful BTAM program?

- What expertise should people involved in a BTAM have? That is, how do we tell people what to do, and who gets and training (and how)?

- What differences are there in team composition? How should BTAM professionals work with and understand other disciplines?

- What challenges exist to BTAM program sustainability?

Follow-up questions and comments arose organically through discussion during the event. The event lasted 8.5 hours in total (including 6.5 hours of discussion), and participant responses were transcribed by one primary notetaker, with supplementary notes provided by two attendees.

Analytic Approach

The expert forum transcript and notes were used to refine candidate themes generated from the interview data. Expert forum data were coded with succinct text labels and iteratively compared to codes and themes from the interviews to decide the viability of candidate themes. When deemed necessary, themes were refined to better capture a central idea describing a core BTAM program capability (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Discrepant responses tended to reflect real context-based differences in BTAM practice (Sanchez & Levine, 2000)—often relating to BTAM program structure—which we acknowledge within our broader themes. The overarching BTAM program capability categories (i.e., personnel capabilities, structural capabilities, fidelity to a sustainable and defensible BTAM process) were retained.

Phase 3: Virtual Feedback Session

After gathering and iteratively analyzing data from the interviews and expert forum, we hosted a virtual feedback session for any available experts from our previous sample pools to share initial impressions and feedback about the BTAM capabilities report. Fourteen BTAM professionals attended the event and provided suggestions for clarity, refinement of capabilities for cross-sector relevance, and dissemination. Participant responses were transcribed by a designated notetaker. The meeting lasted 51 minutes and served to verify and improve capability definitions, resulting in the final, revised set of fifteen BTAM capabilities.

BASELINE BTAM PROGRAM CAPABILITIES

Through analysis of expert contributions from the interviews and expert forum, we discerned that BTAM professionals viewed BTAM programs as the architecture to support defensible and sustainable BTAM practice. *Defensible* practice means that in the event of a violent incident, BTAM practitioners can demonstrate in a court of law that they took systematic (and when possible, evidence-informed) investigative and protective steps within their control to limit the risk of harm in given situation (i.e., fulfilled their duty of care as professionals tasked with maintaining the safety and well-being of others). To do so *sustainably* means that defensible practices can be supported in the future without diminishing quality. Thus, BTAM programs should strive to maintain capabilities that enable defensible BTAM activity over time.

Our analysis identified fifteen BTAM program capabilities falling within three broad domains: **personnel capabilities**, **structural capabilities**, and **fidelity to a defensible and sustainable BTAM process**. Domains organize capability-related topics for ease of interpretation, whereas themes and subthemes represent BTAM program capabilities and supporting details analytically derived by the researchers from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It should be noted that defensible and sustainable BTAM implementation can be achieved with a variety of configurations and resources (e.g., individual assessors, teams, agencies, enterprises), meaning that practitioners can still perform BTAM effectively while meeting these capabilities in different extents and different ways. The baseline BTAM program capabilities are summarized in Table 1 and described in detail below.

Table 1

Summary of Baseline BTAM Program Capabilities

BTAM Program Capability	Definition
Personnel Capabilities	
1. Foundational BTAM knowledge	Familiarity and basic knowledge of BTAM goals, guiding principles, terminology, and strategies
2. Localized knowledge*	Knowledge of sector- and community-specific BTAM needs (including scope of BTAM activities), resources (for assessment or intervention), and operating constraints
3. Tiered threat assessment expertise	Collective knowledge and skills (depending on involvement in BTAM process) for identifying behaviors of concern within the decided scope of BTAM activities, gathering relevant information, and evaluating information to formulate threat risk
4. Threat management expertise	Shared knowledge and awareness of appropriate safety and intervention steps based on available sector-, organization-, and community-based resources
5. Legal, policy, and ethics knowledge	Understanding of BTAM-relevant legislation, policy, and ethical considerations for defensible practice

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Baseline BTAM Program Capabilities

BTAM Program Capability	Definition
Structural Capabilities	
1. Institutional support*	Formal policies and/or informal supports that enable and justify the existence of a BTAM program
2. Multidisciplinary involvement*	Established avenues for obtaining multidisciplinary capability or supports for the BTAM process
3. Operational tools and flexible structures for the BTAM process*	Operational tools and structured, evidence-informed approaches that support processes for bystander reporting, triage, threat assessment, interventions, and case management
4. Routine BTAM training and education*	Regular access to onboarding, refresher, and continuing education programs for BTAM to ensure appropriate knowledge for all levels of BTAM involvement
5. Work management*	Capacity to organize, distribute, and complete BTAM activity sustainably (i.e., limiting staff burnout)
Fidelity to a Defensible and Sustainable BTAM Process	
1. Facilitating BTAM partners' commitment to pre-incident reporting*	Bystanders' (and other BTAM partners') awareness and commitment to recognizing and reporting early behavioral signs of risk to those involved with BTAM
2. Shared mission and trust among BTAM collaborators*	Unity and interpersonal trust, cooperation, and coordination for effective and efficient BTAM collaboration without interference from personal bias and ego
3. Multidisciplinary integration	Shared understanding and appreciation for the limits and utility of different disciplines for BTAM
4. Commitment to systematic and ongoing BTAM practice	Use of appropriate interventions to protect all parties involved based on dynamic assessments of potentially evolving circumstances
5. Care for well-being*	BTAM practitioners' commitment to supporting and maintaining worker well-being amidst failures and other traumatic exposures

*Note. C*apabilities denoted with an asterisk (*) were expressed by BTAM experts as especially valuable for BTAM program or activity sustainability. It should also be acknowledged that BTAM can be performed rigorously by individuals, teams, or agencies in absence of some structural capabilities, such as limited institutional support, training access, or control over workload.

Personnel Capabilities

Personnel capabilities refer to the collective knowledge and skill requirements for those with some involvement in the BTAM process, from frontline workers and organization leaders who may recognize concerning behaviors to those engaged in assessing and managing threats. Since not all personnel in a sector or community need equivalent expertise, we briefly describe the program-level capabilities and, non-exhaustively, to whom (within the BTAM program) they might apply.

1. Foundational BTAM Knowledge

Participants stressed the value of familiarizing partners BTAM and core BTAM personnel with basic knowledge of BTAM goals, guiding principles, terminology, and strategies.

Knowledge of BTAM objectives. At a minimum, BTAM partners and practicing personnel should grasp the notion of targeted violence (i.e., the intentional process of moving from violent goals to enacting behaviors against an identified target) and understand the objectives of BTAM. The practice of BTAM is intended to proactively reduce future violence risk and protect potential targets violence or other threatening behaviors (e.g., harassment, intimidation). In other words, BTAM is a targeted violence prevention approach that involves taking steps to ensure the safety and security of all relevant parties. Interview and expert forum participants mentioned that BTAM is does not *guarantee* violence prevention, but rather, ensures that reasonable pre-incident investigative and protective actions were taken to minimize risk for harm.

Knowledge of BTAM process. The BTAM process is a systematic, fact-based method of investigating behaviors of concern (i.e., actions by an individual that may signal risk of harm to a specific target), evaluating the circumstances that may motivate or prevent an individual's escalation toward targeted violence, and deciding upon appropriate measures to ensure the safety of all parties (Fein et al., 1995; Van der Meer & Deikhuis, 2014). Central to the practice of BTAM is the focus on factual pre-incident *behavioral* and *circumstantial* factors, rather than superficial factors (e.g., appearance), to determine whether a person of concern *poses* a threat to oneself or others, regardless of whether they directly *communicate* a threat. Interview participants shared that BTAM can often be mistaken for criminal investigative procedures taken by law enforcement entities, which typically involve post-incident information gathering to inform arrest and prosecution decisions.

A general understanding of what BTAM is, what its objectives are, and how it is conducted can facilitate buy-in and collaboration among core (and auxiliary) BTAM personnel and partners. Foundational BTAM knowledge can ease anxieties around bystander reporting by clarifying procedural steps (e.g., how to report and who to report to) and lessening the perceived severity of reporting outcomes (e.g., well-being and safety versus post-incident punishment, assurance of confidentiality; Hodges et al., 2016). Moreover, a shared understanding of core BTAM goals, principles, terms, and approaches enables those involved with assessment and management to coordinate BTAM efforts more efficiently and effectively.

2. Localized Knowledge

When describing BTAM program implementation, interview and expert forum participants often mentioned the need to understand the BTAM needs, resources, and constraints within their operating context (i.e., sector and community).

BTAM needs. The operating context should dictate the scope of BTAM activity. Contexts differ in the frequency and form of concerning behaviors and the resources available to practically assess and manage them, meaning that practitioners should be thoughtful in identifying the most practical scope for their BTAM program. For instance, state- and federal-level law enforcement may be more concerned with identifying credible threats of violence toward public figures (e.g., Borum et al., 1999; Wilson et al., 2021) or terrorism (e.g., Meloy & Gill, 2016), whereas local law enforcement in rural and suburban settings may be more concerned with issues of stalking and intimate partner violence (e.g., Gerbrandij et al., 2018). The number of threat cases reviewed and assumed may differ substantially by sector, organization, and community, such that BTAM program coordinators and members should tailor their scope and operations around realistic assumptions about the types of threats they are most concerned with, the average number of threat cases they might expect per year, and the caseloads they can feasibly handle based on their level of resourcing.

Resources and constraints. BTAM resources and constraints are also context-dependent, such that feasible pathways to reporting, evaluating, and intervening to prevent targeted violence may differ based on sector and locale. Accordingly, there may be settings where practitioners cannot choose their BTAM collaborators and have limited options for intervention, or settings where they have full latitude for selecting a team and dense referral networks for threat management. Thus, the scope of BTAM concerns and activities within a BTAM program should encompass what is valuable and practical for the setting of interest.

3. Tiered Threat Assessment Expertise

Participants expressed the importance of having *tiers* of threat assessment expertise within a BTAM program. That is, not everyone needs to have the same baseline expertise in conducting BTAM because they may be involved in different capacities, but people should have the appropriate knowledge and skills to perform their respective duties in the BTAM process (see "Routine BTAM Training and Education" below).

Bystanders. Interviewees suggested that foundational targeted violence and BTAM knowledge may suffice for typical bystander populations such as community members, students, employees, and top management. Most people within organizations and the public do not need to know how to perform BTAM but do need to know what concerning behaviors to report, how to report them, and what BTAM action steps are intended to do (and not do).

BTAM partners. Frontline professionals tasked with receiving and screening reports (e.g., human resources, security, school administrators, line officers, university public safety) may benefit a higher level of BTAM-related knowledge than other bystanders. Specifically, it may be helpful for them to have additional knowledge to loosely distinguish levels of threat concern. This may include understanding the targeted violence pathway (from grievances to mobilization toward

violence); behaviors that may suggest risk of violence, disruption, harassment, or other forms of aggression within a given context (e.g., Logan & Walker, 2017; Meloy et al., 2012); and the procedures for elevating a case to full threat assessment.

BTAM practitioners. In addition to such knowledge, those tasked with conducting triages and full threat assessments should also understand the role of risk and protective factors (i.e., static and dynamic factors that raise or reduce targeted violence risk, respectively; e.g., Lösel & Farrington, 2012; Heffernan & Ward, 2017), as well as how to safely gather information on a subject of concern from multiple data sources (e.g., family members, community members, romantic partners, faith leaders, mentors, peers) without escalation of a situation, evaluate the credibility of that information, and assess conditions under which the subject may pose a threat to an identified target.

4. Threat Management Expertise

Participants noted that those practicing BTAM should have wide-ranging knowledge about possible threat management interventions and recognize that under situations where certain individuals are suspected to pose a threat to a target, threat assessment and threat management activities are inherently intertwined (Meloy et al., 2021).

Diverse intervention options. More specifically, the identification of a high-risk subject's dynamic risk and protective factors (i.e., *malleable* threat enhancers or mitigators) should cue BTAM program members to consider potential avenues for safely intervening to protect all involved parties in the near- and long-term. Threat management interventions may include but are not limited to sector-specific administrative actions, law enforcement interventions, mental health treatment, human services, and community-based solutions. They can be simple and immediate (e.g., enrolling a lonely adolescent in socially inclusive extracurriculars) or time- and resource-intensive (e.g., engaging with child protective services, psychiatric referrals and follow-up). The availability of intervention resources will differ based on context.

Intervention pros and cons. Notably, expert forum attendees acknowledged that the evidence base used to inform BTAM practice is continually evolving, and as it stands, there is not enough knowledge to identify which specific behaviors or threats should be addressed with which interventions. However, BTAM practitioners should know that measures may vary in their obtrusiveness, protective duration, resource demands, and accessibility (Calhoun & Weston, 2016; Van Dreal & Okada, 2021) and should carefully weigh the pros and cons of potential intervention strategies to avoid inflaming a situation or heightening a threat.

5. Legal, Policy, and Ethics Knowledge

Members of our sample also said all individuals tasked with assessing and managing threats should have an awareness and understanding of legal, policy, and ethical issues related to BTAM practice. This comports with expert recommendations from the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) Threat Management Certification (CTM) body of knowledge and the *International Handbook on Threat Assessment* (Meloy & Hoffmann, 2021).

Interview participants recommended that those with central roles in BTAM implementation (e.g., triage, assessment, management) should familiarize themselves with the following, *if applicable*:

- State mandates for BTAM training and implementation within and across sectors
- Local (organizational, or sector-specific) policies or guidelines for violence prevention
- Relevant regulatory law (e.g., FERPA, HIPAA, notable disclosure exceptions)
- Employment, criminal, and civil law; and considerations for ethical BTAM (e.g., confidentiality issues in information gathering and sharing, conflicts of interest, limits of competence, and professional requirements of own and other relevant disciplines).

Understanding the legal requirements and boundaries for BTAM program implementation, from training and team composition (e.g., state mandates) to information sharing (e.g., FERPA and HIPAA) and professional practice (e.g., professional societies, licensing boards, and local policies), helps maintain BTAM program compliance with relevant governing bodies and protection of people's civil rights and civil liberties through the BTAM process.

Structural Capabilities

Structural capabilities involve institutional, compositional, and operational resources that help sustain BTAM programming and anchor BTAM activities to consistent practice amidst change such as program member turnover or organizational turbulence. These capabilities are not behaviors or activities in the BTAM process, but rather, lay a foundation for their implementation.

1. Institutional Support

Participants indicated that formal and informal institutional supports were essential components for BTAM operability and sustainability, but their availability varied widely across contexts. These institutional supports facilitate BTAM implementation and provide justification for the existence of a BTAM program in a given context.

Formal support. In some contexts, there may already be formal written violence prevention and threat management policies that determine the composition, resources, and charge of the BTAM program. There may even be a full-time threat manager or equivalent job function codified into the organization with high-level authority to manage concerning behavior and override other administrative functions under circumstances of high or imminent risk of harm (Dunkle et al., 2008). Interview participants mentioned that having codified BTAM functions and roles in an organization provides considerable security for sustaining BTAM program operations. Having formal legitimacy behind the BTAM functions also makes it easier for BTAM professionals to obtain additional resources for their operations, such as funding for training, reporting tools, or marketing to raise public awareness of BTAM as a safety resource.

Informal support. However, formalized supports are not always available in every working context, and those looking to start BTAM programs must actively seek and maintain buy-in from leadership, potential BTAM collaborators who may play a hand in proactively assessing and managing threats, and other key partners within their sector or community (Amman et al., 2015; Scalora & Bulling, 2024). Informal support from leaders, the public, and other organization members can pave the way for obtaining operating resources, open additional channels for gathering information, and establish BTAM advocates who can raise awareness or make referrals to the BTAM function. Further, commitment from possible BTAM backup members who can lead or partake in the assessment process can support sustainable BTAM practice when other members turnover or have reduced availability.

2. Multidisciplinary Involvement

Although the BTAM experts in our sample spanned a range of operating structures and environments, they largely agreed about the importance of multidisciplinary capability or supports for threat assessment and management. Critically, they noted that there is no "right" BTAM operating structure for achieving multidisciplinary involvement, as structures may be resource-dependent and even change over time.

Many viable multidisciplinary configurations. BTAM program membership should comprise people from multiple professional roles and be designed to meet the needs and resource constraints of the operating context (Scalora & Bulling, 2024). To that end, participants raised

that there are many viable multidisciplinary configurations depending on the personnel resources available (e.g., Gelles, 2021; Van Dreal & Okada, 2021; Wilson et al., 2021), with distinct pros and cons to each approach depending on need. BTAM programs in small- and mid-sized businesses or rural communities, for example, may only have one or few individuals with the training, bandwidth, and authority to triage threat cases, but can acquire multidisciplinary involvement through in-person or virtual consultation with external advisory parties that have requisite expertise. Other possibilities include community-based teams comprising multiple agencies or institutions (e.g., faith-based and/or law enforcement partnerships) that can designate members with different knowledge, experiences, skills, and resource access to form a collaborative BTAM function. Participants also mentioned having the leadership buy-in and capacity to employ small BTAM teams in-house, with some able to flexibly convene larger groups (who offer input but may not manage cases) for more serious incidents (e.g., a university team with law enforcement and mental health bringing together human resources, student affairs, and athletics to review a case). Alternatively, organizations with more discretionary assets may be able to fully staff multidisciplinary BTAM teams with static membership, or in the case of large enterprises, employ a collection of geographically distributed threat managers who can pull together ad-hoc multidisciplinary teams in their respective regions as needed. Despite such variety in environments and organizing structures, the common sentiment among interview and expert forum participants was that collaboration with at least one or more other relevant disciplines can strengthen threat assessment practice (e.g., due to individual bias, limits of competence, lack of information access for conducting assessments)

Achieving diverse expertise amidst staffing changes. Interview and expert forum participants also mentioned that BTAM membership configurations may change for a variety of reasons, such as turnover, personnel availability, or additional staffing as a BTAM program matures. Changes in the type and number of people can be expected in any context, and BTAM practitioners should not be penalized for failing to meet rigid membership requirements. Multidisciplinary capability remains desirable and often achievable (even if in limited capacity) as people's involvement or membership changes. Whether BTAM operations are lean (e.g., one or two people practicing BTAM) or well-resourced, diverse expertise and input can be gathered to support the assessment and management process. For example, practitioners early in the process of developing BTAM programs can still obtain multidisciplinary involvement to perform BTAM well through case consultation and advisory structures even when there is no "full" BTAM team with consistent membership. Taken together, there is no "one-size-fits-all" configuration or personnel composition within BTAM programs, but multidisciplinary involvement (or supports) in some capacity is key for rigorous practice (Goodrum et al., 2019; Meloy et al., 2021).

3. Operational Tools and Flexible Structures for the BTAM Process

According to many participants, defensible BTAM practice relies on structured, evidence-informed approaches and operational tools (e.g., reporting and recordkeeping systems) to support elements of the BTAM process, from reporting, evaluating, and managing concerning behaviors to case documentation for future reference.

Operating guidelines. Overall, interview participants mentioned the value of establishing operating guidelines for steps of the BTAM process. Having a reliable process with defined roles (including potential BTAM partners) for pre-incident reporting, case intake, triage, assessment, and possible intervention strategies can be valuable for keeping operations somewhat consistent. Expert panel participants gave additional input on this issue, noting that clear roles (knowing how, when, and where they and others fit into the BTAM process) and operating guidelines (e.g., what kind of cases to take, how to handle cases, when and with whom to begin certain processes) aids in timely and sustainable practice. Although every threat case may differ qualitatively in how it unfolds and how it is managed, having some systematic, trackable procedures allows practitioners to revisit and review previous work as needed, identify challenges within their workflows, and improve future operations.

Reporting methods and procedures. For threat identification, participants suggested the benefit of having multiple convenient case intake sources (e.g., referrals, digital reports, open sources, calls) and a clear strategy for case intake that fits within the chosen scope of BTAM program activities. In general, participants recommended the use of multiple reporting modalities (including the option do so anonymously) to sources that are deemed credible and confidential to reporters. Common methods of reporting include phone calls, anonymized digital reporting platforms, mobile phone applications, or in-person contact with trusted colleagues or authority figures. Reports should be funneled to a central point of contact to kickstart initial screening and triage to determine the need for full assessment.

Structured and flexible evidence-informed BTAM approach. In the assessment and management phases, participants encouraged the use of structured and evidenced-driven approaches to BTAM that allow for flexible application at the discretion of users, while limiting the chances that people miss critical, otherwise knowable, information from procedural oversights, inexperience, or personal bias. Triage guidelines, structured interview protocols, and other tools to support the assessment process may add structure, but whenever possible, they should ultimately reflect a multidisciplinary, structured professional judgment (SPJ) approach. Expert forum participants also cautioned against rigid over-reliance on tools and protocols to the point of abandoning common sense and expertise, or misuse of such guiding resources as checklists that summarize threat levels rather than methods for systematically collecting and evaluating information for professional judgment. Flexible, evidence-informed approaches to BTAM can aid in collecting and interpreting critical case information that can be used to determine intervention points and strategies that are appropriate for a specific case. As such, BTAM practitioners should aim to strike a balance between structuring their process and using their judgment to critically understand, interpret, and act on (when needed) the unique facts involved with each case.

Recordkeeping systems. Furthermore, participants indicated that BTAM programs need systems for documentation and clear policies and protocols for record keeping. Some participants recommended documenting case information (e.g., concerning behaviors, contacts with target or targets, dates of reports, known information about risk and protective factors, justification for determined levels of concern and interventions, intervention outcomes, and parties involved) in

spreadsheets or other digital tracking systems, with clear policies for read/write authority (e.g., core BTAM members responsible for managing a case) and file storage duration, as well as protocols for tracking new and old (ongoing and closed) cases. Participants were mixed on where documents should be stored and for how long (i.e., some participants noted indefinite storage due to the possibility of old cases resurfacing, whereas others retained records for a set time period), but generally noted the importance of secured access restricted to core BTAM members on a need-to-know basis. Sound documentation and record keeping practices are essential for protecting the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of those involved in the BTAM process.

4. Routine BTAM Training and Education

Participants advocated for consistent, accessible BTAM training and education for new and existing BTAM partners and staff.

Accessible, audience-specific training delivery. Based on the collective, tiered knowledge required for BTAM programs to work effectively (see "Tiered Threat Assessment Expertise" above), expert forum participants offered that the content, length, and frequency of BTAM training and educational programs should vary based on involvement in BTAM. In other words, higher responsibilities and participation within the BTAM process should correspond with more rigorous training requirements. Those conducting BTAM activity, for example, need richer knowledge than BTAM partners (e.g., leaders, bystanders, other involved parties who may support assessments and interventions) about how to gather and evaluate information in threat assessment and the ramifications of potential intervention strategies. For those engaged in BTAM, interview and expert forum participants also noted that some legislative state-level training requirements for BTAM in certain sectors are inadequate for effective practice, lamenting that violence prevention work demands greater knowledge and experience that should be continually cultivated. Additionally, BTAM upskilling opportunities should be abundant, professionally relevant (e.g., directly applicable to one's job role, offers continuing education credits), accessible (i.e., low cost and easy to integrate into current work), and occur with some regularity. Formally designated full-time threat managers or coordinators, when available, can also offer (or seek external) awareness briefings or staff trainings.

Ongoing BTAM advocacy. For BTAM partners who may play a role in reporting concerning behaviors or supporting the BTAM function within a community or organization, foundational BTAM knowledge may be sufficient. Along such lines, interview and expert forum participants shared that continued advocacy and awareness about the BTAM program (and its value, efficacy, and aims) strengthens the program's operability and sustainability. Foundational BTAM knowledge and buy-in among partners raises the likelihood of bystander reporting and continued institutional support for a BTAM program. A major challenge to BTAM program sustainability is that membership ebbs and flows in organizations, institutions, and communities. That is, people come and go for various reasons, requiring that incoming groups and staff be trained regularly on foundational BTAM knowledge and convinced of the value and efficacy of BTAM. This may entail providing transparent overviews of past BTAM activities and communicating the utility of BTAM in meaningful terms (e.g., reputational costs of reacting to versus preventing violent incidents, financial returns on investment). BTAM education and awareness efforts should also

remind groups or teams that provide adjacent behavioral services (e.g., crisis response, corporate security, student affairs) that BTAM programs are intended to support, rather than compete, with their respective functions.

5. Work Management

Since the BTAM process is dynamic and at times ongoing (e.g., some individuals must be continually managed, cases may resurface), interview and expert forum participants indicated that some BTAM workloads can grow with new and continuing threat cases and therefore must be handled carefully. Participants also noted that BTAM programs differ in their ability to control workload (i.e., the amount of work) and work capacity (i.e., resources to perform the work).

Collective workload. Participants mentioned that sustainable practices for handling workloads for new and ongoing cases can help sustain operations and prevent staff burnout, although this may not always be possible (e.g., workload is not typically controllable in some contexts, such as law enforcement). Some of these practices may be captured within the policies, systems, and operating guidelines of a BTAM program, but they only have utility insofar as they are monitored and enacted appropriately. For BTAM operations where practitioners can be selective about the scope of their BTAM activities, poorly chosen case intake thresholds (e.g., accepting cases beyond the scope of the BTAM program's activity) or unrealistic expectations of the work (e.g., overly ambitious undertakings without the knowledge or resources to do the job, unexpected exposure to trauma) can overwhelm BTAM personnel.

As one expert forum participant stated, some people expect BTAM activity to be linear and finite, such that one contact or intervention with a person of concern is enough. However, effective BTAM often requires practitioners to engage in ongoing, iterative, and flexible protective action. This means that BTAM practitioners and programs may, at times, manage a mix of new and ongoing cases. As new cases pile onto existing workloads, the possibility of an ever-expanding workload can create stress for BTAM personnel with other primary job duties outside of their BTAM functions. In turn, having workloads that exceed work capacity can impair BTAM practice for new and old threat cases.

Personnel work capacity. A BTAM program's capacity to sustainably perform BTAM work is both a function of the workload and practicing members' availability and capability to do the work. When the number of cases assumed cannot be changed, work management may include distributing work among members who have greater bandwidth to lead new cases or recruiting additional members. Moreover, interview and expert forum participants recommended that practicing BTAM personnel should have the time to partake in BTAM, not simply have the role-based authority to do so. Having backup BTAM members can also support the work when other central members are absent. Overall, managing workload and personnel resources can promote long-term BTAM implementation. Although such strategies may be valuable when feasible, it should be acknowledged that many BTAM practitioners and programs have limited ability to control workloads or find additional staff.

Fidelity to a Defensible and Sustainable BTAM Process

Fidelity to a defensible BTAM process refers to BTAM program members' collective ability to abide by systematic, evidence-informed protocols that limit individual bias and maximize the safety of parties involved in a threat assessment case. Ultimately, those performing BTAM should be able to take reasonable steps within their abilities to fulfill their duty of care and protect those who may be at risk of harm, as they could otherwise be liable for negligence if a violent incident were to occur. Personnel and structural capabilities may aid in sustainable commitment to a BTAM process, but success in this regard ultimately hinges on people's individual and collective attitudes, decisions, and activities in BTAM implementation. Thus, unlike personnel and structural capabilities, the capability to remain committed to a defensible BTAM process extends beyond what BTAM programs *have* and are rooted within the *attitudes* and *activities* enacted by those conducting BTAM.

1. Facilitating BTAM Partners' Commitment to Pre-Incident Reporting

Participants also shared that bystanders should have the motivation to report observations of suspicious or concerning behaviors that may indicate future threat risk. Basic knowledge of BTAM and signs of aggressive, harassing, disruptive, and threatening behavior are critical for people to know what to report, which details to provide, and how to report (see "Tiered Threat Assessment Expertise" above). However, commitment to reporting requires that bystanders trust that they can share potentially sensitive information through formal and informal channels.

Formal reporting methods. Trust in more "official" reporting channels (and BTAM function more broadly) can be built through responsiveness to bystander's concerns and reliable follow-up with actions. As one interviewee put it, "You need to work to develop trust with those you serve. We have protests in [our setting]...we have to make it clear that everyone's safety and well-being are our priority...we need to treat confidential information with respect." People want to trust that their safety concerns were considered and investigated by credible parties and procedures, with some transparency or closure about whether their reports were dismissed (i.e., sufficient information to determine safety), being investigated (i.e., in the process of determining threats posed), or moved to intervention steps (i.e., there are identifiable threats). One expert forum participant added, "People might not report [again] if there isn't good follow-up to the [reporting] event. This is tied to sustainability." In addition, individuals who trust that they will not incur repercussions for reporting concerns have greater willingness to report pre-incident behaviors (e.g., Hodges et al., 2016; Low et al., 2023).

Informal reporting methods. Alternatively, the journey from bystanders noticing concerning activity to getting crucial pre-incident data in the hands of BTAM personnel is not always linear and often relies on trusted members in a given setting to receive and share information. Previous research suggests that people who lack awareness or trust in authorities may not feel a sense of urgency to report behaviors of concern and may take matters into their own hands by confiding concerns with friends or adopting personal safety measures until they find themselves in danger (Hodges et al., 2016; Hollister et al., 2014). To counter such tendencies, several expert forum participants echoed the importance of fostering a culture conducive to frequent reporting—one that is founded on trust and a willingness to share about unusual behaviors and events that pose

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safety concerns. As one expert forum participant mentioned, "People need to recognize [a threat] and then hand off to the next highest skillset, but there a lot of folks that people don't want to talk to...we need credible receivers." Another participant commented that credible receivers are also valuable during the assessment process: "We need to have that [go-to person] who we can look for to ask about a person of concern." This person can be in any role provided that they are trusted by others in their context, from a frontline police officer, school resource officer, or gym teacher to an academic advisor in a university or corporate middle manager.

Overall trust in the reporting process and BTAM function lays a foundation for more bystander reporting, reduces the chances that concerning behaviors are overlooked in that context, and improves cooperation among key information holders and BTAM personnel during the information gathering and assessment process (Dunn, 2014; Van der Meer & Diekhuis, 2014). Reporting early signs of risk, along with other relevant information, can forewarn BTAM personnel to take appropriate action before concerning situations escalate to imminent threat.

2. Shared Mission and Trust Among BTAM Collaborators

Interviewees and expert forum participants identified unity and trust as core elements that enhance collaboration among BTAM practitioners throughout the BTAM process.

Shared mission. Among BTAM personnel, unity and trust facilitates cooperation and coordination through the BTAM process (Amman et al., 2015), allowing for members to share knowledge, collectively assess information, suggest intervention strategies, and work reliably in service of collective interests without outsized interference from any individual member's personal biases. Along such lines, one interviewee said, "You need people to develop this sense that they are part of the team, maybe have a once-a-month meeting with everyone from different disciplines, even without cases to assess or manage."

Mutual trust. Another interviewee highlighted the role of mutual trust and psychological safety among BTAM practitioners, asserting, "I want to have people on my team with egos, to an extent. They can share dissent, and no one else gets offended because we know they are trying to help us come up with a solid plan for keeping people safe." Other interviewees also mentioned the benefit of speaking regularly with BTAM partners in the community (e.g., mental health service, human services, teachers), noting that maintaining trusted partnerships can reduce call times when quicker responses are needed from those working BTAM cases.

3. Multidisciplinary Integration

There was also acknowledgement from BTAM professionals that multidisciplinary representation does not guarantee effective multidisciplinary activity. In practice, BTAM personnel should maintain awareness of disciplinary boundaries, the limits of their expertise and authority, and knowledge of when certain disciplines are better equipped to make judgment calls during assessment and intervention activities.

The threat assessment process is highly dynamic and interpersonal (Van der Meer & Diekhuis, 2014). Effective cross-functional collaboration demands that people respect when other disciplinary perspectives have greater relevance or authority (Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Hoever

et al., 2012). This is distinct from trust and interpersonal liking, which can lead people to defer to others for the wrong reasons (e.g., Joshi & Knight, 2015). Shared understanding and appreciation for others' professional backgrounds and experiences—and understanding of one's own limitations—enables the BTAM members to reap the benefits of multidisciplinary involvement. To that end, expert forum participants emphasized the value of interdisciplinary awareness and humility, meaning that people should know what they do not know and who to solicit expertise from. One expert forum attendee stated this succinctly: "You need to find a balance of staying in your lane but having a background on [other BTAM practitioners' or team members'] different capabilities." Furthermore, the ability to recognize and defer to situationally appropriate expertise throughout the evolution of threat cases can be challenging, but the maintenance of foundational knowledge and working relationships with other BTAM collaborators (in-house and/or external) can ensure the reliable use of multidisciplinary expertise for triage, full assessment, and reassessment over time.

4. Commitment to Systematic and Ongoing BTAM Practice

Intermixed with their discussions of the threat assessment process, participants emphasized the importance of identifying appropriate interventions to protect all parties (e.g., target, subject of concern, other partners, threat assessors) based on ongoing monitoring and assessments of potentially evolving situations.

Collective commitment to an ongoing BTAM process. While multidisciplinary integration is essential for BTAM implementation, it is also necessary for defensible practice that those engaged in BTAM *collectively* commit to a structured and potentially ongoing BTAM process (Meloy & Amman, 2022). Operating guidelines and foundations for BTAM collaboration can be present, but this does not guarantee their implementation. For that reason, interview and expert forum participants encouraged fidelity to evidence-informed methods for systematic information gathering and assessment (see "Tools and Flexible Structures for the BTAM Process" above). One interviewee further noted the importance of establishing accountability among BTAM collaborators to ensure consistency of process and ongoing activity when needed. Finally, if after multidisciplinary, systematic, and ongoing deliberation, BTAM members believe that a subject does not pose (or no longer poses) a threat of violence or self-harm, it may be suitable to close a case following thorough documentation of threat assessment activities and justified determinations.

Adjustable interventions. Intervention plans can only be useful to the extent that they address circumstantial issues that limit the risk that a subject poses to an identified target. Interview and expert forum participants noted that once conditions of the target, subject of concern, or their interaction meaningfully change, it becomes necessary to reassess the risk of future violence and adapt intervention plans to ensure safety and security under current circumstances. In other words, intervention plans must be reevaluated for their viability and readjusted as dynamic risk factors (i.e., situational stressors or threat enhancers) increase and dynamic protective factors (i.e., situational threat mitigators) decrease (Amman et al., 2015). Thus, threats do not vanish after an initial intervention, and those partaking in the BTAM process must expect ongoing threat

management for certain cases and exercise creativity when generating possible intervention (and backup intervention) strategies.

5. Care for Well-Being

BTAM experts also called attention to the psychological stressors of BTAM work and the need to ensure wellness of all participating members.

Recognizing work stressors. BTAM work can be emotionally taxing, and those involved in assessments and interventions must not only deal with conventional occupational stressors but also the potentially traumatic (or vicariously traumatic) *content* of BTAM activities. Expert forum participants stated that success in BTAM is not guaranteed, and practitioners may find themselves in situations where failure occurs due to the presence of unknowable factors or knowable information that was not shared through bystander reporting in advance of a violent incident. In many cases, BTAM practitioners have done everything they reasonably could using the information available in the lead-up to an incident, with much else out of their control. Moreover, information gathered in the assessment process can be disturbing and worrisome, and such exposure to concerning behaviors, rhetoric, or even violent incidents can take a mental toll on BTAM practitioners—especially if unprepared.

Well-being support resources and self-care. Due to the potential stressors of BTAM work, some expert forum participants stated the importance of establishing cultures of interpersonal support and self-care. This ensures that those immersed in the BTAM process receive adequate space, accommodations, and wellness resources to cope with potential failures and traumatic exposures. Sustained BTAM program operations are only possible if practitioners have the resources and resilience to continue performing their work adequately.

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CONCLUSION

This project was conducted in support of DHS's desire to understand baseline capabilities for sustainable implementation of BTAM programs. Through interviews and an expert forum, the NCITE team identified fifteen program-level capabilities, which were organized under three broad domains: (a) personnel capabilities and (b) structural capabilities in support of (c) fidelity to defensible BTAM process. These practitioner-informed capabilities were intentionally described in broad terms to produce a guiding framework for thinking about BTAM implementation that can be applied across sectors, communities, and levels of BTAM program maturity. Although this framework aimed to crosscut operating contexts, the real-world implementation of each capability may differ widely across environments—even within sectors and community types. Hence, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to BTAM program design and implementation. Below, we offer several implications for practice and recommendations for DHS.

Implications for Practice

Given the diversity in BTAM programs and the scope of this research inquiry, it should once again be noted that these capabilities do not reflect professional standards of practice or comprehensive guidance for conducting BTAM. Rather, the identified capabilities allow BTAM practitioners to periodically take stock of core components of their programs that may be missing or deficient. Those in search of step-by-step "how to" guides for setting up BTAM programs or conducting BTAM should look to detailed publicly available guides, ideally tailored to their sector. Information on field-specific standards of practice can typically be found through professional societies, state governing bodies, or local policies for specific disciplines (e.g., American Psychological Association, state licensing boards, local crime commissions). Legislation related to BTAM program composition and implementation differs by state and should be examined before proceeding with BTAM activities.

Recommendations for DHS

These baseline BTAM capabilities provide a framework for DHS to understand and resource specific elements of BTAM programs nationwide. Accordingly, we foresee three viable avenues for DHS and its components to use information from this framework. First, the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, NTER Program Office can incorporate these practitioner-informed findings into their educational and resourcing efforts. The NTER Master Trainer Program currently focuses on the basics of targeted violence, BTAM, and instructional design, but knowledge of operational capabilities and the many options for BTAM implementation may be valuable for the professional audiences trained by Certified Master Trainers. Additionally, having broadly applicable capability categories lays the foundation for NTER (or other DHS entities) to develop publicly accessible self-diagnostic forms for practitioners to qualitatively gauge missing or deficient capabilities that could be addressed to improve BTAM operations and sustainability. Although the variety in BTAM implementation poses a major challenge to measuring BTAM practice or program capability, one possibility would be to design a hybrid SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis form and operating charter that outlines objectives, current capabilities, context constraints, and opportunities for fortifying certain

capabilities in light of unavoidable constraints. This would enable BTAM practitioners to identify areas of potential improvement within the context of any unique constraints or resources available to them. Second, DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) and its BTAM-focused Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) grantees can reference these capabilities, *as applicable*, to guide their evaluations and progress reporting. Finally, this framework also allows DHS S&T to identify, based on their research portfolio and implementation partners, potential knowledge gaps (i.e., under-researched capabilities categories) and opportunities for research funding.

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