

Illinois State Police

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

Division of Criminal Investigation

Lieutenant Keith Cox



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Informational Briefing



Mission

Our mission is to safeguard our community through proactive identification, assessment, and mitigation of potential threats to the citizens of the State of Illinois. Committed to a multidisciplinary approach, our Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team aims to analyze and address potential risks, threats, and threatening behaviors ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens and community members while upholding the principles of justice and fairness.



Objectives

- Identify and Define Illinois State Police and BTAM Terms.
- Discuss Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management
- Discuss and Understand the Pathway to Violence
- How and Where Behavioral Threat Assessment fits in Law Enforcement
- The Illinois State Police Program



Lieutenant Keith Cox



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- Physical Threat Assessments
 - Target Residences, Subject of an Operation
 - Intelligence variables
- Office of Firearms Safety; Clear and Present Danger Reporting
- Training Academy; The value of Training, Certifications and Experience



Introductions and Resources

- International Handbook of Threat Assessment (Meloy and Hoffman)
- User Manual BETA-ID and NCBIO-25 LE Behavioral Threat Assessment Investigation Tools – North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (September 23)
- United States Secret Service (USSS) National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC)
- United States Department of Homeland Security – Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention
- Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks – FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU)



Introductions and Resources

- Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation
- Michigan State Police
- Illinois Department of Corrections
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals



BTAM: Definitions

- **Threat** – Perception of possible harm; a statement conveying an intention to cause harm.
- **Threat Assessment** – The process of gathering information for making decisions. The information should be relevant to why/how a person has formed violent or threatening intentions.
- **Threat Management** – Tactically or strategically controlling a subject to prevent the intended violent act from occurring.
- **Violence** - Behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. (the Dictionary)



Violence

- **Affective Violence** – Emotional or impulsive response or reaction to situation, experience or perceived threat.
- **Predatory Violence** - Premeditated Violence; typically absent of an immediate threat and usually follows planning and preparation. Offensive violence which occurs following a discernable process.
- **Targeted Violence** - Forethought and planning go into the attack. These are not spontaneous, emotion-driven, impulsive crimes emanating from a person's immediate anger or fear. In fact there is no evidence in the research to date that “snap” mass murders occur at all. The perpetrators often have a grievance and they take time to consider, plan, and prepare their attack.



Subjects of Concern

- This is the subject making the alarming or threatening communication. This subject came to the attention of the BTAM Team by some means of reporting.
- The “subject” or at a minimum the communication has been reviewed and assessed by an initial team to be considered a viable option for threat assessment and management.
- The term “actor” is often used post incident.
- Most instances the subject is discovered due to leakage.



Subjects of Concern

- **Screamers – Threat in response to a provocation.**
- **Shockers – Threat to induce fear in target.**
- **Shielders – Threat made to protect or ward off aggressors.**
- **Schemers – Threat intended to influence or coerce a target.**
- **Signalers – Warnings or indicators of violence to come.**



Behaviors – Proximal Warning Behaviors

- **Leakage** – Communication to a third party.
- **Directly Communicated Threat Warning** – The direct communication to a target or LE.
- **Fixation** – Behaviors that indicate “pathological preoccupation” with a person or cause.
- **Identification** – Identifying with previous subjects that have executed an attack. The most common and easily identified is closely associating with past violent “actors” or causes.
- **Pathway Warning** – Behaviors noted on the Pathway to Violence such as research and planning or probing and breaching.



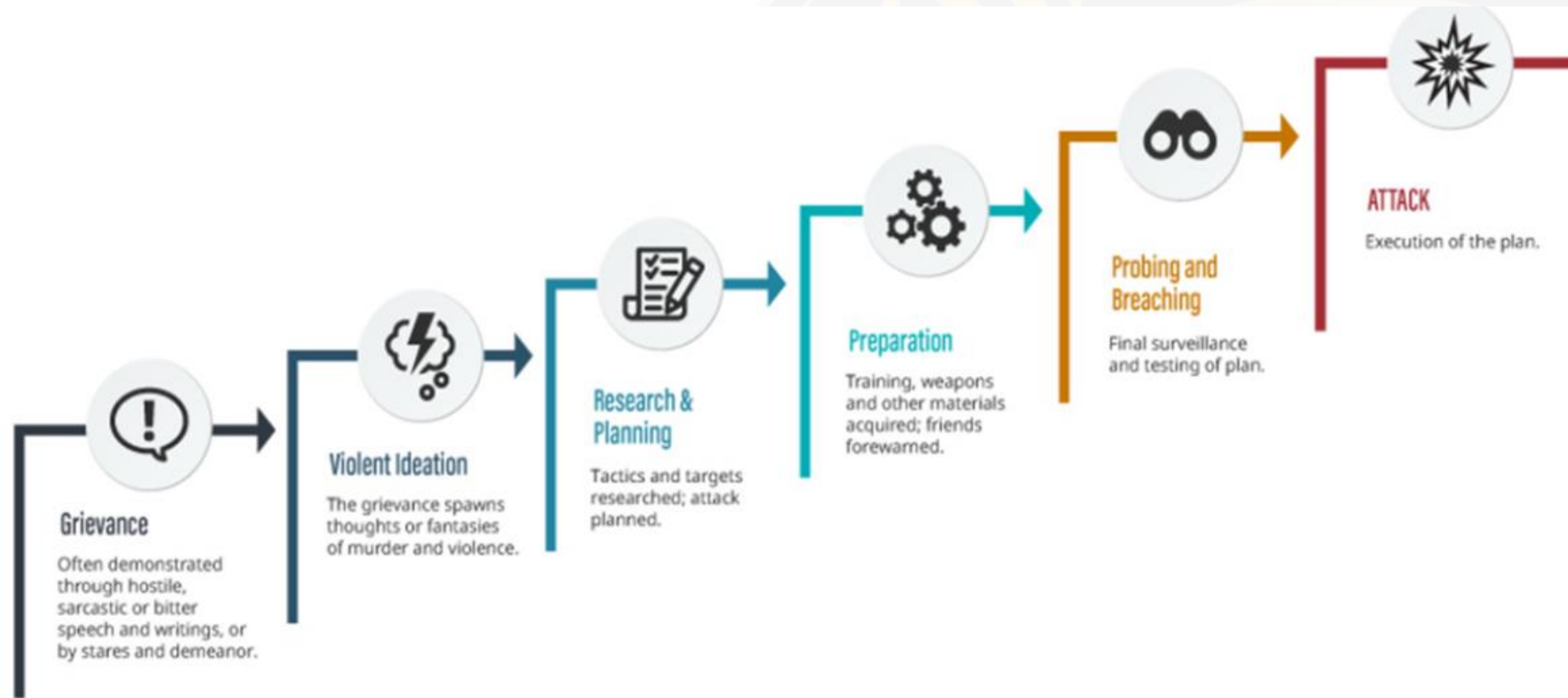
Behaviors – Proximal Warning Behaviors

- **Novel Aggression** – Unrelated violence on unrelated targets
- **Energy Bursts** – Increasing frequency of noted activities related to the target, sometimes even innocent but relatively indicative of a pending act.
- **Last Resort** – Statements or actions made in “desperation or distress” often made with the mindset of “no alternatives” Usually triggered by another event; Loss of a loved one, an event at work, or an event at school.

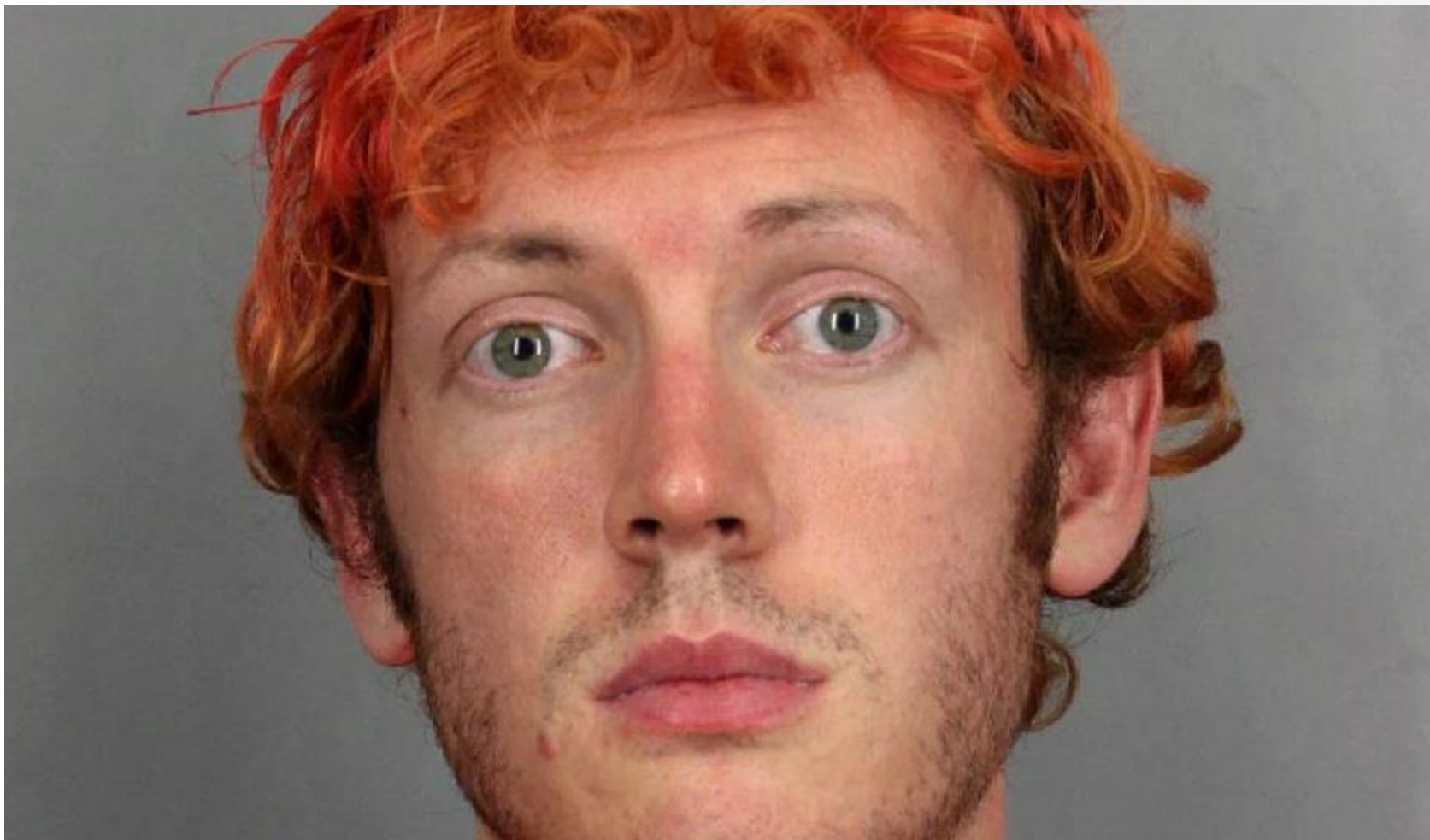
*Source: Meloy, J.R., Hoffmann, J., Guldemann, A. & James, D. (2012). The Role of Warning Behaviors in Threat Assessment: An Exploration and Suggested Typology. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 30(3), 256-79.



Pathway To Violence



Case Study - James Holmes



Case Study - James Holmes

Overview

In Aurora, Colorado, around 12:38 AM on July 20, 2012, James Holmes slipped through a back door of the Century 16 theater where about 420 people were watching a midnight showing of the movie, "The Dark Knight Rises," and opened fire. Ten people died at the scene, two died at hospitals, and 70 were wounded. Officers found Holmes leaning against his car behind the theater and arrested him without a struggle. Later, police found booby-trapped bombs and a Batman mask at Holmes' apartment. The bombs were defused with no injury.

Holmes was born in San Diego California. His father was a Scientist and mother a nurse. Holmes lived in Oak Hills, CA. until twelve years old before moving back to San Diego. It was reported he began to "socially decline" following a suicide attempt at age 11. He was under the care of a LCSW where he was reported as "being obsessed with killing." Despite his struggles he graduated high school in 2006 and achieved a Bachelor's Degree from UC Riverside. He attended Graduate school at the University of Colorado in 2010.

Case Study - James Holmes

- **Timeline**

- October 2011 — Begins dating Gargi Datta, another first-year student in the program. Post break up Holmes begins hiring sex workers and bragging online by leaving “reviews” on various websites.
- March 21, 2012 — Begins seeing psychiatrist Lynne Fenton of the University of Colorado and tells her he is having homicidal thoughts. Fenton later tells a campus police officer about Holmes' homicidal statements and that he sent her a threatening email.
- May 10, 2012 — Orders tear gas canisters online. Over the next few weeks, he also buys two handguns, a shotgun, an assault rifle, 6,295 rounds of ammunition and body armor, in person or online.
- June 7, 2012 — Holmes fails his oral exams at the University of Colorado. Prosecutor Karen Pearson has said that his poor performance on those key exams is "very much relevant to what happened afterward."
- June 10, 2012 — Files paperwork to withdraw from the neuroscience program but doesn't say why.
- June 11, 2012 — Meets with psychiatrist Lynne Fenton for the last time.

Case Study - James Holmes

- **Timeline Continued**

- June 13, 2012 — Holmes buys more ammunition, tactical clothing and “gear” as well as tear gas.
- June 29, 2012 — Holmes allegedly takes photos showing the inside of the Aurora Century 16 theater with his iPhone. One of the photos is a close-up of a door latch, purportedly to show how it works. These photos and others were found on his phone after he was arrested.
- July 5, 2012 — Holmes allegedly takes photos of the outside of the Century 16 theater at night. The photos feature the emergency exits and floodlights above them.
- July 7, 2012 — Holmes uses Fandango.com to buy a ticket to the July 20 midnight showing of The Dark Knight Rises at the Century 16 theater in Aurora for theater eight.
- July 11, 2012, 12:28 a.m. — Holmes allegedly takes more photos of the purple emergency exit doors at the Century 16 theater.



Case Study - James Holmes

- Attack

July 20, 2012, approximately midnight — Holmes can be seen on a surveillance video entering the Century 16 theater. He's wearing a black skull cap, dark pants and a light-colored button-down shirt. He holds the door open for two people who enter behind him.

Pathway Behaviors?

Proximal Warning Behaviors?



Threat Assessment

Threat assessment 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, focusing on an individual's patterns of thinking and behavior to determine whether, and to what extent, a person of concern is moving toward an attack. A threat assessment is not a final product, but the beginning of the management process. It guides a course of action to mitigate a threat of potential violence; merely identifying that someone is of moderate or higher concern, without developing a management strategy, does not complete this process and is not recommended.



Threat Assessment in Law Enforcement

- 1986 The United States Capital Police established a uniformed Threat Assessment Team – assess threats against Congress and their staff - 1,000's of cases per year.
- 1990 The Los Angeles Police Department following the murder of actress Rebecca Schaeffer – 24/7 responses to persons in mental health crisis.
- 1993 Iowa State University developed a LE Threat Assessment Team on a University campus. – Followed 1991 shooting at Iowa University.
- 2007 Virginia Tech University following the mass shooting on the campus.
- 2024 Illinois State Police Establish Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team.



Threat Assessment: Objective of the Team

- The primary objective of the Law Enforcement Threat Assessment Team is to protect the intended target and intervene in the intended or targeted violence.
- Provide the local authorities with assistance.
- Provide a path to mental health, medical, or substance abuse resources.
- Notification Protocols; The target, the local authorities, ISP Assets.
- Continued management of the subject.



Threat Assessment: The Assessment Team

- Sworn Investigators –
 - Trained in many aspects of criminal investigations.
 - Additional Training in Threat Assessment, Crisis Intervention, and Behavioral Health
 - Familiar with States Attorneys and Prosecutors
- Managers –
 - Oversight and Quality Assurance
- Legal Office Liaisons
- Mental Health Practitioners and LCSW



Threat Assessment: The Process

- **Intake & Reporting:** Critical for early identification of potential threats, the first step is gathering information through various channels, such as hotlines, emails, or direct reports.
- **Initial Assessment:** Conduct a fast screening or incident triage to determine if immediate action is required or if the case should be added to an existing one or necessitate the creation of a new case. This step ensures a prompt response to potential threats.
- **Fact-finding:** Investigate the subject's background, including interviews with the victim/target and others, to understand behavior and context and get a more complete picture of the threat.

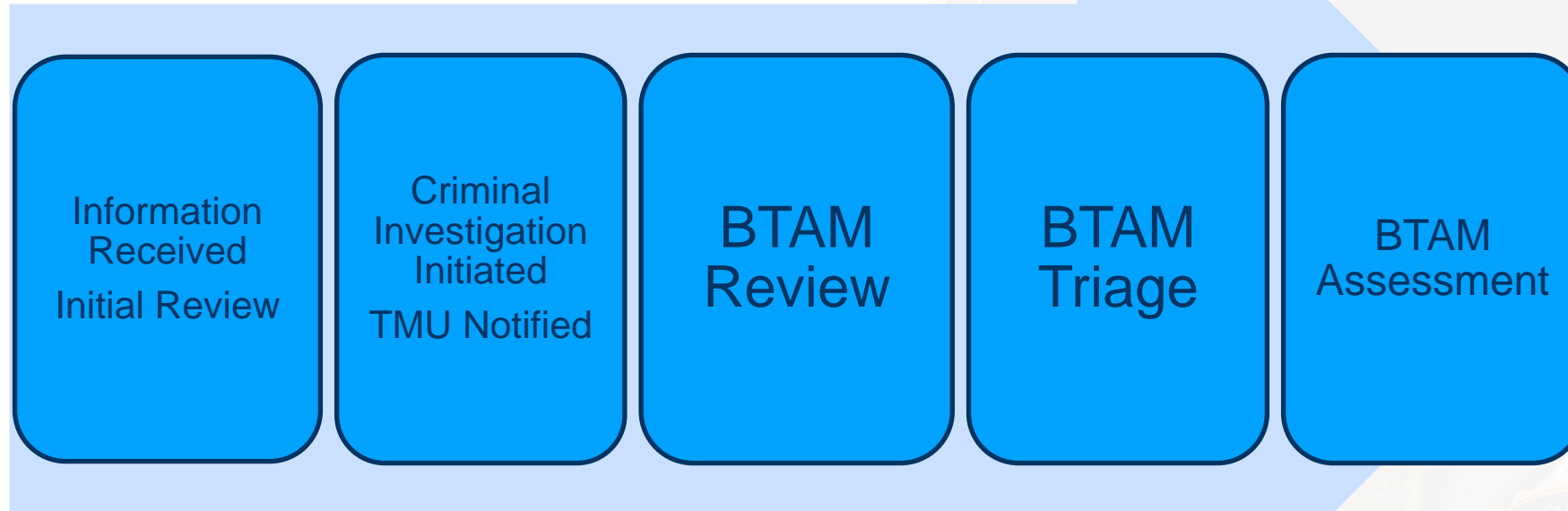


Threat Assessment: The Process

- **Analysis:** Process various variables such as risk factors, inhibitors or stabilizers, and potential triggers to understand the potential for violence and plan interventions.
- **Risk Categorization:** Use objective instruments and informed opinions to categorize the level of risk. This step is crucial for determining the severity of the threat and the necessary response level.
- **Outcomes:** Formulate an action plan and implement interventions to address the identified issues. This is where your threat assessment leads to measured and practical steps to mitigate risks.



Threat Assessment: The Process



Threat Assessment: The Process - Management

Final Assessment

Resource
Assignment

Debrief –
Future
Actions

Management



Threat Assessment: Assessment Tool

- Threat Assessment tools are “strongly recommended” by professionals.
- Structured instruments for assessing targeted violence risk
- Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk 21 (WAVR-21) -
- Risk Assessment Guidelines Elements for Violence (RAGE-V)
- The ISP Assessment Tool was derived from LE Partners
- North Carolina Behavioral Investigation Overview (NCBIO-28)



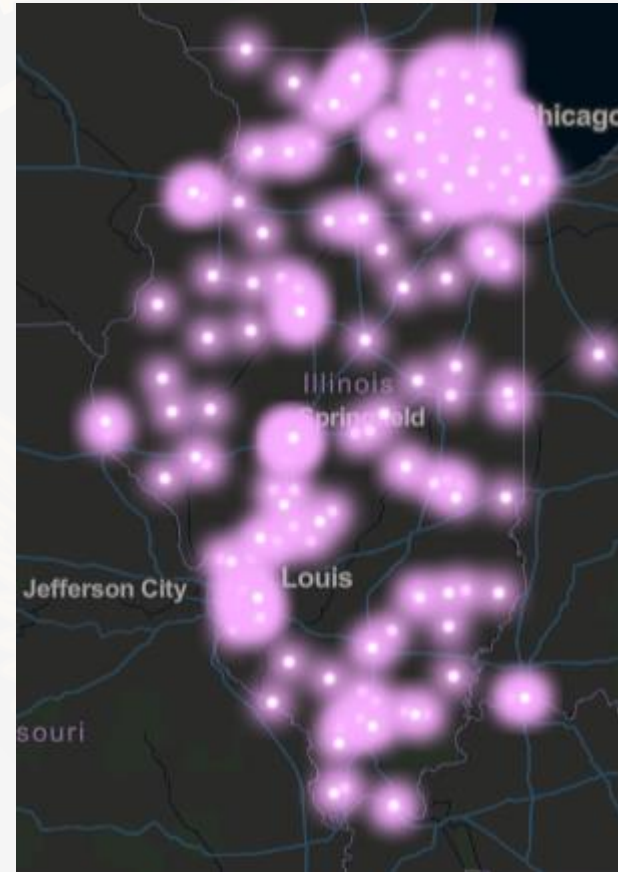
Threat Assessment: Assessment Tool

- Triage Documents to assess initial facts
- Assessment Document to assess the subject and the associated behaviors
- Document behaviors, facts and information collected by investigators.
- We do not document personal opinions or mental health information.
- Our Mental Health Professionals do not conduct or provide clinical diagnoses.



Threat Assessment: Resource Assignment

- The ISP is Building a Resource Catalog!
- Collecting Mental Health Resources
- Collecting Substance Abuse Resources
- Web Based; Access for Sworn Officers
- Interactive Map for Use in the Field



Threat Assessment: Resource Assignment

The ISP is Building a Resource Catalog.



Threat Assessment: Training

- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals.
- The United States Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Behavioral Analysis Unit.
- Department of Homeland Security, Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships.
- Illinois School and Campus Safety.
- Illinois Emergency Management Agency.



Threat Assessment: Collaboration

- We could not have built a program without help from other agencies.
- Private sector threat assessment also very effective.
- Don't be afraid to send an email or make a phone call.
- Contact your local police agency
- Offer your help too!



The Illinois State Police Team

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