

# Threat Assessment Team

Indiana University South Bend

**Professional Advisors Committee**

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

# Threat Assessment Team

The safety of the university community is of the utmost importance. Representatives have been identified and trained to deal with threatening situations.

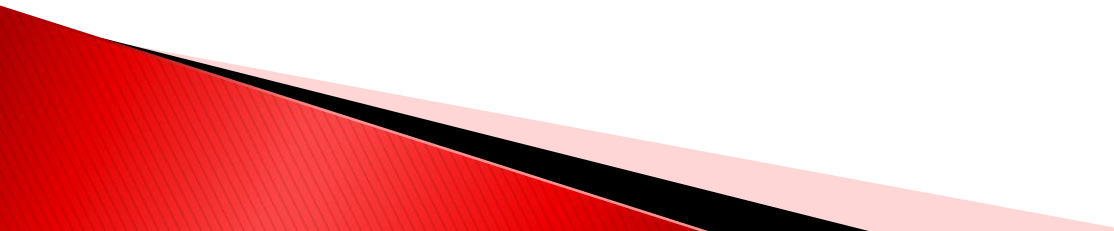
They are available to assess the situation and specify appropriate measures.



# Threat Assessment Team Focus

Consultation meetings are held to review student behavior perceived to be potentially dangerous to others or disruptive to the campus community.

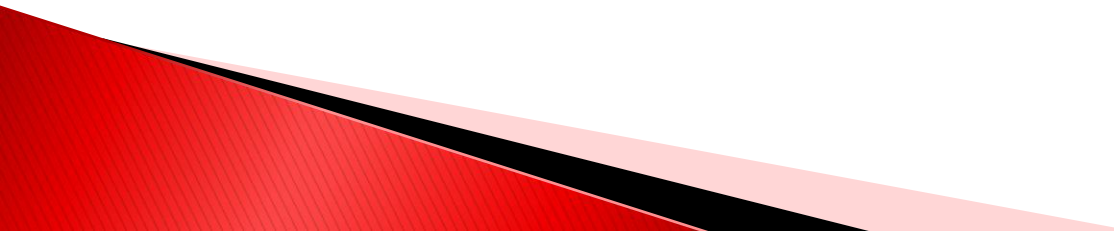
Often the behavior is related to mental health and/or medical issues. Consultation with legal counsel will be ongoing.



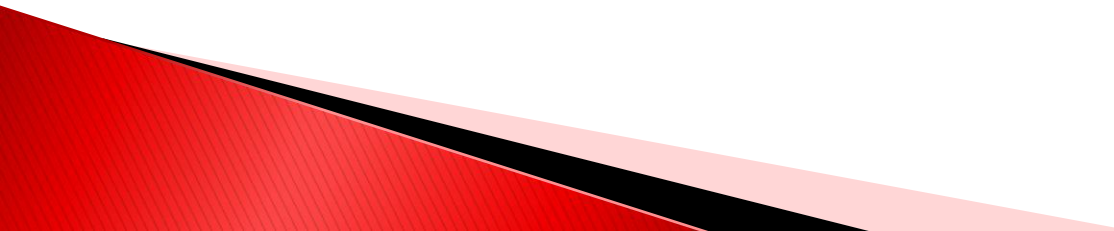
# Threat Assessment Team

- Martin Gersey; Chief, IUSB Campus Police Dept.
  - Jim Hasse; Director, Disability Support Services
  - Laura Hieronymus; Director, Health & Wellness Center
  - James Hurst; Director, Student Counseling Center
  - Charlotte Pfeifer; Director, Judicial Affairs
  - Paula Smith; Director, Student Housing & Residential Life
  - Karen L. White; Associate Vice Chancellor,  
Student Services
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# Threat Assessment Team Mission

- How and why we were formed?
    - Virginia Tech, April 16, 2007
  - Communication structure
  - TAT's Focus
    - Behavior that poses a threat to self, others and the university community
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# TAT's Referral Process

- Contacting TAT Members if unsure
  - A referral/report to TAT
  - Importance of faculty/staff following established university procedures
  - Importance of distinguishing between teaching/classroom management issues
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# When considering whether or not to make a report to the TAT, it is important to think about several things:

- Has a threat of harm been made? Such a threat might be verbal or behavioral, (i.e. implied through facial expression, body posture, situational context, etc.)
  - It is important to consider second-hand information or “gossip” as a factor, (in many school shootings, the perpetrator shared their intentions with peers.)
  - While these situations often involve mental health issues on the part of the potential perpetrator, mental health issues which do not occur in the context of a threat to self or others, especially those involving eccentric, unusual, and odd behavior, are usually not appropriate cases to report to the TAT.
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- Feel free to consult with a member of the TAT to assist you in making a decision whether or not to make a report to the TAT. In some instances, it may make more sense to directly contact a specific member of the TAT due to the nature of the situation, (i.e. contacting Director of Student Counseling Center for suicidal threat, contacting Campus Police for observing a student with a weapon.)



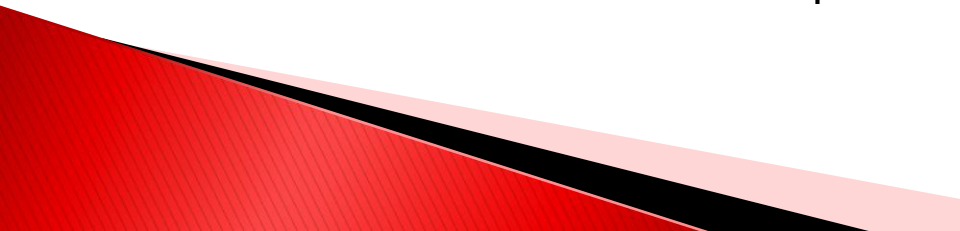
# Threat Assessment Scenarios

## Scenario 1

A student writes a paper for your class that you find disturbing. The content is rambling and vague but generally involves expressions of isolation and anger at perceived injustices done to someone by others. The paper contains graphic descriptions of violence against those people. The student does not identify himself as the target of the injustices or as the perpetrator of the violence. There is no specific mention of who the other people are, but he does describe a rather specific plan for killing others in a public place. The paper ends with the perpetrator of the violence committing suicide.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

Context is very important in this scenario. How does the student behave apart from this paper? Is his/her behavior appropriate in interactions with you and peers? On this and other assignments, did the student correctly follow your instructions? Is the student overly focused on violence? Depending upon context, a report may or may not be needed. Remember, you are free to consult with a TAT member to help you decide whether or not to make a report to the TAT.



## Scenario 2

An adult male has been observed by you and other faculty to be loitering around your department, with increasing agitation, for several days. When you inquired as to his business, he stated that he was waiting for a certain professor to show up at his office. He was informed that the professor was out of town at a conference and would not have office hours until the following day and advised to e-mail the professor. He then responded by saying, "I'll wait to see that (expletive), as long as it takes. He ruined my life and I'm gonna make him and this school pay big time." When you ask what he means by this, he grows even more irritable and says that the university is a public place and he has every right to be here.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

A clear threat has been made. The student exhibits angry, unstable and defensive behavior. Contact TAT.

## Scenario 3

One of your students regularly interrupts you and other students with off-subject, rambling comments. He is quite opinionated and tends to become angry and argumentative when his ideas are challenged. He once told another student to “be quiet.” At times, he also seems to be talking to himself in a barely audible voice. On two occasions, he abruptly stood up and left the classroom. You have spoken to him about his behavior, but little has changed. After a small-group assignment, others in his group speak to you after class saying that they cannot work with this person and are actually afraid of him.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

You should first ask the students in his group why they are afraid of him and, specifically, to determine if he has actually threatened anyone. If a threat was made, referral to the TAT would be appropriate. If the concern is merely the strange behavior and difficulty getting along with people, the appropriate classroom management practices should be utilized.

## Scenario 4

You observe a young male in the hallway yelling at a female and making statements such as “I can’t believe you’re doing this!” and “You’re going to regret it!” The female is crying and telling him to please go away and leave her alone. When you inquire as to what’s going on, the young woman apologizes and the young man angrily storms away.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

No threat of harm is indicated, although such a threat might have been present through non-verbal communication (i.e., the male waved his fist in front of the female’s face as he said “You’re going to regret it!”). If no threat of violence is perceived, then no report to TAT is needed.

## Scenario 5

Shortly before class, several students approach you with concerns they have about a female classmate, Lauren, who has missed the last two classes. One of the students, who tends to be rather dramatic, tells you that she talked to Lauren this morning on the phone and said she sounded very depressed and quoted Lauren as saying “...there’s no point in going to any more classes...really no point in going on at all.” Another classmate seemed to think, based on gossip she heard, that Lauren had made a suicide attempt in high school.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

Among college students, suicide is a much more prevalent problem than homicide. Suicide prevention is predicated on the willingness of all faculty, staff, and students to take any suicidal threat seriously. The most appropriate response here is to directly contact the Student Counseling Center.

## Scenario 6

A student confronts his professor and says that he knows the professor is talking about him before class with the other students. He says that the professor is telling students what he is thinking. He says that he has also heard the professor talking on television about him. The student tells the professor to stop or he will make him stop. The professor asks what the student means by “make him stop. ” The student replies, “You know what I mean.”

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

Clear mental health issues are obvious. It appears that delusional psychotic symptoms are present. A threat was made. Contact TAT.

## Scenario 7

As students are leaving class, one person's backpack falls open and you very briefly observe what appears to be a handgun in the backpack. The student quickly closes the backpack. You stop the student and ask if he does, in fact, have a gun in his backpack. He says that he does have a gun, but also that he has a permit which he shows you.

### **Possible Response to Scenario:**

Even if he has a permit, his judgment is questionable for bringing the gun onto campus. More importantly, except for campus police, guns are not allowed on campus. Appropriate response is to report the incident to campus police.

# Threat Assessment Protocol



*This document provides information for those faced with a potential threat at Indiana University South Bend*

## **Threat Assessment Team Focus**

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Download brochure at:  
[www.iusb.edu/~stusvcs](http://www.iusb.edu/~stusvcs)

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