BTAM: A DEEP BENCH OF RESOURCES

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In 2014, the US government selected three major cities in which to pilot a local approach to preventing terrorism and targeted violence,[1] predicated on the idea that local community involvement can improve the design of such approaches [2]. Since then, these efforts have become more common as local actors—states, cities, and counties—have passed legislation related to behavioral threat assessment, adopted prevention strategies aimed at terrorism and targeted violence, and implemented programming to address such violence.[2]

We present this series of papers—informed by a year-long evaluation of the violence prevention efforts underway in Wood County, Ohio[3]—to shed light on a local effort and assist other actors in building their own networks.

In June 2019, the Colorado Department of Public Safety hosted the Colorado Preventing Targeted Violence Summit, which was designed to bring together relevant stakeholders to accomplish three objectives: learn more about targeted violence, improve communication between stakeholders about the roles they play in combating targeted violence, and brainstorm strategies for the governor's office on how to build healthier communities in Colorado [3]. More than 75 people attended the summit, representing 40 distinct organizations including state, local, and federal actors; nonprofit organizations; academic institutions; and private mental health providers [3]. The summit was groundbreaking—it was one of the first such efforts by a state to bring together all relevant stakeholders to build a shared understanding of, and vocabulary for, tackling the challenges posed by violent acts such as domestic terrorism and school shootings.

Holding a successful summit at the state, city, or county level is not required to stand up a robust terrorism or targeted violence prevention program, but even a modest gathering of a dozen people can be a powerful tool for collaboration. Organizing such an event, however, requires knowing which stakeholders to invite and the roles they have in terrorism and targeted violence prevention. Moreover, even if no summit or gathering is held, knowing who should be involved when a prevention program is being designed and implemented remains critical. Identifying relevant stakeholders is particularly important because it can be tempting to think of terrorism or targeted violence prevention as a law enforcement activity, but most initiatives seek to intervene long before criminal behavior has occurred (and thus before law enforcement can take action).

Our engagement with Wood County over the course of a year suggests that successful intervention—

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[1] The US Secret Service defines *targeted violence* as "a premeditated act of violence directed at a specific individual, group, or location, regardless of motivation and generally unrelated to other criminal activity" [1, p. 12].

[2] For example, a range of activities is underway in states including Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Ohio, New York, and Texas.

[3] Our evaluation focused exclusively on Wood County's efforts serving juveniles.

that is, successful behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM)—requires a team with a deep bench. Core players will be involved in most cases, but in the best-case scenario, they will be part of a broader team with resources that far exceed what the core players themselves are capable of providing. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the personnel, services, and resources in Wood County and the frequency with which they are accessed.

Critically, in most instances, the expertise to manage these cases will already exist either locally or regionally, so the challenge is in identifying the personnel or capabilities that will be needed and bringing them together to establish a shared understanding of the challenge. As one Wood County practitioner noted, "We have a systems-based problem that needs a systems-based solution" [4].

IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL POLICY-MAKERS

1. BUILD A BROAD COMMUNITY OF STAKEHOLDERS

A high-functioning BTAM capability requires a commitment to fostering a strong community of stakeholders with a range of expertise. For example, Wood County held a one-day, in-person workshop that brought together relevant stakeholders to discuss the challenge of mental health care for high-risk cases. More informal initiatives, such

Table 1. BTAM personnel, services, and resources in Wood County, Ohio

	Almost always accessed	Often accessed	Sometimes accessed	Rarely accessed
Personnel	• Licensed mental health provider • School resource officer • School administrator • School counselor • Social worker	• Wood County ADAMHS Board representative • Psychiatrist • *Forensic psychologist* • Mobile crisis care capability • Local law enforcement • *DHS regional personnel*	• Teacher • School psychologist • *FBI regional personnel*	
Services	• Mental health assessment • Mental health services, general • Mental health services, specialized (e.g., eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, dialectical behavior therapy, biofeedback)	• *Neuropsychological assessment* • Academic assessment • Medication management services	• Diversion services (to avoid justice involvement) • Family counseling • Substance use disorder services • Skill development classes (e.g., life skills, social skills) • Individualized Education Program (IEP) • Crisis stabilization beds • Tutoring	• *Residential treatment services* • Group homes • Translation services • Opiate withdrawal services • Intensive home-based therapy • LGBTQIA+ group treatment opportunities • Spanish-language service providers
Resources	• Transportation • Telehealth options • In-school mental health treatment • Personalized safety plan		• Basic necessities (i.e., clothes, personal hygiene products)	

Source: CNA.
Note: Italicized items are not available within the county, but are available in the broader region.

as a working group or a listserv, can also bring together interested parties. A strong community is critical not only to ensure that relevant personnel and services are available when needed but also to facilitate information-sharing. As one Wood County stakeholder told us, "A lot of information sharing is relationship building" [5].

2. INCLUDE RARELY ACCESSED STAKEHOLDERS AND RESOURCES FROM THE OUTSET

Focusing on the core BTAM team may be tempting, but in most cases the team will need to leverage external resources. Resources that are accessed less frequently are by no means less important, and having the relevant stakeholders in the room from the outset will facilitate accessing them mid-crisis. Seeking a new resource or building a new relationship in the midst of a crisis is difficult even in the best-case scenario. It is more challenging, however, when the case concerns the threat of terrorism or targeted violence. Those not familiar with the BTAM process, or who have not encountered such a case, may be especially hesitant to participate. Stakeholders need to think creatively about what local or regional resources they might want to leverage; including these from the outset will give everyone an opportunity to learn together and increase the likelihood that they will find a receptive voice at the other end of the phone when calling in an emergency.

REFERENCES

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[4] Interview with Wood County stakeholder, Aug. 2024.

[5] Interview with Wood County stakeholder, Oct. 2024.

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