

Building Capacity of Mental Health Practitioners to Assess and Manage Risk for Targeted Violence and Terrorism in Community Settings

The Trauma and Community Resilience Center (TCRC) at Boston Children's Hospital, in partnership with the McCain Institute's Prevention Practitioners Network (PPN), is building capacity of mental health practitioners to assess and manage risk for targeted violence and terrorism (TVT) in collaboration with local multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams. Our efforts to achieve this will unfold in two phases:

1. Development and preliminary testing of a clinically useful TVT risk assessment/management tool
2. Tool training and consultation for community based mental health practitioners across the country

Proposed model: The first step will be to learn from research, existing clinical approaches, and subject matter experts in the fields of both suicidology and violence prevention (e.g., extreme aggression, homicide, violent extremism). From this work, the TCRC team will develop a tool that offers community based mental health practitioners a systematic methodology for assessing both static and dynamic risk and protective factors for TVT. The *TVT Strengths, needs, and risks: Assessment & Management Tool (T-SAM)* will employ a semi-structured interview format that facilitates structured professional judgment, patient collaboration in treatment planning, and allows for re-evaluation. Revisions will be made to the T-SAM based on a usability/feasibility assessment. In partnership with the PPN, mental health practitioners from across the country will receive training and subsequent consultation in the use of the T-SAM.

Impact: Although mental health care has been increasingly recognized as a critical element of a multidisciplinary response to preventing TVT, community based mental health practitioners do not feel equipped to work with individuals at risk for TVT due to a lack of specialized training and expertise. In addition, many of the existing TVT or violence risk assessment tools were not developed for utilization by a generalist mental health workforce working with a diverse patient population. Best practices in TVT risk assessment/management for community-based mental health practitioners will also be developed and widely disseminated.

This project is supported by funding from the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program through the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships.

Features of the TVT Strengths, needs, and risks: Assessment & Management Tool (T-SAM)

- Quantitative and qualitative assessment measures
- Identification of strengths, needs, and protective factors as part of the assessment process
- Considerations for use with diverse populations, including modifications to the tool based on gender, development, and culture
- Encourages a collaborative approach
- Links assessment results directly to treatment planning
- Provides a structured process for re-evaluating risk at every patient contact

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