Threat Assessment Team Cohesion

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Developing and Testing an Intelligent Chatbot to Help Individuals Identify Threats and Improve Tips Reporting

**Key Questions**
- What do threat assessment team members view as strengths in current tips reporting?
- What do threat assessment team members view as weaknesses in current tips reporting?
- How do threat assessment team members view potential areas for improvement?

**What We Did**
NCITE researchers conducted focus groups with threat assessment teams to explore strengths and weaknesses in current tips reporting and identify potential areas for improvement. Focus groups were conducted in Sarpy County, Nebraska, across the state of Nebraska, and elsewhere in the country including Alabama, Connecticut, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

**WHAT WE FOUND**

**Team Structure**
- Different structures across teams

**Members can be typically grouped into four categories:**

**Law Enforcement (e.g., local FBI, municipal police, school resource officers, public safety)**
- Often the first group involved in prevention
- Challenges:
  - Lower public trust in law enforcement may decrease reporting
  - Law enforcement is not always needed
  - May be difficult to access in small towns

**School Leadership (e.g., superintendents, local school leadership, university staff)**
- Critical role: can share resources and info across districts and disciplines
- Challenges:
  - Strained resources in some locations

**Other Resources (e.g., statewide offices, county prosecutors)**
- Involved where resources are available and in extreme circumstances

**Mental Health Experts (e.g., crisis counselors, school counselors, therapists)**
- Involved in areas where these resources are available
- Challenges:
  - Many communities don’t have access to mental health experts

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**Grant Acknowledgement and Disclaimer:** This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships under Grant Award Number DHS-21-TTP-132-00-01. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or the University of Nebraska at Omaha.
WHAT IT MEANS

While threat assessment team structure varies based on location and size, many of the guiding principles, challenges, and recommendations for improvement are commonly shared.

NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

- Many rural areas lack adequate resources and technologies.
- There is a need for a better reporting system or threat assessment tool.
- It is difficult to get people invested as it takes time out of the workday.
- There is often a shortage of intervention options, especially with less community involvement.

WHAT WORKS?

**Team Balance**
- Include multidisciplinary expertise
- Promote effective collaboration (varies by size and location of team)

**Team Culture and Trust**
- Solidarity and cohesion in collaborative decision making
- Can build trust through table-top exercises and informal conversation

**Transparency with the Community**
- Have a simple, written plan that fits the community
- Be transparent about issues, decisions, and learning experiences

**Having the Right Resources**
- Tools should be supported by research
- All team members should be well-trained on tools

**Internal Buy-In**
- Begins with leadership for support and a central connection point
- All members must be self-motivated, have shared responsibility, and be trained properly

**Trust with the Community**
- Mindfulness of community concerns and local considerations
- Work on clear communication plans for incidents
- Inform communities about threat assessment and how to report
- Encourage participation across community stakeholders

**Transparency with the Team**
- Team members must understand their strengths and limitations
- Respect boundaries, understand individual roles, make all decisions as a group
- Debrief following every incident

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