Behavioral Threat Assessment
Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions:

Q: What is Behavioral Threat Assessment?

A: Behavioral Threat Assessment Management (BTA) is a fact-based, investigative approach to evaluate threats and determine where the person of concern falls on the pathway to violence and possible points of intervention. By investigating, gathering facts, and assessing threats, the Behavioral Threat Assessment Team can do four important tasks:

1. Identify persons of concern: This could be an individual at risk for violence against themselves or others. Keep in mind that these individuals may be any type of school stakeholder including, a student, staff member, guardian, or community member.

2. Gather information/investigate: Avoid focusing on a single factor. Consider interactions between the person, the situation, and the setting using multiple data sources.

3. Assess person and situation: How concerned should we be about this individual? Be mindful of where the person of concern falls on the pathway to violence — ideation, planning, preparation, or implementation.

4. Manage the person/situation: What are we going to do about it? How is the school or any other agency providing appropriate support and interventions? Are we taking necessary steps to deter the person of concern from engaging in violence?

Q: **What is CSTAG?**

A: The Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines model was developed by a group from the University of Virginia led by Dr. Dewey Cornell to specifically look at threat assessment as it relates to school environments. The CSTAG model provides teams with guidelines to distinguish whether a threat is transient (not serious) or substantive (poses a continued risk to self or others) and guides teams through a five-step decision tree to resolve and respond to threats.

Q: Why should Clinton Community Schools have a BTA team?

A: The goal of the BTA Team is to move persons of concern off a pathway to violence and resolve the underlying issues that may have put them on that pathway by providing needed resources to reduce the stressors surrounding the situation, removing, or redirecting the person's motive, and creating a situation that is less prone to violence.

Q: How do I report concerning behaviors?

A: The best way to report concerning behaviors is by reaching out to your school administrator, counseling team, or the school liaison officer about your concerns.

Q: What type of behaviors should be reported to a BTA team?
A: Any behavior that you feel poses a threat of harm to self or others. This can include direct or indirect threats, concerning behaviors, social media posts, or any other action that causes concern. The BTA Team will follow up on all threats to assess the potential of violence and complete the BTA process.

Q: Is BTA used to discipline students?
A: While BTA is not punitive in nature and is not intended to be used as a disciplinary process, there may be situations where local policy or state law require disciplinary actions be taken related to the student's behavior. The disciplinary process may be implemented at the same time the BTA team is meeting but is a separate process that operates independently of the BTA process. In these situations, a case management plan is developed to reflect these consequences and provide resources for the student when they return to school.

Policy Questions:

Q: Does Clinton Community Schools have state legislation regarding BTA?
A: While the State of Michigan does not currently have a legal requirement for school districts to implement BTA processes, they have provided interim guidance regarding behavioral threat assessments programs and promote BTA as a key strategy to identify threats and implement effective interventions. In addition, the Lenawee County Office of Emergency Management has developed resources to further build upon an ongoing statewide effort to address school safety by enhancing prevention and intervention efforts to support persons of concern and is implementing training for multidisciplinary school teams utilizing the CSTAG model.

Implementation Questions:

Q: Who should be on a BTA team?
A: One of the key components of a successful BTA program is the use of a multi-disciplinary school-based team that includes school administrators, school mental health professionals, school counselors, school liaison officers and special education coordinators or other service providers depending on the case. In addition to a school level team, each district may elect to have an established multi-disciplinary BTA support team that includes representatives with expertise in school counseling, behavior management, mental health, special education, school administration and safety and security.

Q: How does a BTA team conduct a threat assessment?
A: The Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines walk team members through a five-step decision tree as they gather and evaluate information related to the situation and the person of concern, analyze the information to determine the correct classification for the

threat, document any actions taken in response to receiving the threat, conduct a variety of interviews to determine the level of support needed and develop a case management plan to support the person of interest. Not all threats are created equal and they vary in how specific or plausible they are, and in the motivation, capacity, and intent of the person making the threat. All threats, however, need to be assessed quickly and dealt with in a timely, appropriate manner.

Q: How does a BTA team ensure a safe, positive reentry for a student returning to school?
A: When a threat is made that rises to the level of needing law enforcement involvement, or an alternative/disciplinary placement is made based on board policy or state law applicable to the situation, consideration must be given for when the student returns. The management plan should be developed in the same timeframe as opening the case and reviewed one week before the student returns with any additional information provided by the alternate placement team and/or law enforcement agency. The team should also consider any restorative practices that can be put in place and where the student may fall within established multi-tiered systems of support to ensure they receive the needed support when they return to school.

Similarly, if a student receives a referral for mental health evaluation and/or placement at a residential treatment facility, the management plan should be developed with those interventions in mind and with input from their mental health provider.

Case Management Questions:

Q: How does a BTA team know a case management plan is working?
A: A critical component of the BTA process is reviewing case management plans to ensure they are producing the intended impact and that the subject is moving off the pathway to violence. Guidelines have been established for how often teams should meet to review each case based on the classification assigned to the case. At each meeting, the current plan should be reviewed to ensure all tasks are completed, resources can be added or removed as needed, new tasks assigned, and the next review scheduled.

Q: When should law enforcement be notified of a threat?
A: While every case will vary, general guidance is that law enforcement should be involved in situations involving weapons, explosive materials, poisonous materials, drugs, or other illegal items; if state or local law has been broken in the process of making the threat; or when assistance is needed in completing the assessment. Should the information gathered during the assessment process indicate a threat beyond what the team can determine, law enforcement should be informed to determine if additional action should be taken. Local

policies may provide additional information related to when law enforcement should be notified.

Q: When should a mental health evaluation be conducted?
A: A mental health evaluation should be conducted if the person of concern has a history of mental health concerns, current behavior indicates a need for mental health treatment, the person of concern has expressed suicidal ideation or is actively suicidal, or the team feels the person of concern cannot safely return to the school setting without mental health interventions. Qualified internal staff can be utilized to conduct this assessment. If it is not an option, school personnel should facilitate a referral to a community provider.