

The R-Model

Ready • Respond • Refer • Revisit

Organizational Crisis Response Teams

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Ready - Respond - Refer – Revisit Organizational Crisis Response Teams

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The Violence Project

The Violence Project is a nonprofit (501c3), nonpartisan research center dedicated to reducing violence in society by using data and analysis to improve policy and practice. We conduct high-quality, high-impact research for public consumption. We also develop and deliver education and training to share research findings and prevent violence. Our research on mass shootings, funded by the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), has received global media attention.

Our co-founders, **Dr. Jillian Peterson**, a psychologist and professor of criminology and criminal justice at Hamline University, and **Dr. James Densley**, a sociologist and professor of criminal justice at Metropolitan State University, have developed both a common language for understanding violence and a holistic approach to addressing it. The Violence Project's areas of expertise include gun violence, violent extremism, cyber violence, street gangs and youth violence, trauma and mental illness, suicide prevention, crisis intervention, de-escalation, and police reform.

Off-Ramp

[The Off-Ramp Project](#), one of the arms of TVP, is a hub of information, training, and resources focused on preventing all forms of violence, and specifically mass shootings. Off-Ramp translates findings from [the mass shooter database](#) into tangible, evidence-based, accessible strategies and skills to prevent future violence. Off-Ramp has three components - training, resources, and policy. Our online or in-person training certification courses focus on providing skills in building relationships, crisis intervention, de-escalation, suicide prevention, threat assessment, and social media safety to K-12 teachers and staff, administrators, social workers, law enforcement and security, human resource professionals, organizations, and parents. Off-Ramp's resource page is a one-stop centralized list of resources for individuals in crisis or for individuals worried that someone they know is on the path toward violence. Off-Ramp's public policy platform will provide data-driven policy briefs for local, state, and national policy makers focused on tangible policies that will effectively reduce gun violence.

Overview

The R-Model is a protocol for organizations to build a Crisis Response Team (team) to get **ready** to respond to individuals in crisis, **respond** to individuals in crisis, **refer** individuals to support and resources, and **revisit** to continually check in. The R-Model was originally developed as a law enforcement protocol and has since been adapted into an organization crisis intervention and violence prevention model (Peterson, Densley, & Erickson, 2019).

A crisis is a period of time where someone's current circumstances overwhelms their ability to cope. Someone in crisis is like a balloon full to burst and ready to pop. They are in need of compassion, support, and resources to let some air out of the balloon. If not addressed, a crisis can escalate, and the balloon can pop - resulting in harm or violence toward self or others. A crisis is communicated with a noticeable **change in behavior from baseline or "normal."** This will look different for each person. Organizational members and coworkers see each other every day. They are best positioned to notice any marked change that may indicate someone is in crisis.

In the R-Model, the first goal is to de-escalate and safeguard an individual in crisis, then to connect that individual to the resources and services they need. The goal of the crisis response team is to prevent violence toward self and/or others and promote well-being and safety. It is rooted in prior work on behavioral threat assessment (the process of evaluating whether someone may engage in targeted violence) and new research by The Violence Project on the risk factors for public mass shootings. A precursor to modern behavioral threat assessment, called the protective intelligence model, was first developed by the U.S. Secret Service after several high-profile attacks on public officials and public figures. The protective intelligence model was later adapted for other sectors—namely, workplaces, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities—in many cases following high-profile attacks at these locations. For example, it was in the wake of several U.S. post office shootings in the 1980s and early 1990s that the U.S. Postal Service implemented a workplace threat assessment program, using district-level threat assessment teams, as part of its broader workplace violence prevention initiative.

This protocol offers a new way of thinking about behavioral threat assessment. Sometimes, behavior that is concerning is not inherently *threatening*. Based on what we know about organizational violence, it is critical to investigate any signs of a crisis, not only threats of violence.

The R-Model includes 4 Steps, which are covered in detail in subsequent sections.



1. READY - Building a crisis response team

- Create an open and transparent organizational culture
- Establish a Crisis Response Team
- Create a central reporting mechanism
- Train all stakeholders



2. RESPOND - Effectively managing a crisis

- Conduct interviews with the person in crisis and the reporter
- Involve law enforcement if appropriate
- Conduct additional fact-finding interviews and gather records
- Develop risk management options



3. REFER - Determine the level and type of intervention necessary

- Determine the best course of action based on the seriousness of the crisis, the level of risk, and their individual needs.



4. REVISIT - Consistent follow-up to assess progress

- The team should meet regularly to review case plans completed on previous assessments.

Ready: Building a Crisis Response Team

Building a Crisis Response Team (team) will look different for each organization depending on the size of the organization, the resources available, the community characteristics, and the needs of the employees. The steps below are meant to help guide organizations through the team formation process.

In July of 2018, the National Threat Assessment Center, a component of the United States Secret Service, released “*Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*,” which served as the starting point for this process. These recommendations have been reordered, modified, and expanded to reflect new findings from The Violence Project’s research.

The following are steps to building a Crisis Response Team:

step 1

CREATE AN OPEN AND TRANSPARENT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In our work, we have found that many mass shooters target their place of employment because they are angry at their colleagues and they perceive their employer treated them unfairly. At the same time, the colleagues of workplace shooters often knew in advance that something was wrong and violence was possible, but they didn’t feel empowered to speak up.

The first step toward workplace violence prevention is creating an open and transparent organizational culture that empowers employees and volunteers to speak up if they see any behavior that makes them worry about their own or someone else’s safety. You want everyone looking out for one another, but not in a way that erodes trust among colleagues or fosters a hostile, fearful environment. Positive relationships make it more likely that individuals will report worrying or threatening behavior and/or communications to the team. Positive relationships also make it more likely that employees will notice a marked change in someone’s behavior and signs that they are in crisis.

An open and transparent organizational culture comes from practicing *organizational justice*. Organizational justice encompasses three key concepts: (1) distributive justice (i.e., the perceived fairness in allocation of rewards and resources to members of the organization); (2) procedural justice (i.e., the consistency and fairness of the processes that lead to certain outcomes); and (3) interpersonal justice (i.e., how people are treated when they receive information). Being fair in processes requires transparency in actions. Decisions should unfold out in the open as much as possible and they should be unbiased and guided by consistent and transparent reasoning that should be explained clearly when appropriate. People should be treated with politeness, dignity, and respect by those in power and involved in making decisions or determining outcomes. All news, even bad news, should be delivered with sensitivity and people should be given the opportunity to express their concerns and participate in decision-making processes by telling their side of the story.

An open and transparent organizational culture can help mitigate workplace stress, de-escalate conflict, and leave everyone feeling more connected to their place of employment – and less likely to attack it.

step 2

ESTABLISH A CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

- ▶ Crisis Response Teams should include a variety of personnel including human resources, management, line workers, and security.
- ▶ The team should have a specifically designated leader, with at least two people to serve as backup leaders in case of an absence or emergency.
- ▶ The team should meet on a regular basis and on a set schedule that is posted publicly.
 - When will the team meet - how often and under what circumstances?
 - Where will the team meet - virtually or in person?
 - How will the team communicate with each other?
- ▶ The team should establish protocols and procedures that are followed for each assessment, including who will interview the individual of concern and who will gather additional information and document the team's efforts.
- ▶ The team should identify what resources are available, both within the organization and in the community for individuals in crisis and in need of services. Resources should be identified in each of the following areas:
 - Mental health – counseling, inpatient, and outpatient treatment
 - Substance abuse treatment
 - Social services
 - Housing
 - Employment and training
 - Community crisis teams
 - Peer support and mentoring
 - Law enforcement

step 3

CREATE A CENTRAL REPORTING MECHANISM

- ▶ The team should establish one or more reporting mechanisms. This could be a smartphone app, an email address, a Google form, or a number to text or call.
- ▶ Emphasize that reporting a concern will result in care and support for the person at risk. Intervention will be holistic and appropriate.
- ▶ The team should proactively monitor all incoming reports and respond immediately when someone's safety is concerned. Ideally reporting would be monitored by two to three people on the team to ensure a timely response.
- ▶ An anonymous reporting option is recommended because individuals are more likely to report concerning or threatening information without fear of retribution.
- ▶ The community should feel confident that the team will be responsive to concerns, reports will be acted upon, kept confidential, and handled appropriately.

step 4

TRAIN ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Data indicates that all stakeholders should have training in recognizing and responding to a crisis, suicide prevention, and how and when to report to the team. All members of the community should be trained including human resources, security, management and supervisors.

Respond: Effectively Managing A Crisis

1. Meet as a team and determine who will conduct the initial assessment.
2. Establish the assessment procedures
 - a. Use a community systems approach. An effective approach for gathering information to assess a person of concern is to identify the sources that may have information on the person's actions and circumstances.
 - b. Determine who will take the lead on the assessment and track any and all information gathered.
3. If possible, interview the reporting person to assess their perception of risk level.
4. If possible, interview the person in crisis to assess their level of risk. Build rapport that can facilitate information-gathering efforts. Use crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies including empathy, compassion, and active listening. In preparation for that interview, consider the following:
 - a. Who has a previous relationship with this individual?
 - b. How and when will that person reach out?
 - c. How is the individual doing? What is going on in their lives?
 - d. Is this individual in danger of hurting themselves?
 - e. Is this individual in danger of hurting others?
 - f. What resources does this individual need?
 - g. How quickly do they need resources?
 - h. Who else should be contacted about this?
5. If someone poses a high risk to self or others and immediate action is required to prevent serious injury or death, contact local law enforcement and postpone the assessment process until the environment is safe.
6. If appropriate, contact the individual's family. Conduct additional fact-finding interviews to learn more about the individual in crisis.
7. If needed and if able, gather additional records from within the organization including human resource and discipline files.
8. Evaluate the individual's concerning behaviors and communications in the context of their current circumstances.

9. Develop risk management options:

- ▶ Teams should develop crisis intervention and risk management strategies that reduce the individual's risk for engaging in harm against self or others.
 - Which resources will be utilized?
 - How will the person be connected to the resources?
 - When will the next follow-up conversation be?
 - Who will do the follow-up?
 - Do they know where to reach out in case of emergency?
- ▶ The team may determine that the individual is not at risk at the moment but may need monitoring or is in need of mentoring/services.
- ▶ If there is another individual or individuals who are the victims of the threats of violence, the team should reach out and engage with them as well. Appropriate support and safety protocols should be put in place to ensure their feeling of safety and comfort in the organization.



Refer: Determine the level and type of intervention necessary

After the assessment, the team will determine the best course of action based on the seriousness of the crisis, the individuals' level of risk, and their individual needs. Punitive responses should be avoided because they may exacerbate the crisis and/or any grievance and, in turn, increase the risk of harming self or others.

Concerning behaviors can have a variety of resolutions, for example:

- ▶ Referral for/to:
 - Counseling
 - Student support services
 - Social services
 - Community services
- ▶ Mediation
- ▶ Restorative practices
- ▶ A plan for regular check-ins with a supervisor
- ▶ Peer mentoring
- ▶ Removal or safe storage of firearms in the home
- ▶ Code of Conduct violations
- ▶ Law enforcement resolution for criminal behavior
- ▶ Emergency detention for mental health crisis

This is not a complete list and will be dependent on the resources available to the organization.

Revisit: Consistent Follow-up to Assess Progress

At regular team meetings, the team should review case plans completed on previous assessments. During those meetings, reports should be given to the team regarding the individual's progress.

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