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SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK IN A THREAT ASSESSMENT

As a behavioral consultant to law enforcement, the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime periodically receives requests to assess the risk for violence posed by an individual in a workplace. In some cases, this has been precipitated by a verbal or written threat made in the workplace, at other times it is predicated by unusual or strange behavior and/or comments made to coworkers.

If a communicated threat, verbal, typewritten, e-mailed, or otherwise, is present, an analysis of the verbiage is conducted to determine credibility and viability of the threat. Further, if the offender is unknown, a linguistic profile is developed for investigators, which may identify the offender in the future. In known-offender cases, the analysis of the communicated threats and of the behavior exhibited by the offender is assessed in order to determine the level of threat.

In order to assess this risk, the following suggested questions should be asked to individuals familiar with the offender's behavior, both prior to and after any alleged threat or action.

Note: Perpetrators of workplace violence can be both men and women, however, for the purposes of the questions to be asked, **he** is used to refer to the offender.

Questions include:

- Why has the offender threatened, made comments which have been perceived by others as threatening, or has taken this action at this particular time?

What is happening in his/her own life that has prompted this?

- What has been said to others, i.e. friends, colleagues, coworkers, etc., regarding what is troubling him?
- How does the offender view himself in relation to everyone else?
- Does he feel he has been wronged in some way?
- Does he accept responsibility for his own actions?
- How does the offender cope with disappointment, loss or failure?
- Does he blame others for his failures?

- How does the offender interact with coworkers?
- Does he feel he is being treated fairly by the company?
- Does he have problems with supervisors or management?
- Is he concerned with job practices and responsibilities?
- Has he received unfavorable performance reviews or been reprimanded by management?
- Is he experiencing personal problems such as divorce, death in the family, health problems, or other personal losses or issues?
- Is he experiencing financial problems, high personal debt, or bankruptcy?
- Is there evidence of substance abuse or mental illness/depression?
- Has the he shown an interest in violence through movies, games, books, or magazines?
- Is he preoccupied with violent themes; interested in publicized violent events; or fascinated with and/or recently acquired weapons?
- Has the offender identified a specific target and communicated with others his thoughts or plans for violence?
- Is he obsessed with others or engaged in any stalking or surveillance activity?
- Has the offender spoken of homicide or suicide?
- Does he have a past criminal history or history of past violent behavior?
- Does the offender have a plan for what he would do?
- Does the plan make sense, is it reasonable, is it specific?
- Does the offender have the means, knowledge and wherewithal to carry out his plan?

When many of these questions are answered, an accurate picture of the risk for violence is developed and from this an intervention plan can be devised.

Adapted from "Workplace Violence: Issues in Response," FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, at pages 30-32 (2002). Full text available at www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence