A Sample Masters Project:

A Review of the BC Sheriff Services Threat Assessment Process

by

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Threat and risk assessments completed by the BC Sheriff Services Integrated Threat Assessment Unit (ITAU) inform protective measures implemented to reduce the risk of violence towards employees and the public at provincial government worksites. Initiated at the request of Inspector and Operational Section Head Duane Kempton, this report represents the first independent evaluation of the ITAU’s threat and risk assessment program.

Research questions include;

1. Is the ITAU’s process for assessing risk of violence consistent with established theory and practice?
2. Are processes effective in enhancing the safety and security of court participants? How?
3. Are processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BC Public Service employees? How?

Methods

Three methods were used to address the research questions. A literature review first outlines basic theory and practice in the field of threat assessment; this was later expanded to include a systematic review of past research regarding the performance of tools used by the ITAU in conducting assessments. The second method was to review all threat assessment reports completed by the ITAU in 2015, and then compare them to court data to determine whether a relationship could be established between risk ratings as assessed by the ITAU and criminal offending (violent or otherwise) in the year to follow. Lastly, interviews were conducted with three groups: ITAU employees who perform threat and risk assessments, BC Sheriff Service managers who receive and act upon threat and risk information from the ITAU, and other clients who receive threat and risk information from the ITAU.

Findings

Despite major strides over the past 20 years, threat assessment remains a broad and speculative discipline (Federal Bureau of investigation, 2017, p. 83, Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 8). The preventive effect of protective actions, infrequent or inaccessible incidents from which to draw data, and the unique and dynamic considerations impacting individual outcomes all contribute to difficulties isolating and quantifying impacts of threat assessment activities. External contributory factors such as physical security features, legislation related to stalking and harassment, workplace regulation for employee safety (including violence prevention), and increased sophistication of investigative techniques by law enforcement; while improving the response to targeted violence, also present rival plausible explanations for the achievements of a threat assessment program. As such, best efforts have been made to draw reasonable conclusions based upon evidence from the literature review, review of 2015 threat assessment reports and court data, and interviews with the ITAU’s employees and clients.

There are three main approaches to assessment of risk for violence: structured professional judgement, which allows clinical discretion but defines key points for consideration as empirically supported by the literature (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 263); unstructured professional judgement, which relies upon the opinion and expertise of the assessor (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 409); and use of actuarial instruments, which use fixed rules and formulas to calculate a numerical representation of risk level based upon predictive factors statistically associated to violence (Doyle & Dolan, 2004, p. 5). Structured professional judgement, which is used by the ITAU in performing assessments, was found to be superior to the unstructured approach and comparable to actuarial methods. Investigative, assessment, and management processes as outlined on the logic model for the threat assessment program operated by ITAU (APPENDIX A) were also consistent with those recommended by expert sources in the field. The ITAU was also observed to have excellent access to information, a highly trained team including a range
of multi-disciplinary clinical and academic experts, and a practice of conducting group consultation in the development of risk ratings and mitigation planning.

Though no significant relationship was demonstrated during statistical testing between the variables of ‘risk rating assigned by the ITAU’ and ‘criminal charges in the year following assessment’ (in reference to both violent and non-violent offending), higher risk ratings for violence were positively correlated to increased incidence of non-violent offending, and otherwise inconclusive results were attributed to sampling issues. Stemming from this, the literature review was expanded to include an evaluation of predictive validity and interrater reliability for structured professional judgement guides used by the ITAU in conducting assessments, with 40 studies meeting the criteria for inclusion. Results found guides including the Workplace Assessment of Targeted Violence Risk, Historical Clinical Risk Management, Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk, Stalking Assessment and Management, Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth, and Multi-Level Guidelines to be empirically validated to an acceptable or better degree for use upon intended populations in both respects; with the exception of use with adult females, for which results were not consistently supportive. It may be reasonably concluded that, if applied appropriately, the ITAU achieves comparable rates of accuracy in assigning risk levels to those determined in previous studies. Rates of criminal offending in the year following initial referral for cases escalated for full behavioural threat assessment were also found to be higher than those addressed via alternate or lesser means, which suggests reliability of the initial triage process in correctly identifying risk levels at the preliminary stage also.

Findings from interviews point to different types of work performed in relation to the courts versus external clients. With the former, the ITAU is heavily relied upon for storage and management of information, basic checks in relation to emergent issues, and event planning for high security and other matters. Conversely, their role with external clients is to prepare threat assessment reports for more complex cases requiring behavioral analysis, provide risk management advice in relation to potential violence, and at times to initiate direct interventions with the subject through law enforcement or mental health contacts. With regard to overall workload the unit also appears to have exceeded capacity, though this finding is based upon interview data from employees and clients, and recordkeeping with regard to official caseload was inconsistent.

Whereas engagement with court users is high, engagement with other worksites is less clear due to a centralized reporting system in which a large number of issues are managed and resolved prior to a referral. In both cases however, information is helpful to case managers and recommendations for risk mitigation are generally followed. Risk ratings were also demonstrated to influence allocation of resources, with higher risk ratings associated to an increased number of protective actions taken by case managers; though there was some evidence that a higher number of recommendations negatively correlated to decreased offending (most who offended in the 2015 sample were in fact assigned a slightly above average number of recommendations).

**Conclusion**

Though precise impacts of threat assessment processes may never be known (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 8); it is clear that the ITAU is a highly qualified team engaging in widely recognized best practices. Assessment activities are also improving safety and security and reducing the risk of targeted violence through use of a reliable risk rating system, which in turn allows evidence based implementation of preventative measures. Further, case management (be it direct or indirect) results in target hardening measures which provide a deterrent effect, interventions with high risk subjects which leading theory suggests are effective in de-escalating progress toward an act of violence, improved emotional well-being for employees, and meeting of regulated requirements for BC employers to assess potential exposure to violence in the workplace.

**Recommendations**
Several opportunities for improvement or emphasis of best practices were identified in the course of the review. As the ITAU is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan and a separate evaluation of policy considerations is underway, some may already be in effect or under review. Recommendations, as detailed at conclusion of the report, appear in order of urgency and/or natural order of implementation.

**IMMEDIATE (0-6 months)**

1. *Improve workload management* to enhance client service, effectively articulate workload pressures and resource needs, and identify employee coaching or recognition opportunities. Though the ITAU (and sheriffs generally) do not control their workload, accurately capturing the amount of work occurring relative to the capacity of the unit would assist with strategic communication and contingency planning.

2. *Exercise caution with use of Structured Professional Judgement Guides for adult women*, as a recent meta-analysis suggests that common guides such as the Historical Clinical Risk Management (HCR-20) may not consistently exceed chance level prediction with adult female samples.

3. *Consider consistently assessing risk level for non-violent offending*, as this rating is currently optional to assessors and may be of benefit to clients in the context of identifying potential challenges (if not risks) to employees. Findings from the review of 2015 threat assessment reports and outcomes suggest a higher prevalence for these types of offences, possible association to violent offending, and a shorter term trajectory in comparison to violent offences.

**SHORT TERM (6 months – 1 year)**

4. *Review use of ‘risk assessment’ for the purpose of sheriff staffing decisions* as overall results from the evaluation suggest that methods for assessing risk level for violence in this context are inconsistent and cursory, likely therefore achieving chance level prediction in assessing known issues and no predictive ability in assessing unknown issues. This form of assessment is also intended to prevent or de-escalate an attack before it occurs, and does not provide the deterrent effect of uniformed personnel. It is recommended that these basic checks continue in a standardized format, but not be relied upon as the sole determinant of sheriff staffing decisions. Limitations of this form of risk assessment should also be communicated to decision makers, which necessitates broad re-education of users.

5. *Review the method of communication for mitigation strategies to sheriff managers*. Though from a program standpoint it is appropriate to issue recommendations on protective measures in the course of a threat or risk assessment, a majority of sheriff managers prefers not to receive them. The ITAU may wish to consider changes to the mode and format of delivery (ex. a matrix of standard action items available for reference on a shared platform rather than specific recommendations included in a briefing report), or characterization of recommendations (ex. ‘operational considerations’ rather than ‘recommendations’) to this group. Of note, findings from the literature review and interviews suggest that in the absence of recommendations, *following a standard intelligence briefing*, sheriff managers are comparably equipped to make operational determinations regarding protective measures in the absence of recommendations.

6. *Review deployment and supervision practices for Protective Intelligence Officers (PIO’s)*. PIO’s are a critical component of the ITAU’s infrastructure, which creates a service gap during unplanned absences (ex. being redeployed into operations during periods of short staffing). While responsible for oversight of PIO’s; sheriff managers in many cases have limited knowledge of their PIO’s day to day duties, cumulative workload, performance, or development needs. If retaining the current reporting structure, it is proposed that the ITAU accept a more collaborative role in managing PIO’s.
7. **Review the appointment process for specialized non-operational positions.** Balanced against concerns of sheriff managers around a lack of consistency between hiring practices for PIO’s and operational sheriff positions; the current use of temporary appointments (TA’s) to fill PIO positions in part addresses their further concern about potential difficulties transitioning back to operations for ITAU employees returning from an extended absence, and allows for capacity building within the unit. The ITAU may wish to expand the use of temporary appointments to other positions within the unit they become vacant through attrition. As there are potential impacts to other specialized non-operational positions within the Sheriff Service, it is recommended that this issue be part of a broader discussion amongst stakeholders.

8. **Initiate a review of Provincial Sheriff Policy** to address major changes to operational deployment which impact risk levels and available protective responses. Though provincial policy is not set by the ITAU, many items such as the implementation of carbines, increased number of inmate classifications, integration with police, and unusual judicial orders affect security protocols for sheriffs. It is proposed that these issues be brought to the attention of the Senior Business and Planning Policy Analyst.

**LONG TERM (1-2 years)**

9. **Facilitate targeted field education to court staff** to improve engagement with user groups; which may in turn increase opportunities for issues detection, decrease inappropriate or inadequate reporting, and promote relationship building at the local level. This may be a particularly assistive in light of recent commitments to introduce a high number of new sheriff recruits into the workforce.

10. **Centralize reporting for court issues** through use of a technology platform to standardize procedures and branding, eliminate intermediaries to decrease delays in reporting, ensure all required components of initial information are received through use of templates, and assist in capturing workload. Corporate Security and Risk Management Branch has considered a similar initiative, which may be an opportunity for participation in a parallel or joint venture.

**VARIABLE TIMELINE**

11. **Improve access to information for assessors** by easing settings in the Justice Information databank (JUSTIN) and Sheriffs Custody Management System (SCMS), pursuing direct access to police information (specifically less restrictive access for existing users and an onsite portal), and direct notifications from the Incident Reporting and Information Reporting system (IRIS) through the addition of a “notify ITAU” button on the employee report form. Success was also reported with use of an ‘initial consultation checklist’ for external clients, and expanded use of this type of document is recommended.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

12. **Further research related to effectiveness of targeted violence management in BC government.** Outside of court staff, the level of program engagement for most provincial government organizations is unknown. There is also evidence that a failure on the part of external end users to follow through with recommendations has led to an escalation of behavioral issues on several documented occasions. Further research involving local Occupational Health and Safety Committees and/or local managers is recommended to determine true rates of reporting, compliance with recommended management strategies, and outcomes relative to protective actions taken. More conclusive information regarding risk ratings and outcomes in relation to the ITAU’s program may also be drawn from a larger and more diverse sample.

13. **Further research in the field of threat assessment and risk management** generally, but with particular regard to the relationship between management strategies and outcomes. Also research into the effectiveness of structured professional judgement guides in assessing adult women, as findings from the
literature review were inconsistent and suggest (in some cases) chance level prediction. Though not addressed in this report (as no evidence surfaced within the scope of inquiry), similar issues with use of structured professional judgement guides upon Aboriginal populations are also acknowledged.
Table of Contents

Executive Summary ......................................................................................................................... 2
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 2
Methods ........................................................................................................................................ 2
Findings ......................................................................................................................................... 2
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 3
Recommendations .......................................................................................................................... 3
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... 7
List of Abbreviations ..................................................................................................................... 11
Glossary ......................................................................................................................................... 11
1.0 Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 12
  1.1 Defining the Problem ............................................................................................................... 12
  1.2 Project Client ........................................................................................................................... 12
  1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions ............................................................................ 13
  1.4 Background ............................................................................................................................ 13
  1.5 Organization of Report .......................................................................................................... 14
2.0 Methodology & Methods .......................................................................................................... 16
  2.1 Methodology .......................................................................................................................... 16
  2.2 Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................................... 16
  2.3 Methods ................................................................................................................................ 16
Part 1: Literature Review ............................................................................................................ 16
Part 2: Review of Assessments & Outcomes .............................................................................. 17
Part 3: Interviews ........................................................................................................................ 17
  2.4 Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 18
  2.5 Delimitations .......................................................................................................................... 19
3.0 Findings - Literature Review .................................................................................................. 21
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 21
  3.1 Scope of review ...................................................................................................................... 21
  3.2 What is a threat assessment? .................................................................................................. 21
  3.3 Why perform threat assessments? .......................................................................................... 22
  3.4 Application to Courthouses and other government worksites .................................................. 22
  3.5 Authorities ............................................................................................................................. 23
Theory and Practice in Assessing & Managing Targeted Violence ............................................. 23
5.6 Internal views of team members and the program ..............................................................54
5.7 Challenges with obtaining & storing information ...............................................................55
5.8 Issues related to the PIO Program ......................................................................................55
5.9 Time & workload pressures ...............................................................................................56
Group 2: BC Sheriff Services Managers Who Receive & Act Upon Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU .57
5.10 User Profile ......................................................................................................................57
5.11 Impact of the ITAU upon threat identification & awareness .............................................57
5.12 Impact of the ITAU upon case management & outcomes ................................................58
5.13 Perspectives on the reporting structure for PIO’s ............................................................58
5.14 Identified need for policy updates .....................................................................................59
5.15 Desire for field education .................................................................................................59
5.16 Other comments ..............................................................................................................59
Group 3: Others Receiving Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU .....................................59
5.17 User Profile ......................................................................................................................59
5.18 Impact upon threat identification & awareness ...............................................................59
5.19 Impact upon case management .......................................................................................60
5.20 Impact upon outcomes ....................................................................................................60
5.21 Positive views of the collegial relationship ....................................................................61
5.22 Lack of timeliness with reporting ....................................................................................61
5.23 Other comments ..............................................................................................................61
Summary ..................................................................................................................................61
5.24 Group 1: Employees of the BC Sheriff Services Integrated Threat Assessment Unit Who Perform Threat & Risk Assessments .................................................................61
5.25 Group 2: BC Sheriff Services Managers Who Receive and Act Upon Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU .................................................................62
5.26 Group 3: Other Clients Receiving Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU .................62
6.0 Discussion & Analysis ........................................................................................................64
6.1 Introduction .........................................................................................................................64
6.2 Research Question #1: Is the ITAU’s process for assessing risk of targeted violence consistent with established theory and practice? ........................................................................64
6.3 Research Question #2: Are current processes effective in enhancing safety and security for court participants? How? ......................................................................................65
6.4 Research Question #3: Are current processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees? How? ...........................................................................68
7.0 Conclusion .........................................................................................................................73
8.0 Recommendations ............................................................................................................75
8.1 IMMEDIATE (0-6 months) ...............................................................................................75
8.2 SHORT TERM (6 months – 1 year) ............................................................................................................. 76
8.3 LONG TERM (1-2 years) ......................................................................................................................... 77
8.4 VARIABLE TERM ..................................................................................................................................... 78
8.5 FURTHER RESEARCH ............................................................................................................................. 78
9.0 References ............................................................................................................................................... 80

APPENDIX A: BC Sheriff Services Integrated Threat Assessment Unit (ITAU) Threat Assessment Model ........ 1
APPENDIX B: Interview Questions .................................................................................................................. 2
APPENDIX C: Breakdown of ‘Violent’ Versus ‘Non-Violent’ Offenses for the Purpose of Determining Outcomes in the Year Following Assessment by the ITAU ................................................................. 4
# List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Area under the curve</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCPS</td>
<td>British Columbia Public Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-SAFER</td>
<td>Brief Spousal Assault Form for Evaluating Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTS2</td>
<td>Revised Conflict Tactics Scales</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITAU</td>
<td>Integrated Threat Assessment Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCR-20</td>
<td>Historical Clinical Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>Intraclass Correlation Coefficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLG</td>
<td>Multi-Level Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODARA</td>
<td>Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIO</td>
<td>Protective Intelligence Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCL-R</td>
<td>Psychopathy Checklist Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCL-SV</td>
<td>Psychopathy Checklist for Sexual Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>POI</td>
<td>Person of Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Receiver Operating Characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Stalking Assessment and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARA</td>
<td>Spousal Assault Risk Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAVRY</td>
<td>Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIO</td>
<td>Senior Intelligence Officer</td>
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<td>SPJ</td>
<td>Structured professional judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRR</td>
<td>Summary risk rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRAG</td>
<td>Violence Risk Assessment Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAVR-21</td>
<td>Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk</td>
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# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Actuarial Assessment</td>
<td>A statistical method used to assess the likelihood of an occurrence based upon risk factors validated through aggregate data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chi Square Test</td>
<td>A statistical method comparing observed and expected values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishers Exact Test</td>
<td>A test of significance (instead of chi square test) for smaller samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intraclass Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>A statistical method used to describe how strongly units in the same group resemble one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Professional Guides</td>
<td>Tools which consider risk factors as empirically validated by the literature used by professionals to assist in determining risk level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Professional Instruments</td>
<td>Tools based upon the experience of expert assessors used by professionals to assist in determining risk level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Professional Judgement</td>
<td>A method of assessment which requires consideration of known risk factors but allows for discretion in weighting and overall finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver Operating Characteristics Analysis</td>
<td>A graph plotting true positive rates (sensitivity) against false positive rates (specificity) with values presented as an Area Under the Curve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured Professional Assessment</td>
<td>An opinion based upon the qualifications and experience of an assessor</td>
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</table>
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Defining the Problem

Threat and risk assessments completed by the BC Sheriff Services (BCSS) ITAU inform security measures implemented to protect employees and the public at provincial government work sites. It is therefore critical to ensure that current processes are effective in managing risk. There has been no study to date evaluating the impact of the ITAU’s threat assessment process upon outcomes; nor could a similar study be located from a comparable organization.

Assessing effectiveness of a prevention based program is fundamentally challenging insofar as, when the issue which the program is intended to prevent does not occur, an attempt is then made to connect this non-event to outputs of the program. This is clouded by the possible influence of outside contributory factors, and uncertainly around whether the event was ever likely to have materialized in the first place. Though attempts are made to connect processes used in the course of threat assessment to an outcome of ‘reduced acts of violence’ using mixed methods, the evaluation has relied upon qualitative data as a primary line of evidence for this reason. In the context of the research questions, ‘effectiveness’ refers to success of the program in preventing future acts of violence.

The ITAU utilizes a risk management model which relies heavily upon threats being identified in advance, allowing an assessment to take place and a management plan to be developed. Evidence-based intelligence is used in determining risk level and to develop recommendations on appropriate mitigation strategies. In the case of more complex or serious threats, structured professional judgement tools may be used to support decision making. This report represents the first evaluation of the ITAU’s threat and risk assessment model. Specifically, an inquiry into the impact of current processes upon the safety and security of court participants, and upon reducing the risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees.

1.2 Project Client

BC Sheriff Services is a provincial government organization, part of the Court Services Branch, and falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General for British Columbia. BC Sheriffs are designated peace officers as authorized by the Criminal Code of Canada; with primary functions including court security, prisoner transportation, cell block operations, jury administration, and document service. Additional authorities such as the ability to search an individual for weapons by consent while inside a court facility, to use force in evicting disruptive persons from a courthouse, or to access police databanks for the purpose of assessing threats towards persons or facilities under Sheriff Services jurisdiction stem from the Sheriff Act.

The ITAU is a segment of the BCSS dedicated to assessing and managing threats to court participants, and is also contracted to perform threat assessments for targeted violence towards BC Public Service (BCPS) employees in all Ministries. Other activities captured by the ITAU’s mandate include open source investigating, site vulnerability assessments, event planning, threat management education, and close protection services for executives or other individuals in government (D. Kempton, personal communication, Mar 13th 2017). Headquarters is located at the Port Coquitlam Provincial Courthouse, which is home to eight of the department’s eleven employees. Twenty nine additional sheriffs operate out of other court locations in supportive positions, but are involved with day to day operations at their home offices and report to a local manager. Rank structure is outlined in Table 1. Partnership with Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) E-Division has resulted in ITAU members being seconded to the Behavioral Analysis Unit and Real Time Intelligence Centre (RTIC), as well as RCMP certification of one ITAU member as a Threat Specialist (representing one of twelve individuals certified nationally).
Though modeled after systems in use by other law enforcement agencies and supported by past research in the field of threat and risk assessment for violence, the ITAU’s methods are untested in relation to mitigating threats to BCPS worksites and personnel. To ensure the ITAU’s threat evaluations, as well as more routine advice issued in relation to court security matters, are effective in this application; an independent review of the ITAU’s threat assessment program is sought by Inspector and Operational Section Head Duane Kempton (hereafter the client). The report produced by the researcher will be used to inform best practices, and to secure confidence and credibility with end users regarding the processes in place.

Table 1: ITAU Organizational Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent</th>
<th>Provincial Intelligence Analyst</th>
<th>Inspector</th>
<th>Provincial Intelligence Analyst</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Intelligence Officer (Coastal)</td>
<td>Senior Intelligence Officer (Fraser)</td>
<td>Senior Intelligence Officer (North)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligence Case Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protective Intelligence Officers (29)</td>
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1.3 Project Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this project is to analyze the effectiveness of the ITAU’s threat assessment process in identifying, assessing, and managing risk for future acts of violence against BC court users and other provincial ministry employees. Results may also identify potential process improvements and/or facilitate a better understanding of program limitations. Recommendations are provided as part of this report.

Research questions include:

1. Is the ITAU’s process for assessing risk of violence consistent with established theory and practice?
2. Are processes effective in enhancing the safety and security of court participants? How?
3. Are processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees? How?

1.4 Background

Historically, BC Sheriff Services staffed all criminal courts and provincial family courts with little advance consideration to targeted threats. Response to an increased threat level was reactive, and to a decreased threat level non-existent, as staffing and security measures were static. The ITAU, modelled after processes used by the U.S
Secret Service for assessing risk of violence towards high profile public figures, was created in 2002 for the purpose of enhancing safety and security for court participants. This represented a marked departure from the prior approach where blanket policies and procedures were used to establish a general standard for security; and instead allowed informed advance planning regarding deployment of staffing resources and implementation of proactive security measures (setting up a security screening station outside of a courtroom, applying restraints to a prisoner, or utilizing the Incident Command System to execute a full scale operational plan).

While providing the opportunity for incorporation of additional staffing and security measures for the relatively small percentage of high risk activities, opportunity was also generated to withdraw excess resources from the more common low risk matters. For example, provided an assessment has been performed deeming a court case low risk, there are now times (with the Judge or Justice’s advance permission) that sheriffs have elected not to provide staffing. This creates a potential business case for savings to offset the ITAU’s operating costs, though in practice savings are negligible as withdrawal of staffing resources is actioned only in the event of critical staffing shortages and not as a standard practice.

In fulfillment of WorkSafe BC requirements for job sites to provide a violence prevention program, the BC Public Service Agency in concert with the Government Security Office (Risk Management Branch) has developed a guide available to managers and supervisors on how to recognize and manage targeted threats. In the event a targeted threat of violence is reported, the Ministry Security Officer is notified and (if deemed appropriate) the ITAU is asked to perform a risk assessment and provide recommendations on risk mitigation strategies. Since this policy came into effect in 2010, the added responsibility for assessing threats in other Ministries has led to a substantial increase in workload. Cost of employee hours is partially offset by charge-backs to the source.

1.5 Organization of Report

The above introduction provides a description of the problem, client, and relevant background information. The evaluation is then framed with three research questions: (1) Is the ITAU’s process for assessing risk of violence consistent with established theory and practice? (2) Are processes effective in enhancing the safety and security of court participants? (2) Are processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees?

Next a methodology, conceptual framework, and methods for the program review are provided. Methods include a literature review, a review of threat assessment reports and outcomes following assessment (offences committed or not committed) from 2015, and interviews with ITAU employees and clients. A description of limitations and delimitations for the research are provided at the conclusion.

Findings in relation to each of the three methods are communicated in separate sections:

- The first is a literature review which outlines established theory and practice in the field of threat and risk assessment, the efficacy of three main approaches to professional judgment, and the predictive validity and interrater reliability of structured professional judgement guides used by the ITAU in performing threat and risk assessments.

- The second is a review of threat assessment reports prepared by the ITAU in 2015. The nature of concerns, offender characteristics, and activities involved with the assessment are recorded. Court records are then used to determine whether subjects were charged with any violent or non-violent offences in the year following assessment. Risk ratings per the assessments are compared to outcomes, as well as to the number of management strategies recommended in the reports. The number of management strategies is also observed relative to outcomes, and outcomes for cases outside of the sample where no in depth assessment occurred are compared to those from the sample group.
• The third summarizes results from interviews with three groups. ITAU employees who prepare threat and risk assessments were first interviewed to establish what the process entails, and associated challenges or opportunities. BC Sheriff Services managers who receive and act upon threat and risk information from the ITAU were then interviewed to determine how the information is assistive in addressing safety and security issues at the courthouse. Finally, other BC Public Service clients who receive threat and risk information from the ITAU, but defer to case managers in other Ministries for implementation of security measures following assessment, were interviewed to determine whether the information is assistive in addressing targeted violence at worksites other than courthouses.

Following the communication of findings, the discussion section examines implications in direct relation to the research questions. Each research question is presented as a subsection providing an analysis based upon evidence from the literature review, review of 2015 threat assessment reports and outcomes, and interviews. Implications of the discussion are then summarized in the conclusions section, with 13 recommendations for program improvement provided at the end of the report.
2.0 Methodology & Methods

2.1 Methodology

This evaluation is both formative and summative in that it will produce a report responding to whether the ITAU’s risk management model is effective in achieving intended program goals, and formative insofar as recommendations for program improvement will be provided. As outlined by McDavid, Huse and Hawthorn (2013), mixed methods may be used to strengthen implicit research designs where no comparison group or before-after comparison for the program group is available; triangulation in particular is a central feature of evaluation practice (p. 207-208). A mixed methods approach using three independent lines of evidence was utilized.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The literature review will identify accepted framework(s) for assessing and managing threats of targeted violence. It will also provide evidence of the strength of predictive validity and interrater reliability amongst structured professional judgement tools utilized by the ITAU to assess associated risk, and how structured professional judgement performs when compared with alternative approaches to professional judgement. If valid theory, processes, and tools are applied in a comparable manner by the ITAU, similar rates of success in relation to accurate identification of risk levels are likely, and it is likely that appropriate management strategies are being recommended.

If risk levels are being correctly identified and well-established management techniques are being applied, demonstration of program effectiveness becomes predicated upon evidencing the impacts of program outputs upon desired short term outcomes (ie. ‘enhanced case management’ and/or ‘direct interventions upon the subject’), and the impact of short term outcomes on long term outcomes (ie. ‘enhanced safety and security at court facilities’ and ‘reduced risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees’). All are outlined on the logic model available for reference as APPENDIX A.

An attempt is made by reviewing threat assessment reports prepared by the ITAU and outcomes following assessment (criminal offences committed or not committed) in 2015. Though the preventative effect of protective actions create a challenge in evaluating the predicative ability of risk ratings in this manner, it may still be possible to demonstrate a reduction in offending between the group which was escalated for in depth assessment and the group which was not, or patterns related to the number of recommendations for risk mitigation relative to outcomes. Review of the reports also allows capture of information around the threat and risk assessment process for comparison to established practices from the literature review.

Due to foreseeable limitations to validity and conclusiveness for data drawn from the review of threat assessment reports and outcomes including those above, interviews with ITAU employees and two groups of case managers who receive and act upon threat assessment information from the ITAU (sheriff managers and group of external clients) are used as a primary line of evidence to establish qualitative linkages between assessment activities, case management of threats, and outcomes in relation to enhanced safety and security at courthouses and/or reduction of targeted violence in the BCPS setting.

2.3 Methods

PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted in two parts, both of which draw primarily from the University of Victoria’s online library. The first establishes leading theory and practice in the field of threat and risk assessment as derived from key private, government, and academic sources. The second part explores the efficacy of structured
professional judgement tools in conducting threat and risk assessments for future acts of violence. Studies on the predictive validity and interrater reliability of structured professional judgement guides utilized by the ITAU were reviewed, as well as the guides themselves.

**PART 2: REVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS & OUTCOMES**

An implicit design was used to analyze the relationship between the explanatory variable of ‘enhanced case management’ and dependent variable of ‘future acts of violence’ using threats of targeted violence towards government employees or facilities which were referred to the ITAU in 2015. Only those events which met the threshold for production of a full behavioral threat assessment report were included in the sample. Report information was included in an excel spreadsheet providing a break down under the headings ‘issue description’ (referral organization and a brief explanation of the concerns), ‘offender characteristics’ (age, sex, mental health issue identified, past history of violence), and ‘assessment’ (ie. date of report, tools or guides utilized, team members consulted, investigative sources reviewed, time spent preparing the assessment, risk rating for future violence - low, moderate, or high, and recommendations).

The JUSTIN databank which details BC court records was then used to populate additional categories under the headings ‘charged with a violent offense’ and ‘charged with a non-violent criminal offense’. Subheadings included ‘number of offenses’, and ‘date of first offense following assessment’. Court proceedings involving the persons of interest were reviewed for one year following assessment. Chi square tests with a significance level of <.05 were used to examine the relationship between variables of ‘risk rating’ and ‘criminal charges following assessment’, both for general and violent offending. Due to the small sample size findings were verified using Fishers Exact Test. The relationship between risk ratings and number of recommendations issued was also examined.

To establish reliability of the ITAU’s initial triage process in correctly identifying cases which present elevated risk to employees at the time of referral (as this is what led to a determination of which cases a threat assessment report would be prepared for in the first place), outcomes for issues where no report was prepared (criminal offences committed or not committed in the year followed assessment) were compared to rates of offending for the sample group as well.

**PART 3: INTERVIEWS**

Qualitative interviews were used to (1) establish the process being used to conduct threat assessments along with associated challenges or opportunities, (2) examine the impact of the ITAU’s threat assessment ‘products’ (outputs on the logic model) upon ‘enhanced case management’ and/or ‘direct interventions upon the subject’ (short term outcomes on the logic model), and (3) examine the impact of short term outputs upon ‘enhanced safety and security at court facilities’ and ‘reduced risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees’ (long term outcomes on the logic model – see APPENDIX A).

Instruments using semi-structured questions were designed inductively to test aspects of the research questions and purported linkages on the logic model. One was created for ITAU employees, and another for managers (no distinction between Sheriff Services managers and those from other ministries). Pre-testing was conducted both with an ITAU employee and a Sheriff Services manager not otherwise involved with the project. Copies of the interview scripts are attached as APPENDIX B.

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to form interview groups. First, criteria for each group were identified as follows: Group 1 – ITAU employees involved with the preparation of threat assessment materials, Group 2 – Sheriff Services managers who routinely receive and act upon threat assessment information from the ITAU; Group 3 – Other BC Public Service managers who routinely receive threat assessment information from the ITAU. The client was then asked to identify the total population of potential participants in each group, and recruitment invitations
were sent to all by a third party (as deemed appropriate given the collegial, and in some cases supervisory, relationship between invitees and either the researcher or the client). Participants who responded to the third party invitation were contacted by the researcher for an interview. Following completion of all data collection, responses were compiled onto an excel spreadsheet and coded thematically.

2.4 Limitations

The preventative nature of the ITAU’s risk management model (insofar as recommendations for risk mitigation are provided) and timing of the study (years after implementation of the program) present challenges in responding to research questions related to ‘effectiveness’. Isolating impacts of program outputs in a scenario where risk was identified but no act of violence was carried out following implementation of a risk reduction strategy is an imprecise equation; as it is impossible to know with certainty whether protective actions implemented as a result of the assessment prevented the act, or whether an act of violence was even likely in the first place. External contributory factors in the security field have also aided in improving the response to targeted violence, which pose a further challenge in isolating the impacts of threat assessment and management activities upon outcomes.

Further, low frequency may be inferred from the lack of open source reporting on violence towards BC Government employees or worksites; however no statistics around true base rates could be located for study. In the absence of true base rates for comparison, it is not possible to establish temporal asymmetry for the explanatory variable of ‘ITAU’s threat assessment program’ and dependent variable of ‘incidence of criminal offending’. Absence of a control group also inhibits demonstration of covariation. Though outcomes for cases where no threat assessment report was prepared are compared to those where one was prepared for the purpose of establishing reliability of the initial triage process in identifying higher risk cases, the former does not constitute an equivalent control group for the latter (outcomes are being compared between cases of lower presumed risk and subject to lower level interventions to those of higher presumed risk cases and subject to higher level interventions).

Though structured professional judgement tools are useful in ascertaining general risk for future violence or recidivism, full behavioural threat assessments are primarily geared towards assessing risk towards a specific target. Because of the inability to discern the identity of the victim using JUSTIN, it is possible that the person of interest (POI) may be successfully redirected away from an attack upon the intended government target, but carry out an offence against an unrelated individual or site instead (which falls under the mandate of police). This provides the appearance that recommendations were ineffective in meeting program goals, when in fact they were successful. It also detracts from the ability to conclude success in meeting program goals, since it is unclear whether violence and other offending was carried out in relation to a government worker or facility.

Limitations exist around the validity of information obtained through self-reporting mechanisms. Impacts may be intentionally exaggerated or under represented, and individuals may be misinformed or not remember occurrences accurately. They may also feel pressured or scrutinized, or respond with known patterns of bias or perceived demand characteristics. These issues have been considered in analyzing results. There is also a relationship between the researcher, client, and interview participants insofar as all are colleagues in the BC Public Service. In some cases, the client is also a direct supervisor of a participant, or a participant is a direct supervisor (or former supervisor) of the researcher. Efforts have been made to alleviate concerns or confusion undermining forthright reporting through use of a third party recruiter, consent form outlining activities undertaken to promote confidentiality and anonymity, and verbal reiteration at the time of interview regarding the voluntary nature of participation.

As career public servants and employees of the Sheriff Service itself, both the client and researcher may also hold engrained opinions and beliefs inherent within the subculture of the organization. Risk of bias is mitigated through
review and feedback by a faculty supervisor from the University of Victoria, who is a neutral third party and academic expert in the field program evaluation.

2.5 Delimitations

A relatively small sample size of POI’s (N=25) was used which detracts from external validity, however this represented all threat assessment reports available for review from 2015 (81% of total threat assessment reports and 8% of total caseload), and due to time and resource constraints it was not feasible to expand the scope of the study to include reports from additional years. The sample was limited to cases which resulted in preparation of a threat assessment report because those which did not result in a report (N=324) had limited data to draw from in comparison, may be inapplicable to a one year review of outcomes (ex. related to assessment of a group rather than an individual), and were perceived to present the least risk to employees at the time of referral. This may impact the ability to draw statistically significant results related to the relationship between risk ratings and outcomes, however there is still value to reviewing the reports to gather information related to the characteristics of case files, processes occurring during assessment, and the relationship between risk ratings and recommendations.

The sample size of interviews (N=20) was also relatively small. For the client at hand however, samples are commensurate in size and offer representativeness of the total population with the exception of judiciary, for whom there was no representation. Judiciary are a key client group, however results regarding issues at the courthouse may be inferred from the responses of sheriff managers who are responsible for safety and security in this context.

Full behavioural threat assessments are generally conducted in circumstances such that there is an eminent threat presented by the POI. While it is therefore likely that offences following assessment would occur within the one year to follow, it is also possible that there was offending outside of the time period studied. Another consideration is that threat assessments are most accurate at the time they are completed. Should circumstances change for the POI a change in his or her risk level may follow, causing findings and recommendations to become less valid over time. It was important to limit the span of sample data for these reasons, but provide sufficient sensitivity given the low frequency for violent offences. With regard to the statistical methods used to examine the relationship between risk rating and outcome, the Chi Square test was selected as a widely accepted and reliable tool for comparing the impact of variables upon outcomes. The test becomes less accurate with small samples and/or with smaller frequencies however (ie. cells with a value less than 5). To address this, Fishers Exact Test (recommended for small samples and values) was used to verify results.

Contact with the court system as outlined by JUSTIN will not fully capture acts of violence (or otherwise) as some may not be observed, reported, or meet the threshold for charge approval; offences occurring outside of British Columbia would also be missed. At the time the research was proposed permission had been received from the RCMP to also access the Police Records Information Management Environment (PRIME) databank entries related to POI’s for the year following assessment; however it was rescinded prior to data collection. This would have bolstered the study with more robust information capturing offences investigated but not charged, and other forms of contact with police which would provide context to the POI’s circumstances but not otherwise be known (such as contact as a victim, or being stopped in the presence of gang members). It would also have set a lower threshold for detection in the research, which would have improved validity given the infrequency of occurrences. A decision was made to proceed using JUSTIN data alone, but to rely upon qualitative links between program outputs from interviews as the primary line of evidence.

Due to time and resource constraints it was not possible to provide detailed reporting in the literature review regarding research specific to each of the various types of violence or groups of perpetrators applicable to assessments covered by the ITAU. Motivators, warning behaviours, and management strategies vary depending on
the nature of concerns and characteristics of the subject; detailed information regarding application of subscales of the structured professional judgement tools and the implications of protective actions are also applicable to the research topic, however only a general overview of basic concepts have been included in the literature review per the scope set out in the introduction sections.
3.0 Findings - Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

3.1 Scope of review

A literature review was conducted in two parts, both of which drawing primarily from the University of Victoria’s online library. The first establishes theory and practice in the field of threat and risk assessment as may be applied to work environments captured by the ITAU’s mandate. Search criteria included terms such as “threat assessment”, “violence risk assessment”, “structured professional judgement”, “managing targeted violence”, “courthouse violence”, and “violence against government targets”. Key content was derived from sources below.

- Research conducted by the U.S. Secret Service, as architects of modern threat assessment
- Research conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, as administrators (via the Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Marshall Service) of investigation, enforcement, and protective services including those specific to the court system
- Calhoun and Weston’s Contemporary Threat Management (2003) and subsequent editions, which built upon research conducted by the U.S. Government and have served as a common reference model for law enforcement in North America since the time of release
- Works acknowledged by the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP), as an internationally recognized non-profit dedicated to sharing research and best practices amongst the law enforcement community, also the regulating body for “Certified Threat Managers”
- Meloy and Hoffman’s The International Handbook of Threat Assessment (2014), which represents a recent and comprehensive compilation of academic views

Though case studies have led to wide acceptance of known warning signs and an “intuitive understanding of risk factors”, there has been limited research with regard to violence in the workplace (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 84), and the phenomena of risk is only partially understood (Dr. Alana Cook, personal communication, May 9 2018). Workplace violence may also carry a variety of contextual undertones; violence between intimate partners, stalking behavior, or terrorism for example. It is not the intent of the author to detail the nuances between each form of applicable violence, but rather to provide a high level overview of key considerations and processes as presented by expert sources. While a large body of research is available with regard to violent attacks in schools, this has some but limited applicability to the work of the ITAU and has been excluded with the exception of foundational works.

The second part of the review explores the efficacy of various approaches to conducting threat and risk assessments for future acts of violence. Studies on the predictive validity and interrater reliability of structured professional judgement guides utilized by the ITAU were reviewed, as well as the guides themselves. Research specific to predicting violence within secure forensic or correctional populations or to sexual offending was excluded, as this would not be contextually relevant to the majority of cases assessed by the ITAU. Forty articles met the criteria for inclusion, with additional sources evaluating the general utility of structured professional judgement guides also reviewed, along with the guides themselves.

3.2 What is a threat assessment?

Prior to contemporary threat management, the ability of law enforcement to act was limited unless someone had broken the law. The modern threat assessment process now allows evidence-based planning to de-escalate and prevent attacks before they occur (Calhoun & Weston, 2003, p. 1; Doherty, 2016, p. 17). Though the terms ‘threat’
and ‘risk’ are used interchangeably in the literature, from a security perspective threats flow from risk. Risk assessments, therefore distinct from threat assessments, represent a generalized approximation of potential harm; whereas threat assessments evaluate the eminent manifestation of a specific risk in the short term (ITG Consultants, 2014, p. 2).

Threat assessment may be defined as “determination of the level of targeted violence risk posed by an individual or group towards a specific target (ATAP, 2006), with violence further defined as “any actual, attempted, or planned injury of other people, as well as any communication or behavior that reasonably causes other people to fear for their health or safety (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 4). Distinct from autonomic or opportunistic violence, planned predatory forms of attack where a victim is selected in advance constitute targeted violence (Doherty, 2016, p. 11). The goal of threat assessment is to identify the threat, assess its credibility, and to prepare a strategy aimed at subverting a violent attack before it occurs (Fein, Vossekuil & Holden, 1995, p. 2; Vossekuil, Fein, Borum & Reddy, 2001, p. 79).

3.3 Why perform threat assessments?

Threat assessment is one part of a multi-faceted approach to risk management. Over the past 20 years most of North America has introduced anti-stalking, anti-threat, and harassment legislation which aids in the management of criminal behavior. Physical security features such as screening stations, alarm systems, closed circuit television cameras, and security personnel also assist in deterring violent acts; and failing all else there is an expectation for police to respond in an emergency. Nonetheless it is possible to subvert security systems though careful planning, and in the case of a motivated attacker legal and environmental barriers may not be sufficient (Fein et al., 1995, p. 2). Underscoring the importance of prevention over reaction, approximately one third of active shooter incidents are over before law enforcement arrive (Doherty, 2016, p. 9). By identifying, assessing, and managing potential violence before it occurs in addition to target hardening measures and the availability of a police response, overall risk of harm is further reduced (Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 5).

BC employers as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (OHSR) and enforceable under the Workers Compensation Act are also legally bound to perform a risk assessment “in any workplace in which a risk of injury to workers from violence arising out of their employment may be present” (Occupational Health & Safety Regulations, Sec. 4.27). In addition to external sources, targeted violence in the workplace may manifest internally from an employee. Some employers are routinely conducting assessments prior to termination. By proactively assessing and managing the issues, including education for employees, employers also increase awareness of potential threats and promote an environment of collective responsibility for reporting (Doherty, 2016, p. 17; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 14).

3.4 Application to Courthouses and other government worksites

Acknowledging that the prevalence of targeted violence at court facilities in Canada is lower than that in the United States, due to a lack of comprehensive information regarding the prevalence of courthouse violence in Canada, several sources from the U.S. were examined. The Centre for Judicial and Executive Security conducted a longitudinal study on the prevalence of ‘court-targeted acts of violence’ summarizing acts occurring at U.S. local and state courts over a period of 40 years. Of note, this included only the most serious of occurrences involving shootings, bombings, or arson attacks. Results showed a dramatic increase from 20 acts between 1970-79, to 37 acts between 1980-89, 64 acts between 1990-99, and 78 acts between 2000-09 (Fautsko, Berson & Swensen, 2012, p. 1). Research by the U.S Marshall Service suggests that the risk to judges and other court participants has followed the same trend, with an increase in reports of threats from approximately 200 per year in 1993 to upwards of 700 per year in 2003, and a further increase to over 1200 per year by 2011 (Herraiz, 2006, p.2). Tragically highlighting the importance of a proactive protection strategy, reports from the National Sheriffs Association record a total of eight
judges, three prosecutors, five law enforcement officials, and 42 other court participants killed at U.S. courthouses between 1971 and 2006 (Herraiz, 2006, p. 2).

3.5 Authorities

Risk assessments for future acts of violence (and ultimately threat assessments) are performed by a range of public and private mental health and justice service professionals for the purposes of treatment, sentencing, or public protection. ‘Threat management’ is not a regulated profession in Canada, however the ATAP offers an internationally recognized Certified Threat Manager designation; many law enforcement agencies have also developed an in house certification process for threat specialists, and many colleges and universities offer related programming. The ATAP is the largest of several major non-profit organizations dedicated to the sharing of knowledge, research, and best practices amongst threat management professionals throughout the developed world; others include the Canadian Association of Threat Management Professionals, Association of European Threat Assessment Professionals, the Australasian Association of Threat Management Professionals, and the Asia-Pacific Association of Threat Management Professionals.

A unique and comprehensive summary of current academic views is also contained in Meloy and Hoffman’s *International Handbook of Threat Assessment* (2014). As leaders in the field, large bodies of research pertaining to threat assessment and management have also been published by the U.S. Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Marshalls Service.

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ASSESSING & MANAGING TARGETED VIOLENCE

3.6 Basic Assumptions

Initial research by the U.S. Secret Service entitled *Preventing Assassination: Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project* (1997) studied all cases (N=83) where an individual had attacked or approached to attack a prominent individual of public status in the United States since 1949 (Fein & Vossekuil, 1997, p. 6). Findings were supported by a follow up study entitled the *An Interim Report on the Prevention of Target Violence in Schools* (Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein & Borum 2000) which analyzed 37 school shootings involving 41 attackers (p. 1). Studies debunked a commonly held belief that targeted violence was impulsive or committed exclusively by individuals suffering from mental illness, instead finding that less than half of attackers were mentally ill and that most had planned their attack against a pre-selected target in advance. While approximately one third identified with a militant of extremist ideology, they also found that the development of attacker ‘profiles’ (leading effort of the day in identifying perpetrators) was ineffective; whereas a discernible set of commonly held thought processes and ‘pre-attack behaviors’ were established which could distinguish an attacker in the majority of cases. Contrary to the existing practice of using verbal threats as a threshold for investigation, it was further found that while attackers often communicate their intentions to a third party, direct contact is rarely made with the target in advance. Cumulative findings informed a handbook entitled *Protective Intelligence and Threat Assessment Investigations: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement Officials* which was released in 2000 (Fein & Vossekuil); concepts from which are still relevant through to present times.

Modern threat assessment remains contingent upon a fundamental assumption that subjects participate in known pre-attack behaviors in lead-up to an act of violence. A departure from the historical ‘violence prediction model’ which characterized violence as “dispositional (residing within the individual), static (not subject to change), and dichotomous (either present or not present)”; the modern ‘threat assessment model’ acknowledges violence as “contextual (highly dependent on situations and circumstances), dynamic (subject to change), and continuous (varying along a continuum of probability)” (Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, & Bergland, 1999, p. 324).
Key assumptions are as below:

“The first principle is that targeted violence is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior. The second principle is that violence stems from interaction among the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation, and the target. The third principle is that a key to investigation and resolution of threat assessment cases is identification of the subject’s ‘attack-related’ behaviors” (Borum et al., 1999, p. 329, Vossekuil et al., 2001, p. 86).

3.7 The Threat Assessment Process

Though available information will vary greatly from case to case, the first step in conducting an assessment is to investigate. Calhoun and Weston (2003) describe this as an examination “of the entire situation, circumstances, and previous history” (p. 58). Though privacy laws restrict what types of information may be available, appropriate lines of evidence may include interviews (either with the subject or others with knowledge of his/her past history and current state of mind, including events of significance and influence), materials produced or in the possession of the subject (ex. websites, emails, photographs, social media), and applicable documentation (ex. court orders, incident reports, mental health records, previous assessments, and databank entries) (Fein et al., 1995, p. 3-4). Investigations should also gather information on the target to better understand their relationship to the subject and potential vulnerabilities, as well as circumstances leading to the investigation. Following careful evaluation of reliability and validity (validity achieved by receiving the same information from more than one source), information becomes actionable intelligence (Justice Institute of British Columbia, personal communication, May 8 2018). As a general assumption, the reliability of the threat assessment will reflect the nature and quality of the information it is based on (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 5).

The second step is to evaluate the information gathered in the investigation. Ascertaining the subject’s motivation is assistive in determining who is at risk and to what extent. Motives – though variable depending upon the type of violence – often include one or more of eight rationales: achievement of notoriety, bringing attention to a problem, to avenge a perceived wrong, to retaliate for a perceived injury, to end pain, to be removed from society, to be killed, to save the country or world, to make money, or to cause political change (Vossekuil et al., 2001, p. 83). Fundamentally, practitioners must determine whether the subject is participating in warning behaviors commonly known as the ‘Pathway to Intended Violence’ and assess whether he/she is moving toward or away from carrying out an attack (Fein et al., 1995, p. 5; Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 6). Steps on the Pathway include (in chronological order) holding of a grievance, ideation of an attack, research and planning, preparation, breach of security to enable the attack, and the act of violence itself (Borum et al., 1999, p. 331, Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 43). Possession or acquisition of a weapon is further cause for concern. In more recent times, the Pathway has been characterized as one of several “useful means of conceptualizing behavior patterns indicating increasing threat” (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 39). Other warning behaviors include increased fixation on the target, identification with a “pseudo-commando” persona, initial tests of unrelated violence known as “novel aggression”, “energy burst behavior” representing an increase in any threat related behaviors, communication of intent to a third party (known as “leakage”), and direct threats (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 39-40).
The third step is developing a plan to mitigate the threat. Because each subject, target, and circumstance is different, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. By identifying circumstances which may increase or decrease the likelihood of an attack however, known as ‘stabilizers’ and ‘destabilizers’ or ‘triggers’ (Borum et al., 1999, p. 334), it is possible to reverse engineer solutions tailored to guiding a subject away from violence. Management strategies are often presented in the literature as a spectrum from least to most intrusive; depending on the circumstances they may also be applied to the subject, situation, environment, target, or a combination. Common management techniques are depicted on the chart below (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 54-65, Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 11-13). Once a strategy has been applied it is necessary to continually reassess to determine the impact and effect. It is unclear from the literature at what point a case has been sufficiently addressed and can be closed.

Table 3.7(b) Management Strategies Continuum

(Justice Institute of British Columbia, personal communication, May 8 2018)
Described by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2017) as perhaps the most important thing that can be done to improve outcomes (p. 82), it is recommended that practitioners engage the expertise of a multi-disciplinary team in assessing and managing threats (ITG Consultants, 2014, p. 6, Keeney & Alathari, 2016, p. 53). For threats involving a specialized area of knowledge in particular it is helpful to engage the assistance of a subject matter expert; however in all cases the most defensible assessment will be able to demonstrate inclusion of multiple perspectives to avoid the potential for perceived subjectivity, bias, or ‘tunnel vision’. As further summed by Meloy and Hoffman “no matter how reliable the information gathered, the resultant threat assessment will be flawed, incomplete, or inaccurate if the assessor does not have the requisite education, experience, or subject matter expertise” (2014, p. 55). Sufficient access to information and effective information management are also critical. Further, education and awareness regarding threats and associated reporting is essential to reducing the risk of targeted violence at any site (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 82; Herraiz, 2006, p. 4).

3.8 Major Concepts in Assessing the Credibility of Threats

A cornerstone in threat evaluation is identifying those who ‘make’ versus ‘pose’ a threat (Fein et al., 1995, p. 2). Fredrick Calhoun and Steven Weston have written extensively on this topic, coining the terms “hunters” and “howlers” to describe subjects in each category. There is strong evidence from post-incident analysis that the majority of people who make threats do not carry them out, and that the majority of people that do carry out threats do not communicate them directly in advance (ITG Consultants, 2014, p. 3; Fein et al., 1995, p. 2; Borum et al., 1999, p. 328; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 5; Vossekull et al., 2001, p. 82; Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 9). For this reason, contrary to former practices, modern threat management does not rely upon receipt of a threat as a threshold for investigation. ‘Howling’ behavior is exacerbated by the ability to communicate anonymously using the internet (Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 33), however a further connection has been drawn between more impersonal communication methods (such as by email or phone instead of verbally in person) and decreased likelihood of escalation (p. 35). Limited research has been conducted on electronic threats, though what exists suggests focusing on warning behaviors rather than mode (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 221). It is recommended that threat assessment teams standardize the assessment process for anonymous threatening communications, using a model such as that offered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (see Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p 197).

The circumstances and context surrounding concerns of targeted violence, as well as the stakes involved from the perspective of the subject are central in assessing credibility (Calhoun & Weston, 2003, p. 113). Many instruments have been designed to assist assessors in determining risk dating as far back as the late 80’s and 90’s, most developed using professional expertise from industry experts though some have built empirical credibility through recent testing (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 13). The CirCon is an example of an instrument which provides broad contextual structure to an assessment by examining how the threat was communicated, its intended purpose, demonstrated knowledge of the target, indications of current changes or relevant circumstances for the subject, as well as related past history. De Becker’s JACA (acronym for Justification, Alternatives, Consequences, and Ability) is another common tool which can then be used to review stakes from the subject’s perspective using four basic elements, all of which must be present for a subject to be deemed high risk: the subject must feel “justified in acting violently”, “see[] no alternatives to violence”, “accept[] the consequences of committing a violent act”, and “believe[] he or she has the ability to commit violence” (Calhoun & Weston, 2003, p. 131).

The relationship between the subject and the target further impacts the credibility weighted to a threat, as a closer relationship may be a stronger indicator of intended violence and provides advantages to the attacker by being familiar with the target’s schedule, location, and potential vulnerabilities; this is known as the “intimacy effect” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 16, Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 14). In the case of stalkers a relationship may only be perceived. Though the likelihood of “howlers” escalating to “hunting” behavior may be estimated based upon his or her relationship to the target, subject motivation, and current success in achieving the intended objective, it is necessary to carefully evaluate each case individually (Calhoun & Weston, 2009, 142). Actuarial
tools and structured professional judgement guides have been developed to assist with assessing both stalking and intimate partner violence; instruments in use by the ITAU are addressed in part two of the review.

There is a connection between mental illness and violence worth exploring in the course of an assessment. The breadth of implications are unclear in their entirety, though a connection to some forms of serious illness such as psychotic disorder is apparent (Borum et al., 1999, p. 333, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 9). Vossekuil et al. (2001) found that mental illness rarely played a role in attack behaviors (p. 81). A link has been established however between threats of suicide and planned homicide, or vice versa (Fein et al., 1995, p. 2). The presence of mental illness is also more prevalent in cases of particular types of violence. For example, one study conducted by James et al. (2011) found that stalkers of the British Royals were afflicted with serious mental illness in 86.9% of cases (p. 2).

3.9 Measures of Effectiveness of Threat Assessment Approaches

Evaluating the effectiveness of a threat management program in reducing risk of targeted violence is a challenge. As a relatively new discipline with gaps in knowledge remaining, unique considerations impacting outcomes in each case including implementation of protective actions, and an unknown base rate to draw conclusions from around patterns and trends, threat management is an imperfect science. The literature suggests that the answer may lie in triangulating findings through combined study of assessment validity (including the interrater reliability and predictive validity of instruments as applicable) and the impact of risk mitigation strategies upon outcomes.

Several literature sources spoke directly and eloquently to the question of evaluation:

"New and additional research is needed on measuring the success of threat management strategies, though this may be challenged by the difficulty with measuring success. How can research confirm that one specific management technique was the one that prevented violence, versus other techniques used in the same case? How can research validate at all that a team’s threat management plan, rather than the universe of other influences, prevented a person of concern from ever becoming violent? For each offender who demonstrated specific threat enhancers and mitigators before he acted, there likely are others with similar histories who will never act. Research should be pursued by those with access to sufficient information to enable them to evaluate outcomes in response to management techniques. Knowledge derived from research is and will remain a critical part of this discipline” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 83).

"A traditional study design where ‘prediction’ is the important variable is of no use here. On the contrary, in the structured professional judgement approach... the worst thing that can happen is that a professionals’ risk assessment of high risk turns into a prediction that is correct. If so, the risk management strategy has failed. The basic idea behind structured risk assessments is therefore prevention, not prediction. Thus, studies on the efficacy of tools for use when performing risk assessments of various types of targeted violence should preferably include and correlate perpetrator risk factors, victim vulnerability factors, risk management strategies, and not least the outcome” (Belfrage & Strand, 2009, p. 75).

"When evaluating violence risk assessment tools, there are primarily two important aspects to be studied, the interrater reliability (including bias) and the predictive validity. ...the study of risk predictions is complicated by the fact that high risk cases have often been exposed to risk reducing interventions. Previous studies have discussed recommended/initiated protective actions as possible mediators of the relationship between the global risk assessment and the outcome variable... but the problem has not been fully addressed” (Svalin, Mellgren, Torstensson & Levander, 2017, p. 71).
“Risk management is the end product of threat assessment. The irony is that if done effectively – often risk management is modified as the dynamics of threat assessment change – the threat assessor will never know whether the subject would have become violent or not without intervention. Furthermore, given the low base rates of targeted violence, it would take quite a long time to determine whether the threat assessment program actually reduced incidents of targeted violence [unlike the field of violence risk assessment in which the data is more readily available]” (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 8).

3.10 Summary

Though base rate information from Canada is lacking, longitudinal data from the U.S shows increases in targeted violence towards government worksites, and in particular to court facilities. The literature suggests that reduced risk of targeted violence is best achieved using a multifaceted approach. In combination with physical security, safe policies and procedures, and employee engagement including education on the identification and reporting of concerning behavior; threat assessments may further reduce risk by preventing or de-escalating violent attacks before they occur. In British Columbia, threat assessment is also a regulated requirement “in any workplace in which a risk of injury to workers from violence arising out of their employment may be present” (Occupational Health & Safety Regulations, Sec. 4.27).

Foundational research conducted by the U.S. Secret Service in the late 90’s paved the way for modern theory and practice. Potential for violence is gauged on a continuum based upon known pre-attack behaviors which commonly include the Path to Intended Violence but have also been recently expanded to include fixation on the target, identification with a “pseudo-commando” persona, novel aggression”, “energy burst behavior”, “leakage”, and direct threats (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 39-40). Threats are investigated, assessed for credibility, and a mitigation plan is developed which aims to de-escalate or subvert an attack. In assessing credibility of a number of key factors are considered; these may include the distinction between subjects acting like ‘hunters’ versus ‘howlers’, circumstances and context surrounding events, the relationship between the subject and target, and the presence of certain types of mental illness which have been linked to violence. Assessment accuracy has also been linked to the breadth and depth of available information, and the support of a qualified multi-disciplinary team. Instruments and guides have been designed to aid assessors, and several approaches to professional judgment are practiced with varying degrees of validation. This is further discussed in part two of the review.

As an evolving discipline with infrequent and inconsistently documented or accessible incidents to draw data, evaluating the performance of a threat management program is challenging. The preventative nature of protective actions also makes it difficult to isolate the effect of assessment and management upon outcomes. Further compounding these issues the field is broad, with a great multitude of applications and localized research regarding different forms of violence, many of which applying to assessments captured by the ITAU’s mandate. Available evidence suggests that indications of effectiveness may best be drawn through combined study of assessment validity (including the interrater reliability and predictive validity of instruments as applicable) and the impact of risk mitigation strategies upon outcomes.

GAUGING PROFESSIONAL APPROACHES TO VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT

3.11 Approaches to Professional Judgement

Historically propensity for violence was assessed using unstructured professional judgment, which involved reliance upon the intuition and expertise of mental health professionals to provide an opinion on the level of risk presented. This was followed by the “anamnestic” approach, which includes a limited amount of structure insofar as assessor must consider the history of the individual which led to past violence (Kropp, Hart, Lyon & Storey, 2011, p. 304). While proponents valued complete discretion to consider case-specific factors, critics pointed to a lack of transparency and consistency in findings. Meta-analysis further revealed poor predictive validity and low interrater
reliability, causing the unstructured professional judgement approach to be largely discarded (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 409; Childs, Frick, Ryals, & Lingonblad, 2014, p. 41; Bertolucci, Ogloff, Coles, & Dolan, 2016, p. 665). Summing a common view in lead up to the emergence of actuarial tools in the mid-90’s, Guy, Packer and Warnken (2012) state “clinical decision making in the absence of any scientifically grounded structure and guidance… is [simply] unreliable and invalid” (p. 270).

Declining support for traditional methods led to a surge in publication of actuarial tools, starting with the Violence Risk Assessment Guide (VRAG) in 1993 (Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 4-5). The ideological pendulum had by all accounts swung from no structure to complete structure; in contrast to the unstructured approach, actuarial instruments assign a numeric value to a fixed list of predictive factors empirically associated with violence, which are then summed to produce a graduated scale of probability for risk. In essence, a ‘calculation’ rather than a ‘judgment’ is performed. While found to be more accurate than unstructured approaches (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 409; Childs et al., 2014, p. 41; Bertolucci et al., 2016, p. 665, Borum et al., 1999, p. 325), generalizable across various populations, and less resource intensive to administer (Falzer, 2013, p. 42); actuarial instruments have been criticized as focusing on static factors which rely upon aggregate data and may not apply to individual cases (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 409; Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 14; Childs et al., 2014, p. 41; Borum et al., 1999, p. 325). As pointed out by Borum et al. (1999), it is “almost impossible” to achieve a high degree of confidence using statistical formulas to assess infrequent issues such as targeted violence due to the low base rates of data to draw from (p. 326). Actuarial methods also do little to guide determination of appropriate interventions and risk management strategies, leaving the critical – arguably only – question in the hands of risk management professionals of ‘how to reduce the risk of future violence’ unanswered.

Structured professional judgment (SPJ) guides were developed as an alternative, starting with the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide in 1994 (Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 4). A blend of clinical discretion and actuarial precision, SPJ schemes guide professionals through the risk assessment process using a series of static and dynamic factors empirically linked to violence. New ‘strengths based’ guides are also emerging (at times referred to as ‘fourth generation’) which focus upon protective factors as a central feature in de-escalating or preventing violence. The relevance of each factor in relation to the case at hand is evaluated, and available interventions contemplated. Conclusions are communicated in terms of risk level (ie. low, moderate, high) (Guy et al., 2012, p. 271); also providing practical information on the manifestations of risk such as imminence, severity, density, nature, likely targets, and potential use of weapons (Guy et al., 2012, p. 281); and identifying best suited management strategies (Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 26-27). Structure in the decision-making process further allows for transparency while maintaining emphasis upon the skills and qualifications of the assessor (Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 18).

Debate is ongoing regarding the superiority of actuarial instruments over SPJ guides and vice-versa; however the literature suggests that SPJ tools are as accurate in terms of predictive validity, and in some cases more accurate, than actuarial methods (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 410; Meloy, White & Hart, 2013, p. 1354; Childs et al., 2014, p. 42; Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 29). Both are acknowledged as valid tools by the ATAP, and are widely in use throughout the developed world.

### 3.12 Scope of Review for Predictive Validity and Interrater Reliability of Structured Professional Judgement Guides for Threat Assessment

Studies on the predictive validity and interrater reliability of structured professional judgement guides utilized by the ITAU were reviewed, as well as the guides themselves. Research specific to predicting violence within secure forensic or correctional populations or to sexual offending was excluded as this falls outside the scope of the ITAU’s mandate. Studies of predictive validity generally involved a research design where assessments for future risk of violence occurred for academic purpose only (as opposed to being conducted as a required part of a formal release plan), so no mitigation strategy was implemented to prevent acts of violence beyond what would have been in place
in the absence of the assessment and may otherwise have influenced outcomes. Forty articles were located for inclusion.

Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) analysis was widely used for evaluating predictive validity in assessing future risk of violence. The ROC curve plots the true positive rate (sensitivity) against the false positive rate (specificity) with values presented as an Area Under the Curve (AUC) ranging from -1 (100% inaccurate classification) to 1 (perfect classification); an AUC of 0.5 represents classification equivalent to chance prediction (equivalent to 50%). Other methods included Linear Regression Analysis, Cox Regression Analysis, Fishers Exact Test, Chi Square Test, Latent Class Analysis, bivariate analysis, and ANOVA Analysis. Findings on predictive accuracy from the literature have generally been communicated using a class system which aligns with communication of ROC findings, with AUC provided as available: >0.9 = excellent, 0.8-0.89 = very good, 0.7-0.79 = good, 0.6-0.69 = moderate, 0.5-0.59 = low, and <0.5 = below chance prediction.

Interrater reliability was typically derived using variations of the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), which is mathematically equivalent to weighted kappa stats. These measures are used to numerically describe how strongly units in two or more groups resemble one another. Class categories which align with communication of ICC findings have also been used to report on interrater reliability, however ICC analysis uses different thresholds than ROC analysis for describing and interpreting results: >0.75 = excellent, 0.6-0.74 = good, 0.4-0.59 = fair, and <0.4 = poor.

### 3.13 Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk

The Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk (WAVR-21) was designed to assess targeted violence up to and including homicide in the workplace, and has also been applied in campus settings. There is no other widely accepted SPJ tool available which is specific to workplace violence. Twenty one predictive factors are utilized with five identified as “red flag” indicators: (1) Motives for violence (2) Homicidal ideas, fantasies, or preoccupations (3) Violent intentions and expressed threats (4) Weapons skill and access (5) Pre-attack planning and preparation; each factor is then coded as “absent”, “present” or “prominent” based on a “key assessment question” and detailed description of qualifying circumstances or behavior falling into each category (Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1355). To those who attend formal training in the WAVR-21, an additional form which considers protective factors is provided (Kleinlen, nd). Though designed for use by qualified mental health professionals, two supplemental coding tools are available which are less technical and provide a resource to non-clinical practitioners (Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1354). One validating study was located for inclusion.

Meloy et al. (2013) tested interrater reliability using 16 invitees of various disciplines including police, mental health professionals, psychology students, and human resource administrators using a sampling of 12 cases from files of the authors selected to provide a range in severity. Results indicated an overall rating of good interrater reliability (ICC of 0.67); though the breakdown demonstrated excellent reliability for two factors, fair to good for eleven factors, and poor for eight factors (Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1356). The eight factors which rated poor were low variability however, which suggests cases selected may not have been sufficiently diverse to provide a meaningful statistical evaluation (Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1356). Most from this category also required clinical judgement. Red flag factors were in the fair to good range for all coders (Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1356). Reliability improved when results from mental health professionals and psychologists were analyzed independent of other raters (p. 1356).

The WAVR-21 website indicates that a study of predictive validity of the WAVR-21 authored by Scalora, Cawood, and Vinas-Racionero was scheduled for release in 2017, however it could not be located by the researcher. Preliminary results are purported to demonstrate predictive validity with an AUC of 0.70 (WAVR-21, n.d.).
3.14 Historical Clinical Risk Management

The Historical Clinical Risk Management (HCR-20) is the most commonly utilized SPJ tool in the world (Cawood, 2017, p. 1). With approximately 100 studies published to date researching various aspects of the guide it is also the most thoroughly tested. It was designed to assess risk of violence in a forensic setting using 20 predictive factors divided into historical, clinical, and risk management factors. The assessor then rates both the presence and relevance of each item. The majority of studies related to use for prediction of violence with inpatients at a psychiatric facility or amongst inmate populations in the correctional system. These are not environments in which the ITAU would ordinarily perform an assessment and were excluded per restrictions set out in the scope (section 3.12); however 14 studies met the criteria for inclusion.

Two studies were located which were not exclusive to mentally disordered persons. One represents the most recent study of predictive validity and interrater reliability overall, and pertains to the most recent version of the guide. Cawood (2017) assessed 40 known cases retrospectively from a broad cross-section of worksites in the U.S. including schools, government offices, and private businesses. Fourteen of the 40 involved a violent outcome. Doctoral students in the clinical psychology program achieved an ICC of 0.72 for interrater reliability (Cawood, 2017, p. 5). Summary risk ratings (SRR’s) for physical violence also achieved an AUC of 0.70 (Cawood, 2017, p. 5). The other study was conducted by Neves, Goncalves, and Palma-Oliviera (2011) using a sample of non-mentally disordered Portuguese offenders in a community corrections setting (N=158). Each was screened with the HCR-20 and Psychopathy Checklist Revised (PCL-R) using file records and interviews with participants, then followed for an average of 13 months using police information and reports of case workers to determine recidivism for reported acts of violence. Very good predictive coefficients were found for general, non-violent, and violent recidivism with AUC’s of 0.84 and 0.82, and 0.81 respectively (Neves et al., 2011, p. 143). Results represent initial evidence that the HCR-20 is capable to assessing risk of violence for persons who are not mentally disordered with comparable interrater reliability and predictive accuracy as previous studies which have focused exclusively on mentally disordered groups (Cawood, 2017, p. 6).

Representing typical sample characteristics and research design utilized for studies meeting the criteria for inclusion, studies were undertaken throughout the United Kingdom as well as in Europe and China which assessed secure forensic patients upon release into the community. Results support use of the HCR-20 for mentally disordered persons (with the exception of a female sample), however summaries are provided below:

- Dolan and Khawaja (2004) retrospectively assessed mental health patients from the UK (N=70) following release into the community using case file data. A strong relationship was found between readmission and self or collateral reports of violence, however it was not a consistent predictor of reconviction for a violent offense (Dolan & Khawaja, 2004, p. 478); this may have been due to a high level of supervision following discharge (Dolan & Khawaja, 2004, p. 480). The historical subscale also showed an independent predictive ability for violent episodes (Dolan & Khawaja, 2004, p. 481).

- Using Version 3 of the guide, a follow up study to Dolan and Khawaja’s work following the same design was conducted by Doyle et al. (2014). This showed significant improvement in predictive validity for convictions related to violence in the community with AUC’s ranging from 0.73 to 0.70.

- A similar study in Scotland by Ho, Thompson, and Darjee (2009) assessed 96 mental health patients following release using the Psychopathy Checklist for Sexual Violence (PCL:SV), VRAG, and historical component of the HCR-20. All were found to have moderate predictive validity for violent outcomes (Ho et al., 2009, p. 523) using new charges or reconvictions as the threshold.

- A separate study of 351 mentally disordered UK offenders upon release using the HCR-20, PCL:SV, and the Offender Group Reconviction Scale (OGRS) suggests that predictive validity may be improved if assessments are conducted at the time when active symptoms are present, rather than upon discharge (Gray et al., 2004, p. 523).
A further study conducted by Pedersen, Rasmussen, and Elsa (2010) assessed mental health patients following release in Denmark (N=107). Overall predictive validity was good, however findings in relation the comparative value of sub scales showed a stronger connection between the clinical/dynamic subscale than the historical subscale for future violence (Pedersen et al., 2010, p. 74). Rehospitalizations, new convictions, and deaths were considered.

The HCR-20 has also been validated with a Chinese forensic population upon release into the community (Ho et al., 2013). One hundred ten patients were assessed using case file data by two independent raters (qualified psychiatric employees of various disciplines) at the hospital. Overall, predictive validity was good (Ho et al., 2013, p. 479), though subscale scores were not as reliable as the SRR (Ho et al., 2013, p. 493). Violence detection was drawn from clinical notes including self-reported incidents and others observed or reported not necessarily resulting in a criminal charge.

With regard to intellectually disabled offenders (distinct from those suffering from mental disorder) a supplemental guide for the HCR-20 is available. Goodman-Delahuntly and Verbrugge (2011) assessed 59 community-based offenders who were intellectually disabled and had a history of violence using the Intellectual Disability Supplement. A small improvement in predictive validity was noted when compared with the VRAG or HCR-20 alone, though all three scored in the good range (Goodman-Delahuntly & Verbrugge, 2011, p. 137).

Notably, the only two studies specific to women did not consistently demonstrate predictive validity for the HCR-20 with regard to violent offenses. Eighty females convicted of a criminal offense in Germany were assessed at the time of sentencing, with an AUC of 0.59 (Eisenbarth, Osterheider, Nedopil & Statland, 2012, p. 580). The PCL-R and VRAG were validated as alternatives for use with females with AUC’s of 0.66 and 0.72 respectively (Eisenbarth et al., 2012, p. 580). A later meta-analysis evaluating several SPJ guides in relation to violent recidivism for women demonstrated results below chance level prediction with the exception of one sample (Geraghty & Woodhams, 2015, p. 31). It was further noted that inconclusive, if any, testing had occurred with regard to the Female Additional Guidelines for the HCR-20 to date (Geraghty & Woodhams, 2015, p. 35).

Further to studies above which included evaluation of interrater reliability as a component of multifaceted research, two focused on this topic exclusively. The first study was conducted by Douglas and Belfrage (2014), in which experienced clinicians rated 35 psychiatric patients in Sweden using both Versions 2 and 3 of the guide. Methods included both case file examination and interviews with the patients. Findings were consistently in the good to excellent range for both tools, with a small improvement using Version 3 (Douglas, 2013, p. 137). The second study was performed by Penney, McMaster, and Wilkie in 2014, which compared assessments on three patients completed by 21 qualified clinicians of varying backgrounds in Ontario, Canada. Interrater reliability results in the good to excellent range were validated for this study as well, with an ICC for SRR’s of 0.82 (Penney et al., 2014, p. 22). These studies validate findings from others which included similar testing as a component to broader research (see Doyle et al, 2014).

Overall the literature shows that the HCR-20 is an exceptionally well researched and reliable tool for use with male mentally disordered populations; with initial research suggesting use may reasonably be extended to non-mentally disordered persons. Early studies rate both predictive validity and interrater reliability as moderate to good; however recent results show improvement in the good to excellent range for predictive validity and very good to excellent range for interrater reliability. Slight improvements are observed using Version 3. There are conflicting opinions on the value of subscales independent of one another when compared with the SRR; use of subscales other than in the manner intended does not appear to be sufficiently supported. Predictive validity was found to be better overall when interviews with clients were included in source data and/or a lower detection threshold than criminal charged was used (self or case worker reported violence for example); this suggests that greater sensitivity in data collection instruments may improve results.
There is conflicting evidence regarding the validity of this tool for use with women, including the Female Additional Guidelines, with most research pointing to chance level prediction. Also, some evidence supports improvements to predictive accuracy of the HCR-20 when supplemented with the Intellectual Disability Supplement for applicable subjects, although improvements were marginal.

3.15 Spousal Assault Risk Assessment

The Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) was designed for use in assessing risk for spousal violence. It consists of 20 risk factors for mandatory consideration, which are coded for presence along with any other factors deemed critical to an evaluation of case-specific risk (Kropp & Hart, 2000, p. 162). Interviews with both the offender and victim are recommended. General violence risk and risk for spousal violence are coded separately and also combined; scores are considered independently as well as together, however it is acknowledged that interpretation does not subscribe to a linear set of rules and will be highly dependent upon professional judgement as well as the unique circumstances of each case (Kropp & Hart, 2000, p. 102-103). Five studies were located for inclusion.

The first large-scale study of predictive validity was conducted by Kropp and Hart (2000), in which correctional, mental health, and probation staff assessed 2681 adult male offenders serving probation or prison time for spousal assault. Interviews were conducted with the offenders postdictively. Subjects were divided into four groups for the purpose of establishing separate aspects of validity: item homogeneity, interrater reliability, concurrent validity, and predictive validity; two of which (interrater reliability and predictive validity) were examined for the purposes of this review. Interrater reliability between assessors from a diverse set of backgrounds and access levels to information was found to be good (ICC of 0.65), with the exception of critical items which were difficult to rate or may have occurred with insufficient frequency (ICC of 0.31) (Kropp & Hart, 2000, p. 109). Predictive validity was also good in forecasting recidivism (Kropp & Hart, 2000, p. 114).

Following the large-scale study two meta-analysis evaluating performance of the SARA were conducted, both with a finding of acceptable interrater reliability and predictive validity. The first was conducted by Helmus and Bourgon in 2011, with interrater reliability for SRR's found to be lower (ICC of 0.63) than for total scores (ICC of 0.84) (Helmus & Bourgon, 2011, p. 69). It was also lower for general violence than for intimate partner violence (Helmus & Bourgon, 2011, p. 69). Great variability in predictive validity was found, which was attributed to differences in the level of training and access to information of assessors (Helmus & Bourgon, 2011, p. 70). Average AUC evidenced a moderate effect size ranging from 0.63 to 0.67 (Helmus & Bourgon, 2011, p. 70-72). Messing and Thaller validated findings on predictive validity in a second meta-analysis in 2013, this one comparing the performance of five tools used to assess risk of intimate partner violence. The SARA ranked second with an average AUC of 0.62 behind the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) which received an AUC of 0.66, though the overall difference in effect size was small (Messing & Thaller, 2013, p. 1537).

The most recent studies were conducted by Jung and Buro (2017) and Olver and Jung (2017). The first assessed 246 case files from adult males charged with domestic violence in Alberta, Canada using the ODARA, a modified version of the SARA omitting factors commonly left unspecified (14 out of 20 factors remaining), and a tool called the Family Violence Investigative Report (FVIR) developed and mandated by the Province of Alberta. Cases were compared with police information regarding rates of general, violent, and violent convictions against a spouse over an average of 3.3 years; rating the ODARA at AUC’s of 0.75, 0.71, and 0.66; the SARA at AUC’s of 0.76, 0.72, and 0.74, and the FVIR at AUC’s of 0.70, 0.54, and 0.57 respectively (Jung & Buro, 2017, p. 247-249). Overall, both the ODARA and SARA were found to have good predictive validity for predicting future violence, whereas there was no significant difference found between the FVIR and chance prediction. A follow up study building upon the work of Jung and Buro (2017) was conducted by Olver and Jung later the same year using the same sample, with an aim of examining incremental validity between the three instruments using Cox Regression Analysis. Findings
supported the initial study, but further suggest that use of both the ODARA and SARA in assessing potential for intimate partner violence may enhance the ability to predict outcomes.

In evaluating performance of the SARA based on the literature greater weight was applied to meta-analysis than individual studies, though the first study performed by Kropp et al. in 2011 included an exceptionally large sample size which is also weighted accordingly. With regard to interrater reliability available evidence suggests there is good reliability for total scores and a moderate reliability with SRR’s, perhaps due to greater subjectivity. Meta-analysis points to predictive validity within the moderate range, with average AUC’s of 0.65 and 0.62. More recent studies point to improved results, with an AUC as high as 0.74 for prediction of intimate partner violence. The need for access to information and training for assessors is emphasized throughout the literature. Overall, the SARA is a well-researched and reliable tool for its intended application in assessing potential for spousal violence.

3.16 Brief Spousal Assault Form for Evaluation of Risk

The Brief Spousal Assault Form for Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER) was designed to assess risk of intimate partner violence (Au et al., 2008, p. 729). It is an adapted/condensed form of the SARA intended for use by police with the number of factors reduced, in particular those requiring clinical judgement, from 20 to 10 to account for differences in the dedicated time available to conduct assessments and general level of education held by police officers versus mental health professionals (Storey, Kropp, Hart, Belfrage & Strand, 2014, p. 257). The guide consists of ten predictive factors divided into two categories (1) History of intimate partner violence (2) Psychological and social functioning, which are rated both for current presence (within four weeks) and past presence (no time limit). Current, past, and current combined with past totals are used to produce three separate scores. Studies which inferred validity from SARA results were excluded, however four were located which met required criteria for inclusion and spoke to the B-SAFER alone.

A preliminary study was conducted by Au (2008) in Hong Kong which had police officers screen a group of 43 accused male batterers and 46 other males in a control group using the B-SAFER and found that 95% of cases were correctly classified (p. 727). Concurrent validity of the B-SAFER was confirmed using findings from a second screening tool, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2). Current presence scores were found to be particularly astute at predicting intimate partner violence (Au et al, 2008, p. 727).

Belfrage and Strand (2012) conducted the first study of predictive validity, also considering the impact of protective actions. Police in Stockholm reported SRR’s, follow up actions, and outcomes in instances of reported intimate partner violence perpetrated by an adult male (N=216). Protective actions were largely associated with risk rating, with higher risk ratings by officers resulting in higher level protective actions and on the lower end of the scale taking very limited or no action (Belfrage & Strand, 2012, p. 425). Results showed high recidivism across all categories, with the exception of individuals rated high risk which were lower (Belfrage & Strand, 2012, p. 420). This suggests predictive poor validity at face value, however it was posited protective actions had provided a preventative effect (Belfrage & Strand, 2012, p. 420).

A second Swedish study of predictive validity was conducted by Storey et al. using a sampling of adult males (N=249) accused of physically or sexually assaulting a current or former intimate partner (2014, p.259). Results demonstrated that the B-SAFER is an effective guide to predict both risk management and recidivism (Storey et al., 2014, p. 267). Of note, it was found that there was no statistically significant relationship between the number of management strategies implemented and the rate of recidivism (Storey et al., 2014, p. 266). Predictive validity was also found to be lower for female and juvenile offenders (Storey et al., 2014, p. 259.), and interrater reliability ranged widely from an ICC of 0.76 for total scores for recidivists to 0.32 for risk ratings amongst the total sample (Storey et al., 214, p. 263).
A third Swedish study which built upon the work of Storey et al. was conducted by Svalin et al. in 2017; with a goal of validating the predictive validity of the B-SAFER as well as global assessments produced in relation to intimate partner violence. B-SAFER assessment reports and protective factors as communicated by police were drawn from 301 reported cases of intimate partner violence. Overall, due to a high rate of unspecified values (33%) possibly stemming from a lack of accessible information or insufficient training around mental health and psychological risk factors, low predictive accuracy in global assessment based upon B-SAFER input was found (Slavin, 2017, p. 79). Further, only a small percentage of protective recommendations were implemented, and protective measures were not necessarily modified following a recurrence of initial behavior or violent act (Slavin, 2017, p. 79).

Overall findings regarding interrater reliability are unclear. Available evidence suggests that, despite this tool being developed for use by police, a wide range of capabilities exists between police assessors. This has been attributed in the literature to a lack of education around assessing clinical values. Predictive validity is also unclear in studies where protective actions are factored into interpretation of accuracy, however overall results suggest that the B-SAFER is an effective guide for establishing risk of future intimate partner violence and highly influential in assignment of police resources, which in turn may provide a beneficial preventative effect for high risk cases.

### 3.17 Stalking Assessment & Management

The Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) were developed to guide assessment of risk for violence or reoffending in cases where a past history of stalking behavior exists (Foellmi, Rosenfeld & Galietta, 2016, p. 606). The SAM uses 30 predictive factors divided into three categories: (1) Nature of Stalking items, (2) Perpetrator Characteristic items, and (3) Victim Vulnerability items (Kropp et al., 2011, p. 305). Evaluators then weight the relevance of each item to the case at hand. Three studies were located for inclusion.

The first study on usefulness of the SAM was conducted by Belfrage and Strand (2009), which asked Swedish police officers in two counties to perform both a SAM and B-SAFER assessment upon the total population of reported stalkers (N=153); participants were “not keen” on using more than one assessment tool per case however, so higher risk cases were generally assessed using the B-SAFER and lower risk cases assessed using the SAM (p. 71). Females and unknown individuals were also excluded from analysis. Risk for continued stalking, violence, and severe violence were rated using the SAM prediction factors, with a strong positive correlation between higher SAM scores and higher risk ratings by officers; which indicates that the tool may be of benefit in determining risk levels (p. 73). An unusually low number of unknown values were listed, which suggests police officers did not have difficult coding predictive factors after having received 2-3 days of training (p. 70). Many participants noted the critical importance of Victim Vulnerability factors to their overall assessment (p. 75).

In a second study by Foellmi et al. (2016) graduate or doctoral level psychologists evaluated 89 offenders convicted of stalking or harassment in New York City. It found that SAM numeric scores were capable of predicting stalking recidivism but not violence, and that risk ratings did not predict either. In reviewing limitations of this study, authors acknowledge that exclusion of Victim Vulnerability items (due to the impracticality of direct contact), intensive stalking-related treatment undergone by a large portion of participants (which is not considered by the SAM), and relatively low risk group of participants (decreasing the overall likelihood of violent recidivism) likely contributed to results (p. 613-614).

Most recently a study was conducted by Kropp et al. (2011) for the purpose of establishing interrater reliability and concurrent validity of the SAM. Two graduate students in forensic psychology coded a sample of files from 109 adults convicted of stalking related offences using the SAM, PCL:SV, and the VRAG. Most SAM items had an “expected and acceptable” range of ratings with interrater reliability scores which were “generally good” (Kropp et al., 2011, p. 309). Issues surfaced around an inability to calculate statistics on past presence of risk factors, however this may have been due to difficulties ascertaining historical information. The SAM was found to be strongly related to the PCL:SV, but not to the VRAG (Kropp et al., 2011, p. 311).
Overall, the literature found interrater reliability of the SAM to be good or better with assessors from both police and academic backgrounds. Victim vulnerability factors were particularly influential. The SAM was also established to be capable of predicting stalking behaviour, however there is inconsistent evidence to support use for predicting other forms of violence.

3.18 Structure Assessment for Violence Risk in Youth

The Structured Assessment for Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) guidelines were designed to assess risk of violence in juveniles from 12 to 18 years old, and to guide case management with regard to appropriate interventions (Childs & Frick, 2016, p. 211). A SRR has also been developed which is specific to non-violent delinquency. Twenty-four historical, social/contextual, or individual risk factors and six protective factors are rated by the assessor, who weighs each item and combines the total to produce the SRR (Astrom, Gumpert, Andershed, & Forster, 2017, p. 684). Frequency, severity, recency and relevance of each item are considered (Childs & Frick, 2016, p. 212). Twelve studies were found for inclusion.

McGowan, Horn, and Mellott (2011) explored application of the SAVRY in an educational setting. This was unique as all other included work was exclusively in relation to delinquent youth environments such as correctional, probation, or social service assessments. Ninety-nine cases were selected on the basis of records available at an alternative school in the U.S., with inclusion criteria of one act of violence reported in the previous year. Disciplinary, intervention, and arrest records maintained by the school over the year to follow were used to determine whether a further act of violence had occurred; good predictive accuracy was found, with an AUC of 0.72. (McGowan et al., 2011, p. 482). Authors noted the prevalence of violent outcomes was likely higher for this sample, given abnormally elevated emotional or behavioral issues are a condition of admittance to the school (McGowan et al., 2011, p. 481).

Other studies looked at predictive validity in more traditional settings, some with consideration to age, gender, or ethnicity. All testing validated further use of the tool:

- Meyers and Schmidt (2008) evaluated 121 Canadian juvenile offenders using the SAVRY with an overall strong finding on predictive validity consistent across gender and ethnicity; results indicated AUC values of 0.75, 0.65, and 0.80 for general, violent, and non-violent recidivism based upon police data at one year following assessment (p. 344).

- This validated results from a previous Canadian study of 74 juvenile offenders conducted by Catchpole and Gretton in 2003 (p. 1) which did not consider gender or ethnicity.

- A large-scale US study conducted by Vincent, Chapman, and Cook (2011) evaluated 480 youth male offenders and found the SAVRY to be significantly predictive for all types of reoffending with minimal variability across racial-ethnic groups.

- There is evidence of variation in results across age ranges in a recent study by Childs and Frick (2016, p. 212). One hundred seventy-seven juveniles on probation were divided into age groupings of 13-15 and 16-18 years of age, and then assessed by probation officers using the SAVRY. This is unique in that most previous studies of the SAVRY have used a wide age range in reporting of results (Childs & Frick, 2016, p. 212). While assessment of risk was similar across both groups, probation outcomes were mixed. The AUC for the 13-15 age group was 0.86 for both the violence and non-violent offending SRR’s; whereas AUC for the 16-18 age groups was 0.75 and 0.74 respectively (Childs & Frick, 2016, p. 217).

Supportive but less positive results were obtained from samples outside of North America and Europe:

- A similar study to that of Meyers & Schmidt (2008) took place in the United Kingdom over the same period (Dolan & Rennie, 2008), with a finding that the SAVRY demonstrated moderate ability to predict
risk of general and violent recidivism. This may have been caused by the reliance upon criminal record information which is perhaps too high a threshold for detection as it is likely to reflect an underestimation of offender behavior, and/or the reliance of former studies on retrospective analysis which is at higher risk of criterion contamination (Dolan & Rennie, 2008, p. 42-43).

- Results from a sample of 163 youth male offenders in Singapore were also lower with respective AUC’s of 0.65 and 0.63 for violent and general recidivism over a 4.5-year period, though better predictive validity in alignment with other samples from outside of North America was found when reducing the review period to 2-3 years (Chu, Goh & Chong, 2016, p. 802).

- Chu et al. results (2016) were mirrored however by a more recent study of the SAVRY using a sampling of male Chinese youth offenders which also spanned a 5-year period, with AUC’s ranging from 0.60 to 0.68 for total scores (Zhou, Witt, Cao, Chen, & Wang, 2017, p. 1).

Four studies compared performance of the SAVRY to alternative tools and approaches to professional judgement, with consistently supportive results:

- The earliest research located recoded cases previously assessed by mental health professionals using unstructured clinical judgement, with the SAVRY coded by master’s level psychologists (Lodewijks, Doreleijers & De Ruijter, 2008). One hundred seventeen juvenile offenders from the Netherlands were included in the study, which showed that total scores and SRR’s for the SAVRY scored significantly above 0.5, however unstructured clinical judgement did not exceed chance level prediction (Ledewijks, 2008, p. 703). A finding of good to excellent interrater reliability was provided (ICC as low as 0.62 for individual domain scores and as high as 0.82 for the SRR) (Lodewijks et al., 2008, p. 702).

- Hilterman, Nicholls & Nieuwenhuizen (2014) compared performance of the SAVRY to that of two unstructured professional judgement approaches and one actuarial tool using a sample of 105 Spanish youth sentenced to community supervision. The SAVRY ranked first with an AUC of 0.75, followed by the actuarial method with an AUC of 0.72, however neither unstructured approach demonstrated significant predictive validity (Hilterman et al., 2014, p. 324).

- Astrom et al (2017) evaluated the predictive ability of the SAVRY in forecasting recidivism when comparison with another SPJ instrument as well as unstructured professional judgement (p. 684). Results as coded by social service staff found that the SRR of the SAVRY significantly predicted serious violent crime with an AUC of 0.80, less serious crime with an AUC of 0.70, and general reoffending with an AUC of 0.69; whereas unstructured professional judgement was not successful in predicting outcomes (Astrom et al, 2017, p. 690).

- A further comparative evaluation of 177 juvenile offenders at the time of release to probation also reinforced the superiority of the SAVRY over empirical measures, with the SAVRY found more likely to place recidivists into a higher risk category (Childs et al., 2014, p. 50).

Findings of good to excellent interrater reliability as reported above are supported by the one study located which was specific to the topic. This study examined results from known cases rated by 408 juvenile probation officers as conducted during SAVRY training, and 80 actual cases rated in the field by juvenile probation officers with assistance from a research assistant in the field (Vincent, Guy, Fusco & Gershenson, 2012). ICC results showed excellent scores for individual domains and good scores for overall risk ratings, which was consistent with previous ‘lab’ testing (Vincent et al., 2012, p. 225).

One study evaluated outcomes of the non-violent delinquency SRR independently. Childs, Ryals, Frick, Lawing, Phillippi, and Deprato (2013) assessed both the SRR for violence and SRR and non-violent delinquency with a sample of 158 sentenced juvenile offenders; findings showed that while both were positively predictive, the non-violent delinquency SRR demonstrated a greater ability to predict probation outcomes. This provides preliminary
support for use of this supplement to the SAVRY, in particular the non-violence delinquency SRR, in supervision and treatment planning; which represents an extension beyond traditional use for determining risk for future violent offending (Childs et al., 2013, p. 266).

The literature shows that the SAVRY is an exceptionally well researched and validated tool for use with North American and European youth populations. Interrater reliability is consistently good to excellent, and superiority over actual and unstructured methods to assessment is clear. With regard to predictive validity, there is strong evidence that this tool is effective cross ethnicities and for both male and female youth for predicting violent and non-violent recidivism. There is also promising evidence that this tool may be effectively utilized in non-delinquent settings, and for the purpose of determining treatment and intervention options in addition to current application in correctional, probation, and social work environments. One study suggests the tool may not be as accurate within the 12-18 year age range; further research in this area would be beneficial though continued use throughout all relevant age ranges is well supported by the literature.

Samples outside of North America and Europe tested in the moderate to good range for predictive ability, which while acceptable is not as positive as other results. Results from the UK were explained by a higher threshold for specificity, however it is unclear for Asian samples whether differences were due to differences between the populations or in research design. The length of follow up period in previous testing for these groups have been in the five year range for example, whereas testing elsewhere which yielded better results were generally in the 1-3 year range.

### 3.19 Multi-Level Guidelines

The Multi-Level Guidelines (MLG) were designed for use by criminal justice and mental health professionals to assess risk of group-based violence (ex. youth gang, organized crime, freemen, and religious, national, or environmental extremists including lone actors) using 20 predictive factors categorized into four clusters: (1) Individual, (2) Individual-Group, (3) Group, and (4) Group-Societal (Cook, 2014, p. 53). This work expands upon that of Monahan (2012) which was specific to terrorism. Two studies were located for inclusion.

Cook produced a doctoral thesis entitled *Risk Assessment and Management of Group Based Violence* in 2014 which studied utility and reliability of the MLG. Forty six front line law enforcement officers and/or mental health professional rated 11 cases, submitting questionnaires around their confidence and competency in completing assessments before and after receiving a four day training course on the MLG. Results overall supported the need for training specific to use of the guide for administrators, demand in the field for an instrument of this nature, and “comparable reliability” (based upon distributions, structural reliability, and interrater reliability) to other SPJ tools (Cook, 2014, p. 48). Interrater reliability specifically rated in the very good to excellent range (Cook, 2014, p. 51).

A further study entitled *A Concurrent Evaluation of Threat Assessment Tools for the Individual Assessment of Terrorism* was completed in 2017; results suggest reliability of assessments related to terrorism may be improved using multiple structured professional judgement guides for measuring different aspects of risk (ex. individual level, versus terrorism related, versus group based) (Dr. Alana Cook, personal communication, May 10, 2018).

### 3.20 Summary

Threat and risk assessments for future acts of violence are routinely performed for a variety of purposes by a wide range of mental health, justice service, and human resources professionals. As a result SPJ guides are often being used outside of the environments in which they were intended and by users with varied backgrounds. In interpreting results, the literature frequently points to the level of education and training of assessors, with assessors outside of academia or the field of psychology often struggling to complete sections requiring clinical evaluation. While all SPJ guides demonstrated the ability to predict violent offending above chance levels, and often with significant
success, this underscores the importance of validity testing in new applications and with new users, as well as the importance of utilizing qualified assessors.

A lack of standardization around research design allowed observations to be drawn around methods which appear correlated to outcomes. Retrospective studies yielded marginally higher AUC’s than those of naturalistic design, which is possible indicator of confirmation bias. Studies which included self, staff, or otherwise reported incidents in addition to criminal record information (often from interviews) also produced higher AUC’s. In general, greater breadth and depth of available information tended to produce better results. It is likely this is due to increased instrument sensitivity when detecting ‘true positive’ results for acts of violence committed. Also, predictive accuracy of risk ratings appeared to decrease over time, with studies following subjects for five years producing less supportive results than studies in the 1-3 year range. This is not surprising given the highly dynamic nature of subject circumstances and behavior, and points to the need for continual reassessment to maintain high levels accuracy in reporting.

Overall findings from the literature on predictive validity and interrater reliability, including contextual limitations, are summarized below. With regard to predictive validity results must be interpreted in the context of the behavior being screened for (ex. general violence, violence in the workplace, violence towards intimate partners, non-violent offending, stalking, or group based violence), population the tool has been tested upon (ex. males, females, adults, youth, mentally disordered persons), and external validity.

- The WAVR-21 evidenced good predictive validity for future violence in relation to campus, government, and workplace settings as reported by preliminary findings from a single study. Good interrater reliability using trained raters from a variety of backgrounds were also found, though results vary across assessors which appear to be linked to the level of education and expertise.

- The HCR-20 yielded moderate to good predictive validity for future violence with mentally disordered male subjects, and good to excellent predictive validity for non-mentally disordered male subjects. There is also evidence it may be a very good predictor of readmission to hospital. Predictive validity was inconsistently supported for females, and there was some evidence to support a small increase in accuracy using the Intellectually Disabled Supplement for individuals in this category. Interrater reliability for Version 3 is excellent.

- The SARA showed moderate to good results both for predictive validity in relation to intimate partner violence and interrater reliability. Results were less supportive in predicting general violence.

- Specific implications for predictive validity of the B-SAFER are unclear due to the impact of protective factors upon the research samples, however the guide was found to be effective overall and highly influential in assignment of police resources to high risk cases which in turn provide a preventative effect. Interrater reliability was fair, though inconsistent.

- The SAM demonstrated good predictive validity in predicting stalking behavior, however there is inconsistent evidence to support use for predicting other forms of violence. Interrater reliability was also good to excellent.

- The SAVRY was good to very good in terms of predictive validity for both violent and non-violent recidivism across cross ethnicities and for both male and female youth offenders. There is also preliminary evidence that this tool may be effective in school settings. It is unclear whether predictive validity is equivalent across the full age range captured in the youth category, though all rate in an acceptable range. Interrater reliability is also excellent.

- Further research is required to validate predictive validity for the MLG for intended use in predicting group based violence, however a preliminary study found good to excellent interrater reliability, and another suggests results may be improved by triangulating findings with one or more additional tools.
There was substantial variation in the amount of research located regarding the predictive validity and interrater reliability for the guides reviewed. The HCR-20, SAVRY, and SARA were highly researched; with an acceptable amount of information also about the B-SAFER and SAM; however limited independent validating information could be located in relation to the WAVR-21 and MLG. This is not to suggest tools with less studies performed are not valid, in fact all outperform unstructured judgment and in many cases actuarial tools, but rather to recommend further research to aid in the understanding of effective management for workplace violence and group based violence as relatively new and broad categories with which behavioral assessors are now charged.

Samples for the majority of studies were also found to be relatively homogeneous. While adult males and youth of both sexes had been used as samples for considerable testing, very limited information was available with regard to specific testing upon adult women. The only two studies located for inclusion were in relation to the HCR-20, both of which suggesting the tool was not consistently reliable. Implications for other guides in use for the ITAU with adult female subjects are unknown.
4.0 Findings - 2015 Threat Assessment Reports & Outcomes

4.1 Sample Population

Three hundred fifty-five issues were referred to the ITAU in 2015. During the initial triage process 31 of these were perceived to present elevated complexity and/or risk towards employees, and were escalated for production of a threat assessment report (TAR). This involves in depth analysis of subject behaviours by qualified experts, and development of a formal mitigation strategy. The remaining 324 issues were addressed via alternate or lesser means such as a briefing report, operational plan, security alert, or referral back to the originating agency in the event no action was required. Cases in this category have limited information available in comparison to those for which a TAR was produced, and may or may not be conducive to a follow up regarding offences committed in the year following assessment (ex. those in relation to an entire outlaw group, infrastructure vulnerability assessment of a building, or event planning). As such, individuals who were the subject of a TAR were selected as units of analysis.

Of the 31 TAR’s produced in 2015 six were irretrievable, leaving a total of 25 reports included in the research. This represents 8% of the total population referred for initial assessment, and 81% of the subgroup who presented the appearance of elevated risk to employees. Table 4.1(a) provides a breakdown of persons of interest (POI’s) identified in the reports: 21 adult males (84%), two adult females (8%), and two youth males (8%) were included. Age at the time of assessment ranged from 19-64 years for adult males (median age of 38), 30-42 years for adult females (median age of 36), and 14-18 years for youth males (median age of 16). This sample is consistent with past studies of violent offending behavior, which show that the majority of perpetrators are adult males.

Table 4.1(a) Summary of Sample Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Population</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult male</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult female</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth male</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth female</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total POI’s</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FACT:** 84% of threat assessment reports noted a past history of violence, and 40% noted the presence of mental health concerns.

4.2 Origin of Caseload

Table 4.2(a) outlines the ITAU’s total assessment caseload for 2015 broken down from greatest number to least by client source. Referrals for initial assessment were received from 34 clients; those with three or less referrals were captured under the ‘other’ category. Court participants (Court Services, Judiciary, Crown, and Legal Services) accounted for 63% of referrals and 20% of TAR’s. Court Services alone generated 40% of referrals (14 times the mean) and 4% of TAR’s. All other clients combined represented the remaining 37% of referrals and 80% of TAR’s; however the Ministry of Children and Families demonstrated a significantly higher requirement for TAR following referral with 14% of the referrals but 60% of TAR’s.
Table 4.2(a) Client Sources of Initial Referral and Threat Assessment Report Caseload

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Initial Assessments</th>
<th>Full Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Court Services</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Children &amp; Families</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Provincial Corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Crown</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Court Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Provincial Crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Corrections</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Forfeitures</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ministry of Forests...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Guardian &amp; Trustee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Civil Forfeitures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier’s Protection Office</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Probation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public Guardian &amp; Trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislature</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Premier’s Protection Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Forests...</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Legal Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Labour....</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Nature of Concerns

92% of cases resulting in a TAR involved a threat of violence, with three quarters of cases citing threats of violence as the primary concern. Other issues cited as a primary concern were near equally distributed between contact between a POI and employee outside of work, stalking behavior towards an employee by a POI, property damage caused by a POI at the workplace, or inappropriate (ie. non-threatening but unacceptable) communication received by an employee from a POI.
4.4 Threat Assessment Process

All TAR’s documented consultation with a minimum of one other team member, but in some cases as many as four. Investigative data was drawn from 3-13 sources, with a mean of 6.52 sources consulted (SD 2.58). Sources included previous assessments, databanks, information from the client or case manager, information from a police contact, collateral interviews, incident reports, court orders, and open source material. The mean length time to complete a report was 15.66 hours (SD 8.99) with durations ranging from five to 41 hours. Reports contained a mean of 5.96 recommendations (SD 3.64) with totals ranging from 1-19.

Ninety-two percent of reports identified use of one or more SPJ instruments, and 40% identified use of an SPJ guide. In order of prevalence for instruments: Path to Intended Violence, JACA, Hunters and Howlers, Intimacy Effect, Inhibitors, and CirCon were observed. The HCR-20 was used for all adults assessed with an SPJ guide, and the SAVRY was used for all youth. Exceptions included one report which used an SPJ guide only, and one report in which no tools were used. All reports which utilized an SPJ guide (10) were in relation to threats of violence made by a POI with a past history of violence, and all but two were in relation to POI’s who had a history of mental health concerns.

Table 4.4 outlines the risk levels identified for future violence towards an employee, as well as risk levels identified for other criminal but non-violent behavior. Cases rated low-high were combined with moderate cases. The majority of POI’s rated between low and moderate risk for violence (88%), with a total of two cases rated above moderate and one rated below low. All cases providing a finding on risk level for non-violent offending behavior rated between moderate and high. In 68% of cases, no finding for non-violent offending behavior was provided.
### Table 4.4(a) Breakdown of Risk Ratings from 2015 Threat Assessment Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Rating - Violence</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Risk Rating – Non-Violent Offending</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Mod</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unrated</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.5 Relationship between Risk Level and Recommendations

Table 4.5(a) provides a breakdown of the mean number of recommendations provided at each assigned risk level. For risk rating regarding violence the number of recommendations increased as risk level increased, with the exception of POI’s in the low-high category, for which the same or less recommendations were provided as for lower rated cases. Conversely, for risk rating regarding non-violent offences the number of recommendations decreased as risk level increased.

### Table 4.5(a) Relationship between Risk Level and Number of Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level - Violence</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Risk Level – Non-Violent Offending</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Mod</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unrated</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Outcomes Following Assessment

POI’s were queried in JUSTIN for the period of one year following assessment. Per Table 4.6(a) 16% had been charged with a violent violence, 28% had been charged with a non-violent offence, and 72% were not charged with either. All charged for violence were also charged with a non-violent offence.

Table 4.6(a) Summary of Outcomes Following Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes Following Assessment</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with a violent offence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with a non-violent offence</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with both</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s who were not charged with an offence</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Violent offenders were charged with 1-7 offences for a mean of 2.75 offences (SD 2.87); non-violent offenders were charged with 2-30 offences for a mean of 9.42 offences (SD 9.93). Table 4.6(b) provides a breakdown of the length of time between assessment and behavior leading to a charge (below reflects the date in which an offence occurred, not the date of court). Twenty-five percent of POI’s charged with violence acted within one month, with all others taking longer than three months. Conversely 57% of non-violent offences occurred within one month, with the remainder equally dispersed between three month intervals through to the 12 month cutoff.

Table 4.6(b) Trajectory of Offending Behavior Following Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Between Assessment &amp; First Violent Offence</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Time Between Assessment &amp; First Non-Violent Offence</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st offence within 1 month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st offence within 1 month</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Offence within 3 months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1st Offence within 3 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Offence within 6 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1st Offence within 6 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Offence with 12 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st Offence with 12 months</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 Relationship between Risk Level and Outcome

Table 4.7(a) demonstrates how risk level for violence corresponded to observed incidence of criminal charges related to violent behavior in the year following assessment. Twenty-seven percent of POI’s assessed as low-moderate risk for violence and 25% assessed as moderate risk were charged with a violent offence. No violent charges were located for POI’s in other risk categories. A chi-square test was performed, and no statistically significant relationship was observed between the variables of ‘assessment finding on risk level for violence’, and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to violent offences over a period of one year following assessment’, $X^2 (4, N = 25) = 9.48, p = 0.81$. Significance level used was $p < 0.05$. Due to the small sample size and >20% of
contingency table values <5, Fisher’s Exact Test was used to verify results. Using the same significance level, Fisher’s Exact Test confirms the absence of a significant relationship between variables ($p = 0.53$).

Table 4.7(a) Breakdown of Violent Offences Committed in Relation to Risk Rating for Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level - Violence</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Violence Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7(b) demonstrates how risk level for non-violent offending corresponded to observed incidence of charges related to non-violent offences for the sample population in the year following assessment. Thirty-three percent of POI’s assessed as moderate risk, 50% of POI’s assessed as high risk, and 24% of unrated POI’s for non-violent offending behavior committed a non-violent offence. No non-violent charges were located for POI’s in the moderate-high risk category for non-violent offending behavior. A second chi-square test was performed, and no statistically significant relationship was found between the variables of ‘finding on risk level for non-violent offending’ and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to non-violence offences over a period of one year following assessment’, $X^2 (3, N = 25) = 7.81, p = 0.77$. Significant level used was $p < 0.05$. Due to the small sample size and >20% of contingency table values <5, Fisher’s Exact Test was used to verify results. Using the same significance level, Fisher’s Exact Test confirms the absence of a significant relationship between variables ($p = 1$).

Table 4.7(b) Breakdown of Non-Violent Offences Committed in Relation to Risk Rating for Non-Violent Offending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level – Non-Violent Offending</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Non-Violent Offences Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrated</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7(c) demonstrates how risk level for violence corresponded to observed incidence of charges related to non-violent offences for the sample population in the year following assessment. Fourteen percent of POI’s rated low
risk for violence, 27% of POI’s rated low-moderate risk, 25% of POI’s rated moderate risk, and 100% of POI’s rated moderate to high or high risk were charged with a non-violent offence. No non-violent offences were located for POI’s of negligible risk. A third chi-square test was performed, and no statistically significant relationship was observed between the variables of ‘assessment finding on risk level for violence’, and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to non-violent offending over a period of one year following assessment’, \( X^2 (4, N = 25) = 9.48, p = 0.19 \). Significance level used was \( p < 0.05 \). Due to the small sample size and >20% of contingency table values <5, Fisher’s Exact Test was used to verify results. Using the same significant level, Fisher’s Exact Test confirms the absence of a significant relationship between variables \( (p = 0.21) \). Though no statistically significant relationship was established, POI’s with higher risk ratings for future violence did commit more non-violent offences than POI’s with lower risk ratings for future violence. Respectively: 14% of those rated low risk, 26% of those rated low-moderate or moderate risk, and 100% of those rated moderate-high or higher risk committed non-violent offences.

**Table 4.7(c) Breakdown of Non-Violent Offenses Committed in Relation to Risk Level for Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level - Violence</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Non-Violent Offences Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Moderate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.8 Relationship Between Recommendations and Outcomes**

Table 4.8(a) illustrates how the number of recommendations issued by assessors corresponded to violent and non-violent offences committed in the year following assessment. All POI’s who committed an offence (both in violent and non-violent categories) received a higher number of recommendations than the mean of 5.96 \((SD 3.64)\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Recommendations</th>
<th># of POI's</th>
<th>Violence Committed</th>
<th>Non-Violent Offence Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results are subdivided below by risk rating (first for risk of violence in Table 4.8[b] and then for risk of non-violent offending in Table 4.8[c]). No pattern beyond that previously noted was emergent.

**Table 4.8(b) Breakdown of Number of Recommendations and Outcomes by Risk Level for Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level for Violence</th>
<th># Recommendations</th>
<th>Violence Committed</th>
<th>Non-Violent Offence Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Mod</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8(c) Breakdown of Number of Recommendations and Outcomes by Risk Level for Non-Violent Offending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level for Non-Violent Offending</th>
<th># Recommendations</th>
<th>Violence Committed</th>
<th>Non-Violent Offence Committed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mod-High</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.9 Comparison to Outcomes for Other Cases Referred to the ITAU

Of the 324 issues which were referred to the ITAU in 2015 and did not result in a TAR, 55 were inapplicable to a review of outcomes (e.g., proactive assessment in relation to event planning). Three names were also received twice in the same year, leaving 266 case files for inclusion. Remaining cases involved 235 adult males (88%), 29 adult females (11%), and two youth males (<1%); which is comparable in constitution to the sample group.

Individuals referred to the ITAU but who were not escalated for production of a TAR were queried in JUSTIN for the period of one year following referral. Per Table 4.9(a) 12% were charged with a violent violence, 15% were charged with a non-violent offence, 9% were charged with both, and 78% were charged with neither. Incidence of offending as above was consistently lower when compared to the sample group, which offended at rates of 16%, 28%, 16%, and 72% respectively.

Table 4.9(a) Summary of Outcomes Following Referral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes Following Referral</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with a violent offence</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with a non-violent offence</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s charged with both</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POI’s who were not charged with an offence</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.10 Summary

Persons of interest identified in the 25 behavioral threat assessment reports completed by the ITAU in 2015 were used as units of analysis, representing 7% of the total population of individuals referred for initial assessment and
81% of the subgroup presenting elevated risk to employees. The majority (84%) were adult males, though adult females and youth males present in the subgroup were included.

Referrals for initial assessment were received from 34 client sources. Of the 25 resulting in a TAR, 60% were generated by the Ministry of Children and Families, 20% from court participants (Court Services, Judiciary, Crown, and Legal Services), and 20% from other client sources combined. Issues included contact between a POI and employee outside of work, stalking behavior towards an employee, property damage caused by a POI at the workplace, or inappropriate (ie. non-threatening but unacceptable) communication received by an employee from a POI; though 92% of primary concerns involved a threat of violence. Of note, Court Services had the highest initial referral rate (14 times the mean) but one of the lowest escalation rates with one out of 142 referrals resulting in a TAR.

TAR’s documented a mean of 6.52 information sources, mean length of time to complete a report of 15.66 hours, mean of 5.96 recommendations provided, and consultation occurring between team members in all cases reviewed. With one exception, higher risk rating for violence resulted in an increase in the number of recommendations; however higher risk rating for non-violent offenses resulted in a decrease to the number of recommendations. Ninety-two percent of reports identified use of one or more SPJ instrument, and 40% identified use of an SPJ guide. All which utilized an SPJ guide (10) were in relation to threats of violence made by a POI with a past history of violence, and all but two were in relation to POI’s who had a history of mental health concerns. The majority of POI’s rated between low and moderate risk for violence (88%), with a total of two cases rated above moderate and one rated below low. All cases providing a finding on risk level for non-violent criminal behavior rated between moderate and high, however in 68% of cases no finding was provided.

POI’s were queried in JUSTIN for the period of one year following assessment. Sixteen percent had been charged with a violent violence (mean of one offence), 28% had been charged with a non-violent offence (mean of nine offenses), and 72% were not charged with either. All charged with violence were also charged with a non-violent offence. Of further note, the majority of non-violent offenders were charged within one month, whereas most violent offenders were not charged for three months or more; and all individuals who committed criminal offences (both violent and non-violent) had received an above average number of recommendations.

Chi Square Tests using a significance level of \( p < 0.05 \) were used to examine the relationship between the variables of risk level and incidence of offending as below. Fishers Exact Test was used to verify results. No statistically significant relationships were observed, though higher risk ratings for violence were positively correlated to higher rates of non-violent offending.

1) Relationship test 1: ‘assessment finding on risk level for violence’ and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to violent offences over a period of one year following assessment’

2) Relationship test 2: ‘assessment finding on risk level for non-violent offending’ and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to non-violent offences over a period of one year following assessment’

3) Relationship test 3: ‘assessment finding on risk level for violence’, and ‘incidence of criminal charges related to non-violent offending over a period of one year following assessment’

To establish reliability of the ITAU’s initial triage process in correctly identifying cases which present elevated risk to employees at the time of referral (as this is what led to a determination of which cases were escalated for production of a TAR, which ultimately became the sample group for this review), criminal offences committed in the year following assessment for issues where no TAR was prepared were compared to rates of criminal offending for the sample group. Incidence of both violent offences committed and non-violent offences committed was consistently lower in the group not escalated for production of a TAR.
5.0 Findings - Interviews

INTRODUCTION

5.1 Sample & Scope

Qualitative interviews were conducted with three groups: (1) Employees of the Integrated Threat Assessment Unit who perform threat and risk assessments, (2) BC Sheriff Services managers who receive and act upon threat and risk information from the ITAU, the (3) Other clients who receive threat and risk information from the ITAU. The goal was to gather information on the areas below:

- The process being used to conduct threat assessments
- Associated challenges or opportunities
- The impact of threat assessment ‘products’ upon ‘case management’ and/or ‘direct interventions upon the subject’ (short term outcomes on the logic model)
- The impact of short term outcomes upon ‘enhanced safety and security at court facilities’ and ‘reduced risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees’ (which are long term outcomes)

Seven out of ten invitees participated from Group 1, seven out of fourteen invitees participated from Group 2, and six out of eight invitees participated from Group 3, for a total of 20 interviews. Each was asked to review and sign a consent form. Interviews varied in length from approximately 15 to 105 minutes, and were conducted either at the home office of the participant or by phone.

GROUP 1: ITAU EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORM THREAT & RISK ASSESSMENTS

5.2 Training

ITAU staff have variable training depending on their role, and most have a specialization (ex. organized crime issues, infrastructure vulnerability assessment, open source searches, information sourcing through law enforcement databanks, behavioral analysis for mental health consumers). Formal education ranges from no post-secondary to a bachelor’s degree in a related field, and direct experience ranges from 5-25 years. To achieve Senior Intelligence Officer (SIO) rank (lowest rank meeting the criteria for inclusion), all completed progressive standardized in-house Protective Intelligence Officer (PIO) and SIO coursework. Though the background of each participant varied, all were clear that a great deal of training had been provided both in-house and with external host agencies. As summed by one participant “I’ve received dozens and dozens of courses, too many to count”, another describing historical mentoring relationships with a variety of police contacts and well-known academics. Several were instrumental in developing curriculum for or had undertaken the Contemporary Threat Management Certificate from the Justice Institute of British Columbia, had taken certifications through private groups such as ASIS International, or achieved status as a Certified Threat Manager through the Association of Threat Management Professionals (exclusive to professional assessors in law enforcement). Most were trained in 3-4 structured professional guides, and all were familiar with a variety of structured professional instruments. At the analyst level, certification as a threat specialist was received through the RCMP Behavioral Sciences Understudy Program by one incumbent, a designation which is exclusive to law enforcement and held by approximately 12 analysts nationwide.
5.3 Process Summary

Threat Identification

For court related issues, initial information may come to the attention to staff from various internal or external sources. Local sheriff employees of all ranks (including the PIO), Court Administration employees, the Office of the Chief Judge on behalf of a judge, judges or justices directly, Corporate Security on behalf of crown counsel, crown counsel directly, defense counsel, law enforcement agencies, and other justice service partners were all identified as potential sources of initial notification following an incident of concern. Half of participants also noted that they may first hear of an issue through open source channels such as newspapers, television, or social media. Referrals were relatively consistent for court and escort issues, however in the case of air escort assessments (which are the duty of PIO’s) it was unclear whether all locations conduct them, as it appeared to that in some cases a referral does not occur.

Clients outside of the court process use a centralized mechanism for issues referral. All issues are routed from the local manager to the local Occupational Health and Safety Committee, then to the BC Public Service Agency, which in turn refers issues to an internal sub-group called the Targeted Threat of Violence Management Program (TTVMP). TTVMP staff are trained in threat assessment but refer issues potentially above a ‘low’ risk rating to the ITAU for further evaluation. A similar process is performed by Corporate Security staff acting on behalf of Provincial Crown Counsel, with assessments performed internally by trained threat specialists and referred to the ITAU as necessary. It was noted that despite being a primary source of caseload, there did not appear to be clear criteria for referral from MCFD (ex. information provided “for information only”).

Threat assessment

New case files are first subject to “triage”, succinctly described by one participant as “deciding what we’re going to do about it”. Guidelines are documented; however decision making is largely based upon the professional judgement of team members. Following initial checks and review of available information a minimum of two members will discuss next steps, including potential utility of structured professional judgement guides and other frameworks. Outcomes depending on the nature and urgency of a file may include escalation to production of a full assessment report by analysts, further review at the SIO level and production of a briefing report, less formal recommendation of safety precautions, referral to an outside agency if outside the scope of the ITAU’s mandate, referral back to the source if issues do not meet the threshold for further assessment, or communicating that current precautions are sufficient and closing the file. Flags for escalation were identified as repetitiveness, a change in behavior for a known subject, potential for lethality, risk of suicide, or assaultive behavior towards staff. More complex or serious cases, or ones involving clinical assessment of mental health concerns were also more likely to be escalated. Priority may also be impacted by mitigating factors, such as the subject being in custody or a court date in the distant future.

As stated by two participants in reference to the need to corroborate ‘facts’ prior to inclusion in a briefing or assessment, “all intelligence is information, but not all information is intelligence”. Key investigative material such as previous assessments or information on past history or context was often received from the client. In terms of databanks, participants described degrees of access ranging from direct with limitations (SCMS, JUSTIN, PRIME, Civil Electronic Information System,) to indirect through a third party (Canadian Police Information Centre, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Police Reporting and Occurrence System, CAST police databank, INFOPOL Federal Corrections database, and the CORNET Provincial Corrections database). Depending on the nature of the file, information may also be available from specialized law enforcement groups such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams, Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, Real Time Intelligence Centre, Canadian Border Services Agency, Provincial and Federal Corrections, Probation, or Parole Supervision. Contact with police involved with the file was common, and in some
cases interviews with co-workers or family of a person of interest may occur. For some types of court documents, direct access is available. Consultative relationships also exist with threat assessment teams throughout Canada, in particular with RCMP E-Division’s Behavioral Sciences Unit which provides access to a clinical psychologist and behavioral scientists, and with academic threat specialists at Simon Fraser University.

Once the information has been collected, participants described use of structured professional guides and instruments to develop findings and recommendations. Choice of tool(s) is guided by the nature of the concern, with the WAVR-21 and HCR-20 characterized as common “go-to’s” for more serious or complex threats. One participant commented on a challenge with the HCR-20 in that a significant amount of psychological information is required; also around use of the WAVR-21 to assess outside threats, as it was this person’s understanding that the guide as primarily intended to assess employee to employee violence. Other SPJ guides listed include the SAM for stalking, SARA or B-SAFER for spousal issues, and the MLG for group based violence. SPJ instruments including the Path to Intended Violence, CirCon Factors, JACA, and Intimacy Effect, were all commonly used; it was noted that these are most useful as they can be used with limited information, whereas SPJ guides often require more detailed and/or clinical information. Whereas the individual predictive factors for each tool are rated at the discretion of the assessor, the cumulative results from each tool respond to separate lines of inquiry and are weighted equally in the overall report. For court issues, Sheriff Services policy around court security and escort security classifications may also be used to complement professional judgement; though it was noted that these policies have not been updated in some time despite a multitude of high impact changes to operational deployment (ex. Implementation of carbines).

Development of recommendations as a component of the assessment process was described as being based upon stabilizers and destabilizers, guided by the unique circumstances surrounding each case and with the assistance of SPJ tools, and most fundamentally relying upon the professional judgement of the assessor while erring on the side of caution. For issues referred to an analyst, group consultation including an Inspector will follow (minimum four people), where all provide feedback on risk level and mitigation strategies. “The strength of the assessment is in the group” added one participant, expanding that besides providing a balanced perspective this also spreads the risk amongst members as the outcome is never a single person’s decision. As stated by another, “low risk doesn’t mean no risk, and high risk doesn’t mean it will happen. At the end of the day it’s an educated opinion based on the best information available at the time”. Though the current practice is for “whoever is available” to attend these consultations, which some felt was a valuable opportunity to receive additional input, others felt these may more appropriately include only the investigator, psychologist, and others who serve a defined purpose.

Products resulting from assessment include threat assessment reports or summary reports, briefing documents, consult documents, operational plans, security alerts, case tracking entries, open source reports, infrastructure vulnerability reports, residential assessment reports, and documents related to large scale event planning. Several participants also pointed to less formal communications, such as emails providing further information or direction to the TTVMP.

Case Management

Following assessment, participants explained that findings and recommendations are communicated back to the client source (ex. Office of the Chief Judge, Corporate Security, Court Administration, TTVMP, etc) who then filter the information back to case managers at the worksite. For threats concerning court participants, the local Sheriff Services manager and supervisors would also be notified. This may take the form of a phone call, email, verbal briefing, or forwarding of a summary report.

While it is the client and/or case manager the client is working with who decide on what security precautions are to be implemented and are responsible for implementation; follow up actions by the ITAU may include preparing security alerts, entering case tracking information on a security calendar, preparing an operational plan,
infrastructure vulnerability assessment, open source checks, notification to other worksites, attending the office to perform a briefing, performing a re-assessment if new information surfaces, and requests to other agencies to perform direct interventions upon the subject (ex. welfare or breach check by police, recommendation for charges by crown, or outreach by a mental health worker). As stated by one participant, “it’s not ours to enforce, we make recommendations and they decide what to do”. Another noted that in several cases referred back for further assessment following an escalation of the behavior, recommendations from the first assessment had not been followed (ex. Behavioral contract had been repeatedly violated by a client but no action was taken).

5.4 Impact of the assessment

When asked what the impact of assessments was and how they knew, most participants shared a view that it is difficult to tell what the impact is, or moreover in many cases that they are not made aware of the outcome, however the mark of success would be ‘if nothing bad happens’. Implementation of the security plan occurs externally, so it is often unknown whether recommendations are followed. Some had received feedback from clients expressing appreciation for information, or gratitude for peace of mind following a non-resultant investigation. Specific to court issues only, some had also observed reluctance from decision-makers to commit to implementation of security recommendations “due to staffing issues”. As an example of impacts resulting from assessment, one participant pointed to recommendations for target hardening at the judge’s home which were followed, thereby making it less susceptible to an attack.

Several participants pointed to research in the US as a rationale behind their work, as targeted attacks were often found to be preventable had warning signs been recognized in advance. As stated by one participant “You don’t necessarily know [the outcome following assessment], but as long as there are violent acts against people we need to keep doing what we’re doing.” Another adding that assessment satisfies a WorkSafe obligation, but because the purpose is management of behavior rather than prosecuting it there is a greater opportunity to influence or resolve the issues through early intervention; “sometimes the small things have a big impact”.

5.5 Difference between court users and other clients

When asked whether there were differences between files related to court participants and those from other clients, one interviewee commented as below.

“There’s a difference between risk assessment and threat assessment. Most court files are risk assessment, not threat assessment, which is managed entirely differently. Court files are less about assessing and more about managing. Structured processional judgement isn’t used. The SIO may be able to get a little bit of extra information that’s helpful to know. Ok this is a gang guy, but what type of gang guy is he? It provides context when applying security measures”.

Others expressed that communications are at times more guarded communicating with clients outside of the courthouse, as they are in many cases civilians with no law enforcement background. Expectations for turnaround on a report were also noted to be shorter with outside clients, and with less certainty around whether recommendations would be followed, than with court users. Two participants were not involved with clients outside of the courthouse.

5.6 Internal views of team members and the program

Overall participants expressed positive reviews and sentiments around the program. Specific points included the personal dedication and commitment of team members; access (be it at times through a third party) to many sources of good quality information; the high level of industry qualifications and experience possessed by team members; appreciation for mentoring opportunities; a desire to promote recognition amongst the unit for the work taking place; and a strong belief that the system of identifying, assessing, and managing threats ‘is working’. Comments were
also received around the pay structure for ITAU employees, and how pay should be increased to reflect the value of contributions.

5.7 Challenges with obtaining & storing information

Though participants felt that established channels for communication were effective overall, most expressed frustration around a lack of reporting (or in the case of external sources complete reporting) by informants. With regard to sheriff employees and other court participants it was put forward that staff may fail to report for reasons including the choice to rely upon their own professional judgement instead, being too busy to collect the information or report it, weak relationships with the local PIO or SIO, a belief that ITAU is ineffective at managing threats, or a lack of understanding about how the program works. Issues with over or under reporting were identified with other client groups as well, but it was posed that this is likely because of “a lack of education on what to look for and when to report”. For outside agencies providing information, an additional concern surfaced around a lack of “completeness” of information provided. One participant suggested the ITAU should provide presentations both to sheriff staff and other departments at the courthouse regarding the work that the unit does.

While citing recent changes to legislation providing unimpeded access to police information for assessment purposes as a milestone improvement, interviewees described inconsistent access to information from police and other sources. Data may be vetted prior to distribution, or not released at all. Placement of an ITAU employee at the RTIC was found to be useful in overcoming this difficulty, however direct or expanded access to PRIME, JUSTIN, CORNET, and SCMS were suggested by most participants as an opportunity for improvement. As summed by one participant, “using a third party creates a delay, sometimes as extra day, so that report takes us a day longer than it should”. A lack of clarity was identified around access to psychological assessments and previous reports prepared by MCFD, as well as a lack of intuitive information sharing by client sources (creating a situation where it is necessary to ask for each item every time). A proposed solution was to supply clients with a checklist of the information needed. It was further proposed by two interviewees that a single platform providing an interface between available databases would be beneficial. It was suggested that this should include links to templates, as the current word and excel documents are time consuming to locate and set up.

5.8 Issues related to the PIO Program

Inconsistency with Proactive Screening

Sheriff staff at court locations expect that PIO’s are proactively screening scheduled attendees, however interviewee comments around screening varied greatly from region to region with responses ranging from “screening has gone by the wayside”, to characterizing screening as the PIO’s “main duty”. ‘What’ is being screened and ‘how’ was also inconsistent, with some PIO’s reviewing the jail slate of incoming prisoners (if anything), and others reviewing the criminal court lists as well. Some also query individual names on JUSTIN, whereas others rely upon a visual scan for known individuals or charges of concern.

For locations in which sheriff supervisors make a specific request for a risk assessment by the PIO prior to making decisions about whether or not to provide staffing for a courtroom, the level of investigation is variable but generally appears to include: a visual scan of the names attending court, seriousness of charges if in relation to criminal matters, and the nature of the circumstances giving rise to the appearance. This is followed by a check of names against the SCMS and JUSTIN databanks for previous issues, and in the absence of specific concerns the matter is deemed ‘low risk’.

Participants further identified that there is no process is in place for backfilling PIO’s when redeployed due to staffing shortages, so it is likely that proactive screening activities do not occur in this scenario. One interviewee suggested a standard form for sheriff staff to use when submitting security concerns so they could be received by the
ITAU directly. One which notifies local supervisors and the PIO at the same time; ideally interfaced with SCMS and JUSTIN so that other court locations impacted could be notified as well. An alternative suggestion was for local sheriff staff to be accountable for logging onto a computer and checking the jail slate and alerts for themselves. It was noted that at times the information is available, but not checked. Questions were also raised around the training sheriff staff receive around identifying and responding to non-physical threats.

Several interviewees communicated general issues with screening of family court participants, as the CEIS software used to schedule these matters is not integrated with the more robust information available regarding the criminally accused in JUSTIN, and security alerts are “easy to miss”. Similar issues were noted with screening attendees for traffic matters, for which no process for flagging exists. Concerns were also expressed around inconsistency with notifications to other worksites impacted when there is an update at another location. It was suggested that this could be avoided by assigning a single case manager when multiple locations are impacted.

Redeployment of PIO’s to address staffing shortages

PIO’s were identified as a critical component of the ITAU’s infrastructure, with redeploying of the PIO during short staffing at his or her local worksite identified by all participants as a key issue impacting success in initial threat identification at courthouses as well as delays to follow ups required at the courthouse during the assessment process. Redeployment for extended periods was further put forward as leading to a lack of fulsome training and development for PIO’s, which in turn is contributory to an inadequate pool of qualified candidates for promotion within the unit. The current strategy for overcoming limitations to development is to post PIO positions as a temporary appointment rather than a full time position, potentially providing more applicants an opportunity to gain experience. It was also proposed by one participant that all sheriff staff should have access to a central reporting system providing the ability to refer issues to the ITAU directly, which would mitigate the impacts of the PIO being unable to assist.

Opinions of participants varied with regard to whether it would be beneficial for PIO’s to report directly to ITAU rather than continue reporting to local managers at the courthouses. All agreed however that it was important for the physical office of the PIO to be located within the courthouse which they provide coverage for, mostly for reasons related to relationship building at the local level.

5.9 Time & workload pressures

It is the expectation of management that timelines for assessment will follow guidelines of “one day for PIO referral, one week for a briefing report, and two weeks to a month for a threat assessment report”, however all participants communicated that the length of time required to complete assessment tasks will vary greatly based upon the nature and urgency of the concerns. Routine matters were characterized as taking ‘a few hours’; and more complex, dynamic, or less urgent matters as taking several weeks or months. Mitigating factors such as a distant scheduled next contact, or the subject being in custody were noted as considerations in prioritization. Several participants also pointed to a cycle of waiting for external partners to conclude parallel assessments prior to completing their reports (ex. psych assessment or corrections intake classification).

Consistent messaging was received around time and workload pressures surrounding the assessment process. Concerns were expressed by all but one participant around requiring additional time than is provided to conduct “due diligence” around each case and implications of this upon the quality of the assessment. The exceptional interviewee expanded on the view that the guidelines for timeframes should be adhered to:

“...There’s a reluctance in doing the work because of the risk involved and risk you are accepting as an assessor. You want to exhaust all resources of information instead of making a decision, but you need to cut it off at some point. The report is based on the assessors knowledge, skills, abilities, hearsay, third
party information, and potentially unfounded allegations. Even with known information such as databases, [the finding on risk level] is an opinion, and the report is only helpful at certain stages”.

Six out of seven interviewees also expressed concerns around the number of files assigned to each SIO and analyst, and/or size of the regions assigned to each individual. As summed by one interviewee;

“We wear too many hats: intelligence hub for the province, support for PIO’s, developing operational plans, behavioral threat assessments and IVF’s for other ministries. There are only so many of us available and at times this leads to a heavy workload and resourcing issue”.

A suggestion was put forward that it would be beneficial to have a psychologist or PhD student available on call for overflow. Another was to spend more time on court files and less on work with the TTVMP, until such time dedicated resources could be allocated. It was noted that there is a discrepancy in reported caseload between old software (ACCESS) and new software (JIRA). For example, without a significant increase in actual workload, ACCESS reported 480 cases in 2017 and JIRA reports 200 in the first two months of 2018. Participants advise that a strategic plan is under development which may respond to these issues.

**GROUP 2: BC SHERIFF SERVICES MANAGERS WHO RECEIVE AND ACT UPON THREAT & RISK INFORMATION FROM THE ITAU**

**5.10 User Profile**

As part of the responsibility for administration and oversight of sheriff operations at the courthouse, Sheriff Services managers are tasked with ensuring the safety and security of staff members and the public. In the course of such duties they receive threat and risk assessment information impacting court participants (both regarding employees and clients), as well as in relation to other groups in the case of multi-use buildings. At times groups of individuals may be assessed insofar as there is a potential impact upon the courts (ex. planned protest on the court property). Primary services received from the ITAU include: case tracking, security alerts, operational plans, threat assessment education (judges only), occasionally threat assessment or summary reports, and occasionally infrastructure vulnerability reports for events occurring off site (ex. Judges conference). Other apparatus in place at courthouses which mitigate risk to attendees were described to include physical security features, information from partner agencies and internal groups, access to databanks, judiciary initiated ‘flags’ for security issues on court files, and open source information. Some sites engage in daily briefings between supervisors and staff. Additional measures, such as a search gate or changes to staffing levels, may be implemented on a case by case basis.

**5.11 Impact of the ITAU upon threat identification & awareness**

Participants advised that initial information about a threat is most often brought to their attention as a result of behavior observed by or reported to sheriffs at the courthouse, or through media reporting. The ITAU may also receive information from another location or external agency which is then communicated to the impacted location, normally via the local PIO.

While threats generally came to the attention of interviewees through other channels, all agreed that supplemental information later received from the ITAU was helpful and more fulsome than what otherwise would have been available. When asked whether it enhanced their understanding of the issues, some interviewees agreed, with others agreeing but clarifying that it often reinforced or confirmed what was already known, and/or varied considerably from case to case. Access to police information was noted to have improved significantly over time. Several participants stated that the ITAU appeared to include “opinions” or “hearsay” in briefing information however, with issues at times presented as ‘serious’ without the appearance of sufficient supportive evidence. Receivers weighted what they viewed to be substantiated information as more actionable than that which appeared to be unsubstantiated.
Whether used to verify or inform operational decisions, it was clear that threat and risk information from the ITAU was beneficial from the user perspective; however it was also essential for there to be confidence that it was credible and accurate. As summed by one participant, “Intel drives the operation. The op[erational] plan accounts for threats identified in the assessment, so if the correct threats weren’t identified in the first place then the op[erational] plan won’t account for these factors”.

5.12 Impact of the ITAU upon case management & outcomes

While there was general agreement that background information provided by the ITAU influences decision making around implementation of security measures, at a minimum being taken into consideration, opinions varied regarding the utility of recommendations. Sheriff managers at one end of the spectrum advised that recommendations are followed 100% of the time, one stating that it is a liability issue for ITAU to provide them and for the recipient not to act, and another expressing that briefings with recommendations “give a clear picture of what to expect and how to respond”. At the other end of the spectrum a majority of interviewees held a view that ITAU’s role is to provide information only, and that recommendations were unnecessary and even counterproductive as this places decision-makers in a position of having to justify why they are not followed if a different course is chosen or responses are de-escalated over time; in short “operational decisions should be left to operations”. Others advised that recommendations are followed most but not all of the time.

Several participants noted a disconnect between the ITAU and operations, insofar as resources and facility considerations at the receiving location did not appear to be taken into consideration. While recommendations were followed for the most part, some further commented on the fluidity of risk level; “it is possible that initial recommendations may be followed, then escalated or deescalated based upon new information of observations after first contact”. Others pointed to factors besides threat and risk assessments which have improved security. Examples included courtrooms specifically designed for high security events, more consistent application of security protocols, and better communication between offices and regions. In all cases, regardless of management philosophy, interviewees advised of general positive outcomes from a security perspective.

5.13 Perspectives on the reporting structure for PIO’s

A strong majority of sheriff managers commented on the reporting structure for PIO’s; the current arrangement being that PIO’s carry out full time activities related to the ITAU’s program, but report to the local manager and are included on the paylist at the courthouse where his or her office is located. The majority characterized the arrangement as problematic, because administration and oversight (such as scheduling, leave approval, performance management, mandatory training, and ultimately the decision whether to redeploy PIO’s as operationally required) are performed by the local manager, however he or she may have little or no knowledge of the work assigned to their PIO. Concerns were expressed around the apparent degree of freedom available to PIO’s and a perceived lack of oversight, and lack of dedicated funding to support the program. “Co-managing” was suggested.

Several participants believed that ITAU employees, including PIO’s, “lose touch with operations” following an extended period in dedicated intelligence positions. Concerns were expressed around hiring and promotional processes within the unit, specifically uncertainty around whether individuals would have the ability to transfer back into operations at the same rank. The issue of jobs being posted as temporary appointments rather than permanent positions (contrary to standard practices elsewhere in the Sheriff Service) was also contentious, with some in support and others opposed.

Those who supported continuation of the PIO program in present form cited the value of local relationship building with external partners, “informal exchanges” with supervisors and management on site, and ability to draw on PIO’s as an additional operational resource as required. In both cases where the program appeared to be working well, it
was noted that the PIO’s office was physically located in close proximity to other sheriffs’ workstations and that the individual occupying the position was a pro-active communicator with strong working relationships.

5.14 Identified need for policy updates

Multiple interviews noted that policy and protocol around high security escorts is outdated in light of several high impact changes, and should be reviewed. Suggested focuses included implementation of carbines, and the increasing level of police integration and assistance with high security activities, increasingly common judicial orders which generate security concerns and/or impact staffing, management strategies to address the number of emerging correctional classifications at provincial institutions, and appropriate inclusion or exclusion of individuals on conference calls related to determination of risk level for escorts.

5.15 Desire for field education

Multiple interviewees commented on a disconnect between the ITAU and operations insofar as a large number of line staff do not fully understand what the ITAU does and may not necessarily see the value in the program. This is of particular concern in light of the high number of new recruits in the field. It was suggested that the ITAU consider a column in the sheriff newsletter and/or educational presentations at worksites.

5.16 Other comments

Others expressed concerns that the ITAU’s expenditure of resources upon issues for other clients may be having a negative impact on the service provided to court participants. Variable comments were also received around the need to secure stronger relationships with police; with some suggesting there was a need to improve relations and others advising of “very strong” relationships with local police.

GROUP 3: OTHERS RECEIVING THREAT & RISK INFORMATION FROM THE ITAU

5.17 User Profile

Group 3 was comprised of representatives from the BC Public Service Agency (BCPSA) TTVMP and BCPSA Occupational Health & Safety Program, who are jointly tasked with risk management and development of related workplace standards for violence prevention (as part of a larger mandate) for all provincial government employees and several contract clients; the Corporate Security and Risk Management Office, tasked with a similar portfolio for the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of the Solicitor General; and the Ministry of Children and Families Occupational Health and Safety Program. The primary product received by all participants were Summery Reports (which are condensed/vetted versions of Threat Assessment Reports), however infrastructure vulnerability assessments were cited as a secondary product, and some reported receiving assistance with operational planning, open source reports, threat assessment education, and security alerts or case tracking.

5.18 Impact upon threat identification & awareness

For this group the ITAU’s role is as a secondary assessor, and not as a source of initial information in the manner described by some sheriff participants. A chain of referral was described in which issues came to the attention of participants through the MyHR or General Incident Loss Reporting reporting systems or through direct contact with members of the client group (line staff, supervisors, or managers). The participant would perform an initial threat assessment internally within his or her department, and in cases which posed concerns would refer issues to the ITAU for more in depth investigation. Multiple interviewees commented on the success of the early triage system used by MCFD to report threats of violence. Corporate Security expressed an interest in developing a similar streamlined system for reporting.
All participants possessed training related to threat and risk assessment including use of structured professional judgement tools; however analysts at the ITAU had greater access to information, in particular police sources and data banks, and a higher level of training (and/or access to behavioral scientists and a forensic physiologist as ad hoc team members) providing the ability to perform more complex or clinical assessments. Though participants found that information provided by the ITAU generally “confirmed what [they] already knew”, there was unanimous agreement that it was beneficial to receive verification based upon more fulsome analysis and interpretation. At times new, additional, or peripheral information would surface providing context or clarity; or leading to further recommendations. This was also characterized as assisting participants by allowing them to justify the actions implemented and to communicate the management strategy with greater confidence.

5.19 Impact upon case management

Participants (as clients and receivers of Summary Reports from the ITAU) do not occupy roles which act directly upon threat assessment information, but work with the client contacts who are tasked with implementation of preventative measures. All indicated that information received from the ITAU was taken into account when making recommendations to their client contacts, with the level of influence upon their decision making ranging from “heavily relying upon the Summary Report to determine the response” to “usually already hav[ing] the strategies in place prior to receipt of the report, which are then confirmed when the information comes in”.

When asked whether the ITAU’s recommendations for threat mitigation are followed by case managers (clients of the participants) there was general consensus that recommendations were followed the majority of the time, but not in all cases. Reasons provided for recommendations not being followed varied. At the executive level reasons included financial constraints (ex. Installing CCTV equipment) or the inability of the worksite to implement (ex. Transfer of an employee between offices when there is only one office in the area), or due to recommendations being “impractical”. At the front-line level reasons were less clear (ex. continuing to allow abusive behavior when a zero-tolerance policy was recommended). Examples were provided by several participants where a failure to follow initial recommendations had led to an escalation of behaviors over time. Some interviewees were unaware of outcomes following communication of the results of assessment to worksites unless the files were referred back following further issues. It was noted that some worksites which routinely encounter problematic clients, such as MCFD offices and correctional centers, have proactive and refined security procedures preceding any action recommended following assessment.

Beyond information provided by the ITAU in the course of an assessment, participants were appreciative of additional assistance in the form of threat education provided on site to staff members at client worksites, help facilitating local sheriff involvement during court proceedings, contact with the police on behalf of the client, reviewing draft letters prior to issuing to clients or staff, and maintaining information regarding dormant or overlapping files from other Ministries.

5.20 Impact upon outcomes

All interviewees commented to the effect that while it is challenging to discern the precise impacts of their (as well as the ITAU’s) efforts upon reducing the risk of targeted violence towards employees, they believe that the process is ‘working’. When asked what the impact of threat assessment information from the ITAU was, the most common benefits stated were in relation to the emotional wellbeing of employees who ‘feel safer at work’, ‘appreciate that someone cares’, and/or ‘have peace of mind knowing an expert has performed an assessment’. As further summed by one participant, “the benefit [of assessment] is applying the right response to the correct level of threat…. There’s no huge overreaction and no huge under-reaction”. In cases where the client may have otherwise implemented unnecessary security measures, there is also an opportunity for cost savings.
Other responses sited improvements to physical security features resulting from assessment which were credited with cumulatively contributing to decreased risk to employees, a lack of involvement by the Independent Investigations Office in BC Public Service affairs to date, and an increase in communication from client sources which were attributed to greater ‘buy-in’ for the program. It was further noted that the regulated requirement for assessment in the situations where it is occurring has been satisfied.

5.21 Positive views of the collegial relationship

Participants valued the strong collegial relationship between their respective programs and the ITAU and expressed a unanimous desire to continue the partnership. Specific comments centered around the importance of the mutual trust and respect which had been built over time, and recent refinements to processes which were viewed as an improvement to service delivery (with the exception of a continued opportunity to improve with regard to timeliness). A majority also expressed a desire for onsite education for Ministry staff to achieve a shared understanding of what the program is and what it can do; it was noted that offices where this has already occurred were observed to have accessed the program more frequently following the session.

5.22 Lack of timeliness with reporting

The main issue which surfaced was a lack of timeliness with reporting. Though improvements were noted over the past few months, threat assessments were still taking variable times to complete – some upwards of 3-4 weeks; with the exception of the initial consultation process, in which preliminary information was now provided within a few days. It was noted that “even partial information is better than no information” as clients are unwilling to wait this long for a report, so updates are important. Participants held a general view that delays were attributed to the limited number of qualified analysts, lack of backfill for leave and vacancies, and high workload at the ITAU.

5.23 Other comments

When making direct contact with staff members rather than the individual who referred the file (ex. Occupational Health, TTVMP, Corporate Security, etc), the individual who referred the issue should be notified so as to prevent duplicate inquiries or updates. This has not always occurred but is appreciated when it does.

SUMMARY

5.24 Group 1: Employees of the BC Sheriff Services Integrated Threat Assessment Unit Who Perform Threat & Risk Assessments

ITAU employees were asked to describe processes related to threat identification, threat assessment, and case management; leading to development of a process summary by the researcher for each area:

- Initial information about a threat was most often referred from a client source, however in some cases police contacts or open source information led to notification of an issue. For clients in other ministries notification follows a centralized reporting process, whereas court issues may be referred directly from a wide range of sources (essentially any person at the courthouse has the ability to report).

- Once received, issues are triaged by a team to determine next steps. These are highly dependent upon the unique circumstances of each case. Conditional access to databanks and police information is available for the purposes of investigation, and assessors are trained in a range of structured professional judgement guides and instruments to assist with analysis. Cases may be escalated for higher level assessment (or de-escalated) as appropriate.
• Recommendations are guided by the nature and severity of the threat, and result from a consultative process involving subject matter experts including a clinical psychologist and other behavioral scientists or threat specialists as applicable.

Though participants believed that processes were “working”, the impacts of threat assessment were difficult to quantify or in some cases unknown. Participants were also asked about what is working well versus not working, pressures and challenges in the field, and opportunities for program improvement. Emergent themes included positive views of team members and the department, challenges with obtaining and organizing information, issues related to the PIO program, and time and workload pressures.

5.25 Group 2: BC Sheriff Services Managers Who Receive and Act Upon Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU

Sheriff managers were asked about the impact of information received from the ITAU upon the identification, level of understanding, and case management of threats at courthouses. Initial information on threats was most often obtained from external sources, however in some cases was received from the ITAU directly. Information reported by the ITAU following assessment was helpful and more fulsome than participants had access to independently, however the degree to which it was impacted decision making varied considerably from case to case. Participants advised that recommendations were followed most but not all of the time. Inconsistent views on the utility of receiving recommendations were also apparent, with most preferring not to receive them and others characterizing them as essential. Some also questioned the credibility of conclusions in cases where they did not appear to be supported by the evidence.

Group 2 was also asked to comment on issues or opportunities for program improvement from a client perspective. Emergent themes included issues around the reporting structure for PIO’s, a need to update risk assessment policy and protocols, and a desire for field education to support engagement between operational staff and the program. Beyond reporting of assessment information (in the form of briefing reports as full threat assessments were relatively uncommon), court locations relied heavily upon the ITAU’s case tracking system to manage court appearances with security issues, security alerts identifying persons of interest, and assistance with operational planning for high security events taking place at the courthouse.

5.26 Group 3: Other Clients Receiving Threat & Risk Information from the ITAU

BC Public Service managers were asked about the impact of information received from the ITAU upon the identification, level of understanding, and case management of threats towards government employees and facilities (including but not limited to courthouses). Initial information regarding threats was not received from the ITAU, however information shared following referral consistently enhanced or reaffirmed the client’s understanding of the nature and severity of threats; this was primarily achieved through consideration of information derived from police databanks and analysis by experts with a higher level of training which would otherwise be inaccessible.

Recommendations were followed most but not all of the time. Reasons provided for not following recommendations included an inability to implement due to physical, practical, or financial limitations of the worksite, though some employees elected to diverge for unknown reasons. Three interviewees noted no direct knowledge of outcomes following the sharing of recommendations with case managers at the worksite in question unless the issues were referred back to them followed a recurrence or escalation of the issues. Further it was relatively common for this to occur, at times following a failure to follow recommendations from earlier assessments.
Group 3 was asked to comment on issues or opportunities for program improvement from a client perspective; emergent themes included appreciation and positive expectations of the collegial relationship with the ITAU, and issues with the timeliness of reporting. Beyond reporting the results following an assessment, the ITAU was also found to assist in ways which were beneficial such as providing assistance with arrangements for court appearances, following up with police agencies on a client’s behalf, or reviewing letters prior to issue for persons of concern.
6.0 Discussion & Analysis

6.1 Introduction

Recent high profile attacks in Canada against peace officers, court facilities, and other symbolic government targets are a somber reminder of the stakes in threat and risk management. Examples include sheriffs at the courthouse in Whitecourt (AB) shot by prisoners during an escape attempt in 2013, a couple accused of attempting to detonate an explosive device at the Legislative Building in Victoria (BC) in 2013 (presently awaiting decision on the appeal to reinstate a quashed conviction), shootouts in Ontario between police and an armed assailant at both Parliament Hill (Ottawa) and the Brampton courthouse in 2014, and foremost three officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Moncton (ONT) who were lured to their deaths by a heavily armed male with anti-establishment beliefs in 2014. Media reports in each case suggest that perpetrators participated in warning behaviors prior to the attacks, which gives rise to the colloquial (if not academic) question of whether early threat detection and management may have led to prevention or de-escalation of these events.

Despite major strides over the past 20 years, threat management remains a broad and speculative discipline (Federal Bureau of investigation, 2017, p. 83, Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 8). The preventive effect of protective actions, infrequent or inaccessible incidents from which to draw data, and the unique and dynamic considerations impacting outcomes in each individual case all contribute to difficulties isolating and quantifying precise impacts of threat assessment activities upon outcomes. As stated in the limitations section, the evolution of threat assessment has also not occurred in a vacuum. Concomitant improvements to external contributory factors such as heightened physical security features and consideration to environmental design in new buildings, legislation around stalking and harassment, workplace regulation related to employee safety including violence prevention, sophistication of investigative techniques, and coordinated communication amongst public safety stakeholders have also aided in improving the response to targeted violence.

These issues create challenges in gauging the effectiveness of a threat assessment program. However similar to the manner in which threat and risk assessments are executed in practice, best efforts have been made to provide reasonable opinions in light of source data, and through use of recognized frameworks. Those identified in the literature which will be evaluated below include examination of the predictive validity and interrater reliability of tools used to guide the assessment process, and a focus upon the impacts of protective actions upon outcomes. Additionally, linkages to short and long term outcomes as outlined of the logic model have been used as benchmarks for success (see APPENDIX A). The below analysis responds to each research question directly.

6.2 Research Question #1: Is the ITAU’s process for assessing risk of targeted violence consistent with established theory and practice?

The ITAU’s threat and risk management model is based upon widely accepted theory which was developed by the U.S. Secret Service in the late 90’s and has been built upon by academic and law enforcement professionals since that time. Based upon past studies of predictive validity and interrater reliability the structured professional judgement approach to assessment, which is used by the ITAU in assessing risk of future violence, is found to be significantly more accurate than the traditional unstructured professional judgement approach (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p. 409. Childs et al. 2014, p. 41, Bertolucci et al., 2016, p. 665), and comparable to actuarial approaches (Doyle & Dolan, 2007, p.410, Meloy et al., 2013, p. 1354, Childs et al., 2014, p.42, Hart & Guy, 2016, p. 29).

Once a threat or risk has been identified investigation, evaluation, and management strategies (as described in interviews and confirmed through review of 2015 threat assessment reports) are in alignment with highly credible expert sources on best practices including the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Violence (2015), Calhoun and Weston’s Contemporary
Threat Management: A Practical Guide for Identifying, Assessing, and Managing Individuals of Violent Intent (2003 & 2009), and Meloy and Hoffman’s International Handbook of Threat Assessment (2014). At a high level these start with initial triage to determine the approach best fitting for the assessment process based upon the nature and severity of concerns. Issues may be escalated, de-escalated, or referred to outside organizations as appropriate. This is followed by a rigorous search of databanks, documents, open source information, and information from police and client contacts to inform the assessment procedure. A report is then prepared which may take the form of a threat assessment report or briefing document, at times aided by use of structured professional instruments or guides. Risk level and recommendations for prevention are developed as a team, and are based upon stabilizers and destabilizers identified in the assessment.

Key focuses upon patterns of thinking associated with elevated risk, and monitoring for known pre-attack behaviours to determine whether an act of targeted violence is likely and/or imminent are consistent with current field knowledge. In addition to screening for warning behaviours such as those included on the Pathway to Intended Violence and others such as ‘pseudo-commando’ identification, “novel aggression”, “energy burst behaviour”, or “leakage” (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 39-40); four indicators were identified which may warrant consideration in assessing the credibility of a threat. These include whether the subject is acting like a ‘hunter’ or a ‘howler’, circumstances and context surrounding the event, relationship between the subject and target, and the presence of certain types of mental illness which have been linked to violence. All were accounted for in interviews with the ITAU’s assessors.

With regard to tools used by the ITAU to assist with assessment, structured professional guides are empirically validated by the literature for use as prescribed (ex. the SAVRY is intended to guide evaluation of violence risk for youth, so would not be supported for use with adults). A later section responding to the research question entitled ‘are current processes effective in reducing violence towards BC Public Service employees’ expands upon this area. Though limited research was available or reviewed which empirically validates the structured professional instruments used by the ITAU (ex. JACA), each was developed using the experience of expert assessors, was acknowledged in the literature, and is widely in use. Common management strategies recommended by the ITAU are also acknowledged in the literature.

6.3 Research Question #2: Are current processes effective in enhancing safety and security for court participants? How?

In the course of their work at the courthouse employees are frequently in a position of having to impose (or be present during imposition of) controversial or upsetting restrictions upon attendees. Changes which impact financial wellbeing, job security, access to family members or assets, and one’s freedom are all situations with the potential to result in an amplified behavioural response. Though less common (as indicated by the review of 2015 threat assessment reports prepared by the ITAU, none of which cite an employee as the cause) concerns may also surface with regard to employee to employee issues such as conduct upon dismissal. Given the relatively high frequency of interaction with emotionally disturbed clientele, and the large scale of operations employing a diverse array of individuals, it is no surprise that court users alone accounted for 63% of cases referred to the ITAU for initial consultation by the whole of the provincial government in 2015.

As part of a broader mandate, BC Sheriff Services is responsible for ensuring safe and secure operations at courthouses in British Columbia. The ITAU’s role (as a department within the Sheriff Service) is to assess information from sheriff staff or other user groups about potential risk of violence towards employees or facilities, and to provide technical support services to operations. Following assessment, an opinion on the level of risk presented along with recommended mitigation strategies is provided to sheriff managers and others as appropriate. Receivers of the information are then responsible for implementation of protective measures. The ITAU’s role in case management is therefore often indirect, however impacts may be gauged through interviews with sheriff
managers. Though Corporate Security & Risk Management Branch (client source representing the Ministry of the Attorney General & Ministry of the Solicitor General) also refers files from users at the courthouse, being that Corporate Security are managed as an external client interview data has been combined with other external clients in the next section. Case files are also received from the judiciary, and the Office of the Chief Judge on behalf of judiciary; however no representation from this group was included in the interview process. As such, the views of “case managers” in this section are in reference to those of sheriff managers only.

For a variety of reasons as expanded upon below, court locations do not generate as many targeted threats calling for in depth behavioral analysis as external clients. As such, discussion with respect to tools and processes utilized by the ITAU in conducting this form of assessment, and on implications for case management in these situations, is reserved for the next section entitled “Are current processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BC Public Service employees”, which focuses more specifically on these areas. As BC Public Service employees, the small number of complex behavior threats which are generated by court users will be captured here also.

Besides pointing to greater exposure to volatile situations, the large number of potential threats reported by court participants suggests a high level of engagement with the ITAU’s program. In 2014 Sheriff Services rolled out ‘active shooter training’ which involved a presentation to all Court Services employees facilitated by the local sheriff manager, and in 2015 it became standard for Provincial Judges to receive a security orientation from the ITAU upon hire. Though the large number of reported issues may also reasonably be attributed to integration between operational sheriff staff directly charged with executing safety and security measures and those in dedicated intelligence roles, numbers are also likely elevated as a result of training provided to user groups. This is consistent with a key finding from the literature that worksites which receive specific education around identification and reporting of potential threats develop a “culture of reporting” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 14), and suggests overall success in threat and risk identification in the court setting.

To qualify the prior statement that court issues do not appear to require frequent in depth behavioral analysis; of the 142 issues referred for initial consultation by Court Services in 2015, only one resulted in production of a threat assessment report (compared with an average of 11% for other client groups). Several interpretations flow from this observation. Foremost, aside from inherent risks stemming from the nature of the work, whereas issues referred from external clients have already gone through a central reporting process during which it has been predetermined that issues are too complex for resolution at a lower level, issues referred from court participants are received directly from any number of internal or external sources which would result in a large proportion of low level issues being received. A secondary explanation is that environmental protective factors play a role in determining risk level, causing fewer issues to reach the threshold for a threat assessment report at the courthouse given the range of security features in place. It is also possible that the majority of issues generated by the courts are not threats but rather risks. Whereas threats are more likely to require more complex behavioral analysis, risks may more often be addressed through implementation of preventive measures given the specifics of the concern are less definitive. Alternatively, less information may be available regarding concerns from court participants, which inhibits the ability to perform an in depth assessment.

A final but well supported theory on causation, which evidences the importance of exploring this issue, is that sheriffs are in fact referring issues to the ITAU which do not require assessment at all, or may require basic checks only. This is consistent with interview data from ITAU employees and sheriff managers which point to secure storage and management of information as a major function of the section. Sheriffs appear to routinely refer issues not requiring in depth assessment but rather for the purpose of keeping track of problematic individuals and upcoming dates of interest, and appear to be highly reliant upon the case tracking system maintained by PIO’s for this purpose. It is unclear whether this was an intended large scale function of the program.

Support is also rendered from the ITAU with regard intelligence sharing and event planning. Additional products and services supplied (representing program outputs on the logic model) include security alerts, operational plans,
open source reports (primarily for judiciary), and occasionally threat assessment or infrastructure vulnerability reports; all of which increasing opportunities for issues identification or enhanced understanding of known concerns. This demonstrates that the ITAU’s role extends beyond threat and risk assessment, with significant workload related to direct management of threats and risks in the form of technical and administrative support. Contributions also enable advanced planning (if not greater information upon which to base decisions) for situations presenting elevated risk. Commensurate workload pressures from the large number of case files in addition to other forms of administrative support are evident. Though workload was admittedly variable, nearly all ITAU employees interviewees expressed concerns around challenges in completing due diligence at existing capacity. All but one also expressed concerns around the number of files or size of region/area of program responsibility assigned to each SIO or analyst, and stress was experienced around the requirement to repeatedly reprioritize efforts throughout the day. Further, it was not possible to determine actual workload due to discrepancies between recording methods.

Case managers as a whole acknowledge that the ITAU is in the best position to gather and present intelligence, and feel that overall a good job is done in doing so. Though often ‘confirming what was already known’, threat and risk information supplied to case managers was characterized as helpful and more fulsome than otherwise would have been available, largely due to access to police information. Information is essentially used to confirm or ‘justify’ what was planned, and to escalate or de-escalate as appropriate based upon new intelligence. Information also appeared to be weighted by perceived credibility. Whereas ITAU employees identified “erring on the side of caution” as a guiding principle, the majority of sheriff managers preferred to take action only in cases where the threat or risk findings were clearly validated by supportive information.

Regardless of who they are determined by, it is clear that evidence based mitigation strategies are being implemented at the courthouse which contribute to enhanced safety and security for attendees. From a user satisfaction perspective however, they are opportunities for improvement. While some sheriff managers appreciated recommendations as a reference point; the majority preferred not to receive them. Reasons centered around limitations to freely act in their capacity as decision-makers due to perceived liability in the event recommendations are not followed or are de-escalated after a period of monitoring, or a requirement to justify their actions if measures beyond those recommended are enacted. These individuals argue that they possess a high level of experience and training specific to security planning, commonly perform a consultation or briefing amongst the supervisory team (similar to the ITAU’s process), have greater local facilities knowledge than ITAU’s assessors, and once equipped with relevant intelligence are capable of determining appropriate responses on their own. Increased communication between managers throughout the province has also led to higher levels of consistency and transparency in decision-making. Given the majority of issues at the courthouse do not appear to involve structured professional judgement, which means that most responses developed both by assessors and managers are developed using professional expertise alone, it is likely that following a briefing on background information from the ITAU sheriff managers are comparably capable of determining operational responses without the benefit of recommendations. Of note, recommendations from the ITAU and those selected by sheriff managers are most often the same.

One unique use of threat and risk information at the courthouse is for the purposes of informing sheriff staffing decisions. This is specifically applied in the context of determining where best to allocate resources when there are not enough sheriffs available to fill the required number of posts. Based upon interviews with sheriff managers there is an expectation that PIO’s are proactively screening for issues of concern, however this does not appear to be occurring. Some ITAU employees reported PIO’s to be conducting a visual scan of court lists and jail slates daily, with individuals or circumstances giving rise to concern checked using databanks or police contacts prior to attendance at court; however the majority appeared to be undertaking no proactive screening, or inconsistent screening with regard to scope and methods. Though relevant intelligence may come to the attention of other ITAU staff in the course of incidental exposure to databanks and professional contacts, there is also little evidence that employees beyond the PIO level are actively searching for information pertinent to new threats and risks.
For locations which benefit from proactive screening by PIO’s or in which sheriff supervisors make a specific request for a risk assessment prior to decisions about whether or not to provide staffing for a courtroom, the level of investigation is cursory. Given the reliability of a risk rating will be impacted by the quality and quantity of available information, a search involving basic checks only may reasonably be expected to produce poor results. A search will also only produce results in relation to previously documented issues, which represents a relatively high threshold for detection. This is cause for concern as analysis of the literature suggests lower predictive accuracy in research designs with higher specificity. Risk assessment also does not achieve the same deterrent effect of static security features (such as a sheriff monitoring a courtroom or search gate at the front door), so while representing an improvement over no action in an emergent triage situation causing a courtroom to operate without staffing, it does not constitute an equivalent to staffing.

Stemming from reliance upon PIO’s to maintain a case tracking system, and the expectation for proactive screening of attendees in addition to other job duties (whether this is in fact occurring or not occurring) including low level threat and risk assessments, preparation of security alerts, drafting of operational plans, and acting as a liaison between the ITAU and court users; the common practice of redeploying PIO’s into local operations during periods of short staffing is also problematic. There is no backfill for these positions when this occurs, so the work is either not completed or is added to the workload of an SIO who is in less of a position to directly identify and manage on site issues. Dissenting views also surfaced around the current reporting structure for PIO’s. A majority of sheriff managers characterized the arrangement as problematic or “awkward” due to the local manager being responsible for administration and oversight of the PIO but often having little to no knowledge of the work he or she is assigned. Opinions expressed by the ITAU were mixed, with some siting benefits such as relationship building at the local level.

In summary, available evidence suggests that threat and risk information is assistive and at a minimum is considered by case managers. In the majority of cases recommendations are also followed, which demonstrates influence over case management decisions in addition to a direct and critical role played via technical administrative support and as a central storage entity for secure information. ‘Increased awareness of threat and risk information’ and ‘implementation of protective actions’ are components of ‘enhanced case management’, which appears as a short term outcome on the logic model for the ITAU’s program. The above analysis points to success in meeting this goal. Further, identification, assessment, and active case management of threats and risk issues is apparent at courthouses; which may naturally be extended to demonstrate that the program is successful in the long term goal enhancing safety and security for court users overall. Use of assessment information for the purpose of informing sheriff staffing decision however is not supported, and there are opportunities to enhance service from a user perspective with regard to communication of findings following assessment and issues related to the job duties and supervision of PIO’s.

6.4 Research Question #3: Are current processes effective in reducing risk of targeted violence towards BCPS employees? How?

In addition to preparing threat and risk information in relation to user groups at the courthouse, the ITAU is contracted to perform assessments for referred through a centralized reporting system from the BC Public Service Agency’s Occupational Health and Safety Department, including those referred by the Targeted Threat of Violence Management Program (TTVMP). In contrast to the courthouse where issues are often reported directly from the employee or department with concerns, assessments for other clients will have gone through an initial triage with trained evaluators capable of independently managing a range of more routine issues. If a referral occurs, once threat or risk information is communicated from the ITAU back to the external client source they in turn pass findings on to management representatives and/or local Occupational Health and Safety Committees of the worksite impacted. The worksite is then responsible for implementing protective actions. As with the courts the ITAU’s role in case management for other organizations is therefore indirect, however impacts may be drawn from interviews...
with external client contacts. In addition to central groups involved with referrals as above, representation from the Ministry of Children and Family’s Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) Program (as a major source of case files) was included in external client interviews.

Contrary to the court environment, 2015 case files suggest that a greater proportion of issues referred to the ITAU from clients outside of the court system represent complex threats. The top external client group for 2015 was the Ministry of Children and Families, which referred 14% of total issues for initial assessment but represented 60% of the total threat assessment reports prepared (which only occurs in more complex or dynamic situations). For some client groups lower rates of initial referral may infer decreased exposure to volatile situations, however for those routinely interacting with hostile clientele this is likely because of advanced vetting through central reporting systems which are capable of resolving some issues prior to referral, and due to more refined OSH processes at the local level. It is difficult to gauge program engagement in this scenario, though logically one would expect worksites with increased exposure to risk would report more frequently than others, which appears to be occurring.

All BC government managers also have access to the Manager/Supervisor Guide to How to Recognize a Threat of Targeted Violence (Interview participant, personal communication, Mar 20 2018) as well as assistive services through the BC Public Service agency (BCPSA) and OSH committees at the local level, however the extent of reporting is unknown.

Success in reducing in targeted violence starts with correctly identifying risk levels. Reliability of threat and risk assessment ratings were found to be impacted by limitations upon access to information, level of training of assessors, and multidisciplinary/multi-assessor inclusion. While access to information, level of education, and the amount of direct experience conducting threat and risk assessments varied substantially between team members; cumulatively a very high level of access to both restricted and general information was observed, as well as to expert resources internal and external to the unit including certified threat specialists, behavioural scientists, and a clinical psychologist. Most members of the ITAU also had a specialization (ex. organized crime issues, infrastructure vulnerability assessment, or open source searches), and risk ratings and recommendations were decided as a group. Further, the structured professional judgement guides and tools used to assist in assessment are supported by the literature. On this basis it is evident that the ITAU is well equipped to professionally respond to a wide range of complex, serious, and dynamic concerns with comparable or better reliability to other threat assessment groups.

As an empirical means of evaluating the reliability of threat assessments completed by the ITAU, a systematic review was conducted of past research on structured professional judgement guides which are used during the assessment process. These include the WAVR-21, HCR-20, SARA, B-SAFER, SAM, SAVRY, and MLG. As hallmarks of effectiveness, predictive validity and interrater reliability were examined using 40 studies. Rates of predictive accuracy drawn primarily from Receiver Operating Characteristics analysis was found to be within the moderate to very good range, which translates to between 60-89% accuracy depending on the tool, sample characteristics, and research design. Interrater reliability was graded using a different categorical scoring system based upon variations of the Interclass Correlation Coefficient. With the exception of the B-SAFER which scored in the fair (40-60% agreement) range, all performed within the good to excellent range equating to 60-100% agreement between assessors. Also, limited research was available to validate testing on adult female populations, with reviewed sources suggesting inconsistent and often chance level prediction. As all indications suggest the ITAU is using structured professional judgement guides in the prescribed manner, with relatively high levels of access to information, and utilizing qualified assessors, it may be reasonably inferred that similar rates of success are being achieved in applying accurate risk levels to those above.

In further efforts to empirically examine reliability of the ITAU’s reporting, risk ratings from threat assessment reports from 2015 (N=35) were compared to court data to determine whether subjects were charged with a violent offence, or any offence excluding traffic, in the year following assessment. Unfortunately the small sample size (N=25) combined with a lack of representativeness amongst risk ratings (88% rated low-moderate risk) and outcomes (72% of subjects not charged with any form of offense in the year following assessment) likely
contributed to inconclusive results. Chi Square Testing with a significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used to measure the relationship between the variable of ‘risk rating for future violence’ and ‘incidence of charges related to violence’, with results verified using Fishers Exact Test. In some cases a secondary risk rating for non-violent concerns was provided; for these cases a second test was performed to measure the relationship between ‘risk rating for non-violent concerns’ and ‘incidence of charges related to non-violent offending’, and a third test was performed to measure the relationship between variables of ‘risk rating for violence’ and ‘incidence of charges related to non-violent offending’. No statistically significant relationship was demonstrated between risk ratings and outcomes; though higher risk ratings for violence were positively correlated to higher rates of non-violent offending In the absence of obvious sampling problems, overall results would have provided the appearance that risk ratings were inaccurate. An alternative explanation would be that given the ITAU’s program involves recommendations for protective actions following assessment, these protective actions as carried out by case managers in fact provided a preventative effect; this explanation was posited by Belfrage et al (2012) with regard to similar results testing the B-SAFTER with a larger sample (N=216). Accurate positive prediction in a program intended to prevent may more rightly be interpreted as a failure rather than a success in this respect (Belfrage & Strand, 2009, p. 75). To provide a more conclusive finding however, further research using a larger and more diverse sample is needed.

To establish reliability of the ITAU’s initial triage process in identifying cases which present elevated risk to employees at the time of referral (as this is what determines which cases are escalated for full behavioral threat assessment in the first place), criminal offences committed in the year following referral for cases addressed via alternate or lesser means were compared to those from the group which was escalated for production of a TAR. Incidence of both violent offences committed and non-violent offences committed were consistently lower in the group addressed by alternate or lesser means, which provides a strong indication that cases presenting elevated risk are being correctly identified at the triage level. Though it also demonstrates that those addressed via TAR continue to offend following assessment; a probable explanation (given, as above, higher risk ratings assigned by the ITAU are likely a relatively accurate depiction of risk levels) is that this has occurred in spite of and not because of the process. This further suggests that rates of offending for the group at increased risk may otherwise have been higher in the absence of threat assessment and management activities, and supports a future research focus as suggested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2017, p. 83) and Belfrage & Strand (2009, p. 75) upon the relationship between protective actions and outcomes.

Belfrage et al (2012) found that risk ratings were strongly associated to the intensity of protective actions. Risk ratings were compared to the number of recommendations provided by assessors in the ITAU’s 2015 reports, with a finding that the number of recommendations generally increased as the risk rating for violence increased. Keeping in mind case managers verify recommendations are generally followed, this suggests that risk ratings are assistive in decision making regarding allocation of resources, with the greatest intensity of protective actions being directed towards the highest risk cases. Conversely, the opposite pattern was observed with regard to risk ratings for non-violent issues; with the number of recommendations decreasing as the risk level increased. Though implications of this are unclear, it is possible this is due a limitation upon the intended scope of recommendations to focus upon issues related to violence prevention.

Number of recommendations was also compared to outcomes, with a finding that all of those who committed offences (both violent and non-violent) had been issued an above average number of recommendations. While testing the B-SAFTER, Storey et. al (2014) similarly concluded that there was no significant relationship between the number of management strategies and recidivism (p. 244). One hypothesis to explain this somewhat contradictory finding is that, being each set of recommendations is highly case specific, the content and degree to which they are carried out would have a greater impact upon outcomes than the number issued.

Of note, a large proportion of threat assessments did not supply a risk rating for non-violent offending (68% unrated). This may be due to purposeful limitations in scope given the primary intention of the assessment is to determine propensity for violence. It was observed however that a higher proportion of subjects participated in non-
violent than violent offending (28% versus 16% respectively), and that there appeared to be a pattern in the trajectory of non-violent charges whereby offending tended to occur within 30 days of assessment (56%); compared with violent offending for which there was no pattern in trajectory. The higher prevalence of non-violent offending, as this may also be problematic to employees and appears also to be connected to violence, suggests there may be utility in providing consistent ratings for this type of behavior.

Another observation is that 92% of 2015 threat assessment reports stemmed from a communicated threat of violence to the target or a third party. Though leakage is cause for concern, direct verbal threats to the target are not a reliable indicator of the level of threat presented, as it is in fact more likely that subjects who plan to carry out an attack will not communicate his or her intentions but rather participate in a series of known warning behaviors (Fein et al., 1995, p. 2; Borum et al., 1999, p. 328; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017, p. 5; Vossekuil et al., 2001, p. 82; Calhoun & Weston, 2009, p. 9). As individual circumstances vary considerably however, it is also critical to evaluate all threats on a case by case basis. In the context of threats to employees of the Ministry of Children and Families (which applies in the majority of case files reviewed) these must be evaluated with increased sensitivity given the strength of familial relationships and direct impact of employee actions upon them. This gives rise to heightened concern regarding the intimacy effect, and supports the current practice of engaging in careful case by case review.

A third effort to gauge impacts of the ITAU’s threat assessment activities centered around the impact of threat and risk information upon protective actions; interviews were performed with external receivers of threat and risk information responsible for reviewing, approving, and communicating mitigation strategies to case managers at the local office which generated the concerns. Participants unanimously found threat and risk information helpful and informative, even when used to verify what was already known. Greater context and clarity with which to determine protective actions, and justification or increased confidence in communicating management strategies were also cited direct impacts. Mitigation strategies are only effective if implemented however. While recommendations are reportedly followed by the local work units most of the time, on occasion they were not followed for practical reasons (ex. too expense or impractical in light of local considerations) or for reasons unknown. In some cases issues will be referred for further evaluation following an escalation in behavior, however the escalation of behavior appeared to flow from a failure to follow recommendations from the initial assessment.

Interviewees had difficulty qualifying the impacts of threat assessment activities upon outcomes, which is not surprising as this essentially calls for the respondent to speculate on contributory factors in lead up to an event which did not occur. Situations are dynamic, and any number of influences has the potential to change outcomes. Perhaps stemming from this, a main observable benefit was with regard to the emotional wellbeing of employees, as the act of escalating threatening behavior for professional assessment ‘makes employees feel safer at work’ and ‘demonstrates concern on behalf of the employer’. Further, employer obligations to perform a risk assessment in relation to potential for violence as outlined by WorkSafe are met, and assistance is often rendered with instigating direct interventions upon the subject through police or with management advice (reviewing materials prior to distribution to the subject for example). Though unknown rates of workplace violence detract from the ability to know, interviewees also pointed to low frequency of successful attacks upon government employees or facilities as a measure of success. Once implemented many protective actions are forms of target hardening and would also have a practical deterrent effect upon subjects considering an act of violence, both in relation to the current issue at hand as well as others in the future.

Having established it is likely the ITAU is achieving significantly better than chance levels of predictive accuracy in assigning risk ratings, threat and risk information provides assistive background to better inform the management of potential targeted violence, recommendations are generally followed and are associated with heightened allocation of resources towards the most high risk cases, and direct action is being taken with regard to interventions upon the subject; it is evident that short terms goals on the logic model of enhancing case management and instigating direct interventions upon the subject are met, and that cumulative impacts result in reduced risk of targeted violence.
towards BC Public Service employee and facilities. Further, employees feel safer at work and are more engaged with their supervisors in an environment where professional assessment services are available.
7.0 Conclusion

As an internal department within the BC Sheriff Service and also the contracted assessment group for assistance with threats to all other employees and facilities within the BC provincial government, the ITAU performs two distinct functions. The level of integration and direct support in facilitating the security program at courthouses is far broader than with external partners. Though for a variety of reasons court issues result in a small fraction of complex behavioural assessments compared with referrals from outside sources; the ITAU is heavily relied upon for storage and management of information, basic checks in relation to emergent issues, and event planning for high security and other matters. Conversely, ITAU’s role in relation to external clients is primarily in relation to preparation of threat assessment reports for more complex behavioral cases, general provision of risk management advice in relation to violence, and in some cases initiation of direct interventions upon the subject through law enforcement or mental health contacts.

Court users appear highly engaged with the program and the section is widely recognized by case managers as a beneficial source of quality intelligence used to verify what is known, escalate or de-escalate as appropriate, or to justify allocation of resources. Sheriff managers also implement recommended protective actions in most cases, though opportunities for improved communication on this front are outlined in the recommendations section. Whereas engagement with court users is high, engagement with other worksites is less clear due a centralized reporting system in which a large number of issues are managed and resolved prior to a requirement for referral. External case managers place a high value on information provided by the ITAU, primarily as this considers police sources which would otherwise be inaccessible, and as determinations are developed with the benefit of opinions from clinical practitioners possessing an elevated level of training and expertise. Risk ratings are also demonstrated to influence allocation of resources towards higher risk cases, with higher risk ratings associated to a higher number of protective actions taken. Though recommendations are reported to be followed most of the time, external interviewees (as intermediaries between the ITAU and worksites experiencing the issues) expressed uncertainty around true rates of compliance, as case managers at the worksites are not required to report back on the status of implementation. There was also evidence that a higher number of recommendations negatively correlated to decreased offending in the 2015 sample (most who offended were assigned a slightly above average number of recommendations), implications of which being unclear.

Though specific tests of predictive validity did not determine a statistically significant relationship between the variables of ‘risk rating determined by the ITAU’ and ‘criminal charges related to violent or non-violent offending behavior in the year to follow’, there was some indication that higher risk ratings for violence positively correlate to increased non-violent offending behavior, and otherwise inconclusive results were attributed to sampling issues. Investigative processes and use of assessment instruments are in alignment with those recommended by credible field experts, and the structured professional judgement approach and associated guides used by the ITAU to assess and respond to complex behavioral threats are empirically validated; with the sole exception of use of structured professional judgment guides upon adult women, as research is limited overall and did not consistently support predictive accuracy beyond chance levels. As such, it is highly likely the ITAU achieves comparable rates of accuracy in assigning risk levels to those determined in previous studies and is adept in developing appropriate response plans. Rates of criminal offending in the year following initial referral for cases escalated for full behavioural threat assessment were also consistently higher than those addressed via alternate or lesser means, which points to success of the initial triage process in identifying higher risk cases at the outset.

During the literature review of past studies, three further factors found to impact the quality and accuracy of assessments were access to information, the qualifications of assessors, and the use of multi-disciplinary or multiple assessors. As determined through interviews with team members and verified using review of 2015 threat assessment reports; the ITAU is found to perform assessments with the benefit of highly classified information from
police and other sources, has a highly trained team and access to multi-disciplinary clinical and academic experts, and develops a finding on all risk ratings and recommendations for complex cases in a team setting. In this regard, the ITAU is strongly validated as a capable resource.

While true and exact impacts of threat assessment and risk management processes may never be known (Meloy & Hoffman, 2014, p. 8); it is clear that the ITAU is a highly qualified team engaging in widely recognized best practices which are consistent with current theory in the field. Assessment activities occurring at worksites which are engaged with the program, including courthouses, are also improving safety and security and reducing the risk of targeted violence through use of a reliable risk rating system which in turn allows evidence based decision making around implementation of protective actions. Further, case management is shown to result in target hardening measures which provide a deterrent effect, direct interventions upon high risk subject which are known to de-escalate progress toward an act of violence, improved emotional well-being for employees, and adherence to a regulated requirement that BC employers assess situations presenting risk of violence to employees.

Several opportunities for improvement were identified through interviews with ITAU employees, sheriff managers, and external clients. Workload pressures were cumulatively identified as a major stressor, which in turn translates to delays in reporting. A number of issues related to the hiring, reporting structure, and deployment of PIO’s were also identified by sheriff managers which could be improved from a user perspective. Further, the current operational use of risk assessment to inform sheriffs staffing decisions appears misguided and is not recommended. All of the above are addressed in the recommendations section, in addition to suggestions for further research.
8.0 Recommendations

As the ITAU is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan and a separate review of policy considerations is underway, some of the suggested practices below may already be in effect or under review. Recommendations are outlined in a time order to reflect urgency and/or natural flow of implementation.

8.1 IMMEDIATE (0-6 months)

1) Improve workload management

A perceived lack of timeliness in reporting was the foremost concern of external clients, and workload issues were the most frequently cited cause of delays by ITAU employees. It is also difficult to gauge actual workload, as databases used to record activities have produced inconsistent records. Several activities are recommended in responding to these concerns:

1. Outline timeline expectations for the various types of case files to ITAU staff and clients
2. Implement a reliable case tracking system which details employee hours and activities
3. Develop guidelines around appropriate workload per employee

This is not to say that additional matters won’t be addressed, but rather to enable effective communication of workload pressures and to identify coaching or positive recognition opportunities in relation to employee output. An additional recommendation is to consider hiring a certified assessor (ex. psychologist or PhD student) on an on-call or auxiliary basis, and to explore billing to external clients for services rendered during periods in which the unit has exceeded reasonable capacity.

Of note, a lack of communication throughout the assessment process was a further cause of frustration for external clients. Communication on regular intervals, in particular in the event routine timelines will not be met, may assist in this regard.

2) Exercise caution with use of Structured Professional Judgement Guides for Adult Women

A recent meta-analysis suggests that adult women are impacted differently by predictive factors considered using common structured professional judgement tools including the HCR-20 (or by alternate/additional factors not considered by them), and that risk ratings may not be reliable for this reason (Geraghty & Woodams, 2015, p. 34-35). It is recommended that this potential limitation be considered in evaluating threats and risks for adult female subjects.

3) Consider consistently assessing risk level for non-violent offending

As evidenced by outcomes based upon court data following threat assessment by the ITAU in 2015, a higher prevalence of non-violent offending than violent offending, possible association to violent offending, and shorter term trajectory in comparison with violent offending (over half committed within 30 days), suggest utility in consistent application of risk ratings for non-violent behavior. Further, non-violent but delinquent behavior may still present potential harm to employees. It is recommended that the practice of providing this rating as an optional component of full behavioral threat assessment reports be reviewed.
8.2 SHORT TERM (6 months – 1 year)

4) Review use of ‘risk assessment’ for the purpose of sheriff staffing decisions

Reduced risk of targeted violence is best achieved through use of threat and risk assessment in combination with other approaches (Calhoun, 2009, p. 5). In addition to these assessments which respond to known threats and risks, courthouses benefit from a wide range of security features which act as a deterrent towards those which are unknown; foremost, armed sheriffs prepared to respond to emergent issues. In times of critical staffing shortage, sheriff supervisors and/or PIO’s perform a risk assessment for the purpose of determining which posts to staff with a sheriff. Methods are inconsistent and cursory however (detecting surface level information only), which severely limits the reliability of findings. Reliance upon these checks to establish a risk level garners a false sense of security, as risk ratings likely represent chance level prediction of future violence for known issues and no predictive ability for issues which are unknown or undetected using the methods available. Should time and resources be made available to conduct more fulsome investigation into potential issues, these assessments (while more reliable) would be aimed at preventing or de-escalating attacks behaviors before they occur, and do not provide the deterrent effect towards unknown risks which is achieved through a uniformed presence.

It is recommended that routine checks of basic information continue as one component of a comprehensive approach to enhance the safety and security of court participants in this context, but not be relied upon as the sole guiding principle in determining sheriff staffing levels. It is further recommended that the scope and methods for performing this type of assessment be standardized (ex. participant names and nature of the court files are visually scanned for concerns, and court related databank checks are performed), with risk level assigned based (at least in part) upon an objective pre-determined set of criteria. When communicating findings from a non-resultant search, this would also be more accurately characterized as “unknown risk” rather than “low risk”, and limitations of this form of risk assessment should be clearly communicated to decision makers. Transitioning necessitates broad re-education of users, and it is lastly recommended that the Senior Management Team collectively review present practices and discuss next steps.

5) Review communication method for mitigation strategies to sheriff managers

As outlined in the discussion section it is likely that, following a briefing on relevant intelligence, sheriff managers are comparably (if not more) capable of determining operational responses to the majority of security concerns arising at the courthouse without the benefit of recommendations. A majority also prefers not to receive them, though opinions vary. From a program standpoint it is appropriate for the ITAU to supply managers with specific information and/or training on fitting protective actions based upon risk level, however there does not appear to be harm in providing these in an alternate format (ex. matrix outlining suggested responses in relation to risk level available on a shared platform), or characterizing these as “operational considerations” rather than “recommendations”. It is recommended that the practice of proactively issuing recommendations to sheriff managers be reviewed. No change is recommended with regard to communication for external clients.

6) Review deployment and supervision practices for PIO’s

PIO’s are a critical component of the ITAU’s infrastructure, which creates a service gap when they are redeployed or not backfilled during leave. It is recommended that PIO’s be excluded as an operational resource on a case by case basis in consultation with ITAU’s Inspector. To action this, it is recommended a case be presented to the Senior Management Team for decision.

If retaining the current reporting structure, a more collaborative and communicative approach between the ITAU and supervisors at the home offices of PIO’s is also recommended. Specifically that expectations for job
duties (including specification of methods for duties such as proactive screening of court attendees, if this is indeed to occur) are standardized and communicated along with frequent contact to update local managers and supervisors on workload, priorities, and suggested opportunities for professional development. At a minimum, openly communicating regarding this controversial issue (including specifying potential limitations of the program, such as those related to proactive screening) may promote collaboration and increase ‘buy-in’.

7) **Review appointment process for specialized non-operational positions within the ITAU**

Though some sheriff managers expressed concerns around a lack of consistency between hiring practices at the ITAU and operational sheriff postings (extended temporary appointments rather than permanent hires for PIO’s); most were also troubled by a ‘disconnect’ between ITAU staff and operations, with a perception that staff become out of touch with current issues and priorities following extended periods away from front line duties and then have difficulty returning to the operational workforce. This supports the current practice of using temporary appointments to fill PIO positions by preventing employees potentially returning to operations from being gone for an extreme amount of time. The use of temporary appointments also supports capacity building with regard to human capital, provides opportunities for engagement with an increased number of staff, and potential utility exists in expanding this practice to capture other positions within the unit as natural vacancies arise through attrition. As any change may have implications for other positions within the Sheriff Service which are ‘non-operational’ or ‘specialized’ and would likely involve protracted discussion amongst stakeholders, it is recommended that this topic be brought forward at the Senior Management level.

8) **Initiate a review of Provincial Sheriff Policy**

In light of major changes impacting sheriff operations including the roll out of carbines, increased integration with police, an increased number of inmate classifications assigned by BC Corrections, and unusual judicial orders to name a few, sheriff managers point to opportunities to update existing policy and protocol in relation to risk management and high security planning. Provincial policy is not set by the ITAU, however it is recommended that these items be drawn to the attention of the Senior Business & Planning Policy Analyst for consideration. Should these issues be revisited from a policy perspective, input from the ITAU may encourage a balanced perspective.

**8.3 LONG TERM (1-2 years)**

9) **Targeted field education to court staff**

Further to evidence of increased reporting from groups which receive education regarding risk identification and prevention, while both ITAU employees and sheriff managers indicate the threat identification process is ‘working’ both also point to opportunities for targeted education of staff at courthouses experiencing decreased program engagement regarding the scope and needs of the ITAU’s program. This may increase opportunities for issues detection, decrease inappropriate or inadequate reporting, promote relationship building, and is emphasized in light of increased sheriff recruits entering the workforce.

10) **Centralized reporting for court issues**

A further option to consider in addressing workload is developing and implementing a centralized reporting system for court related issues using a technology platform. Though this would not result in the same decreases to workload stemming from vetting of issues through trained reviewers (as is the case with external clients); this would lessen the impacts of a service gap when positions are vacant or temporarily unfilled, decrease delays in receiving information as it would come directly rather than filtering through intermediaries, standardize procedures and branding, ensure that expectations for information needs are clear (required details could be
standardized on a reporting template), and potentially allow for accurate statistical measures of caseload without a requirement for manual entry.

Representation from the Corporate Security and Risk Management Branch also expressed an interest in developing a more refined central reporting system for threats and risks as identified by employees, perhaps similar to more methodical multi-level review procedures in place with the Ministry of Children and Families. Though outside the scope of the ITAU’s mandate, there may be an opportunity to provide information in this regard from a relationship building standpoint, or to engage in a parallel or joint initiative.

8.4 VARIABLE TERM

11) Improve access to information for assessors

Though current access to information is sufficient to support quality results, assessors-point to opportunities for increased ease of access. Some success has been experienced with an ‘initial consultation checklist’ outlining required documentation for use with external clients; expanded use of this type of document is recommended for immediate action. Reportedly already in progress, easing settings in SCMS and JUSTIN which restrict the ability to search and enter court and sheriff records are also examples of relatively straightforward improvements which could be made in the short term.

Long term, direct access to police information through additional users and/or portals, including the possibility of an onsite portal, was identified as an opportunity for substantial improvement. Integration with the IRIS reporting platform used by Sheriff Services may also assist with issues identification. This could be facilitated by adding a check box to both the daily occurrence form and report form in IRIS for “notify ITAU”, which would result in an automatic notification at staff discretion. A single integrated platform with which to access data sources and embedded templates may also enhance ease of use.

8.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

12) Further research related to effectiveness of targeted violence management in BC government

Program engagement with some external client groups is excellent. The level of awareness and reporting in relation to concerns about targeted violence in most provincial government organizations however is unknown. While it is possible these organizations are familiar with relevant warning behaviors and guidelines and are simply not experiencing situations giving rise to concern in the workplace (or that a large number of issues are indeed reported to the BC Public Service and resolved prior to referral to the ITAU), it is also possible that they are unclear about what to look for or are underreporting for a variety of reasons. There is also evidence that a failure of external end users to follow recommendations has led to escalation of behavioural issues on a number of documented occasions. Quality data around true rates of reporting and compliance with recommended mitigation strategies could be drawn from direct inquiries to local Occupational Safety and Health committees and/or a representative group of managers from a sampling of worksites, however this was beyond the scope of the project at hand and outside of the ITAU’s mandate (more directly relating to the BC Public Service’s Occupational Health and Safety Program). Further research is recommended in this area.

With regard to measuring the effects of the ITAU’s program, more conclusive information regarding the relationship between risk ratings and outcomes (violence committed or not committed) may be drawn from a similar study utilizing a larger and more diverse sample. As posed by the literature however, predictive validity is less relevant in preventative programs, and a suggested focus for redirect would be the impact of specific protective actions upon outcomes. Additionally, an extension to include direct interview data from external case managers at worksites (rather than with intermediaries involved with central reporting) to determine true rates of implementation following recommendations would be informative. Alternatively, an experimental
design could be used to further isolate the effects of assessment and management techniques by selecting two randomized samples from a group *not* referred to the ITAU but engaged in higher risk contact with employees (ex. those with serious violent criminal charges required to attend court appearances over a given period, or those routinely attending an MCFD office in relation to the removal of a child). The treatment sample could be assessed by the ITAU and managed in accordance with assessment recommendations, and the control sample left untreated beyond ordinary procedures in the absence of assessment.

13) **Further research in the fields of threat assessment and risk management**

Threat assessment and risk management are imprecise disciplines, but remain the most promising planning tools for targeted violence available at this time. As such, further research is needed in both areas. This may most appropriately focus upon the relationship between management strategies and outcomes rather than predictive validity of assessment findings (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015, p. 83, Belfrage & Strand, 2009, p. 75). At the micro-level, results of past research with regard to the effectiveness of structured professional judgement tools in evaluating and managing (potentially unique) risk factors associated to future violence in adult women are inconsistent, in some cases suggesting chance level prediction (Geraghty & Woodhams, 2015, p. 34-35). As a major gap impacting overall effectiveness of the management strategies for a large proportion of the population, further research in this area is critically needed. Though not addressed in this report, as no evidence surfaced within the scope of inquiry, similar issues relating to use of structured professional judgement tools with Aboriginal populations are acknowledged also.
9.0 References


APPENDIX A: BC Sheriff Services Integrated Threat Assessment Unit (ITAU) Threat Assessment Model

**GOAL:** (1) To enhance the safety and security of court operations in BC (2) To reduce the risk of targeted violence towards BC Public Service (BCPS) Employees at the worksite, and/or stemming from employment

**SITUATION:** In the broader context of Sheriff Service’s mandate to provide security services at court facilities, issues pertaining to individuals attending court are referred to the ITAU for case tracking and/or assessment (ex. High security events, media interest, or prisoner management issues). BCPS policy is also to refer non-emergent concerns regarding risk of targeted violence towards any BCPS employee to the ITAU for advice. In both cases the ITAU’s role is to assess the level of risk presented and to develop and recommend risk management strategies using evidence based intelligence.

**RESOURCES**
- Program Managers (2)
- Intelligence Case Manager (1)
- Senior Intelligence Officers (6)
- Protective Intelligence Officers (29)
- Provincial Intelligence Analysts (2)

**ACTIVITIES**
- Providing threat awareness education
- Site assessments
- Basic threat assessments & issues triage
- Review of available evidence:
  - Source info (ex. interviews with PSA, Ministry Security Officer, local sheriffs)
  - Documents (ex. court orders, incident reports, previous assessments)
  - Databanks (ex. SCMS, CEIS, JUSTIN, PRIME)
  - Open sources (ex. social media, websites, news feeds)
  - Advice from interagency colleagues
- Advanced threat assessments guided by structured professional judgement tools

**OUTPUTS**
- Threat awareness workshops
- Infrastructure vulnerability Reports
- Case tracking
- Security alerts posted at the courthouse
- Operational Plans
- Threat Evaluation Reports
- Summary of Findings
- Briefing Reports

**OUTCOMES**
- Increased awareness of potential threats
- Enhanced case management
- Preventative measures implemented at worksites
- Direct interventions (ex. police investigation, outreach by mental health worker)

**EXTERNAL FACTORS:** Unknown or unreported risk, implementation of recommendations at

**RISK/PROTECTIVE FACTORS:** Threat assessment reports mirror the quality and accuracy of source information; risk factors are also fluid and dynamic, causing findings and recommendations to become less reliable over.
APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

ITAU Employees

Section 1: Threat Identification

1) How do issues regarding court participants come to your attention?

2) In the absence of a known concern, to what extent and using what methods are individuals entering court facilities screened for threats by the ITAU?

3) What pressures or challenges are you faced with in threat identification? Is the process working? If not, why not?

Section 2: Performing the Assessment

4) Please walk me through the assessment process once a threat is identified at a court location:
   a. How are issues “triaged”? What are the potential outcomes of triage?
   b. What sources of information are used in your investigation?
   c. How is the information evaluated and case management plan developed?
      i. What frameworks, guides, instruments, templates, etc are used?
      ii. Who is consulted (inside or outside of your team)?
      iii. What training have you received?
   d. What products are produced?
   e. How long does this process take to complete?

5) What pressures or challenges do you face in assessment? What is working and not working?

Section 3: Enhancing Case Management

6) Please walk me through what happens after the assessment is performed:
   a. Who is the information communicated to and how?
   b. What other actions might you take in follow up?
   c. Who decides how to manage the case and follows through with implementation?
   d. What is the impact of the assessment, including recommendations? How do you know?

7) What pressures or challenges are you faced with in case management? How could this be improved?

Section 4: Differences When Dealing with Other Government Organizations

8) Do you participate in preparation of threat assessments related to targeted violence towards employees and worksites in other ministries? If yes:
   a. How are threat identification, assessment, and case management different in this case?
   b. Are pressures and challenges the same? What is working and not working?

Section 5: Other Comments

9) Is there anything I should know in evaluating whether this process is effective in identifying and mitigating potential threats of targeted violence towards court participants and/or other provincial government employees and facilities? Please explain.
Interview Questions – BC Sheriff Services Managers & External Client Contacts

Section 1: Consumer profile

1) Is the threat assessment information you receive limited to court participants or do receive information regarding other government employees and worksites as well?

2) Have you received and/or are you familiar with the below threat assessment and support services from the ITAU which are available to your worksite:
   a. Case tracking
   b. Security alerts
   c. Operational plans
   d. Threat assessment education
   e. Threat assessment reports (or summary reports)
   f. Infrastructure vulnerability assessments

3) What other sources of information and services are in place at your worksite to identify and mitigate potential threats towards employees or the facility?

Section 2: Case Management implications

4) We will now discuss threat assessments performed by the ITAU regarding issues within your area of responsibility. Occasions giving rise to a “threat assessment” may include but are not limited to high security court matters or escorts, and threats of targeted violence towards a staff member or facility.
   a. How did the potential threat come to your attention?
   b. If not from the ITAU, was additional information provided by the ITAU which enhanced your understanding of the issues?
   c. Did the information influence your decision to implement preventative measures?

   Examples of “preventative measures” may include but are not limited to increased monitoring and supervision, changes to staffing deployment, enhanced security features at the facility, or direct interventions upon the subject (ie. police contact, recommendations for charge approval, outreach by a mental health professional, etc).

   d. Were recommendations from the ITAU followed? Why or why not?
   e. Beyond communicating information about the potential threat and recommendations on response, did the ITAU assist with case management in any other way?

   Examples of “assisting with case management” may include but are not limited to case tracking, operational plans, infrastructure vulnerability reports, on site supervision of security activities, and written or verbal briefings or alerts provided for staff.

   f. Are responses to threats effective and/or sufficient?

5) What is working and not working with this process? How could it be improved?

6) Is there anything I should know in evaluating whether ITAU’s model is effective in identifying and mitigating potential threats of targeted violence towards court participants and/or other provincial government employees and facilities? Please explain
APPENDIX C: Breakdown of ‘Violent’ Versus ‘Non-Violent’ Offenses for the Purpose of Determining Outcomes in the Year Following Assessment by the ITAU

**Violent**

- Uttering threats
- Assault
- Aggravated assault
- Assault with a weapon
- Assaulting a peace officer
- Unlawful confinement
- Causing fear of injury to person or property by another person
- Possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose
- Pointing a firearm
- Robbery
- Extortion
- Criminal harassment
- Making harassing communication
- Escaping lawful custody

**Other**

- Dangerous operation of a motor vehicle
- Operating a motor vehicle while disqualified
- Flight from a peace officer
- Resisting or obstructing a peace officer
- Possession of a firearm contrary to court order
- Possession of a stolen credit card
- Possession of an identity document without lawful excuse
- Trespassing at night
- Breach of an undertaking
- Breach of probation order
- Breaking and entering
- Mischief
- Possession of stolen property under $5000
- Possession of stolen property over $5000
- Theft
- Possession of a firearm without license
- Possession of a controlled substance
- Trafficking of a controlled substance
- Being unlawfully at large
- Disobeying a court order
- Causing a disturbance