

Targeted Violence and Terrorism Strengths, Needs, and Risks: Assessment & Management Tool (T-SAM)

Harm toward others is a known risk, yet mental health professionals working outside of forensic settings have few if any tools they can use to assess and manage violence risk to inform risk assessment and treatment planning. To fill an important gap in the field, the Trauma and Community Resilience Center (TCRC) at Boston Children's Hospital created the first risk assessment and management tool for targeted violence that can be used by mental health professionals working in generalist settings.

The Targeted Violence and Terrorism Strengths, needs, and risks: Assessment & Management Tool (T-SAM) offers mental health professionals a collaborative, client-centered approach to assessment and management of risk for both adults and children. T-SAM development was informed by an evidence-based, suicide-focused therapeutic framework known as the Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidality. Items included in T-SAM assessment are the result of a thorough review of existing violence risk assessment tools, research on risk and protective factors for targeted violence, and input from subject matter experts in violence prevention.

In 2023, the T-SAM was piloted in diverse child and adult serving clinical settings (e.g., schools, hospital clinics, social service non-profits, mobile crisis teams, forensic settings, EAPs) with a cohort of 47 mental health professionals across the country. Following their initial T-SAM training, this cohort reported significant improvements in confidence related to identifying, assessing, and treating individuals at risk of targeted violence. Findings further suggest that the T-SAM is helpful in clarifying duty to warn and motivations for targeted violence, guides clinicians' understanding of what to ask when, uncovers risk for other types of violence, and facilitates an individualized process for building treatment plans focused on violence prevention.

Features of the TSAM:

- Clarifies the role of the mental health provider in community-based, violence prevention efforts
- Comprehensively assesses strengths and needs in addition to risks
- Values clinical judgment and collateral information while centering the client's perspectives
- Links assessment results directly to treatment planning and management
- Provides a framework consultation with other providers from similar and distinct disciplines
- Provides a structured process for stabilization, treatment planning and re-evaluating risk at every client contact

Results of the T-SAM Training Program:

- 100% of clinicians said the T-SAM training program was helpful.
- 89% said it prepared them for using the T-SAM in clinic.
- 92% said it helped them to understand risk and protective factors for TVT.
- 89% said it helped them to identify if someone may be vulnerable to TVT.
- 89% said it helped them build a treatment plan that's responsive to TVT risk.
- 94% said the T-SAM is a valuable tool for TVT risk assessment and management.

Reflections from TSAM Trainees:

“The training laid a wonderful foundation and the consult calls really built upon that and strengthened my skills & confidence with regard to using the tool.”

“I took away a great deal from the case presentations and walking through the T-SAM with the other people on the call. Seeing it's usefulness play out in real-world situations, as well as seeing how others approached using the tool was tremendously informative.”

If you are a licensed mental health provider and would like to receive training on how to utilize the T-SAM in your own work, please consult the Boston Children's Hospital Trauma and Community Resilience Center Webpage dedicated to the T-SAM project, accessible here: [Trauma and Community Resilience Center | TVT Strengths, Needs, and Risks: Assessment & Management Tool | Boston Children's Hospital \(childrenshospital.org\)](https://www.childrenshospital.org/trauma-and-community-resilience-center/tvt-strengths-needs-and-risks-assessment-management-tool)

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