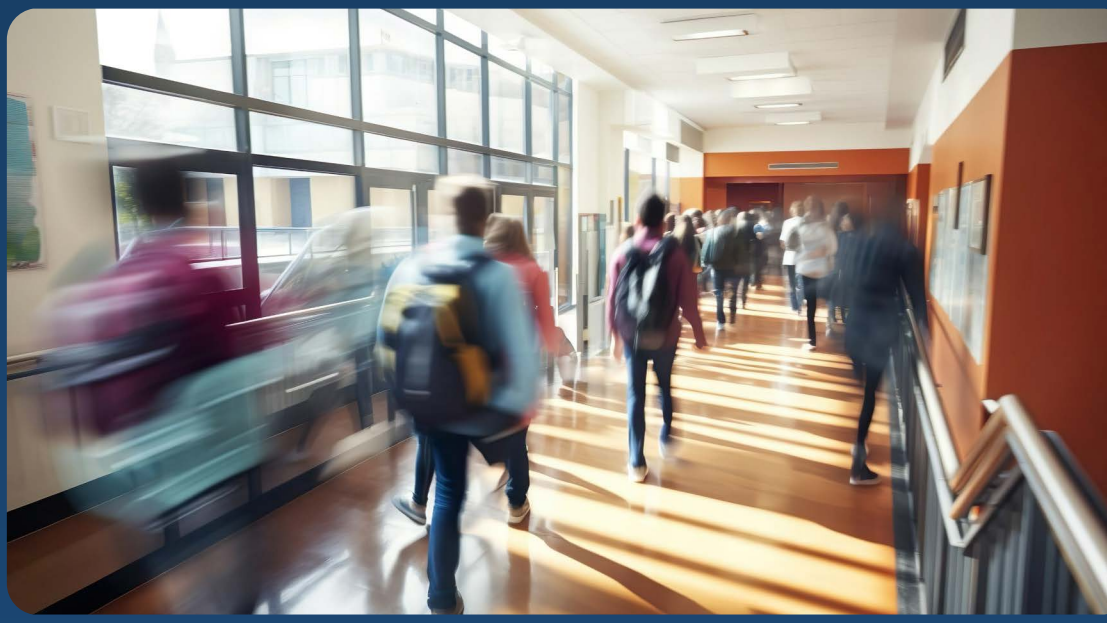
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE
NATIONAL THREAT ASSESSMENT CENTER

Research Report

The State of Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management in K–12 Public Schools

Findings from a 2025 American School Leader Panel Survey



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About This Report

In 2024, the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) tasked the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC) with conducting a study to advance the field's understanding of behavioral threat assessment and management practices in K–12 schools. In this co-branded HSOAC-NTAC report, we take a comprehensive look at how K–12 schools are implementing and using behavioral threat assessment and management programs as part of their violence prevention efforts, using data from a survey administered to a nationally representative sample of 1,746 school leaders. The primary audiences for this research include school- and district-level administrators, school safety partners, and community-based organizations (such as local law enforcement). School-related associations and stakeholder groups may also be interested in this report.

This research was sponsored by the U.S. Secret Service and conducted in the Infrastructure, Immigration, & Security Operations Program of the RAND Homeland Security Research Division (HSRD), which operates the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC).

The American Educator Panels (AEP) are nationally representative samples of teachers, school leaders, and K–12 public school districts across the country. The panels are a proud member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative. For more information about any one of the survey panels, visit www.rand.org/aep. If you are interested in using AEP data for your own surveys or analysis or in reading other publications related to the AEP, please email aep@rand.org or visit www.rand.org/aep.

About the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-296, § 305, as codified at 6 U.S.C. § 185) authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security, acting through the Under Secretary for Science and Technology, to establish one or more federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs) to provide independent analysis of homeland security issues. RAND operates the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC) as an FFRDC for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under contract 70RSAT22D00000001.

The HSOAC FFRDC provides the government with independent and objective analyses and advice in core areas important to the department in support of policy development, decisionmaking, alternative approaches, and new ideas on issues of significance. HSOAC also works with and supports other federal, state, local, tribal, and public- and private-sector organizations that make up the homeland security enterprise. HSOAC's research is undertaken by mutual consent with DHS and organized as a set of discrete tasks. This report presents the results of research and analysis conducted under 70US0924F1DHS2132, "Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Implementation Research." The results presented in this report do not necessarily reflect official DHS opinion or policy.

For more information on HSRD, see www.rand.org/hsrd. For more information on this publication, see www.rand.org/t/RRA3658-1.

About the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center

The National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) was established as a component of the U.S. Secret Service in 1998 to provide research and guidance in direct support of the Secret Service's protective mission and to others with public safety responsibilities. Through the Presidential Threat Protection Act of 2000, Congress formally authorized NTAC to conduct research on threat assessment and various types of targeted violence;

provide training on threat assessment and violence prevention; facilitate information-sharing among agencies with protective and public safety responsibilities; provide case consultation on threat assessment investigations and for agencies building threat assessment units; and develop programs to promote standardization of federal, state, and local threat assessment processes.

NTAC's staff is composed of a multidisciplinary team of social science researchers and regional program managers who support partners in law enforcement, schools, government, and other organizations to combat targeted violence impacting communities across the United States.

For more information on NTAC, see www.secretservice.gov/ntac.

Acknowledgments

The HSOAC team is extremely grateful to the educators who agreed to participate in this panel. Their time and willingness to share their experiences were invaluable for this effort and for helping the team understand how to better support their hard work in schools. The HSOAC team thanks RAND colleagues Alex Dopp for consultation on implementation science during survey design; Lisa Wagner and Brian Kim for assisting with survey management; Ruolin Lu for serving as the data manager for this survey; and Tim Colvin for programming the survey. The HSOAC team also thanks Dorothy Seaman for producing the sampling and weighting for these analyses. HSOAC greatly appreciates the administrative support provided by Tina Petrossian and AEP management provided by David Grant. The HSOAC team also thanks Meagan Cahill and Andrea Phillips for their review and feedback, which helped improve this work. Finally, HSOAC is grateful for the efforts of Cindy Lyons and Maria Vega in overseeing the publication of this report.

Summary

School violence and threats remain a significant concern in K–12 education. To enhance the safety of children in schools, behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) has become a widely adopted approach to preventing violence and other harmful outcomes by bringing together multidisciplinary teams to systematically evaluate and appropriately respond to concerning student behaviors or threats. By appropriately assessing risk of harm and providing tailored interventions, BTAM helps schools manage safety risks while supporting student well-being and reducing reliance on suspensions or expulsions, which research shows can have lasting negative effects and may not effectively reduce the risk of school violence.

As part of its long-standing effort to improve and foster the adoption of BTAM as a strategy to prevent targeted violence, the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) has sponsored a multiyear research effort carried out by the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC) that is focused on BTAM practices and their implementation in K–12 schools.

To provide a comprehensive picture of BTAM implementation, the practices that schools are using to identify and manage potential threats to schools, and the potential solutions to strengthen BTAM across the United States, the joint HSOAC-NTAC research effort included a nationally representative survey of 1,746 principals across the country implementing BTAM practices at their schools. Survey respondents were asked questions about the initial implementation of their school's BTAM program, the composition of their BTAM team, and the types of incidents referred to and addressed by their BTAM team, as well as a broad set of questions about operating, sustaining, and improving BTAM practices at their schools. Each survey respondent also answered a set of scenario-based questions representative of incidents they might experience at their schools, for more insight into how their schools use BTAM as a violence prevention tool. The data collected in this survey are the first of their kind to look comprehensively at how BTAM is being operationalized in schools across the country. This report takes an in-depth look at the results of that survey, providing a picture of the state of BTAM in K–12 public schools across the country in 2025. The survey was fielded in January 2025.

Although several studies have sought to understand the impact of threat assessment programs on various school-level outcomes, including violence prevention, to date these reports have been specific to a single threat assessment model; confined to understanding trends in single states; or based on interviews or surveys of a small number of individuals. Therefore, the primary goal of this report is to draw on a nationally representative sample of school administrators to understand how BTAM is being implemented and operationalized across the country. This first-of-its-kind survey revealed the following key highlights:

- **Adoption of BTAM as part of school safety efforts is becoming a nearly ubiquitous practice across U.S. schools.** This level of effort marks a dramatic increase from a decade ago, when fewer than half of schools had BTAM teams. The main challenge now is not encouraging adoption but rather ensuring effective and consistent implementation. Schools should focus on refining practices and sustaining programs, with ongoing support as needed to institutionalize best practices and build long-term capacity.
- **State-level policies related to BTAM, whether through legislation or non-codified policy, are likely helping schools implement BTAM.** Schools in states with early mandates or policy encouragement for BTAM are further along in implementation, with more standardized meeting schedules and written procedures. This progress may be due to earlier access to training and funding. State-level support appears to play a key role in advancing BTAM practices.
- **Responses suggest that schools are appropriately scoping their BTAM programs to focus on the most severe and high-risk cases of student behavior.** Concerns that BTAM might be used for minor

behavioral issues have not materialized, at least according to our principal reports. Schools are maintaining clear thresholds for referring cases to BTAM teams, focusing on serious safety concerns. This focused approach helps preserve the integrity of the threat assessment process.

- **Most schools are incorporating individualized interventions into plans developed as part of the threat management process, tailoring supports to meet the specific needs and circumstances of students.** Schools are using a variety of interventions to address underlying causes of student behavior rather than relying on a single solution. Scenario-based responses show that interventions are matched to the complexity of each case. This individualized approach is appropriate for the diverse needs seen in BTAM cases.
- **School BTAM efforts generally reflect a commitment to using supportive measures that address root causes of concerning behaviors rather than relying primarily on exclusionary discipline practices or referrals to law enforcement.** Survey results show that schools prioritize such interventions as mental health counseling, building trusted relationships with adults, and skill-building services over restrictive measures. Even in the most severe scenarios presented to principals, supportive interventions consistently composed the largest share of response strategies. Over 75 percent said they rarely or never use exclusionary discipline, and 80 percent rarely or never arrest or prosecute students referred to BTAM teams. This pattern demonstrates that BTAM teams function as intended—as a preventative approach focused on early intervention and support rather than punishment that helps students address underlying issues while keeping them connected to school. This approach aligns with best practices and supports positive student outcomes.
- **Parents are a key part of schools' behavioral threat management processes.** Although only 20 percent of schools directly involve parents in intervention planning, most consult with them during the process. Parent engagement is seen as crucial to the success of intervention plans, with one-third of schools identifying a lack of parent participation as a significant challenge. This highlights the importance of family buy-in for effective BTAM implementation.
- **Principals around the country believe that BTAM is having a net positive impact on improving safety at their schools and also helping to create more positive school climates.** Principals report reductions in crime, violence, and self-harm and view BTAM as preferable to exclusionary discipline. Many said they believe that BTAM contributes to a safer and more supportive school environment.

Despite these strong overarching messages, our survey results also identified opportunities for future focus. In particular, principals identified the following five key challenges:

- **Even though most schools have adopted BTAM practices, there is still considerable variability in the models they use.** Schools often blend elements from national programs with local practices, leading to significant differences in implementation. Although this flexibility allows adaptation to local needs, it also creates inconsistencies and challenges in measuring effectiveness. Greater coherence and guidance are needed to ensure fidelity to evidence-based frameworks while allowing for local adaptation.
- **There is considerable variability in training for BTAM members across schools.** Fewer than half of schools provide annual training, and many only offer it as needed, which may limit team members' skills in such key areas as risk assessment and bias mitigation. Training gaps are especially pronounced in urban and high-poverty schools. Addressing these disparities with additional funding and support is essential for effective violence prevention.
- **There is a lack of standardization across critical BTAM team functions and operations.** There is significant variability in how BTAM teams are structured; how often they meet; and how they conduct information-gathering, case reviews, and program evaluations. Although some schools use structured processes, most rely on informal approaches, and about half lack formal policies or standard operat-

ing procedures. This inconsistency suggests that many BTAM programs are not yet fully integrated or institutionalized, highlighting the need for clearer tools and resources to support systematic and effective team operations.

- **There is considerable variation in how BTAM teams deliver interventions and develop management plans for students.** Although most teams focus on individualized interventions, there are wide differences in decisionmaking processes, resource use, and application of decision support tools. This lack of consistency can affect the quality and effectiveness of interventions, especially as many schools have only recently adopted BTAM. Clearer guidance and best practices are needed to ensure that interventions are implemented effectively and fairly across schools.
- **Although most schools conduct some form of review or reflection process to understand the impact that BTAM is having on such student- and school-level outcomes as violence rates and the use of exclusionary discipline, many lack deep or systematic approaches to continuous improvement.** Few schools use systematic data analysis or validate interventions with trained staff. Relying on a single method for review limits the ability to assess and improve BTAM effectiveness. Multiple robust feedback mechanisms are needed to ensure that programs achieve intended outcomes and continue to improve.

Conclusion

Findings from this nationally representative survey of K–12 principals underscore the remarkable progress schools have made in adopting BTAM programs, with near-universal implementation and a clear focus on addressing the most serious safety concerns through individualized, supportive interventions. However, the rapid expansion of BTAM has also introduced significant variability in terms of the models schools are using, operational practices, and training, which may undermine the consistency and effectiveness of these efforts across schools. To fully realize the potential of BTAM as a cornerstone of school safety, schools and supporting agencies should prioritize the development and dissemination of evidence-based frameworks, standardized procedures, and robust training opportunities—while maintaining the flexibility needed to adapt to local contexts. Strengthening continuous improvement processes and ensuring access to resources and training will be essential for institutionalizing best practices, enhancing program fidelity, and safeguarding the well-being of all students.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What Is Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management?

The U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) defines behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) in K–12 schools as follows: "A behavioral threat assessment is a proactive approach to identify, assess, and provide appropriate interventions and resources for students who display a behavior that elicits concern for the safety of themselves or others" (NTAC, 2022).

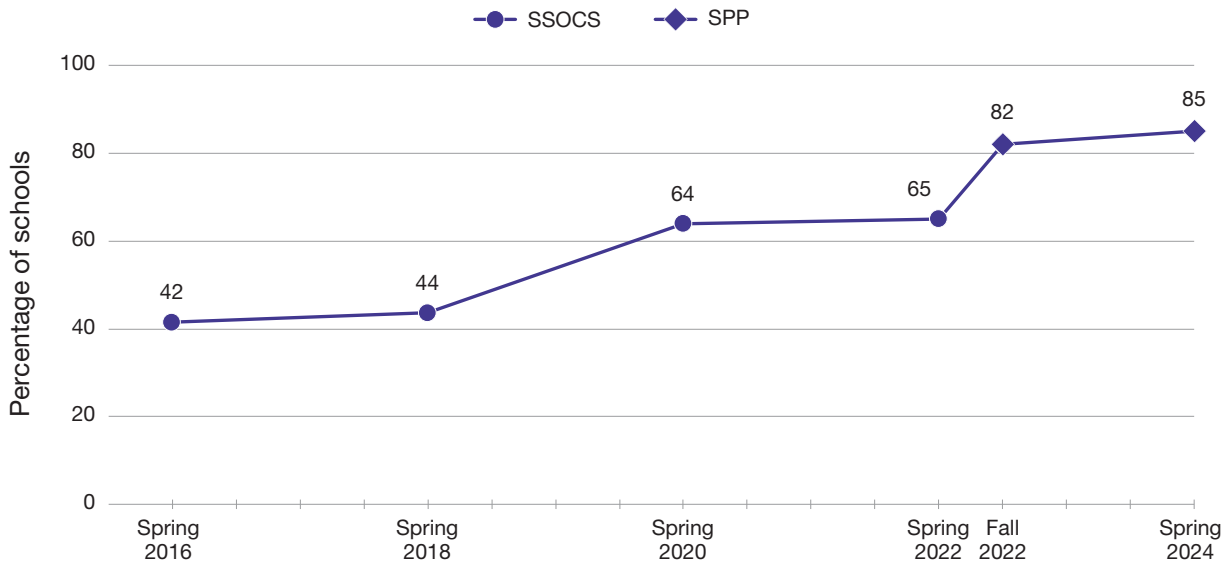
Incidents of school violence and threats—whether directed at students, staff, or the broader school community—remain a significant concern in K–12 education. When a student's behavior raises alarms about potential harm to themselves or others, school leaders face the complex task of determining an appropriate response. Although it may seem that removing the student from school is the safest option, research has shown that exclusionary discipline, such as a suspension or an expulsion, can have lasting negative effects on students and may not effectively reduce risk. Most threats are ultimately found not to be credible, and removing students from the school environment can sometimes increase the risk of harm by severing connections to support and oversight. As a result, schools increasingly seek alternatives that balance safety with the well-being and rights of all students. BTAM has emerged as a widely adopted approach to address these challenges in K–12 schools across the United States, with federal data showing that as many as 85 percent of schools nationwide had a BTAM team in place as of 2024 (see Figure 1.1).

The BTAM approach involves a multidisciplinary team—often including school administrators, counselors, and public safety professionals—systematically evaluating and responding to concerning student behaviors or threats. These teams are at the core of school- or district-level BTAM programs, which schools and districts often implement as part of their broader school safety efforts. The BTAM process typically includes three stages: referral of a student based on observed behaviors or reported concerns, assessment of whether a student poses a risk of harm, and management of the situation through tailored interventions. The BTAM approach aims to identify concerning behavior early, enabling schools to respond proportionately and provide support where needed. This approach not only helps prevent violence but also reduces reliance on exclusionary discipline, promoting a safer school environment. Although several entities, such as private organizations, federal government agencies, and U.S. states, have developed BTAM models and frameworks for use by K–12 schools, many schools and districts across the country have also developed their own models and approaches, as this report discusses.[1]

[1] In this report, we focus on BTAM implementation at the level of K–12 schools and school districts. Although we make reference to and cite BTAM models and frameworks developed by federal government agencies and available to schools, we do not

FIGURE 1.1

Percentage of Schools with a Behavioral Threat Assessment Team



SOURCE: Features data from the U.S. Department of Education's School Survey on Crime and Safety (Burr et al., 2024) and its School Pulse Panel (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2025).

NOTE: Both data collections asked principals whether their school had a behavioral threat assessment team or "any other formal group of persons to identify students who might be a potential risk for violent or harmful behavior (toward themselves or others)." SSOCS = School Survey on Crime and Safety; SPP = School Pulse Panel.

The impetus for early adoption of the BTAM model dates back to the joint U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education's Safe School Initiative, which examined 37 incidents of targeted school attacks between 1974 and 2000 following the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in Colorado (Vossekuil et al., 2004). The initiative introduced BTAM as a violence prevention model for schools, emphasizing the importance of identifying students who display behavior that elicits safety concerns, assessing the behaviors and their context, and managing any potential risk of harm through interventions and supports. It also stressed the importance of multidisciplinary teams to assess concerning behaviors and efforts to foster positive school climates that encourage reporting of concerns. By the 2015–2016 school year (the earliest national estimate available), 42 percent of a national sample of K–12 public school principals reported having threat assessment teams (Diliberti et al., 2017). By the 2021–2022 school year, 65 percent of public schools reported having such teams, in which *threat assessment* was defined as "a formalized process of identifying, assessing, and managing students who may pose a threat of targeted violence in schools" (Burr et al., 2024, p. 13). As noted above, more recent federal data show that this rate had increased to 85 percent of all public schools by 2024 (NCES, 2025).

As Figure 1.1 shows, the existence of BTAM teams at K–12 schools grew notably between 2016 and 2024. During this time frame, the Secret Service continued to publish updated research on targeted school violence and guidance for the implementation of BTAM programs in K–12 schools (see, e.g., NTAC, 2018; NTAC, 2019; and NTAC, 2021), and there was increasing research into—and focus on—approaches for preventing violence in K–12 schools more broadly. The passage of laws across various states mandating BTAM teams in K–12 schools also helped advance BTAM implementation at various points in time. For example, several

include a review of how federal law or policy, or any changes therein, might affect BTAM implementation at K–12 schools.

states, including Florida, passed mandates related to threat assessments in response to the 2018 Parkland shooting (Blad, 2023).[2]

Purpose and Approach

Despite clear growth in schools' adoption of BTAM programs, more than 20 years after the publication of findings from the joint U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education report on the Safe School Initiative (Fein et al., 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2004), we still have little systematic data on what BTAM actually looks like in schools across the United States. Although several studies have sought to understand the impact of threat assessment programs on various school-level outcomes, including violence prevention, these reports are (1) specific to a single threat assessment model, (2) confined to understanding trends in single states, or (3) based on interviews and surveys of small samples of individuals (see, e.g., Ross et al., 2022; Cornell et al., 2018; Crepeau-Hobson and Leech, 2022; Jackson and Viljoen, 2024). Therefore, the primary goal of this report is to draw on a nationally representative sample of school administrators to understand how BTAM is being implemented and operationalized across the country.

More specifically, we aim to answer 12 questions about the state of BTAM in K–12 public schools as of the 2024–2025 school year:

1. What schools have implemented BTAM?
2. When did schools establish BTAM teams?
3. What is the scope of schools' BTAM programs?
4. How are schools operationalizing BTAM?
5. Do schools use named BTAM models, to what extent do they modify them, or are they building their own models?
6. Why did schools adopt specific BTAM models (or develop their own), and how did they go about it?
7. How do BTAM teams assess level of risk for referred cases?
8. How do BTAM teams develop intervention plans for at-risk students, and what do these plans look like?
9. How do BTAM teams monitor intervention plans?
10. Is BTAM working as intended?
11. What do principals think are the effects of their BTAM programs?
12. What do principals think about sustaining and improving their BTAM programs over time?

Overall Survey Structure and Design

To address these research questions, we relied on survey data collected from K–12 public school principals between February 5, 2025, and February 24, 2025. The survey was administered to a nationally representative sample of principals who were members of RAND's American School Leader Panel (ASLP). Participating principals received detailed questions about their school's BTAM program—ranging from which school and outside personnel are on their BTAM team, what specific BTAM models they are using, and the steps they took during the initial program implementation phase to perceptions of BTAM's impact on a variety

[2] Other states in this group include Maryland (2018), Texas (2019), Illinois (2019), and Kentucky (2019).

of school-level outcomes.[3] Although survey invitations were directed solely to school principals, we assume that these principals responded to our survey on behalf of their schools and interpret their data accordingly.[4]

In total, 1,746 individuals completed our 20-minute survey, and we weighted their responses to be representative of the national population of K–12 public school principals and the schools in which they serve. For detailed information about the survey administration period, survey sample, completion rate, and construction of survey weights, see Appendix B.

School Characteristics and State Policy Contexts Explored in Our Analyses

To answer our research questions, we investigated national patterns in educators' survey responses based on school characteristics and state policy context related to BTAM. More specifically, we examined differences in educators' responses based on six school characteristics: (1) grade levels served, (2) school locale, (3) school neighborhood poverty status, (4) student racial/ethnic composition, (5) school enrollment size, and (6) district enrollment size.[5]

Where appropriate, we also examined differences in educators' responses according to the BTAM state policy context in 2019.[6] Specifically, we drew on a systematic analysis of state-level laws and policies related to threat assessment completed by Child Trends and the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and published in 2021. We used these data to divide states into three groups, roughly corresponding to their policy context at the time of the review (2019):

- **Early legislation states (18 states),** including states where, in 2019, state legal requirements, regulations or district policy required school districts to adopt threat assessment as a safety measure. This category could include states that had explicit laws about schools using the practice, or policies requiring training or mandating assessment processes as part of their response to violent incidents (sometimes in the broader context of bullying and violence response).
- These states were Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.
- **States that encouraged schools to use BTAM (20 states),** combining states where, in 2019, state law, regulation, or district policy encourage[d] districts to adopt threat assessment policies and states where BTAM was not addressed in state law or regulations, but was covered in non-codified policy.
- States in this group consisted of Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, and West Virginia.
- **Other states (13 states),** which included those where BTAM was not addressed in state law or regulation as of 2019.
- These states were Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming (Child Trends and NASBE, 2021).

[3] A complete list of the survey items administered to principals and the response frequencies is available in Appendix A.

[4] We interpret principals' responses as speaking on behalf of their schools and therefore often report results using the school as the unit of analysis (e.g., "percent of schools who said X"). However, for survey items that ask about principals' perceptions, we report using the principal (e.g., "percent of principals who said Y"). These terms can be interpreted interchangeably.

[5] For more details about the definitions of these school characteristics, see Appendix B.

[6] The 2019 compilation of law and policy was the most up-to-date source of comprehensive information on BTAM requirements nationally at the time of survey sampling and planning.

We used the 2019 data as a reference point for understanding the existing BTAM implementation landscape as reported through the eyes of our survey respondents. Grouping states into the three aforementioned categories allowed us to understand whether early encouragement or legislation by states to implement BTAM in schools (potentially associated with stronger funding, training, or other support for BTAM) might be related to the practices and outcomes reported by principals today.

Importantly, specific policies across states differ, even within each category. For example, among the 18 states in the early legislation category, current policies can look quite different. Although both Maryland and Texas require schools to have BTAM teams, Texas explicitly requires that members of teams have a range of specific types of expertise "to the greatest extent practicable" (Texas School Safety Center, undated), and Maryland emphasizes coordination with the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), which provides training and other resources to K–12 schools in this area (MCSS, undated). Other states that required BTAM in schools as early as 2019, such as Kentucky, Nevada, and Oregon, also specifically stress the importance of multidisciplinary teams in the threat assessment process, with added emphasis on the role of mental health professionals. These states also provide training to school staff through either state-level school safety agencies or state departments of education.

It should be noted that in the intervening years (i.e., between 2019 and the writing of this report in 2025), several states have made changes in law or policy regarding BTAM. For example, as our study was underway, some states enacted new laws requiring that schools use BTAM or establish BTAM teams (e.g., New Jersey, Tennessee, Iowa); others have also done so since the 2019 analysis but prior to the start of our study (e.g., Vermont). If states were to be grouped according to policies in place as of this writing in mid-2025, more would be included in the "legislation" category. Nevertheless, understanding the implementation of early legislation by some states in 2019 is still useful for the purposes of this current analysis, insofar as it helps demonstrate how early state support in 2019 may have affected BTAM implementation over time across different state policy contexts.

We also considered to what extent certain aspects of a BTAM program (e.g., the number of people on a BTAM team, whether BTAM is housed at the school or district level) matter for its operations. As it is infeasible to consider all subgroup differences for all survey items in this report, we present subgroup differences in the text where they were particularly notable or interesting and where they provide helpful context to understand national patterns. Unless otherwise noted, we only call out subgroup differences in the text that are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Limitations

We hope the findings presented in this report will shed new light on how BTAM is being implemented in K–12 schools through a much-needed, deeper understanding of nationally representative trends. We also hope that our findings provoke new ideas about how to better ensure the safety and well-being of individual students and entire school communities across the country. With that in mind, we highlight several limitations to our analysis. First, as is true of any survey that relies on self-reported data, certain biases—such as social desirability bias—may influence results, should respondents provide answers that they believe are more socially acceptable or favorable. Biases can affect data accuracy, especially in areas related to such sensitive topics as school behavioral threat assessment. Second, although our survey aimed to be representative of administrators in K–12 public schools across the country, our findings may still not fully capture the variety of experiences across different school sizes, geographical regions, and student and community demographics. Differences in local policies (below the state level), available resources, and community factors can also influence safety practices, potentially limiting the generalizability of our results to all schools across the United States. Moreover, although the report highlights high-level differences in state-level policies and context specific to BTAM, it does not fully explore the details of such policies and does not provide an up-to-

date analysis of state policies as of this report's publication date. Finally, our survey about BTAM practices provides a snapshot of perceptions and practices at a specific point in time and reflects neither changes over time nor how recent events might affect these perceptions and practices.

Organization of This Report

This report is organized such that each of its 12 main chapters corresponds to one of the research questions listed above. In Chapter 2, we begin by examining how many and what types of schools are using BTAM. In Chapter 3, we discuss when schools initially implemented their programs, the challenges they faced in the initial implementation phase, and how long it took for BTAM to "work well." We then investigate the scope of schools' BTAM programs in Chapter 4 and how schools are operationalizing BTAM programs in Chapter 5. In Chapters 6 and 7, we examine what types of threat assessment models schools are using (or if they have built their own models), how they have modified named models, and how and why schools adopted specific models. In Chapter 8, we explore how BTAM teams assess the level of risk or concern in individual cases referred to the BTAM team. In Chapters 9 and 10, we then focus on how BTAM teams develop intervention and support plans for students and monitor student progress against these plans. Chapter 11 is unique insofar as we examine principals' responses to a set of hypothetical scenarios about student behaviors; the goal of these scenarios is to understand whether schools' BTAM programs are working as intended and whether principals' reports of what their BTAM team does matches with how they respond to hypothetical scenarios. In Chapter 12, we examine principals' perceptions of the impacts that their BTAM program is having on a variety of outcomes, including school safety; climate; violence rates; and the use of exclusionary discipline and law enforcement involvement. With an eye toward the future, in Chapter 13, we explore principals' perceptions of how schools' BTAM programs can be sustained and improved. In Chapter 14, we conclude our report with a discussion of implications and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Which Schools Have Implemented BTAM?

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the BTAM landscape in K–12 public schools across the country using data from the 1,746 principals who completed our survey on behalf of their schools. We first use our survey results to investigate how many schools nationally had BTAM programs in place as of the 2024–2025 school year.[1] We then examine what types of schools are likely to have BTAM programs and to what extent the prevalence of BTAM programs today is at all related to what the policy context looked like in 2019. Specifically, we explore any potential differences in schools' implementation of BTAM today based on whether their states required, encouraged, or did not address BTAM in the 2019 policy.

As of January 2025, Virtually All Public Schools in the United States Had a BTAM Team or an Alternative Team That Played a Similar Role

Figure 2.1 displays the national landscape of BTAM programs in K–12 schools, using 100 boxes to represent the population of U.S. public schools. As shown and according to the principals who took our survey, virtually all public schools (97 percent) engaged in BTAM in some capacity during the 2024–2025 school year. Eighty-two percent of public schools have a team that they explicitly call a *BTAM team* (for which we use the term *official BTAM team*). This translates to more than 70,000 schools across the United States with BTAM teams.

Those schools are represented by the dark purple boxes in the figure. This includes 25 percent of schools that have an official BTAM team housed at the school level, 13 percent of schools that only have a school district–level BTAM team, and 43 percent of schools that have both school- and district-level teams.

Another 14 percent of schools have a team that was not formally identified as a BTAM team but was functionally similar to such teams in that it "makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns" (those are represented by the light purple boxes in Figure 2.1). These are typically school-based teams that make decisions in cases of serious student behavioral concerns; they could be a team associated with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or positive behavioral intervention system (PBIS) or some other team referred to by another name.

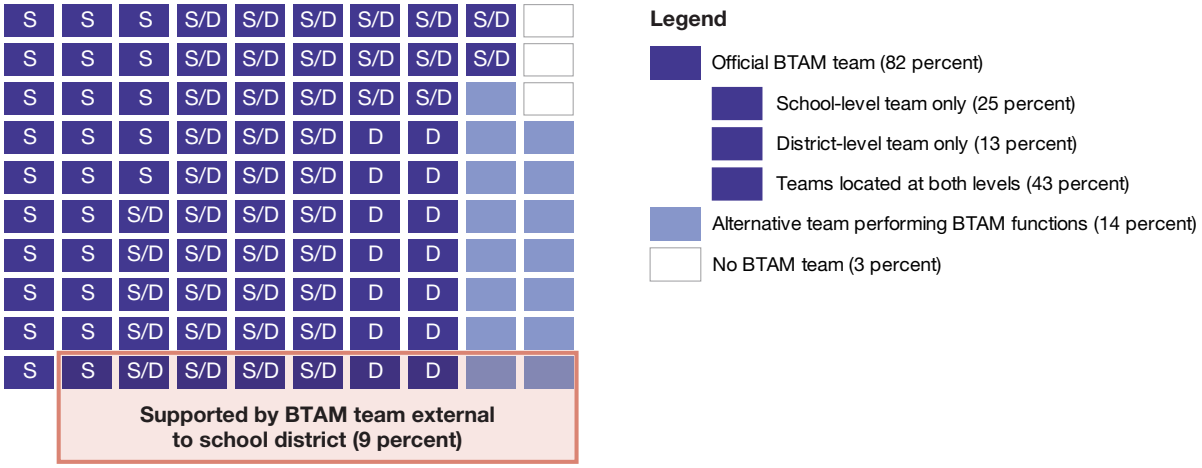
In rare cases, schools with official BTAM teams (or BTAM-like teams)[2] were also served by BTAM teams that were managed by organizations or government entities external to the school or district. For example, in some areas, teams managed by a local community or health care organization carry out BTAM for youth and adults referred to them through different pathways. Nine percent of schools reported working with an

[1] Some schools maintain programs that are not explicitly *called* BTAM but are functionally similar BTAM programs. We initially present data that cover both types of programs but will later narrow to discuss only those programs that our respondents specifically identified as BTAM.

[2] We define *BTAM-like team* as a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns but is not formally referred to as a BTAM team.

FIGURE 2.1

Landscape of BTAM in U.S. Public Schools



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "During this school year (2024–2025), does your school or school district have a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team or any other formal group of persons tasked with identifying and assessing students who might be at risk for violent or harmful behavior (toward themselves or others)?" "Is the BTAM team(s) housed at the school or district level, or both?" "Some schools are served by BTAM teams external to a school or district. These teams may be managed by a community organization; a local, county, state, or federal government entity; a law enforcement agency; or other organizations. Is your school served by an outside BTAM team?" and "Does your school have a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team? This could be a team associated with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) that makes decisions about individualized interventions for serious behavioral concerns" (N = 1,746). For principals who responded to the above items with "Don't know," we counted their school as a "no." One hundred boxes are used to represent the U.S. population of public schools. Percentages and shading may not align or sum to 100 because of rounding.

external BTAM team, as represented by the superimposed orange box in Figure 2.1. We asked principals to consider teams managed by a community organization; a local, county, state, or federal government entity; a law enforcement agency; or other organizations. Because these external BTAM teams are not a primary focus of this report, we have limited information available about them and how schools engage with them. Furthermore, most principals noted they were only "somewhat familiar" with the operation and processes of these outside BTAM teams. For a brief overview of what we do know about these teams, see the box on the next page.

The State Policy Context in 2019 Matters for Schools' Adoption of BTAM Today, but Teams Are Relatively Common Even in States That Did Not Promote BTAM in 2019

As shown in Figure 1.1, schools' use of BTAM has increased over time. Although individual schools may adopt new school safety approaches individually or at the district level, the state policy context—that is, whether schools are subject to legal requirements or receive incentives to adopt BTAM—likely affects the extent to which and how rapidly schools implement new practices. States that mandate BTAM in schools, for example, might fund their state-level school agencies to provide BTAM-specific training to schools at no cost, or publish guidelines to aid implementation. Some states took definitive steps to push their schools to implement BTAM relatively early (e.g., Virginia's law relating to BTAM was enacted in 2013), while others have established legislative mandates more recently (e.g., Florida, New Jersey). Other states took steps to encourage adoption, for example, by publishing guidance and recommendations without a legislative mandate (e.g.,

Nine Percent of Schools Engage with an External BTAM Team—These Teams Are Almost Always County-Level Teams

As shown in Figure 2.1, 9 percent of schools (or roughly 8,000 schools across the United States) work with an external BTAM team. Of those schools supported by external teams, the vast majority (89 percent) said these were community- or county-level teams that respond to cases in local schools and in the broader community. Only 5 percent of schools received support from a state-level team, and only 2 percent engaged with a team managed by a federal agency (such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI]) about specific cases.

Most schools that worked with such teams (55 percent) said an outside BTAM team only becomes involved in a case when the school specifically seeks out its assistance. Conversely, a handful (8 percent) reported that the only time their school engages with an outside BTAM team is when the external team approaches the school about a specific threat or tip received that is relevant to the school. The remaining schools provided mixed responses in terms of who initiates the engagement—the school or the external team.

The principals we surveyed reported a mix of experiences working with these external teams. Thirty-eight percent said outside BTAM teams have access to more or different information than the school or district does, including ready access to law enforcement data and other sources—a potential benefit. Another potential benefit of external teams, which slightly more than half of schools that had engaged with these teams experienced, is access to a broader variety of service providers or providers with greater capacity to deliver intervention programming relative to what the school is able to provide.

Some schools provided information on the potential drawbacks of working with external teams. One-quarter (25 percent) of these respondents said that external teams do not know as much about school environments and/or youth populations relative to school-based stakeholders, which can be problematic when it comes to assessing the level of threat posed by student behavior. Similarly, 20 percent of principals noted that outside teams do not know as much about the specific school community context.

High school principals, in particular, seemed more skeptical about the usefulness of these external teams. They were more likely than their elementary and middle school counterparts to believe that external teams do not know much about school environments and/or youth populations (48 percent said this) and also less likely than middle school principals to believe that these teams have access to a broader variety of service providers.

Colorado). Still other states do not provide any guidance and leave these decisions to the individual school or school district.

Although we do not expect state policy context to be the primary determinant of schools' decisions about which safety measures to implement (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of the primary drivers for initial BTAM implementation in schools), encouraging the use of BTAM or providing other supports, such as funding to state-level school safety agencies specifically for BTAM could promote adoption or influence how schools form BTAM teams and scope their responsibilities. As a result, schools in states with early BTAM-specific legislation or in states that encouraged BTAM earlier than others might be further along today in refining their practices for their specific school context. These issues are discussed later in this report.

As described in Chapter 1, we drew on a systematic analysis of state-level laws and policies related to threat assessment and completed by Child Trends and NASBE to examine the association between state policy con-

text in 2019[3] and schools' use of BTAM today.[4] The Child Trends and NASBE analysis (2021) divided states into three categories: (1) states that mandated behavioral threat assessment in K–12 schools through legislation or specific state policy in 2019; (2) states that encouraged the implementation of behavioral threat assessment in K–12 schools or addressed it via non-codified policy in 2019; and (3) states that made no mention of behavioral threat assessment in 2019. We explored to what extent the current (as of this writing) BTAM landscape in schools differed across these three early state policy contexts. Figure 2.2 displays the existing landscape of BTAM program adoption in schools based on our survey data, again using 100 boxes to represent the population of public schools in each state policy context. The three breakdowns demonstrate that BTAM is very common in schools across all 2019 state policy contexts. Very few schools in any state policy context do not engage in BTAM at all. However, there are marginal differences in specific elements of BTAM adoption across these contexts, namely in the types of teams serving schools. For example, although BTAM is still common today in states that lacked legislation and did not encourage BTAM in 2019,[5] schools in these states are more likely than their counterparts in other policy contexts to use a BTAM-like team to perform threat assessment and management functions (e.g., an MTSS or PBIS team). More specifically, 90 percent of schools in early legislation states have an official BTAM team today, compared with 77 percent of schools in states that only encouraged the practice in 2019 and 73 percent of schools in states where there was no mention of BTAM in state policy in 2019. Furthermore, schools in early legislation states are more likely today than those in states where BTAM was not addressed in 2019 to have teams at both the school and district levels.

BTAM Teams Are Common Across School Characteristics

We also investigated the prevalence of BTAM teams (including BTAM-like teams) across different school demographics, including school level, locale, poverty level, student racial/ethnic composition, and student enrollment size. As shown in Figure 2.3, BTAM teams were common across all school types. However, we do note some minor differences. Principals of large schools (those serving 450 students or more) were slightly more likely than their counterparts in small schools to report having official BTAM teams (85 percent versus 79 percent, respectively). BTAM teams may also be slightly less common in rural settings: 78 percent of rural schools reported having official BTAM teams compared with 84 percent of suburban schools and 86 percent of urban schools.[6]

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[3] The 2019 compilation of law and policy was the most up-to-date source of comprehensive information on BTAM requirements nationally at the time of survey sampling and planning (see additional description and context in Chapter 1).

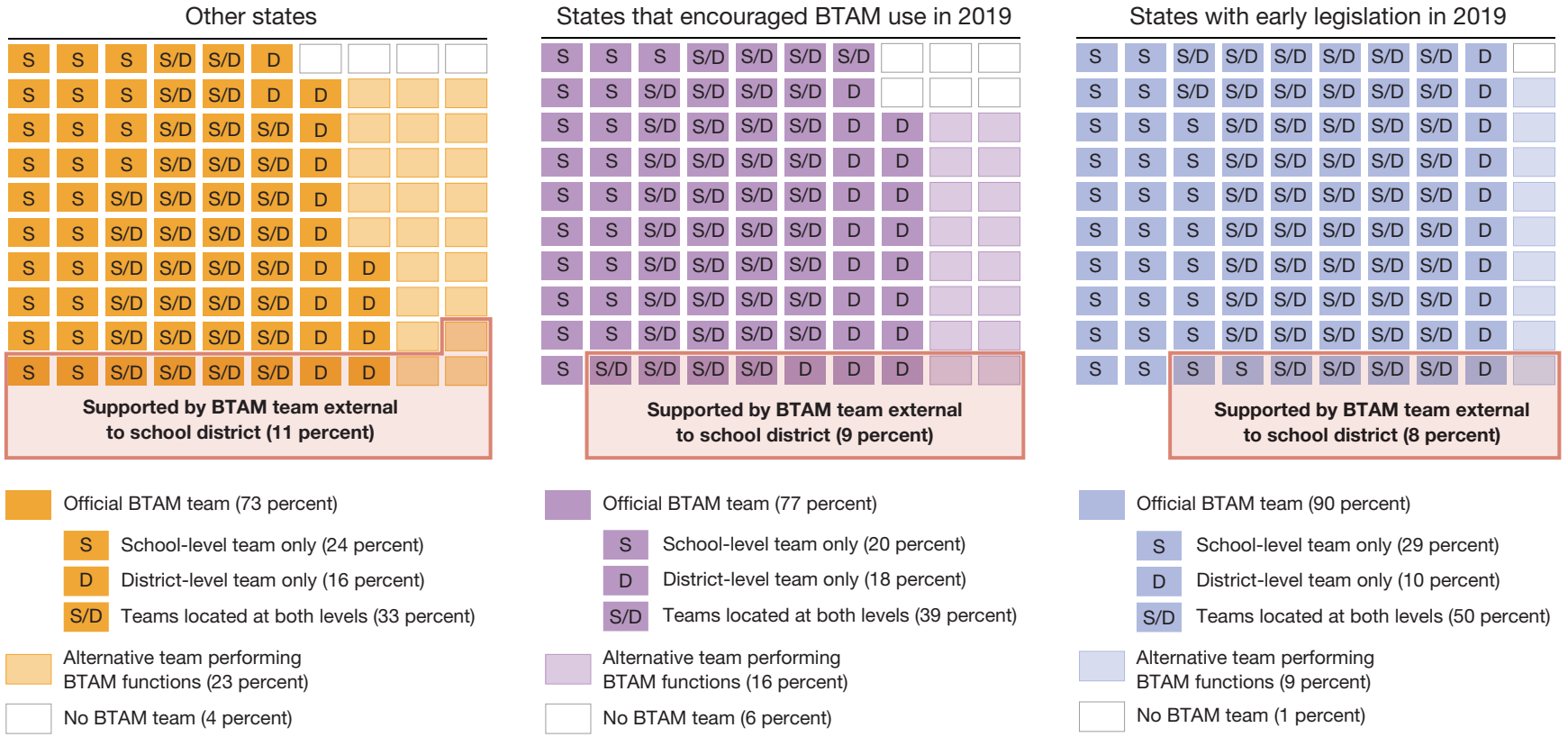
[4] Note that the authors of this study were focused on *threat assessment*, which is a somewhat broader category than *behavioral threat assessment and management* as currently defined. For example, a state might be categorized by these authors as having a law, regulation, or policy requiring threat assessment even if the requirement did not involve that threat assessment being done by a multidisciplinary team (which is core to virtually all framings of behavioral threat assessment).

[5] Note that some of these states that had neither legislation nor encouraged BTAM as of 2019 have passed BTAM legislation as of this report's publication.

[6] Federal data on school safety measures from the 2021–2022 school year also show that schools located in rural locales were less likely to have threat assessment teams, compared with schools located in city, suburban, and town locales (Burr et al., 2024). During that school year, schools located in urban areas were also most likely to have threat assessment teams.

FIGURE 2.2

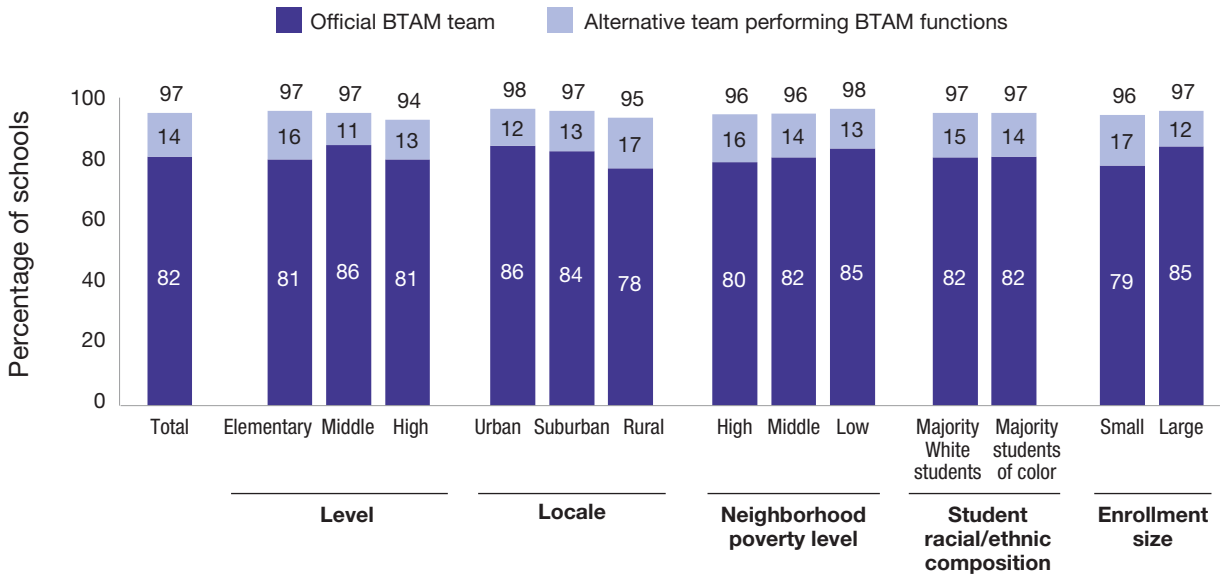
Current Landscape of BTAM in U.S. Public Schools, by 2019 State Policy Context



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "During this school year (2024–2025), does your school or school district have a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team or any other formal group of persons tasked with identifying and assessing students who might be at risk for violent or harmful behavior (toward themselves or others)?" "Is the BTAM team(s) housed at the school or district level, or both?" "Some schools are served by BTAM teams external to a school or district. These teams may be managed by a community organization; a local, county, state, or federal government entity; a law enforcement agency; or other organizations. Is your school served by an outside BTAM team?" and "Does your school have a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team? This could be a team associated with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or positive behavioral intervention system (PBIS) that makes decisions about individualized interventions for serious behavioral concerns" (*N* = 1,746). For principals who responded, "Don't know" to the above items, we counted their school as a "no." One hundred boxes are used to represent the population of public schools in each state policy context. Percentages and shading may not align or sum to 100 because of rounding.

FIGURE 2.3

Percentage of Schools with a BTAM Team, by School Demographics



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "During this school year (2024–2025), does your school or school district have a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team or any other formal group of persons tasked with identifying and assessing students who might be at risk for violent or harmful behavior (toward themselves or others)?" and "Does your school have a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) team? This could be a team associated with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or positive behavioral intervention system (PBIS) that makes decisions about individualized interventions for serious behavioral concerns" (*N* = 1,746). Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

CHAPTER 3

When Did Schools Establish BTAM Teams?

As noted at the outset of this report, the practice of BTAM has experienced significant growth at schools around the country since data on the topic first became available for the 2015–2016 school year. This chapter provides an analysis of when schools around the country implemented their programs and a discussion of the main challenges that schools faced during the initial implementation phase and how long it took schools to get their programs to the point they believe that the BTAM programs were "working well." In looking at when schools' BTAM teams were formed, we focus on the subset of roughly 1,600 schools in our survey sample that reported having an official BTAM team or a BTAM-like team. We then focus in on what implementation looked like among the subset of principals who were around for the initial implementation of their school's official BTAM program.

The Past Decade, but Especially the Past Five Years, Has Seen Large Growth in BTAM Adoption

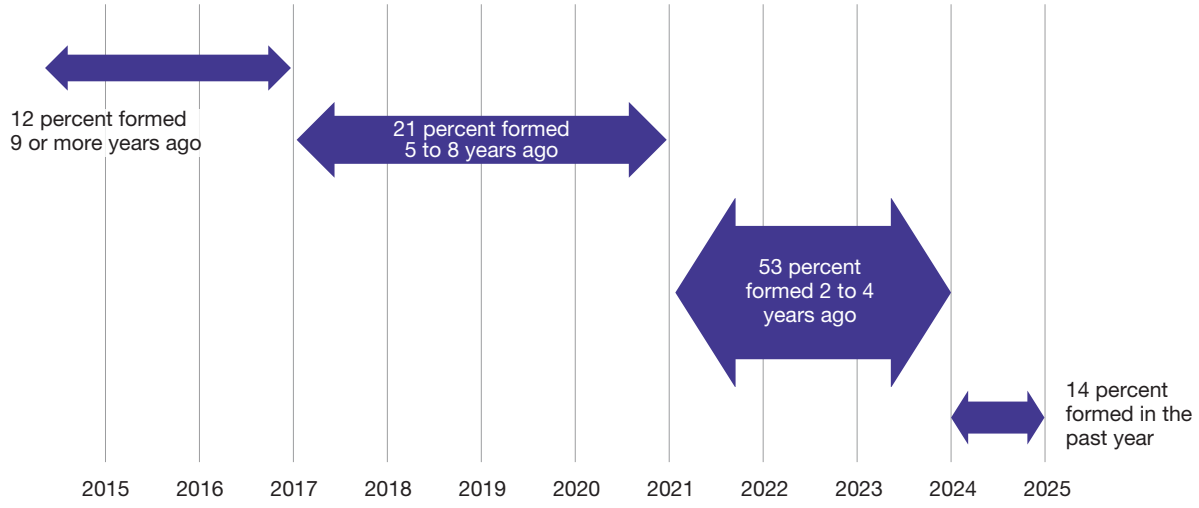
We asked principals in January 2025 when their school's BTAM team (or alternative school-based team that functions similarly to a BTAM team) was formed. Note that we asked principals this question midway through the 2024–2025 school year, making it slightly difficult to interpret principals' responses about how long their BTAM team had been in place. Nevertheless, Figure 3.1 uses principals' responses to this question to display a representation of the timing of the formation of BTAM teams at all public schools across the country.

As shown in Figure 3.1, a minority of principals reported having BTAM teams that were formed five to eight years ago, or even earlier. Most principals (53 percent) reported that their BTAM teams were formed in the past two to four school years. This timing corresponds with at least two notable trends: (1) the return to in-person schooling after the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and associated spikes in student behavior problems, such as minor classroom disruptions and student fights (NCES, 2022; Peetz, 2025); and (2) high-profile school shootings throughout the country, which spurred renewed attention to behavioral threat assessment in schools and led directly to changes in state policy (WFTS Webteam, 2018; Higgins, 2025).

Notably, results from our nationally representative sample of principals who were asked to recall when their BTAM programs began largely to align with federal trend data presented in Figure 1.1. Specifically, both data sources suggest a significant increase in BTAM implementation in approximately the past five years.

FIGURE 3.1

Periods When BTAM Teams Were Formed in U.S. Public Schools



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Approximately how many school years has this BTAM team been in place?" (*n* = 1,505). Only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or another team not called a BTAM team that functions as a BTAM team) received this question. We excluded principals who did not know how long the BTAM team had been in place at their school. The width of the arrows is correlated with the share of teams formed during this period.

Respondents Involved in Initial BTAM Implementation Reported Some Challenges but Got Up to Speed Quickly

Because almost no program is implemented perfectly from the start, and local contexts often change over time in response to shifting circumstances and student needs, effective long-term program management requires integrating processes and activities designed to adjust the program over time to maintain or to improve performance (see discussion in Cook et al., 2019). During implementation efforts, such changes are often labeled "adaptation"—adjusting a named model to match local needs. We probed this process of adaptation in survey questions that asked about how schools had adjusted their selected BTAM models during the initial implementation phase.

Schools can also encounter other challenges when running their BTAM programs, both early during initial implementation and also later on. Effective implementation requires processes and activities that can help identify issues and opportunities to improve program performance as they arise. It also requires teams to identify specific actions in response to these identified issues or opportunities and have processes in place to implement change. For example, a school might conclude that its BTAM program is not serving a specific population of students effectively: An example of such a situation could be students in special education programs being assessed as posing significantly different levels of threat compared with general education students exhibiting similar concerning behavior. In this case, a school might determine that changes need to be made to their threat assessment process, for instance, by adding a special education professional to the BTAM team; collecting additional data to support assessments; or creating new decision aids that can help the BTAM team be more consistent, fair, and effective across all referred cases.

In this section, we discuss the extent to which schools told us that they experienced challenges when first implementing their chosen BTAM program.[1] Although most schools around the country have already implemented a BTAM program (see Figure 2.1), we present data on initial implementation for two reasons. First, these data could help the roughly one in five schools that might still adopt and implement an official BTAM program avoid challenges schools have experienced in the past. Second, presenting data about early implementation challenges alongside data on later challenges can shed light on how schools' struggles with BTAM might change over time as programs become more established.

The discussion then shifts to the changes that schools have made to their BTAM efforts since implementation, challenges they told us they are facing, and the processes they have built into their programs to support continuous improvement efforts.

Top Early Implementation Challenges Included Finding Time, Identifying Outside Service Providers, and Finding Training—but Relatively Few Schools Reported Experiencing These Problems

Schools typically had positive experiences when first implementing their chosen BTAM approach. For example, at least three-quarters of schools said they believe that their school community was supportive of BTAM adoption; that it was relatively easy to adapt their selected BTAM approach and adjust associated school procedures to meet their needs; and that the financial costs of BTAM did not create issues (see Table 3.1).[2] These data suggest that schools can successfully implement a BTAM model with modest support—even when adapting it to local contexts.

That said, 52 percent of schools did note one or more challenges related to initial implementation. Among those schools that did experience challenges in this phase, most only reported one or two. In reviewing principals' responses, three specific challenges did rise to the top—even so, relatively few schools experienced them during the initial implementation stage. A quarter of schools struggled to find the staff time required to implement BTAM, and one-fifth could not identify school and local service providers that had enough capacity to support BTAM efforts (e.g., counselors, mental health treatment providers). One-sixth of schools could also not identify readily available training options.

Overall, our survey suggests that most principals believe that implementation of their school BTAM program proceeded smoothly. The trend could help explain the significant increase in BTAM adoption witnessed over the past decade.

Most Principals Believe That Their Schools Were Able to Fully Implement Their BTAM Programs Within One to Two Years

We asked those principals involved in the initial implementation of a specific BTAM program and who perceived that the BTAM program was working effectively at their schools how long it took them to get the BTAM program to the point of "working well." Most principals said it took between one and two school years to get to that point, while 38 percent said it took one school year, 40 percent said it took two school years, and 11 percent said it took three or four school years.[3]

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[1] The questions on challenges experienced during the initial implementation phase were only asked to principals who said their team was using a named model that we listed, an "Other" model, or a locally created one *and* who said they were around for the initial implementation of this model.

[2] Because schools tended to design their own approaches to BTAM, it is not surprising that many typically had positive experiences implementing a program that met their needs (see also Chapter 6 for more details on initial program adoption).

[3] Eleven percent were not sure how long it took for their teams to become effective.

TABLE 3.1

Percentage of Schools with Various Experiences During the Initial Implementation of BTAM in Their Schools

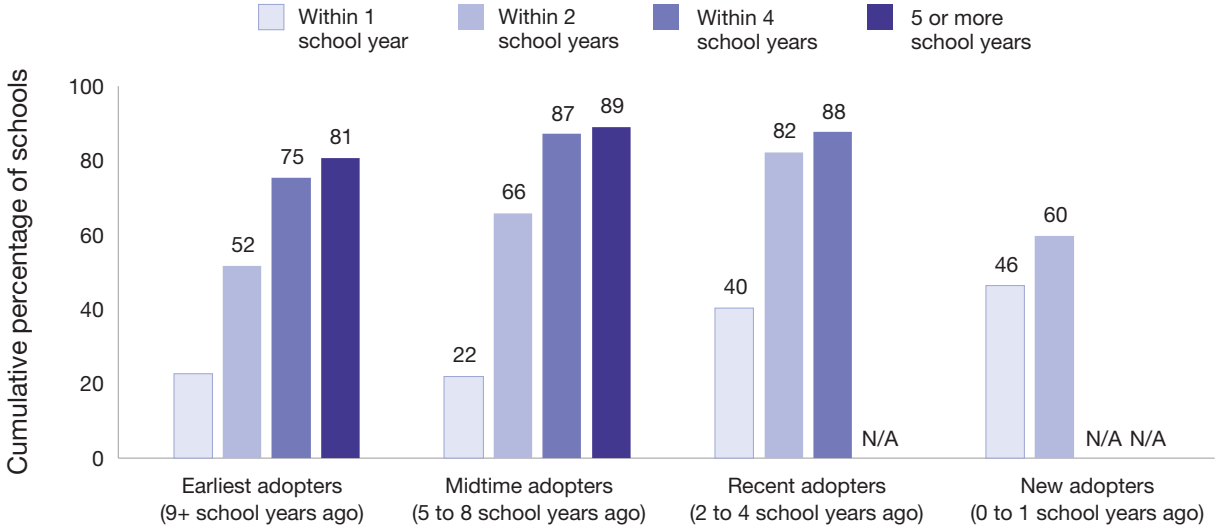
	Percentage of Schools		
Implementation Experience	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree or Strongly Agree
We had enough staff time to implement BTAM.	24	20	55
Our school and local service providers had enough capacity to support our BTAM efforts (e.g., counselors, mental health treatment providers).	21	13	67
Training opportunities for BTAM team members were readily available.	16	19	66
We were able to use a staged process to implement BTAM so that it integrated smoothly into school systems broadly speaking.	12	26	62
The financial costs of implementing BTAM did not create any issues.	11	15	74
We had no issues sharing information among partners for BTAM purposes (e.g., FERPA or HIPAA did not hinder information-sharing).	10	26	64
It was easy for us to pick the BTAM program we wanted to use from the options available.	10	40	50
Our instructional and other school staff clearly understood the goals and reasons for implementing BTAM.	9	21	70
Our existing school records and other systems were easy to use in support of BTAM.	9	17	74
It was easy to coordinate with relevant outside partners while implementing BTAM (e.g., police, service providers).	8	16	75
It was easy to adjust school procedures to integrate BTAM into the way we dealt with student behavior and discipline issues previously.	7	17	76
The BTAM program we chose was easy to adapt to our local needs.	5	17	78
It was clear BTAM was a better approach to managing student behavior concerns relative to our previous approaches.	3	21	76
BTAM was well-matched to our culture and relationships between school leaders and staff.	2	15	82
Our school community (e.g., parents, students) were supportive of our school's adoption of BTAM.	2	35	63
Our school staff was supportive of our school's adoption of BTAM.	1	14	85

NOTE: This table depicts response data from the following survey question: "The following table includes a number of positive statements that could describe the implementation of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) in a school. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement as a descriptor of your experience implementing BTAM in your school" (n = 450). The table includes only those who said that their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team; their team was using a named model that we listed, an "Other" model, or a locally created one; and they were around for the initial implementation of this model. FERPA = Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; HIPAA = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

We also examined how long it took for principals to perceive that their schools' BTAM teams were effective based on when their BTAM program was implemented. That is, we examined the time to effectiveness for the different cohorts of BTAM adopters as shown in Figure 3.2. Looking at the earliest adopters (those schools that adopted BTAM teams nine or more years ago), 93 percent perceive that their BTAM teams are at the point where they are somewhat or very effective at maintaining school safety. Only 23 percent of these earliest adopters report that they had reached effectiveness within the first school year. Within two school years, most early adopters said they feel that their BTAM teams were somewhat or very effective at maintaining school safety; within four school years, three-quarters said they feel they have reached effectiveness. Among these early adopters, 12 percent of principals said they feel that their schools had reached the point where the BTAM team was somewhat or very effective at maintaining school safety but were not sure how long it took the team to get there.

FIGURE 3.2

Cumulative Percentage of Schools Whose BTAM Programs Were Somewhat or Very Effective at Maintaining School Safety, by When Program Was Implemented and How Long It Took to Believe That the Team Was "Working Well"



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "How effective do you believe this BTAM team is at maintaining school safety?" "Approximately how many school years has this BTAM team been in place?" and "How long has your school used [AUTOFILL] program?" (n = 441). Only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team and said they were around for the initial implementation of the BTAM program saw this question.

For schools that adopted BTAM more recently, enough time may not have passed yet for schools to overcome any initial implementation challenges such that their teams are functioning effectively. Among the newest adopters, 60 percent of principals perceive that their BTAM teams have become somewhat or very effective at maintaining school safety. Among the balance, 15 percent feel their teams are not currently effective, and 25 percent were not sure whether their BTAM teams were effective.

CHAPTER 4

What Is the Scope of Schools' BTAM Programs?

In an effort to proactively identify and intervene with students whose behavior suggests that they may pose a risk of harm to themselves or others, the BTAM approach is designed to respond to a variety of behaviors of concern, not limited to explicit or direct threats. NTAC guidance for defining the types of behaviors that might be referred to a BTAM team includes objectively concerning behaviors, such as "threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying or harassing others, and criminal behaviors" (NTAC, 2018, p. 4). NTAC guidance also identifies a constellation of "other concerning behavior" that may warrant an assessment and response by the BTAM team, including a variety of indicators of stress, inappropriate interest in violent topics (e.g., past school attackers, weapons), interpersonal conflicts, suicidality, or other concerns that might lead to a potential harmful outcome if not addressed. Early identification of these behaviors can make schools' efforts to intervene and support students more effective. However, although BTAM as an approach is designed to give schools the capacity to respond early to behaviors indicative of potential violence, BTAM teams are *not* intended to be the primary vehicle for schools to respond to lower-level behavioral or mental health concerns, signals of change in a student's well-being (e.g., depression, bullying, declining grades), or such routine school discipline issues as classroom disruption.

In our survey, we explored how principals described the scope of their BTAM programs in terms of the types of incidents and behaviors that would be addressed by a BTAM team.[1] In this chapter, we focus on the subset of roughly 1,600 schools in our survey sample who reported having an official BTAM team at their school or alternative school-based team that functions similarly to a BTAM team.

According to Principals' Responses, Official BTAM Teams Are Appropriately Focused on Serious Behavior and Problems—Not Low-Level Issues

We asked principals, "What is the scope of the threatening or concerning behavior to which your school or district's BTAM team responds?" We listed eight examples of threatening or concerning behavior that a student might exhibit and asked principals to select which, if any, would be referred to their school's BTAM team.

Ninety-three percent of principals indicated that their official BTAM teams would respond to very serious threatening or concerning behavior, such as students who directed threats toward other students or school staff, and students who made threats of or may be intending to commit mass violence against the school or school community. Though such behaviors would appear to always fall within the remit of a BTAM team, state law or local policy sometimes requires schools to immediately involve law enforcement in some very serious situations. As a result, some of our respondents may have viewed such cases as outside the "jurisdiction" of their BTAM team and overall program because of their criminal nexus. About 80 percent of principals responded that their

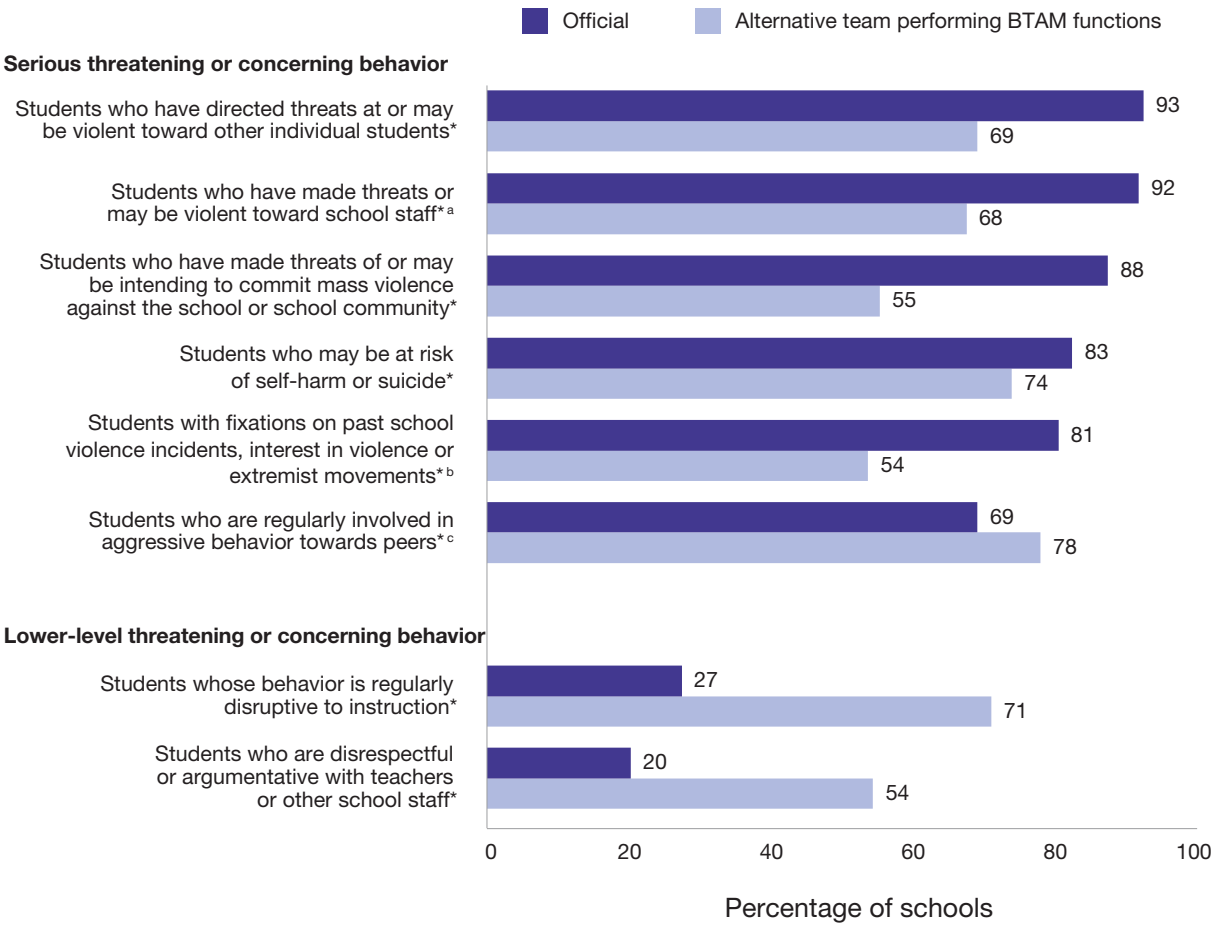
[1] We also presented survey respondents with a set of behavioral scenarios and associated follow up questions to explore how they viewed the role of their BTAM teams in response to different types of incidents. The results of the scenario-based questions are presented in Chapter 10.

schools' BTAM teams would respond to other serious concerns, such as students at risk of self-harm or suicide or students with fixations on past school violence incidents or interest in violence or extremist movements.

As previously discussed, some schools (14 percent) have a school-based team that makes decisions about serious student behavioral concerns but is not referred to as a BTAM team (a BTAM-like team). Comparing and contrasting the responses of schools that have official BTAM teams versus these school-based BTAM-like teams help provide some insight as to the scope of official BTAM teams compared with teams that would have a broader remit by definition. As shown in Figure 4.1, few official BTAM teams deal with low-level concerning behavior, such as regular classroom disruption and disrespect of school staff. Principals' responses suggest that these lower-level behavioral concerns are appropriately addressed by other teams schools may have in place, such as MTSS or PBIS teams that operate alongside, but separate from, the school BTAM team. Official BTAM teams appear to be focused on the most serious concerns. Principals also reported that such teams as the ones described above responded more often to low-level incidents and less serious behavior.

FIGURE 4.1

Percentage of Schools Whose BTAM Teams Focus on Various Threatening or Concerning Behavior



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "What is the scope of the threatening or concerning behavior to which your school or district's BTAM team responds?" (n = 1,635). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. An asterisk (*) indicates that the percentage of principals in schools with official BTAM teams who reported their team responded to that type of student behavior was statistically significantly different from the percentage of principals in schools with unofficial BTAM teams who said similarly.

[a] For example, threats against teachers.

[b] For example, fixation on Columbine attacks, fixation on animal cruelty or abuse, or viewing websites with extremist or violent content.

[c] For example, frequent verbal or limited physical conflicts without concerns about weapon use, bullying, or fighting.

CHAPTER 5

How Are Schools Operationalizing BTAM?

In this chapter, we investigate how public schools are operationalizing BTAM as part of their school safety efforts.[1] We examine the policies and procedures schools have in place that are specific to BTAM, the membership structure of school BTAM teams, the training that team members receive, how often these teams meet, and how they are funded. To do so, we focus on the 82 percent of schools in our sample (n = 1,408) that had an official BTAM team. Throughout our analysis, we consider how and to what extent differences in the operation of BTAM programs may be related to factors such as BTAM team size, team level (school-level only, district-level only, or both), and other school characteristics. At the end of this chapter, we explore how BTAM operations differ across schools in states with different BTAM policy contexts in 2019.

Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures specific to BTAM help ensure that the overall process is implemented with fidelity across individual cases and that policies help provide structure, consistency, and accountability.[2] Procedures provide clear guidelines, such as step-by-step instructions for implementing specific components of BTAM (e.g., conducting behavioral threat assessments, assigning supports and interventions). Clear procedures for assessment and management help improve the reliability of BTAM outcomes at both the individual student level and broader school level.

Policies can touch on various BTAM topics; some policies, for instance, will specify the composition of BTAM teams to ensure that multiple perspectives and experiences provide input into the various BTAM steps. Having policies specific to the BTAM team can also add a degree of formality by specifying leadership roles, details about meeting structure and regularity, and training requirements for team members. Some policies related to BTAM also mandate the collection of specific types of data about individual cases, allowing schools to analyze trends and improve their practices over time.

[1] At the onset of this project, we were concerned that principals may not always be familiar enough with their school- or district-level BTAM teams to be able to answer detailed questions about how these teams operate. Therefore, we confirmed principals' familiarity in our survey (see Appendix A, Table A.8). The majority of principals (71 percent) said they are extremely familiar with BTAM (e.g., they are a member of the team or lead it or otherwise have detailed knowledge). Another 25 percent said they were at least somewhat familiar (e.g., "you have referred students and/or have knowledge of the team's processes"). Principals' overwhelming familiarity with BTAM increases our confidence about the accuracy of the responses they provided to our survey.

[2] Implementing BTAM with fidelity means consistently following established protocols and best practices for BTAM, ensuring that each step of the process is carried out as intended by the chosen model or guidelines, whether a school has chosen to adopt an existing, named model or developed its own model to meet its needs.

Only Half of Schools' BTAM Programs Have Defining Policy Documents

A slight majority of schools (53 percent) with BTAM teams have an explicit policy document that establishes and defines their BTAM program. Principals in schools in large districts and in schools serving a majority of students of color were more likely than their counterparts to indicate their BTAM program had defining policy documents. Schools with larger BTAM teams and with teams spanning both the school and district levels—perhaps a proxy for the formality of a BTAM program—were also more likely to have defining policy documents.

However, 23 percent of principals did not know whether their school's BTAM program had a defining policy document. This is somewhat concerning; if these schools do have policies in place related to BTAM, principals' responses suggest that the school leader is often not aware of the policy document's content. Principals in schools with only a district-level BTAM team were especially likely to report being unsure about whether the program had a defining policy document.

Only Half of Schools Have Protocols in the Form of Documented Standard Operating Procedures to Guide How the BTAM Team Functions

About half of schools with BTAM teams (49 percent) have written standard operating procedures (SOPs) that guide team functions. Similar to the patterns we observed around the existence of defining policy documents, SOPs were more common in schools serving a majority of students of color, in large districts, and in support of large teams and schools with teams at both the school and district levels.

One in five principals were not sure whether their school or district had established SOPs for how their BTAM team regularly functions. Principals in schools that had only district-level BTAM teams were especially unsure about whether these teams functioned according to established SOPs.

Team Composition and Roles

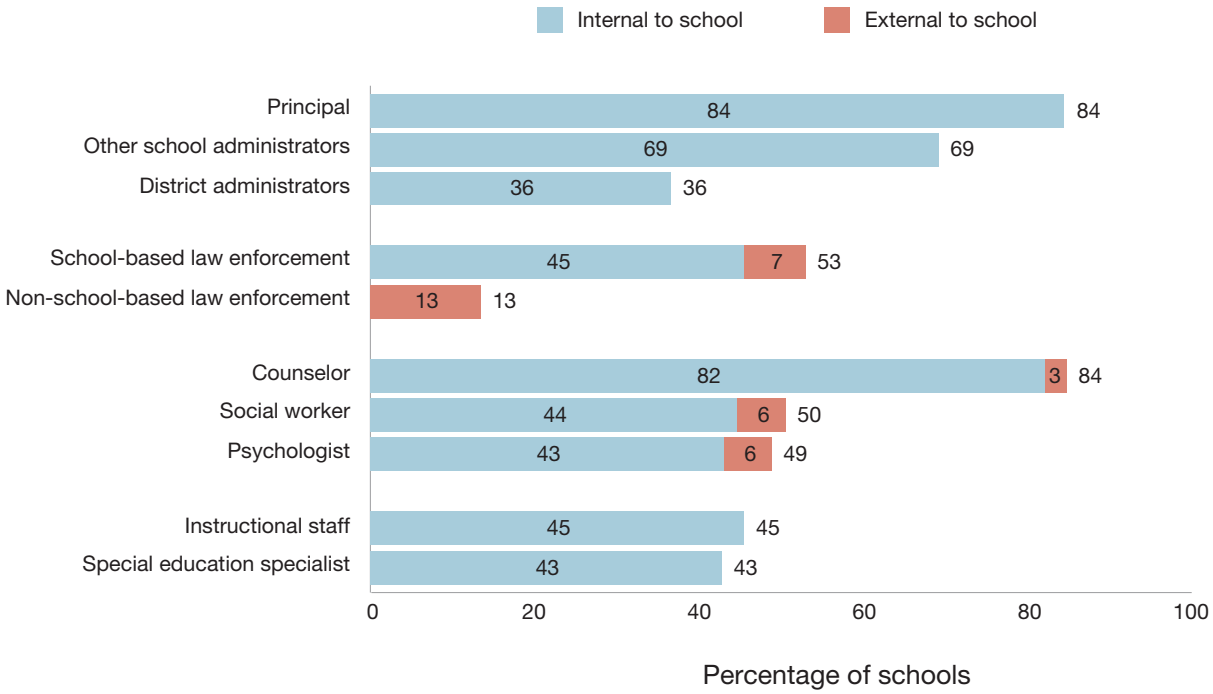
The BTAM process relies on a multidisciplinary team of individuals to assess the level of concern appropriate to specific behaviors or threats and make decisions about how to respond. That is, a BTAM team should bring together individuals with different but complementary expertise to best assess and respond to individual referred cases and student needs. Most named BTAM frameworks and even some laws or regulations in states requiring or supporting BTAM implementation specify minimum team sizes and specific disciplines that must or should be represented (see, e.g., NTAC, 2018; National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, undated). Most commonly, BTAM models or implementation guidance recommend including individuals from school administration (e.g., a principal or assistant principal), mental health services (e.g., a counselor or school psychologist), and public safety (e.g., a school resource officer [SRO] or another individual with security expertise). That said, a wide variety of other specialists and individuals with community or other knowledge are often flagged as additional potential team members (e.g., instructional staff, special education professionals, among others). Because the number and types of specialists that are part of the team can drive the performance of BTAM teams, team composition and roles that different individuals play on the team were significant focuses of the survey.

Principals and Counselors Are the Two Most Common Members of BTAM Teams

Our survey asked principals to indicate which people were members of their BTAM team based on a list of ten different types of roles. As shown in Figure 5.1, principals indicated that a variety of school- or district-based individuals (and outside individuals) from administrators to mental health providers are part of these

FIGURE 5.1

Percentage of Schools Whose BTAM Teams Include Various Regular Members



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which person(s) are regular members of this BTAM team?" (n = 1,408). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

teams. By far, the two most common members were principals and counselors (both 84 percent). However, majorities of school BTAM teams also included other school administrators (69 percent), school-based law enforcement (53 percent), and social workers (50 percent). Other individuals were also commonly included on BTAM teams, such as school psychologists (49 percent), instructional staff (45 percent), and special education specialists (43 percent). District administrators were included on BTAM teams at 36 percent of schools, and 13 percent of schools included non-school-based law enforcement on their teams.

Schools with Mental Health Professionals on Their BTAM Teams Overwhelmingly Rely on Professionals Who Are Already on Staff at Their Schools (as Opposed to External Personnel)

Principals' responses indicate that BTAM teams are overwhelmingly composed of individuals internal to the school (i.e., who are on staff or are located at the school).[3] For example, 49 percent of schools had a psychologist on their BTAM teams. The majority of schools with a psychologist on their teams indicated they had a psychologist on staff at school either full time or part time (43 percent of schools overall); this individual

[3] In another survey item, we asked principals which types of staff members they have at their school, including counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and law enforcement officers (see Appendix A, Table A.5). If schools had these personnel on staff either part time or full time, we assumed that it was these internal personnel who would be those serving on the BTAM team. In cases where schools told us that they did not have these individuals at their school but did have that role represented on their BTAM team, we presumed that role was played by individuals from outside the school. We also assumed that some positions (e.g., school and district administrators, instructional staff, education specialists) are always internal to the school and that, by definition, non-school-based law enforcement personnel are always external to the school.

presumably sat on the school BTAM team. Only 6 percent of schools noted that they had a psychologist on their BTAM teams but not on staff at their schools—this indicates that these schools made the extra effort to ensure that these disciplines were represented on the team, even though it required them to draw personnel from outside their current staffing.

We saw this same pattern with all the health professional positions we asked about, suggesting that schools' access to school-based mental and physical health staff usually shapes whether their BTAM team includes such personnel. This is noteworthy because schools have differential access to various types of school-based personnel, and accessing those disciplines from outside the school can be challenging, especially when it comes to individuals with specialized expertise.

Team Composition Depends on School Characteristics (e.g., Grade Level, District Size, and Poverty Level)

Which specific personnel were included on schools' BTAM teams was also highly related to the school context (although this is intertwined with which types of schools tend to have which staff, as discussed in the "Differential Access to School Personnel Likely Shapes the Composition of BTAM Teams" box). For example, secondary (middle and high) schools were more likely to have a greater variety of personnel on their teams—including other school administrators beyond the principal, school-based law enforcement, counselors, and social workers—than their elementary counterparts.

Schools in small districts (those serving fewer than 10,000 students) were especially likely to directly include school principals and district administrators on their BTAM teams. Conversely, in large districts, other school administrators, such as assistant principals, were more likely to be involved. We infer from these patterns that larger districts might have greater capacity for specialized roles or delegation of specific individuals to be involved in BTAM, given they tend to employ more school- and district-level administrators.

We also observed some differences in school BTAM team composition by school poverty level. For example, schools in higher-income neighborhoods were more likely to have school psychologists than schools serving lower-income neighborhoods.[4]

Almost All Schools Have BTAM Teams with Between Three and Eight Roles Represented

We also used principals' responses to our question about which personnel were represented on their school's BTAM team to infer how many people were on the team overall, assuming one person per role. We acknowledge that some schools may involve multiple people in the same role: For example, a BTAM team might include several instructional staff. With this caveat in mind, we found that nearly all principals selected between three and eight personnel from the list provided (see Figure 5.2). The typical (median) principal selected five distinct roles.

To understand how BTAM team membership changes as these teams increase in size (i.e., which types of personnel are added as teams grow), we investigated the likelihood of various types of personnel being on a BTAM teams given team size. We focus on schools with between three and eight team members because there are very few schools with BTAM teams that fall outside this range.

We plot the results of this analysis in Figure 5.3. Principals' reports suggest that they and their school counselors are the most commonly represented roles on school BTAM teams. Principals and counselors are highly

[4] Federal government data from the 2021–2022 school year paint a somewhat different picture, showing that high-poverty schools were actually more likely than low-poverty schools to have both diagnostic mental health assessment services and mental health treatment services (NCES, 2024).

Differential Access to School Personnel Likely Shapes the Composition of BTAM Teams

The composition of schools' BTAM teams is likely related to which personnel are present at school—either employed directly by the district or as part of a contract agreement. That is, schools with regular access to specialized staff are more likely to include these staff on their BTAM teams, compared with schools that lack such regular access.

We confirmed with principals what types of specialized staff—counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, sworn law enforcement officers, and security guards—are present at their schools either full time or part time (see Table 5.1). Unsurprisingly, we found that some types of staff were much more common than others, with principals reporting as follows: school counselor (89 percent), school nurse (89 percent), school psychologist (67 percent), sworn law enforcement officer (58 percent), social worker (56 percent), and security guard (22 percent).

Importantly, some types of schools were much more likely to have these personnel available than others. For example, middle and high schools were more likely to have school-based law enforcement officers and other security staff who are not law enforcement officers present at school. Meanwhile, low-poverty schools were more likely than their middle- and especially high-poverty counterparts to have social workers and school psychologists. Rural schools were also less likely to have mental health personnel available, but they were more likely to have sworn law enforcement officers (including SROs).

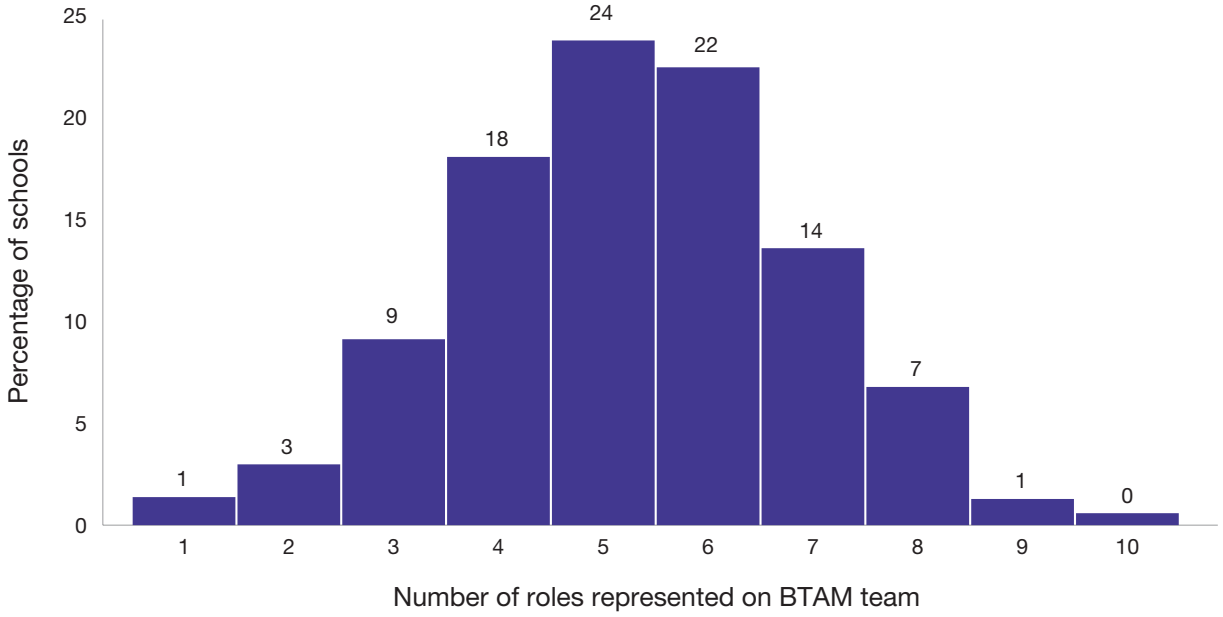
TABLE 5.1

Percentage of Schools with Various Types of Staff, Either Full or Part Time

	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	School-Based Law Enforcement	Non-Law Enforcement Security Officer or Guard
Total	89	89	56	67	58	22
Level						
Elementary	84	90	51	68	47	16
Middle	96	91	63	72	74	26
High	97	86	63	62	73	34
Locale						
Urban	87	88	60	72	41	32
Suburban	88	91	66	82	61	25
Rural	92	88	46	53	67	13
Neighborhood poverty level						
High	92	89	51	55	53	28
Middle	90	88	55	65	61	20
Low	84	92	63	84	51	24
District size						
Small	88	88	51	63	62	15
Large	90	91	62	74	52	31

NOTE: This table presents response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following staff members do you have at your school, either full or part time?" (*N* = 1,746).

FIGURE 5.2
Distribution of School BTAM Team Sizes



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which person(s) are regular members of this BTAM team?" (n = 1,408). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Percentages may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

likely to be involved in even the smallest BTAM teams and are regular members of virtually all BTAM teams with more than four or five members. Other school-level administrators, such as assistant principals, are not typically involved in very small BTAM teams but appear to be the first member added as team size increases.

When teams have five or more members, personnel in more specialized roles (e.g., special education professionals, school-based law enforcement, school social workers, instructional staff, or school psychologists) are next to be added to BTAM teams. These personnel are rarely present on small teams but are typically all present once teams have more than five or six members. Principals' responses suggest that these personnel are not added to teams in any obvious order.

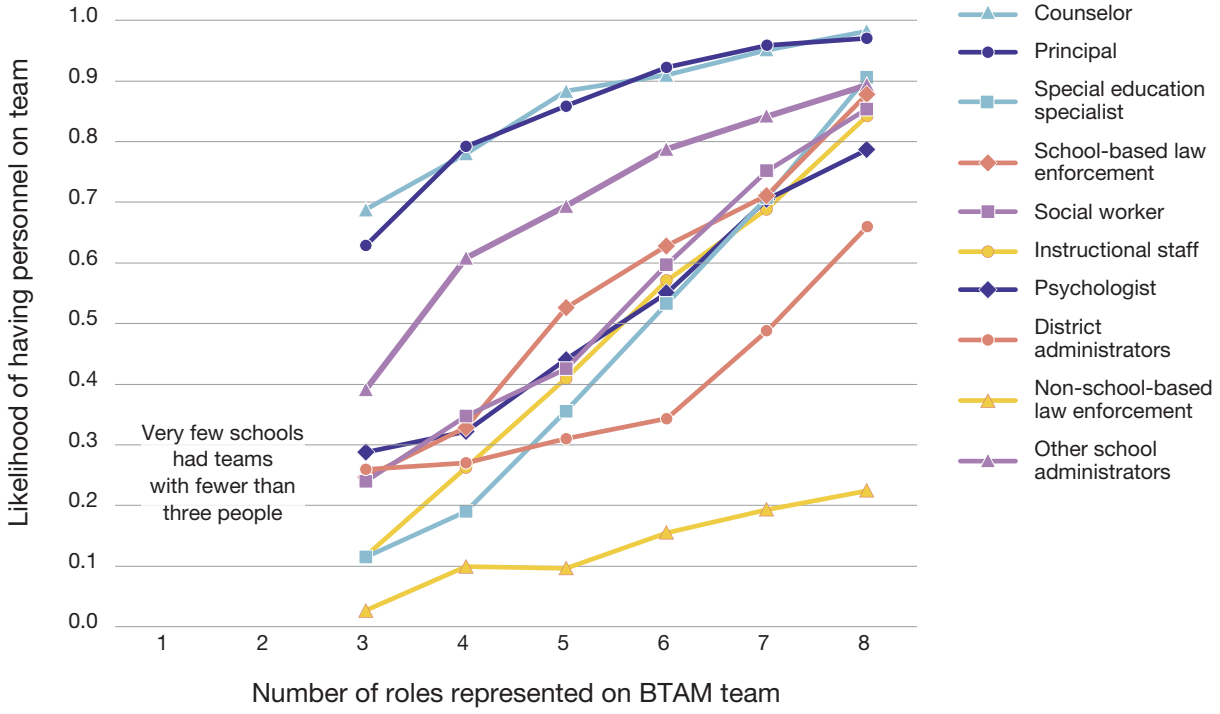
Meanwhile, district administrators only tend to be involved in especially large teams; even among schools with larger BTAM teams, these personnel are only present about half of the time. Unsurprisingly, district administrators are disproportionately present on district-level BTAM teams and do not tend to be involved in teams that exist only at the school level. Our survey results also suggest that non-school-based law enforcement is rarely present on school BTAM teams, regardless of size.

Principals Report That Law Enforcement Tends to Play an Advisory Role on School BTAM Teams

Many named BTAM models specific to the K–12 school context recommend involving school-based law enforcement, local police, or other individuals with public safety expertise as team members. The rationale is that law enforcement officers can assist with decisions about keeping a school safe and secure in the event of a threat or provide access to knowledge that other school-focused professionals do not have (e.g., if a student has a prior criminal record). They may also be able to provide police or criminal justice information as part of assessments (e.g., knowledge about resources available, if appropriate, through the juvenile justice system)

FIGURE 5.3

Likelihood That Various Personnel Are Regular Members of BTAM Team, by Team Size



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which person(s) are regular members of this BTAM team?" (n = 1,408). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. We omit results for teams with less than three members; very few schools had BTAM teams with fewer than three members, so results are not reliable. For psychologists, counselors, and social workers, we directed principals to include both school-based and external personnel.

and can coordinate with their agencies if immediate action is needed to ensure the safety of the school community (e.g., conducting searches of a student's home for weapons, if permissible).

Police involvement in BTAM has been controversial for some individuals and civil society groups, driven by concern that their involvement will increase the chance that students will end up in the justice system—i.e., that the outcome of threat assessment and management will increase the likelihood of arrest and prosecution for student behavior at school. Our survey results indicate otherwise, given how principals described the role of law enforcement on their school BTAM teams.

In our survey, we explored the involvement of law enforcement in BTAM by asking respondents about officers' role on the team and assessing the frequency of criminal justice–related outcomes in the BTAM process (we discuss the latter in more detail in Chapters 8, 10, and 11). Specifically, we asked those principals who included either school-based or non-school-based law enforcement on their school's BTAM team what role these individuals played on the team. We listed five options and asked respondents to select up to two responses that best capture law enforcement's involvement on their specific school teams. The vast majority of respondents (82 percent) selected two roles, while 14 percent selected only one.[5] The intent in forcing a choice was to focus on the most important roles police play on these teams, in the view of respondents.

We first examined how many principals responded that law enforcement personnel play the following role(s) on their school BTAM teams:

[5] A handful of respondents (4 percent) ignored the instructions and selected more than two roles.

- help with decisions about when safety- and security-related actions are necessary (e.g., searching student belongings, implementing schoolwide lock down) (64 percent)
- provide a public safety perspective about school dynamics and student behavior to help assess and manage behavioral concerns (58 percent)
- participate to initiate public safety responses when necessary (e.g., arrest or other criminal justice intervention) (33 percent)
- consult on the potential legal repercussions of student behavior (19 percent)
- provide information from police and court records so the team can understand past student behavior (18 percent).

Two responsibilities were clearly predominant: helping with security-related decisions (64 percent) and providing a public safety perspective to the BTAM process (58 percent). Forty-two percent of schools said their law enforcement personnel only performed one or both of these actions. Another 46 percent of schools said their law enforcement personnel performed at least one of these roles on their BTAM team but also identified law enforcement as performing one of the less common roles: initiating public safety responses, consulting on legal repercussions, or providing information from police or court records. Only a small minority of schools (12 percent) responded that they included law enforcement on their BTAM team exclusively to perform at least one of these previous three functions.

Altogether, these findings are counter to some perceptions of the roles that law enforcement personnel play as BTAM team members (i.e., they are exclusively there to provide information from police or court records, which was actually the role least selected by principals). The findings also are counter to concerns that schools treat law enforcement involvement in BTAM as a direct link to the criminal justice system (i.e., concerns that the presence of police in schools is leading to more arrests; see, e.g., Theriot, 2009; Meiners, 2011). Rather, the specific activities and responsibilities that principals see as most important for the law enforcement members of their BTAM team suggest they view them primarily as sources of expertise (see, e.g., McKenna and White, 2018).

Training for BTAM Teams

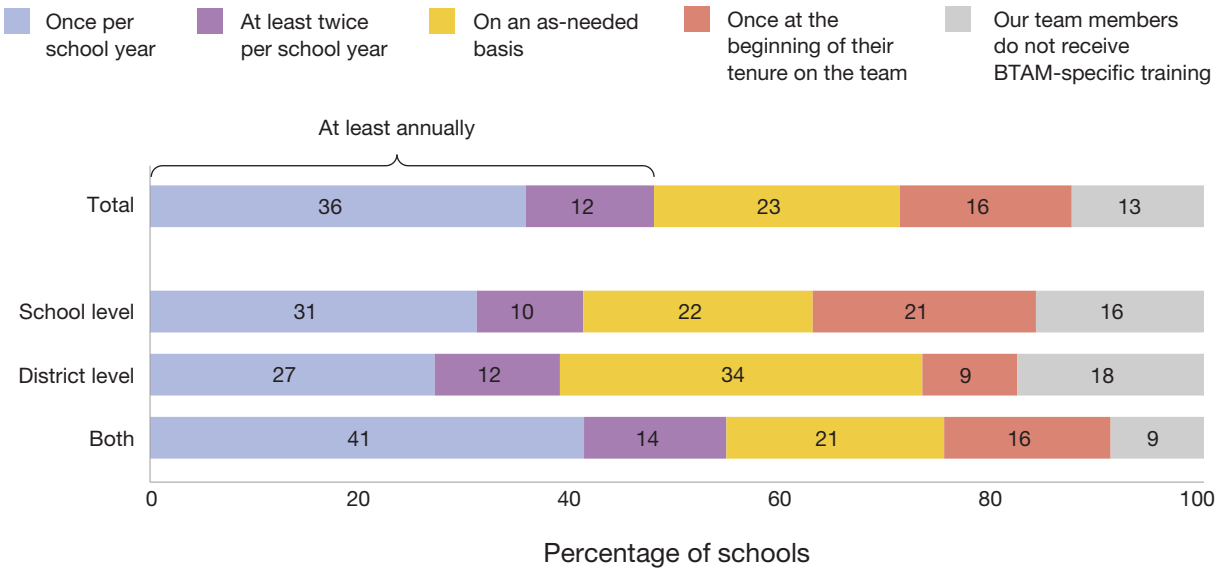
Although BTAM teams are generally made up of experienced practitioners with field-specific expertise, individual members are not necessarily BTAM experts per se and are not necessarily experts at working effectively as part of a larger multidisciplinary team. This finding means that BTAM-specific training may be important for providing a foundation of BTAM-specific knowledge across all members and as a mechanism for building working relationships within the team. The National Association of Behavior Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA), for example, specifies that training for BTAM teams should target a broad variety of competencies (e.g., risk and threat assessment), mental health and cultural awareness, bias mitigation, effective team communication, intervention strategies, and community engagement (NABITA, 2024). This section discusses principals' responses to questions exploring the training for members of their schools' BTAM teams.

Roughly Half of Schools Train BTAM Members at Least Once per School Year

According to principals' responses, about half of schools (48 percent) with BTAM teams provide training or professional development related to BTAM to their team members annually (see Figure 5.4). This includes 36 percent of schools that train their BTAM members once per school year and 12 percent that train multiple times in a single school year. Meanwhile, 23 percent of schools provide training on an as-needed basis, and

FIGURE 5.4

Percentage Distribution of Schools, by BTAM Team Level and Frequency of Trainings



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "How often do the members of your BTAM team receive training and/or professional development related to BTAM?" (*n* = 1,376). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

16 percent train members only at the beginning of one's tenure on the team. About one in six schools (13 percent) do not provide any training.[6]

Schools in Districts That Also Have a District-Level BTAM Team Receive the Most Training

The frequency at which schools provide training to their BTAM members is related to team level, as shown in Figure 5.4. Schools where the principals reported that they had both a school- and district-level BTAM team are especially likely to receive annual training. That is, 55 percent of schools served by both types of teams train annually, compared with 39 percent of schools with district-only teams and 41 percent with school-only teams. We hypothesize that this difference might reflect the level of resources available in districts that maintain teams at multiple levels.

Team Meetings

NTAC recommends that BTAM teams meet "on a regular basis" to provide time for the team to work together and learn their individual responsibilities so they are able to operate more readily as one cohesive unit (NTAC, 2018). At the minimum, BTAM teams should meet whenever cases require assessment and intervention, but—even in the absence of new cases—regular meetings can provide teams opportunities for training, monitoring of ongoing interventions, and review of past cases to learn and improve over time.

[6] Our survey did not ask questions about—and we therefore cannot report on—the format of these trainings, who conducts them, how long they are, what topics they cover, or whether they vary from year to year.

Forty-Three Percent of School BTAM Teams Have a Regular Meeting Schedule

Forty-three percent of schools have a standard meeting schedule for their BTAM teams. However, there was no convergence among these schools about how often meetings occurred: 9 percent met once per week, 8 percent met once every two weeks, 19 percent met once per month, and 6 percent met every two to three months. The remaining 57 percent of schools met irregularly on an as-needed basis depending on their case load. Principals in urban schools, large schools, large districts, and schools serving a majority of students of color—categories that are highly overlapping—were particularly likely to report having a standard meeting schedule.

Funding

Funding for school BTAM teams and programs varies significantly across U.S. states and individual school districts. Whether a program has stable funding is often a driver for whether it can be sustained over time, because funding instability (and the competition of other priorities for funds) can put programs at risk. Funding for BTAM programs is typically used to support annual and other training for BTAM team members, BTAM conference attendance, or the purchase of case management software. Forming a BTAM team per se does not require funding outside total program funding for a school or district, which already covers the salaries of such key BTAM team personnel as administrators and counselors. Most schools (57 percent) said their BTAM programs are implemented without dedicated staff or additional funds beyond the levels already available. Schools in large districts were especially likely to have dedicated funds for BTAM activities. Teams housed only at the district level and those housed at the school level that worked alongside a district-level team were also more likely to have dedicated funds.[7]

Funding for school BTAM programs comes from various sources, including through aforementioned school or district general fund budgets that also fund the positions of key team members. Some districts might also have a dedicated funding line in budget to support BTAM implementation. Others might seek funds externally via grants.

One-Quarter of Schools Have Dedicated Funding for Their BTAM Program

We asked principals whether their school or district budget includes dedicated funding to support their BTAM program. Only about one-quarter of principals (23 percent) said their BTAM teams were supported with dedicated funding in their school or district budget.[8]

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[7] Nineteen percent of schools did not know how their BTAM programs were funded.

[8] We do not have information about the amounts of dedicated funds.

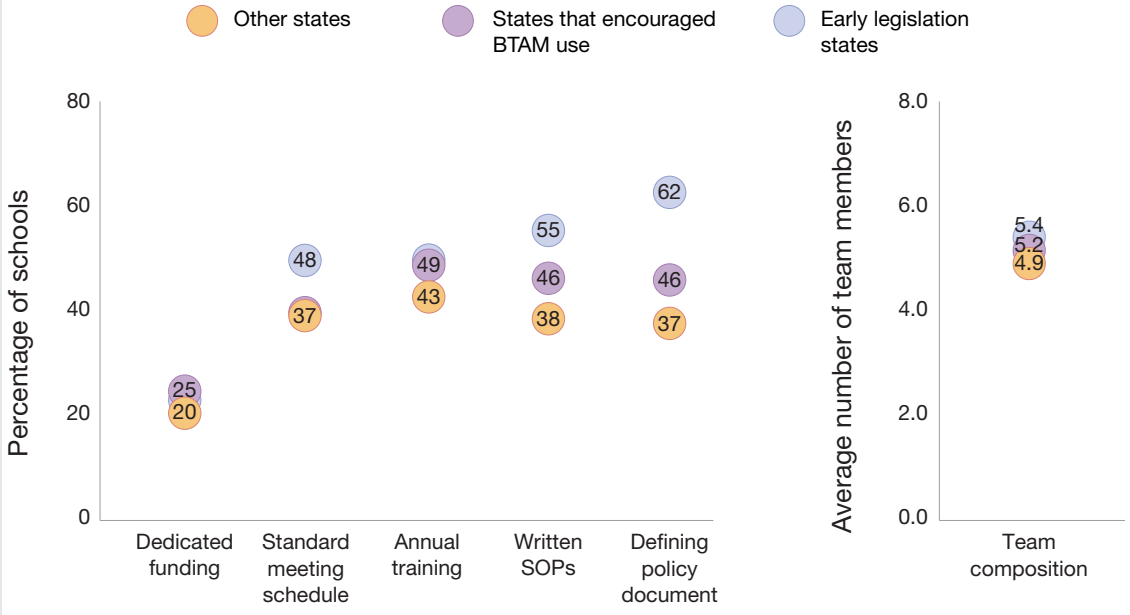
BTAM Programs in Schools from States Whose Policies Already Pushed Early Adoption of BTAM by 2019 Appear to Have Institutionalized BTAM More Wholistically Than Those in Other States as of 2025

Looking across the various means through which schools have institutionalized BTAM as part of schools' safety strategies—through developing policies and procedures, defining team composition and roles, holding trainings and meetings, and identifying funding—schools in states that had already implemented legislation related to BTAM in 2019 appear to be ahead in terms of operating their BTAM programs in 2025, at least in some respects. As shown in Figure 5.5, schools in states with specific BTAM legislation in 2019 were more likely to have multiple organizational and procedural components in place for the operation of their BTAM team at the time of our survey. This includes having defining policy documents, written SOPs, and a standard meeting schedule for their BTAM teams. These schools were also more likely to have larger BTAM teams compared with schools in states that did not address BTAM at all in 2019, though the difference was substantively very small. Schools in states that included BTAM in legislation 2019 are now out in front compared with schools in states where adoption of BTAM was not promoted in 2019. They are also ahead of schools in states where BTAM was only encouraged in 2019, though not to the same degree.

We did identify two areas where schools in states with BTAM legislation in 2019 were not ahead of others that did not: funding and training. That is, schools in states that included BTAM in legislation in 2019 were neither more nor less likely to dedicate funding or annual training to BTAM than other schools at the time of our survey.

FIGURE 5.5

How BTAM Operations Compare Today Based on State Policy Contexts in 2019



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "Does your school or district budget include dedicated funding to support your BTAM program?" "How often does your BTAM team meet?" "How often do the members of your BTAM team receive training and/or professional development related to BTAM?" "Has your school or district established written standard operating procedures (SOPs) for how your BTAM team functions on a day-to-day basis?" "Does your school or district have an explicit policy document that establishes and defines your BTAM program?" and "Which person(s) are regular members of this BTAM team?" (n = 1,408). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

CHAPTER 6

What BTAM Models Do Schools Use, to What Extent Do They Modify Them, or Are They Building Their Own Models?

Because BTAM has been a recommended school safety practice for more than two decades, a variety of different frameworks have been developed to support schools when it comes to implementing BTAM. Frameworks range from overarching guidance for schools to develop their own processes (e.g., from such federal government agencies as the U.S. Secret Service, or state-level school safety agencies) to more specific named models that provide explicit road maps paired with such resources as worksheets and assessment rubrics. Many named models also define in detail how to carry out each stage of the BTAM process, from assessing risk to developing student safety plans.

Several states have developed their own guidelines for BTAM at K–12 schools (e.g., Florida Department of Education, 2025; State of South Carolina, 2023; Texas School Safety Center, undated; Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2023; Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of School Safety, 2025). Private experts and organizations have also contributed to the field by designing and publishing their own models. Additionally, prominent and widely used frameworks for establishing BTAM in schools include those created by U.S. federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC (NTAC, 2018). Importantly, school districts across the country have also designed their own individual BTAM models to fit their unique contexts and needs.

In this chapter, we investigate which BTAM frameworks or models schools are using. As in the previous chapter, we remain focused on the 82 percent of schools that told us they had an official BTAM team.

Most Schools Are Developing Their Own BTAM Models

We asked schools whether they used a named model to structure their approach to BTAM, allowing them to select among a list of five named models; specify the name of a model not included in the response options; or indicate that they used a locally developed model that draws on other models and resources to fit their needs. Respondents could also indicate that their school did not use a defined model as part of their approach to BTAM or that they did not know. As shown in Table 6.1, a minority of schools (20 percent) reported using an available named BTAM model. There was no convergence around any particular model. Instead, most principals reported their schools were using locally developed models. Specifically, 30 percent said they were using a BTAM model developed locally, potentially drawing on other models and resources to craft a process for use by their specific school or school district.[1] Another 11 percent reported using a BTAM model not listed in the response options. In free-text responses, some of these principals mentioned using the state-

[1] We did not ask for additional information about these locally developed programs.

TABLE 6.1
Percentage of Schools Using Various BTAM Models

	Percentage of Schools			
		State Policy Context in 2019		
Model	All	Not Addressed	States That Encouraged BTAM Use	Early Legislation States
Named models	20	22	13	23
"Other" program	11	8	9	12
Locally developed program	30	26	33	30
No defined program	18	19	19	17
Don't know	22	24	27	18

NOTE: This table depicts response data from the following survey question: "What program does this team currently use to structure its approach to BTAM?" (n = 1,404). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

developed frameworks referenced above, most often the Florida Harm Prevention and Threat Management Model, Texas School Safety Center Threat Assessment Guidelines, and Wisconsin School Threat Assessment and Management Protocol (Florida Department of Education, 2025; Texas School Safety Center, undated; Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of School Safety, 2025). These frameworks largely align with best practices identified by the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC.

Meanwhile, 18 percent of principals responded that they do not use a defined model as part of the approach to BTAM, and 22 percent were not sure what BTAM model their school or district was using.

Schools' likelihood of using named models depended on various factors, most notably their state policy context. Unsurprisingly, schools in states that already had legislation in 2019 were the most likely to use named models (some states with early legislation included states where named models were developed in their state—e.g., Virginia). However, the use of named models was still relatively uncommon even in these states and equal to the likelihood of schools in states that did not address BTAM in 2019 policy. Schools in the group of states that encouraged but did not mandate BTAM use in 2019 were the least likely to use named BTAM models. Our results also show that schools with smaller BTAM teams, those located in large school districts, and those that only have district-level teams are the least likely to adopt named models.

CHAPTER 7

Why Did Schools Adopt Specific BTAM Models or Develop Their Own, and How Did They Go About It?

We asked all principals whether they were personally involved in the initial implementation of their school's BTAM model and whether they reported using a named BTAM model or one that was locally created for their context. If they were, we asked why their school or district initially adopted a BTAM approach and about any steps the school or district may have taken prior to implementation. In our examination of how and why schools' BTAM models were put in place, we focus on the 50 percent of principals in our sample (n = 866) who said they were at their current school for that school's initial implementation of BTAM (and, therefore, would be able to provide more accurate information about the origins of their school's BTAM program).

The Perception That BTAM Is a Best Practice for Violence Prevention Topped Schools' Lists of Reasons for Why They Adopted BTAM

Our survey provided principals a list of seven possible reasons for the initial adoption of BTAM at their school and asked them to select up to three that best explain their context. Excluding those respondents who said they did not know about the main drivers for implementation, nearly all respondents identified between one and three reasons as main drivers. (Forty percent picked one reason, 29 percent picked two, and 26 percent picked three.)

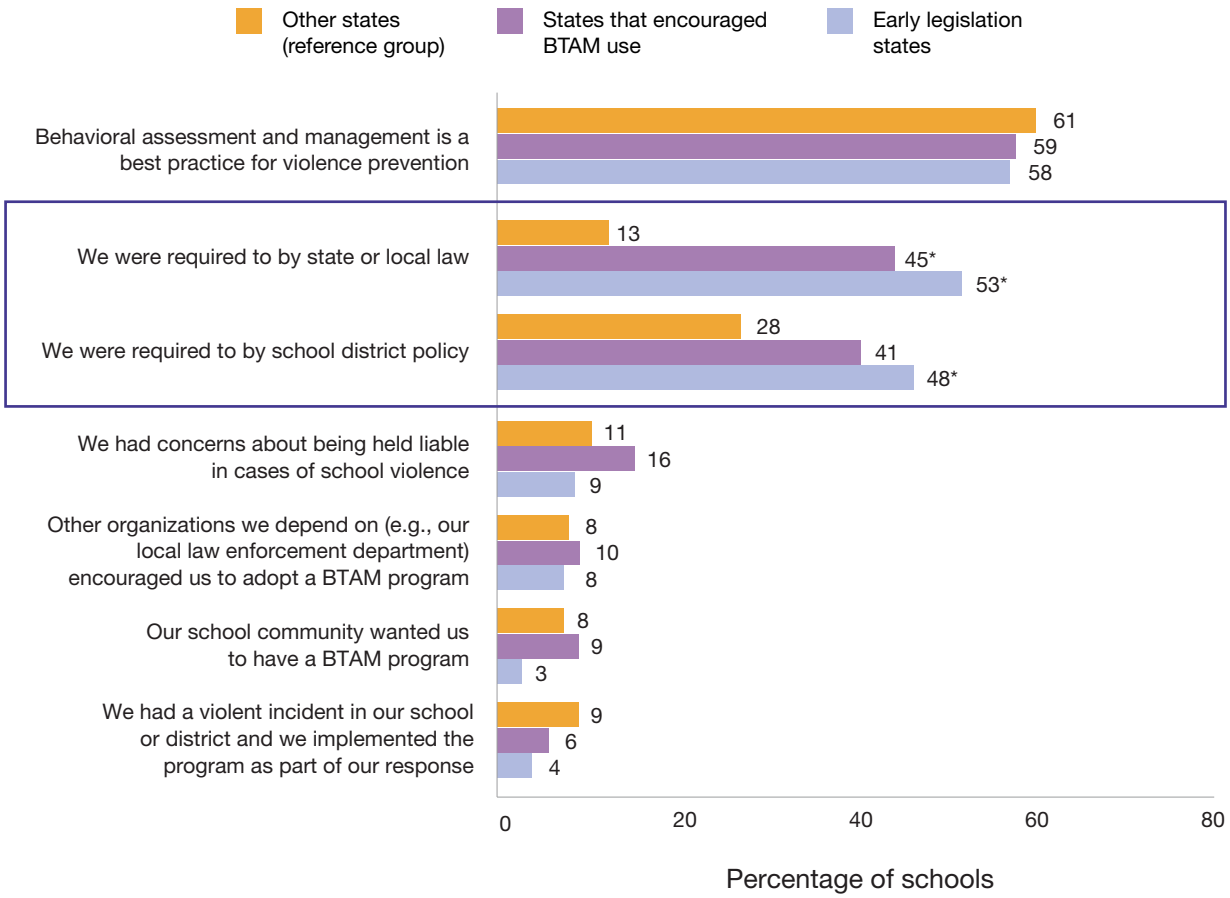
The perception that BTAM is a best practice for violence prevention topped the list of reasons why schools implemented BTAM in the first place: 59 percent of principals selected this option as a main driver. The next most common driver was policy requirements set at either the school or district level, which we discuss in more detail below. Few respondents selected other reasons as main drivers: Only 11 percent of principals reported that their school had concerns about being held liable in cases of school violence; 8 percent said that other organizations on which their school depends (e.g., local law enforcement) encouraged them to adopt a BTAM program; and 5 percent said their school community wanted them to adopt a BTAM program. Notably, 5 percent of principals reported that their school implemented BTAM directly in response to a violent incident in their school or district.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that schools are primarily adopting BTAM programs for a small number of reasons—most notably their belief that it is a best practice for school safety and because of state or local requirements. We interpret these results as an indication that other factors—such as experiencing a violent incident or school community encouragement—may be fringe contributing reasons but are likely not the driving factors for BTAM adoption.

Interestingly, principals in states that mandated BTAM early (i.e., in 2019) or strongly encouraged its adoption early (also in 2019) perceived that such policies were a driver for BTAM adoption at their schools (e.g., half of the principals in states with early legislation said that state or local law was a main driver in their decision to implement BTAM) (see the purple box in Figure 7.1). However, a greater percentage of these prin-

FIGURE 7.1

Among Schools That Use a Named or Locally Created BTAM Model, Percentage Who Identified Various Reasons as a Main Driver for Adoption, by State Policy Context



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "What were the main drivers for the implementation of your BTAM program?" (*n* = 452). Respondents were instructed to select up to three responses. Respondents were also given an "Other" option, selected by 7 percent of respondents; a "Don't know" option, selected by 3 percent of respondents; and a "None of these were main drivers" option, selected by 2 percent of respondents. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team; that their team was using a named model that we listed, an "Other" model, or a locally created one; and that they were around for the initial implementation of this model. An asterisk (*) indicates that the percentage of schools in states that had early legislation or in states that encouraged BTAM use is statistically significantly different from the percentage of schools in other states.

cipals still saw BTAM as a best practice for violence prevention as a main reason for adoption. The fact that BTAM programs are still very common even in those states where adoption of BTAM was neither mandated nor encouraged in 2019 further highlights the finding that state policy is not the determining factor in uptake of BTAM by schools.

Small Districts Approached Planning for Initial BTAM Implementation Somewhat Differently from Large Districts

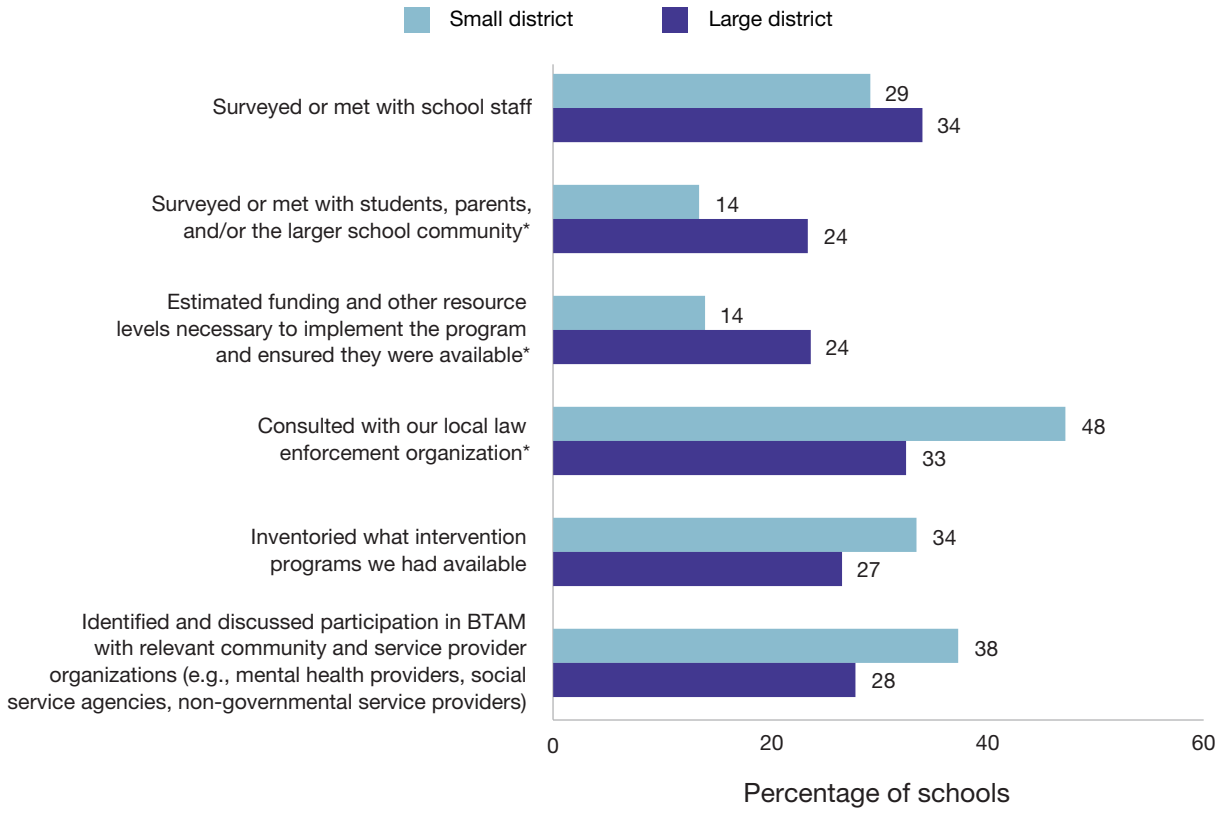
Before formally adopting a BTAM model, it is likely that schools (or districts) engaged in a decisionmaking process about whether to do so and, having decided to move forward, about which specific model to adopt. Drawing on the published literature describing how schools plan and prepare for the implementation of new programs, and the types of activities that are recommended as part of implementation efforts, we provided principals with a list of actions their school or district administrators may have taken as part of this process

and asked them to select which, if any, were applicable to their school or district BTAM implementation process.

With the caveat that principals in large districts were more likely to report not knowing about the specific actions their school or district took in the lead up to BTAM implementation, principals' reports suggest that small districts (those serving fewer than 10,000 students) approached adoption somewhat differently from large districts (see Figure 7.2). For example, principals of schools in small districts were more likely to report consulting with local law enforcement agencies (48 versus 33 percent, respectively). Conversely, principals in large districts were more likely to indicate that school or district administrators surveyed or met with students, parents, and/or the larger school community. Taken together, these findings suggest that small and large districts may have sought buy-in or collaboration from differing groups before adoption. Large districts were also more likely to have spent time estimating funding and other resource levels necessary to implement BTAM and ensuring their availability. More small districts also engaged in *outward-facing activities* (e.g., discussing participation with community providers, consulting with law enforcement), whereas more large districts engaged in *inward-facing activities* (e.g., surveying their [larger population] of school staff, survey-

FIGURE 7.2

Among Schools That Use a Named or Locally Created BTAM Program, Percentage Who Identified Various Actions Their School or District Administrators Took Before BTAM Implementation



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following actions do you know your school took before implementing its BTAM program?" (n = 451). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Respondents were also given the following reply options: "I don't know whether any of these actions were taken" (selected by 22 percent of respondents); and "Our school or district administrators did not complete any of these actions" (selected by 5 percent of respondents). This figure includes only those who said that their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team; that their team was using a named model that we listed, an "other" model, or a locally created one; and that they were around for the initial implementation of this model. An asterisk (*) indicates that the percentage of principals in small districts who said their school or district administrators took a specific action before implementing its BTAM program was statistically significantly different from the percentage of principals in large districts who said similarly.

ing their [larger] school community). This could also suggest that smaller districts are having to look outside their immediate school community for buy-in and support, relative to larger districts that are able to draw and depend more on internal resources.

Despite these differences, most schools did not carry out many of these recommended activities when planning for BTAM adoption. Although only 5 percent of respondents overall said that their school or district administrators engaged in none of the activities we listed, no one option was implemented by more than half of represented schools. The most common planning activity across schools was to consult with local law enforcement (just over 42 percent of schools did that). Across the other options, surveying or meeting with students or parents and estimating funding needs were the least common (more than 17 percent reported doing each of those). Only about 30 percent of schools implemented one of each of the other three types of planning activities (surveying or meeting with staff, inventorying intervention programs, and discussing participation with community organizations and service providers). These data suggest that while many schools did engage in some pre-implementation planning, few pursued a comprehensive set of activities, indicating potential gaps in readiness or variability across districts.

CHAPTER 8

How Do BTAM Teams Assess Risk of Harm for Referred Cases?

When a case is referred to a BTAM team, the behavioral threat *assessment* component of BTAM involves gathering information to determine whether a student who engaged in concerning behavior may pose a risk of harm. The assessment process can be divided into two main stages: (1) gathering information to understand the nature and severity of the concerning behavior or threat and (2) making a judgment about the risk of harm the individual poses to themself or others.

In this chapter, we analyze principals' responses to questions about the *assessment* component of their BTAM programs (the management and support component is discussed in the next chapter). We investigate what the process looks like at schools across the country, what data BTAM teams are using to make decisions about risk of harm, and the level of transparency schools are integrating into the behavioral threat assessment process. In this chapter, we focus on the 82 percent of schools that told us they had an official BTAM team.

Thirty Percent of Schools Have a Highly Standardized Process for Review and Assessment of Referred Cases During BTAM Meetings

Using existing interview- and survey-based research focused on BTAM practices, as well as recommendations and guidelines included in named BTAM models and frameworks (see, e.g., Jackson et al., 2025; Jackson and Viljoen, 2023; Jackson and Viljoen, 2024), we hypothesized that BTAM teams could structure their processes and deliberations in four overarching ways when assessing the seriousness of a particular student's behavior or the potential risk of harm they posed. The options were meant to capture the degree of consistency or standardization that the BTAM team applied across cases—that is, whether these teams use a common structure and assessment process to consistently collect similar data across cases and a consistent method for deliberation across the set of cases referred to them.[1] Table 8.1 presents the four operational types included in a survey question focused on the assessment process and the percentage of principals who indicated that the option best described the structure and processes of their BTAM teams. Drawing on the research literature on program implementation and quality improvement, operational types that are further down the table reflect modes of BTAM implementation that are more likely to produce consistent results case by case and maintain performance over time, thanks to their standardization (see, e.g., Bohanon, Caputo Love, and Morrissey, 2021).

As shown in Table 8.1, BTAM teams at schools across the country are spread across the four different operational types. Only 31 percent of teams are using what we labeled as *highly standardized approaches*—that is, applying common structures and processes in meetings and both collecting consistent data and using a standardized process for threat assessment across referred cases. However, 79 percent of teams are using a common meeting structure (the sum of the bottom three rows in Table 8.1), and 51 percent are collecting

[1] NTAC guidance for effective BTAM implementation in K–12 schools emphasizes standardization across cases, through the establishment of "clearly defined processes and procedures to guide assessments" (NTAC, 2018, p. 7).

TABLE 8.1
BTAM Operational Types and Percentage of Schools with BTAM Teams Using Each Type

Operational Types	Do BTAM Meetings Use a Common Structure and Process?	Are Threat Assessments Based on Similar Data for Each Case?	Do Threat Assessments Use a Standardized Process for Conducting Each Assessment?	Percentage of Schools Using Format
Unstructured BTAM	No	No	No	21
Individualized threat assessment	Yes	No	No	28
Threat assessment with standardized data	Yes	Yes	No	20
Highly standardized BTAM	Yes	Yes	Yes	31

NOTE: This table depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following statements best describes how your BTAM team operates when it is assessing the seriousness of a particular student's behavior or potential threat during a team meeting?" (n = 1,394). To view the complete set of response options, see Appendix A, Table A.38. This table includes only those who said that their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

common data across all cases (the sum of the bottom two rows). Large teams (meaning teams with more roles represented) and teams in schools that were also supported by district-level BTAM teams were more likely to apply an entirely standardized process to the behavioral threat assessment process.

Going down the table, teams and their processes become more structured and more consistent in how they operate—collect data, apply assessment practices, and respond to cases that may pose risk to their school. Such structure and consistency are important in helping ensure that situations that might pose a threat are not missed and that students are treated fairly and appropriately through the BTAM process.

Teams Tend to Rely More on Information Gathered During Interviews Than on Formal School Records to Assess the Risk of Harm Posed by Referred Students

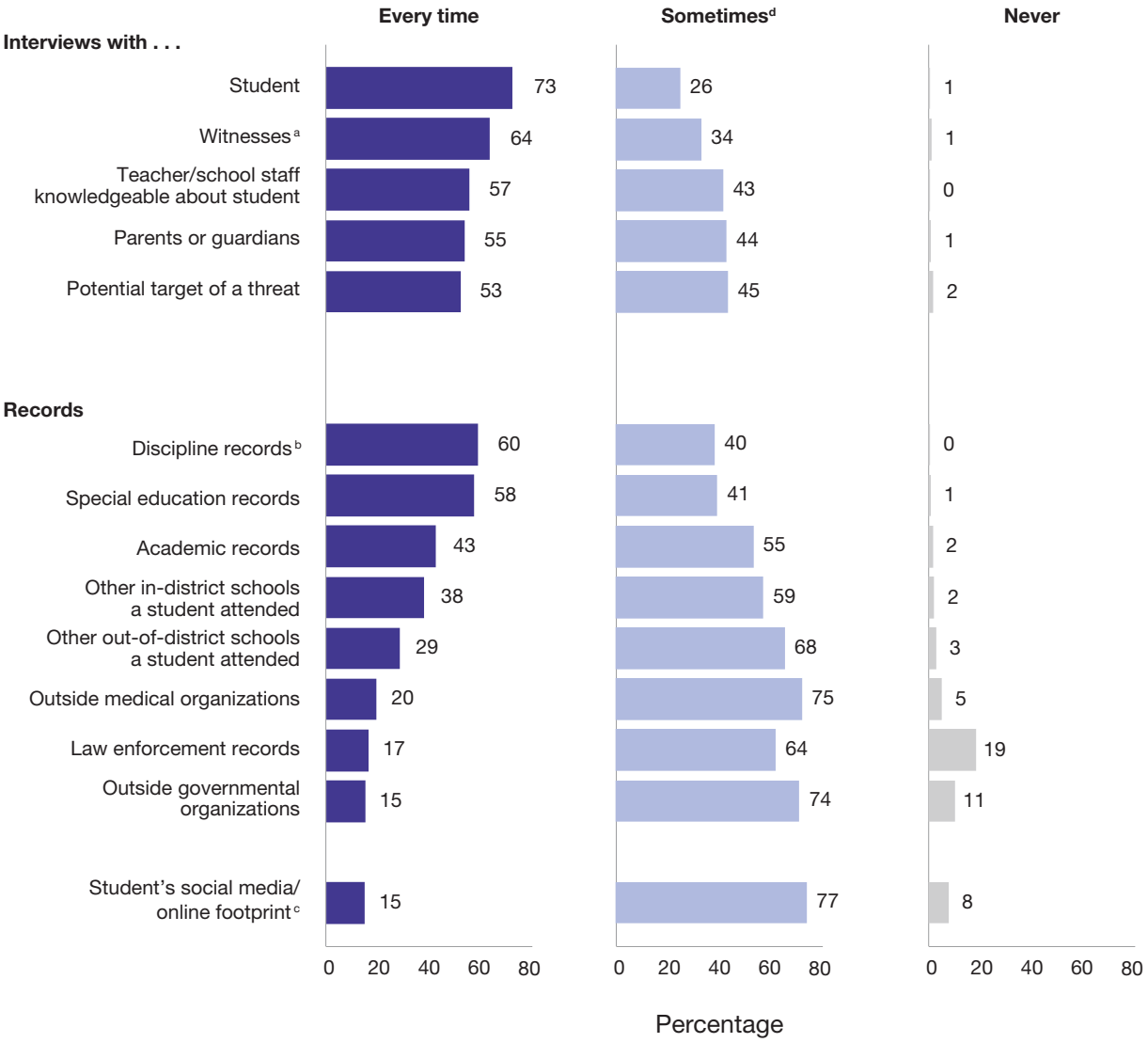
Our survey results suggest that BTAM teams use a variety of information sources to assess the risk of harm posed by students referred to the team. Different BTAM models recommend collecting and using different types of information, but virtually all recommend broad data collection and integrating information from many sources to build the best understanding of student behavior. We provided principals with a list of 14 potential data sources in our survey, ranging from interviews with students, school staff, and parents to reviewing discipline, academic, and other school records; law enforcement records; and social media accounts for referred students.[2] We asked principals which sources their BTAM teams rely on to conduct behavioral threat assessments and how often they use these sources. As shown in Figure 8.1, principals' responses suggest that BTAM teams use a variety of data sources to inform their assessments of risk level. Teams also use many of those sources frequently.

School BTAM teams rely first and foremost on interviews with the referred student to make decisions about potential risk of harm: 73 percent of principals indicated that their BTAM teams use this specific information source every time a student is referred to the BTAM process. Half (or more) of principals also reported their teams use interviews with other people—witnesses, teachers, parents or guardians, and poten-

[2] This list is based on guidance provided by existing BTAM frameworks, such as guidance provided by NTAC and such named models as the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG).

FIGURE 8.1

Among Schools with BTAM Teams, Percentage That Use Various Sources of Information to Assess a Student's Risk of Harm, by Frequency



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "When a student is referred to your BTAM team for concerning behavior, how often does your team use the following sources of information to assess the level of risk posed by the student?" (*n* = 1,395). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

[a] For example, peers or staff who witnessed the behavior.

[b] Including but not limited to history of prior threats.

[c] We specified "publicly available" social media/online footprint.

[d] Including respondents who selected "rarely," "sometimes," or "frequently." We collapsed these three categories into one for readability.

tial victims—every time they assess a student's risk. Fewer principals indicated that their teams use various types of records in every threat assessment, but when they do, discipline records, special education records, and academic records top the list of records BTAM teams use most often. Results also suggest BTAM teams use other types of records at least some of the time. For example, 64 percent of principals said their teams sometimes use law enforcement records, but only 17 percent of principals said they use these types of records in every case, likely because few students have law enforcement records. Note that this finding is consistent

with survey responses that examined the role of law enforcement officers who were members of BTAM teams discussed previously, in which only 18 percent indicated that providing information from police and court records was one of the officer-member's two most important roles.

Somewhat surprisingly, only 14 percent of principals said their BTAM teams review students' publicly available social media accounts or online footprint for every case. The vast majority of schools check these accounts at least sometimes, though not in all cases. High school principals said they review a student's publicly available social media or online footprint at roughly twice the rate of their elementary and middle school counterparts. This is somewhat surprising, given the rise of threats made against K–12 schools via social media (see, e.g., Moore et al., 2024).

Six in Ten Principals Believe That It Would Be Feasible for Their School BTAM Teams to Transparently Explain the Outcome of a Threat Assessment to Individuals Outside the Teams

Because the decisions made by BTAM teams can be high stakes for both the students involved and individuals concerned by student behavior and those potentially affected by any threats, questions may arise about whether decisions made by the team are correct and whether they appropriately and fairly balance student and school community safety needs. Given the sensitivity of the data and decisionmaking involved in behavioral threat assessment, it can be difficult for the process to be transparent enough to satisfy everyone in all cases. To probe these issues, we asked principals whether they thought it would be feasible for their BTAM team to transparently explain the outcome of their threat assessment process.

Sixty percent of principals said they believe it would be feasible for their BTAM teams to justify their decisions about a specific case to concerned individuals outside the teams. In other words, if asked, BTAM teams would be able to explain the rationale behind an assessment decision to a parent, guardian, or other concerned individual (i.e., why a student was determined to pose or not pose a threat). Principals indicated that such explanations would be possible because their BTAM process captures detailed information about both the rationale and data behind an assessment.

Another 32 percent of principals said they believe their BTAM team could *potentially* justify an outcome. Principals were evenly split over why this might be difficult: Half of this group noted that explaining an outcome would be difficult because of how much their process differs from case to case (i.e., their team does not use a standardized process for assessment), and the other half felt it would be difficult because assessments are the result of verbal deliberations among BTAM team members (i.e., there is no documentation that could serve as the basis for explanation). The remaining 7 percent of principals said their BTAM team would not be able to explain the rationale behind the outcome of their threat assessment process of a student because their BTAM files and deliberations are closed.

Principals in schools with more standardized and well-documented BTAM processes—often schools with large BTAM teams (meaning teams with more roles represented) and those served by both school-level and district-level BTAM teams—were most likely to indicate that their teams would be able explain the rationale behind an assessment decision to concerned individuals (e.g., parents or other community members), highlighting a key advantage of consistency in assessment procedures.

CHAPTER 9

How Do BTAM Teams Develop Intervention Plans for Students, and What Do These Plans Look Like?

The *management and support* component of BTAM focuses on identifying appropriate interventions and supportive programming for students who have been assessed by the BTAM team as posing a potential risk to themselves or others. BTAM models emphasize individualized responses and recommend a variety of intervention options, such as academic or social/emotional supportive services, monitoring, counseling, and safety planning tailored to the assessed needs of the individual and the situation at hand (see, e.g., Jackson et al., 2025). The goal of intervention planning is to identify the right composition of resources and supports that can prompt and sustain positive behavioral change for the student involved while also ensuring the safety of the broader school community. Many BTAM models differ in the specificity of their guidance for management and support strategies, leaving schools and their safety partners to develop their own approaches.

In this chapter, we discuss how schools with official BTAM programs are approaching the behavioral threat management and support component of BTAM, reviewing responses about the decisionmaking process for selecting interventions and supports and the types of interventions schools are offering, both at the school and through referral to outside services. We focus on the 82 percent of schools in our survey that told us they had an official BTAM team.

Most Schools Tailor Intervention Components to Students' Needs but Vary in Whether Tools Help Ensure Interventions Are Done Systematically and Consistently

We presented principals with four options for how their BTAM team might decide on an intervention or safety plan for a student assessed as posing a risk of harm and asked them to select which statement best describes their team's process. Principals were roughly split over the following four response options:

- Our BTAM team has a standard set of actions that it takes for every student assessed as a potential school safety concern (16 percent).
- Our BTAM team members recommend elements to add to each intervention plan based on their professional expertise and services from their discipline (e.g., a counselor identifies the types of counseling that should be included in the plan) (33 percent).
- Our BTAM team draws on an inventory of resources available across the school and community to collaboratively choose interventions for an intervention or safety plan (28 percent).
- Our BTAM team draws on an inventory of resources and decision support tools that help guide choices among intervention options and match interventions to individual student needs (23 percent).

The intent of BTAM is to use information about the student and their behavior to determine the right types of interventions that will simultaneously benefit the student (address the concerning behavior to decrease the risk of harm) and also ensure the safety of the school community. BTAM teams using a standard set of actions for every student they assess (our first response option) is counter to this goal. This was least commonly selected by principals, with only 16 percent indicating that their BTAM responded the same way in every case referred. The other three responses described programs that customized intervention planning in different ways and reflected increasingly robust implementation of BTAM practices.

The most common approach or option, selected by one-third of respondents, was that BTAM teams rely on their members to "bring intervention options from their individual professional disciplines to the table" during intervention planning. Ensuring that this happens is a strong driver behind recommendations or even requirements for BTAM teams to be multidisciplinary (see, e.g., NTAC, 2018). Notably, such practice also relies heavily on having the right people "at the table" for every case; if key BTAM team members are regularly absent from meetings or team meetings are unplanned or a team is affected by frequent staff turnover, a school's BTAM program might reach inconsistent decisions about which interventions to use from case to case.

The other two approaches/options include building systems and decision aids that help teams design intervention plans, essentially providing a "support system for the team" to build a strong and consistent process for selecting interventions across different students assessed by the team while still developing plans that are consistent for students' needs. Both include building an inventory of interventions that are available to the school, so the team is not reliant on the memory and attendance of individual team members to be aware of what intervention options are available to meet a student's needs. Building such an inventory is a recommended practice in some BTAM models and in other models for school-based behavioral management (e.g., PBIS or MTSS). Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated that their teams used such an inventory but did not have additional decision support tools to help them do so. The most robust approach/option supplements the intervention inventory with structured decision support tools that help teams select interventions tailored to the student's needs. Just under a quarter of respondents (23 percent) indicated that their BTAM team had both an intervention inventory and decision support tool that helped them as they designed intervention plans. Compared with more ad hoc approaches, structured intervention planning—supported by tools and inventories—may help ensure airer and more consistent outcomes across students. Because both of these response options included having an intervention inventory available, taken together they indicate that more than half of schools (51 percent) support intervention planning with an inventory of available intervention options.

Students and Their Parents or Guardians Are Almost Always Involved in the Process of Determining Interventions—but Usually Only in a Consulting Role

According to principals' reports, 91 percent of school BTAM teams typically involve parents or guardians of the referred student in the intervention and safety planning process; 84 percent also noted involving the referred student in the process. Principals indicated that parents and students were generally consulted to provide information that informs the team's decisions, as opposed to directly participating in planning decisions. For example, 72 percent of schools consulted with parents or guardians, but only 19 percent allowed parents to directly participate in planning decisions. In short, although parents provide added value to the intervention planning process thanks to their knowledge, awareness, and buy-in, principals confirmed that trained BTAM team members are responsible for ultimately selecting appropriate interventions and supports.

Schools' BTAM Teams Choose from a Variety of Available Intervention Options

Schools' BTAM teams almost universally have a variety of intervention options available to them when it comes to intervening with a student assessed as posing a risk of harm to themself or others. As shown in Figure 9.1, these options vary and can include skill-building services, programs geared toward building relationships with trusted adults, special education supports, mental health counseling, or temporary removal from school (e.g., suspension).

The only intervention not universally available across responding schools—but still widely available—is substance use treatment; 79 percent of schools have this intervention as an available option. Unsurprisingly, more secondary schools have access to substance use treatment options than elementary schools, likely because the percentage of youth reporting they use any illicit substance increases with age (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2023).

BTAM Teams Use Most of Their Available Interventions but with Varying Frequency

Schools use many of their available intervention options with some regularity as part of their behavioral threat management process. For example, virtually all schools use programming to build trusted relationships with adults, but the frequency they use these interventions varies: 53 percent report using this often; 42 percent report sometimes; and 4 percent report rarely using it as an option.

Our results also highlight a small number of interventions that are available to school BTAM teams but not employed as widely as expected given the availability. As an example, while 91 percent of principals indicate that their BTAM team has the option to permanently remove students from school via expulsion or relocation, 30 percent of schools report never using this option.

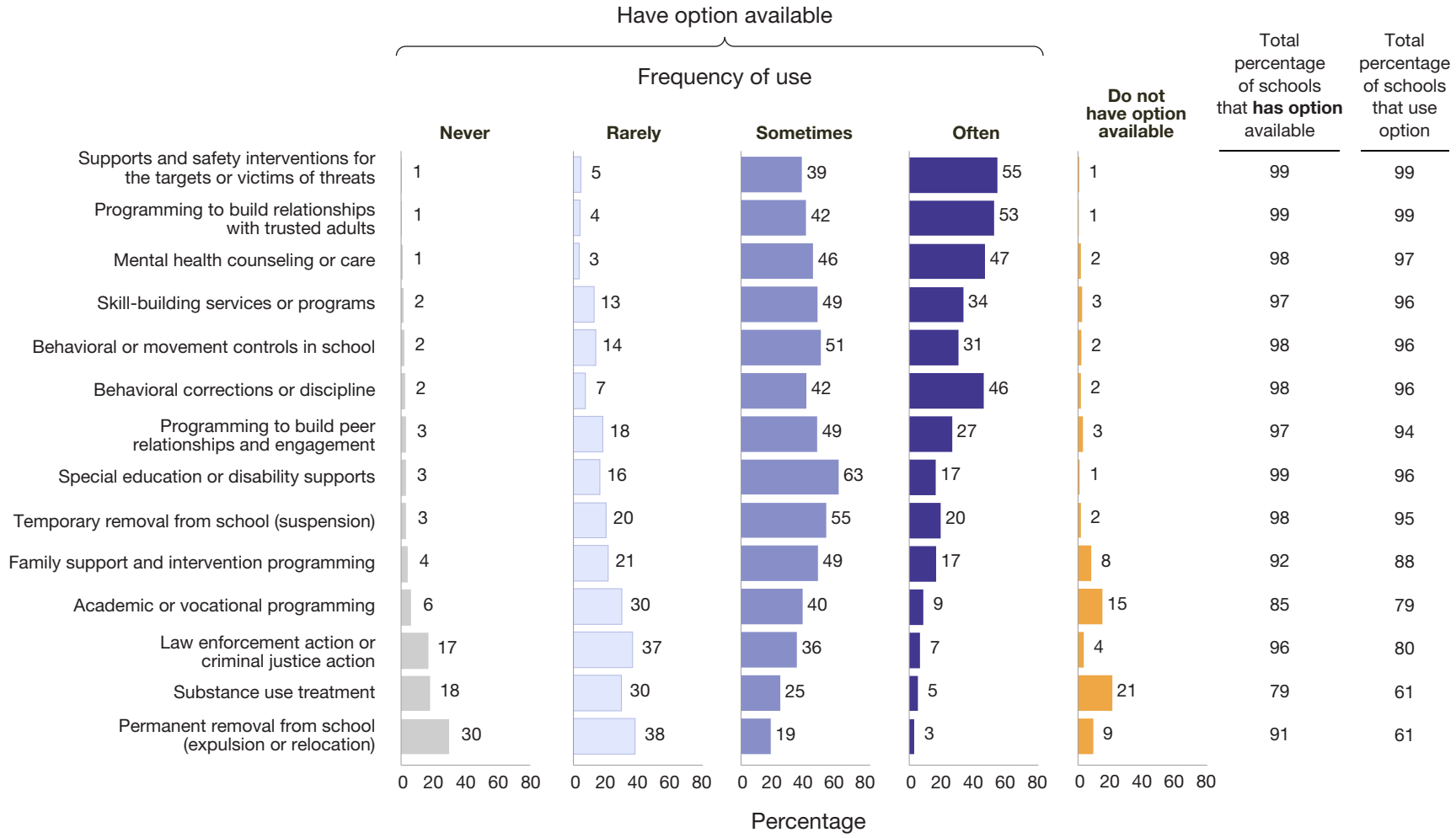
School BTAM teams use some intervention options more often than others. For example, 47 percent of schools said their BTAM teams often refer students to mental health counseling or care. By contrast, only 17 percent report that they often use special education supports, and 5 percent report that they often refer students to substance use treatment. These differences in frequency with which schools use specific interventions are likely related to the types of cases referred to BTAM teams—that is, incidents that involve substance use may be rarer as part of the case types referred to BTAM teams, therefore leading schools to only rarely include such treatment as part of an intervention plan. Similarly, special education supports are only appropriate for some students, explaining why schools tend to report using them only sometimes as an intervention.

Notably, the interventions that schools seem to report using most frequently, such as safety interventions,[1] building trusted relationships with adults, behavioral corrections, and mental health services, could be considered support-focused or supportive discipline interventions meant to modify student behavior (see, e.g., Jackson et al., 2025). Restrictive interventions—such as temporary or permanent removal from school or referral to law enforcement—are implemented less frequently. Overall, these patterns provide some initial

[1] Safety interventions can include a range of protective measures to ensure the safety of the at-risk individual, the target of a threat, and members of the school community more broadly. Specific examples include daily backpack searches or changes to class schedules.

FIGURE 9.1

Percentage of Schools with Various Intervention Options Available to Their BTAM Team and How Often They Use Them



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "When your BTAM team intervenes with a student who is assessed as being at some risk of causing harm to themselves or others, how commonly are the following options part of the resulting intervention or safety plan?" (*n* = 1,384). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

confidence that schools are scaling their interventions to the types and severity of incidents under the purview of their BTAM teams.[2]

Use of Exclusionary Discipline Practices and Referral to Law Enforcement Are Rare but Are Used—and Are Used More Frequently at the Secondary Level

BTAM in K–12 schools is framed as an alternative to exclusionary school discipline, which has been recognized as risking long-term harms to students and causing other damage to a school's community (Huang and Cornell, 2021; Cornell et al., 2018; Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2023). Our survey provides insight into whether and how schools with BTAM programs in place report that they use exclusionary practices such as suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement as part of their threat management processes.

Although principals' survey responses suggest that BTAM teams rarely use exclusionary discipline measures—especially at the elementary level—they show that teams do still use these options (see Figure 9.1). Thirty percent of principals reported their BTAM teams never use exclusionary discipline (i.e., they never expel students, place them in different schools, or suspend them for a month or more).[3] Meanwhile, 46 percent of principals said their BTAM teams rarely use exclusionary discipline; 21 percent reported doing so sometimes; 3 percent reported frequently turning to exclusionary discipline; and 1 percent said they always employ such measures. Our results also suggest that exclusionary discipline practices are more common than referrals to law enforcement (i.e., arresting or prosecuting students for their threatening or concerning behavior). Forty percent of principals said their BTAM teams never refer students to law enforcement for arrest or prosecution, and another 40 percent said they rarely make such referrals. Sixteen percent said they sometimes did so, and 4 percent and 1 percent said they either frequently or always referred cases to law enforcement for arrest or prosecution, respectively. Although it is concerning that a handful of schools reported engaging in such practices frequently or every time a case is referred to the BTAM team, we do not have information about the size of teams' caseloads or about the nature of specific cases. Overall, our data demonstrate that BTAM teams do not commonly rely on exclusionary practices as the means of intervening with students who display behaviors that elicit concerns for the safety of themselves and others.

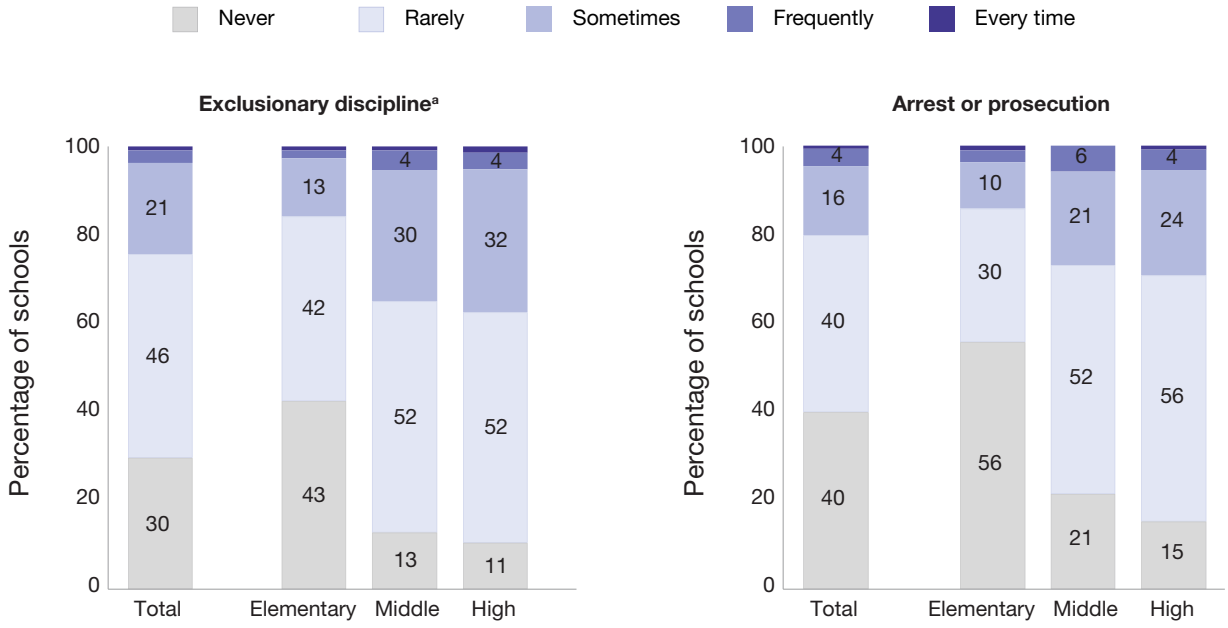
Our data also show that elementary schools—whose BTAM teams likely deal with relatively less serious student behavior compared with secondary schools—were particularly likely to say they never use exclusionary discipline for students referred to a BTAM team. Elementary school principals were also significantly more likely to say they never refer students to law enforcement for arrest or prosecution, as shown in Figure 9.2. However, although these practices are less common in elementary schools compared with middle and high schools, some elementary schools said that their BTAM teams have expelled or referred students to law enforcement with some regularity.

[2] See Chapter 11 for additional analyses about whether BTAM assessments and interventions are working as expected in practice.

[3] However, schools might suspend students for shorter amounts of time that still might be considered exclusionary.

FIGURE 9.2

Percentage of Schools Whose BTAM Teams Use Exclusionary Discipline and Referral to Law Enforcement, by Frequency and Grade Level



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "When your BTAM team assesses students, how frequently are students expelled, placed in a different school, or suspended for one month or more for their threatening or concerning behavior?" and "When your BTAM team assesses students, how frequently are students arrested or prosecuted for their threatening or concerning behavior?" (n = 1,379). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding. Some data labels have been removed for readability.

[a] Includes expulsion, relocation (i.e., placed in a different school), and suspension for one month or more.

Three-Quarters of Schools Provide Mental Health Counseling or Care at No Cost to Students Referred Through the BTAM Process

Many interventions that BTAM teams could recommend for students assessed as being at risk of harming themselves or others cost money to provide. For example, mental health counseling through a private provider has a cost, and how much a family might have to pay to access such services will be determined by whether they have financial means or relevant medical insurance coverage. Presumably, the cost of an intervention will influence the likelihood of a student receiving that intervention, especially if borne by the student and the student's family, and could be an insurmountable barrier for some families. If services are provided at no cost through the school or other community sources, student uptake may be higher, increasing the likelihood that intervention efforts will successfully meet their needs and school safety goals.

We asked whether schools provide four different types of services at no cost to students' families either inside school or outside school through an external service provider: skill-building services, mental health counseling or care, substance use treatment, and family support and intervention programming. We specifically selected these four intervention options because they often require licensed clinicians, therapists, or other professionals, and are more likely to be offered outside school, relative to such options as peer mentoring programs or extra academic support.

As shown in Figure 9.1 mental health counseling or care is the most frequently used intervention in the broader list of intervention options and also potentially one of the higher-cost intervention options recommended by a BTAM team. Three-quarters of principals indicated that their schools' BTAM program pro-

vides mental health counseling or care to students free of charge, either at school or by placing the student in an outside program.[4]

Additionally, 70 percent of schools provided skill-building services free of charge to students referred to BTAM, and 58 percent provided free family support and intervention programming (also either at schools or by placing the student in an outside program). Meanwhile, only 37 percent of schools provided free substance use treatment to students referred to BTAM; note that schools reported using this intervention option infrequently (as shown in Figure 9.1). Relative to other intervention options, substance use treatment is also likely especially costly for students and their families (see, e.g., NIDA, 2024).

[4] Federal government data for the 2023–2024 school year show that 84 percent of public schools provided mental health interventions for students, and 63 percent of schools used district or school funding to support these mental health services. However, only 9 percent of schools "strongly agree" that they are able to effectively provide these services for all students in need (NCES, 2025).

CHAPTER 10

How Do BTAM Teams Monitor Intervention Plans?

Behavioral threat management and support should not end once an intervention plan has been put in place. Instead, the process should continue to ensure that the intervention plan is being carried out appropriately and that it is successfully reducing the risk posed by a student. Such monitoring should ideally continue until the BTAM "team is no longer concerned about the student or [their potential] risk for violence" (NTAC, 2018). Monitoring and follow-up to ensure that interventions and supports are being implemented as directed are therefore critical. In this chapter, we discuss survey results related to questions about what schools are doing in terms of monitoring and follow-up related to BTAM. We focus on the 82 percent of schools that stated in the survey they had official BTAM teams.

Virtually All Schools Indicated They Monitor Interventions After They Are Implemented, but a Quarter of Schools Pass This Responsibility from the BTAM Team to Other School Staff

As shown in Figure 10.1, virtually all schools (96 percent) said they engage in some sort of monitoring after a student's behavioral intervention or safety plan has been implemented. Usually, this active monitoring is a direct responsibility of the BTAM team. Half of schools said their BTAM team actively manages and monitors the progress of *all* cases where a behavioral or safety plan has been implemented and adjusted as needed. Another 23 percent said their BTAM team does this only for *some* students during the implementation of a behavioral or safety plan.

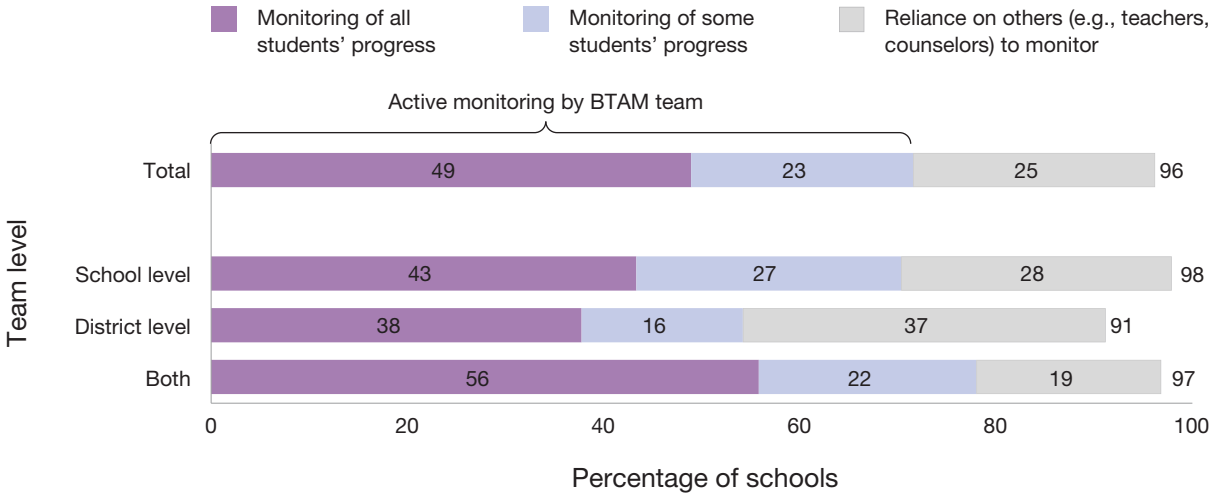
Twenty-five percent of schools reported that they rely on teachers, counselors, and others to monitor progress and adjust interventions without directly involving the BTAM team. District-level teams seem most likely to rely on school staff outside the BTAM team. As shown in Figure 10.1, 37 percent of principals with only a district-level BTAM program said they rely exclusively on other staff for monitoring. Presumably, these district-level teams prefer to rely on school-level staff for monitoring, given their more regular, day-to-day contact with the student. Large BTAM teams that include representation of more roles are also more likely to actively monitor all students' progress, while smaller teams are more likely to rely on teachers, counselors, and others to monitor progress and make adjustments.

Sixty Percent of BTAM Teams Who Monitor Progress Develop Measurable Goals

We asked principals whether the intervention or safety plans that their BTAM teams develop include measurable goals or thresholds for student progress that then inform decisions about any required changes to the plan. Forty percent of schools are not integrating such measurable goals, and 60 percent did report that their BTAM teams engage in some level of active monitoring to integrate measurable goals into intervention

FIGURE 10.1

Percentage of Schools Whose BTAM Teams Engage in Monitoring After a Student's Behavioral Intervention or Safety Plan Has Been Implemented



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following statements best describes what your BTAM team does after a student's behavioral intervention or safety plan has been implemented?" (n = 1,379). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

plans. We did not observe significant differences in schools' likelihood of developing measurable goals across school characteristics, with one exception: schools in large districts were more likely to develop such goals, compared with schools in small districts.

Most Schools' BTAM Teams Monitor Progress by Requesting Reports from School Personnel, but Fewer Than 20 Percent Are Using a Formal Case Management System

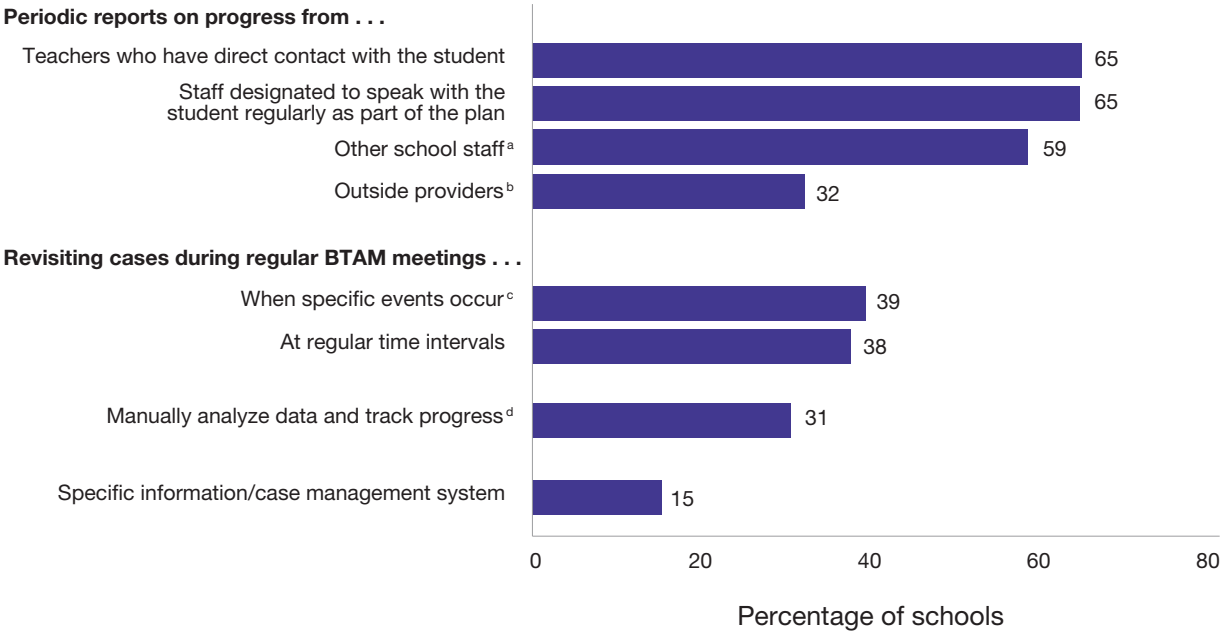
We also asked principals what their BTAM teams are doing as part of their active monitoring of student cases (see Figure 10.2). Most schools rely on periodic reports and updates, including two-thirds that receive periodic reports from designated teachers who have direct contact with the student and regularly speak with the student as part of the plan (e.g., check-in, check-out programs). Fewer—though still a majority—of schools receive periodic updates from other school staff, such as school counselors. Only one-third receive periodic reports from outside service providers, likely because outside providers are involved in comparatively fewer cases relative to school personnel.

In total, 60 percent of BTAM teams revisit cases during their meetings, although schools were split over whether their teams revisited cases at regular time intervals, only when specific events warranted (e.g., when a student returns to school after an absence), or some combination. Forty percent of schools reported not revisiting cases at all.

Meanwhile, one-third of principals reported that they analyzed data and tracked progress as part of their BTAM programs (e.g., they use behavioral graphs to visualize improvements in student behavior). Only slightly more than 15 percent of schools reported using a formal case management system that tracks data on the cases monitored by the BTAM team.

FIGURE 10.2

Among Schools with BTAM Teams That Engage in Active Monitoring, Percentage Who Use Specific Monitoring Activities



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "How does your school or district BTAM team monitor progress against a student intervention/safety plan?" (*n* = 984). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team and that their team engages in active monitoring of some or all students' progress. Response options have been truncated for readability.

[a] For example, counselors.

[b] For example, reports on treatment delivery.

[c] For example, when a student returns to school after an absence.

[d] For example, use of behavioral graphs to visualize improvements in student behavior.

In sum, there is variability in how schools approach monitoring and follow-up as part of their BTAM programs. While nearly all schools engage in some form of monitoring after implementing an intervention or safety plan, the level of involvement by BTAM teams differs significantly from school to school. Most schools rely on their BTAM teams to actively manage and monitor student progress, but almost 25 percent delegate this responsibility to other school staff, particularly in cases involving district-level teams or smaller BTAM teams. Additionally, while most schools incorporate measurable goals into their intervention plans, fewer use formal systems to track progress, relying instead on periodic updates and reports from school personnel.

These findings suggest that while most schools are taking steps to track progress after interventions are implemented, the methods and intensity of monitoring vary widely. Schools using structured goals, routine case reviews, and formal tracking systems may be better positioned to adjust interventions early and improve long-term outcomes. As BTAM practices mature, broader adoption of consistent monitoring strategies may support greater effectiveness.

CHAPTER 11

How Are Schools Using BTAM to Respond to Student Behavior?

Previous chapters have presented data that frame how BTAM teams and programs function at schools across the country. That is, we analyzed principals' reports about the types of issues their BTAM teams are involved in, how teams assess risk, and the types of interventions they use to respond to incidents. BTAM is a proactive approach to identifying, assessing, and providing appropriate interventions and supports for students who display a behavior that elicits concerns about their own safety or the safety of others. The interventions and supports assigned by BTAM teams in response to concerning behavior should be tailored to the specific needs of a student identified by a team as posing a risk of harm to self or others.

In addition to asking principals directly about their programs and how they operated, our survey sought to understand whether BTAM is working as intended at schools around the country (i.e., in the ways described in the previous paragraph). Before principals answered any detailed questions about their BTAM team and program, we presented them with a series of scenarios describing distinct school safety incidents and then asked three questions about how they would respond to each specific incident.[1] Through these scenario-based questions, we sought to elicit information that was as close to practice as possible about situations that principals may have encountered and had to address in their own schools.

All principals received three different scenarios: (1) one scenario capturing a low-level behavioral incident that would typically fall outside the scope of a BTAM team, (2) one scenario capturing a high-risk incident that would fall within the scope of a BTAM team, and (3) one medium-level scenario falling somewhere in between. For the medium-level scenarios, we expected more variation in principals' responses about whether they would refer such incidents to their school's BTAM team and the types of interventions that might be implemented in response to the student's behavior. These scenario-based questions allowed us to examine in more depth how schools are determining the boundaries and criteria for their BTAM programs.

We administered a total of 16 different scenarios, eight of which focused on situations occurring in elementary schools and eight on incidents more relevant to secondary schools. Principals were randomly assigned scenarios conditional on their school grade level.[2] We purposely included a higher number of medium-level scenarios. For more details about the specific scenarios and how respondents were randomized to see each scenario, see Appendix B.

In Appendix B, Table B.1, we provide the full wording for all 16 scenarios presented to respondents. This chapter also includes boxes with scenario descriptions where specific scenarios appear in the text. For ease of interpretation, we extracted key behavioral elements captured in each scenario and summarize them in

[1] Note that this chapter also only presents results for schools that had official BTAM teams. Schools that had other school-based BTAM-like behavior teams or no BTAM teams also answered questions about these scenarios, as described in Appendix B. These schools are omitted from our analyses here.

[2] To view the complete wording of every scenario, see Appendix B, Table B.1.

Table 11.1.[3] The box below ("Identifying Behavior Elements in Scenarios") also uses Scenario E as an illustrative example of how we collapsed the scenarios down to the key behavioral elements they contained. We completed this process for all 16 scenarios. Note that these fictitious incidents are not meant to be an exhaustive representation of the types of safety-related incidents occurring in schools but rather an illustration of what schools are likely addressing. We also note that some of these categorizations may be ambiguous or open to interpretation, which we believe also accurately reflects the experiences of today's schools.

As we reference and discuss scenarios throughout this chapter, we also include a shortened description of these key details in parentheses as a reminder for the reader.

BTAM Involvement Across Different Scenarios

We first use principals' responses to scenarios to discern what sorts of incidents involve school BTAM teams and how they are involved. We also consider when the BTAM team is identified as most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond to a student's behavior in response to an incident and, if not the BTAM team, who else in the school makes initial decisions about how to respond to that type of incident.

BTAM Teams Are Usually Not the Party Making the Initial Decision About How to Respond to Concerning Behavior, Though They Are Almost Always Made Aware of the Behavior or Incident

After presenting each behavioral scenario, we asked respondents who would make the initial decision about how to respond to the behavior. Given different circumstances across the schools in our sample, we expected that the person or group making that initial decision could differ from scenario to scenario and school to school.[4] Therefore, we listed up to 12 options, including the BTAM team and a teacher or school administrator (e.g., principal or assistant principal); a counselor, nurse, social worker, or psychologist; an SRO (or other school-based law enforcement officer), non-school-based law enforcement officer, security officer or guard;

Identifying Behavior Elements in Scenarios

Scenario E: In a drawing assignment that asked students to visualize different ways to solve problems, a student draws a graphic picture of someone shooting at a group of people, including details like bleeding and other physical injuries. The teacher mentions previous unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's family about their academic progress, and that the student had recently appeared withdrawn and sad in class.

The key behavior elements are

- fixation on violence (graphic picture of someone shooting at a group of people)
- concerning home context (previous unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's family)
- history of academic issues (academic progress)
- withdrawal or depression (appeared withdrawn and sad in class).

[3] Table 11.1 also shows the total number of respondents who answered questions about each scenario during the survey (denoted by *n*).

[4] Note that existing guidance around BTAM, including NTAC guidance, does not expect BTAM teams to be the first line of response for all incidents. However, guidance does expect these teams to be notified of and to assess situations that present a higher risk of harm.

TABLE 11.1

Behavior Elements Included in Scenarios Presented to Principals

	Scenario Label															
	Elementary-Level Scenarios								Secondary-Level Scenarios							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Severity level	Low	Low	Med.	Med.	Med.	Med.	Med.	High	Low	Med.	Med.	Med.	Med.	Med.	Med.	High
Expected BTAM?	No	No	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	No	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Yes
n	353	335	131	148	137	137	133	687	734	139	128	103	134	126	107	734
Behavior element																
History of misbehavior	X	X				X	X	X	X	X			X			
Physical altercation		X	X					X			X					X
Explicit threat				X		X		X							X	X
Fixation on violence					X		X							X	X	
History of violence						X		X					X			
History of academic issues				X	X				X	X			X		X	
Suspected substance use			X							X						
Bullying								X								X
Weapon (use and/or access)						X		X				X				X
Withdrawal or depression				X	X									X	X	
Special education context		X											X			
Concerning home context					X	X	X									X

an outside BTAM team; or a MTSS, PBIS, or other behavioral support team.[5] Principals could select only one response option.[6]

Principals rarely identified the BTAM team as the party making the initial decision in response to an incident, even for the most serious types of incidents. This was expected, given that a BTAM team typically receives reports of behavior and then moves forward with response rather than making the initial decision in response to an incident. Instead, principals identified three other individuals as making these initial judgments: a teacher, principal, or counselor. Figure 11.1 shows the percentage of schools that listed these personnel as the first decisionmaker for each of the scenarios. Also, throughout this chapter, we have boxes with brief examples of each scenario.

Scenario D: A student has an intense verbal confrontation with another student at school, shouting, "I am going to kill you for that." The student has no history of fighting or disruptive behavior but has had academic problems. A teacher who spoke with the student does not believe the threat was serious but does note that the student started crying during their conversation and would not share why they were so upset.

Scenario E: In a drawing assignment that asked students to visualize different ways to solve problems, a student draws a graphic picture of someone shooting at a group of people, including details like bleeding and other physical injuries. The teacher mentions previous unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's family about their academic progress, and that the student had recently appeared withdrawn and sad in class.

Scenario I: A student is repeatedly disruptive in their biology class, talking with other students or playing on their phone. Though in a course normally taken by students one grade below theirs, the student still appears to be struggling with the material. The teacher has made attempts to correct or redirect the behavior but has been unsuccessful and reached a point where frustration is affecting the entire class.

Scenario K: During P.E., two students begin pushing each other during a soccer activity. When the P.E. teacher approaches and tells them to stop, both back off and apologize to varying degrees. The teacher notices and is concerned that one of the students still appears angry and agitated after the fight.

As shown in Figure 11.1, teachers are typically the first to make decisions in response to the lowest-level incidents—although even in these cases, the principal or another school administrator also plays this role. Overall, however, principals overwhelmingly identified a school administrator as the first decisionmaker for most of the scenarios in the survey (see purple circles in Figure 11.1). For certain scenarios (such as **Scenario D** [explicit threat, history of academic issues, withdrawal or depression] and **Scenario E** [violence fixation, history of academic issues, withdrawal or depression, concerning home context] at the elementary school level), about a quarter of principals identified school counselors as the first decisionmaker. Secondary school principals most commonly identified a school administrator as the initial decisionmaker; the second most commonly selected option was a teacher (e.g., in **Scenario I** [history of misbehavior and academic issues] and **Scenario K** [physical altercation]). The only secondary school scenario where principals selected the school counselor as the initial decisionmaker (22 percent of respondents) was Scenario N (violence fixation, withdrawal or depression).

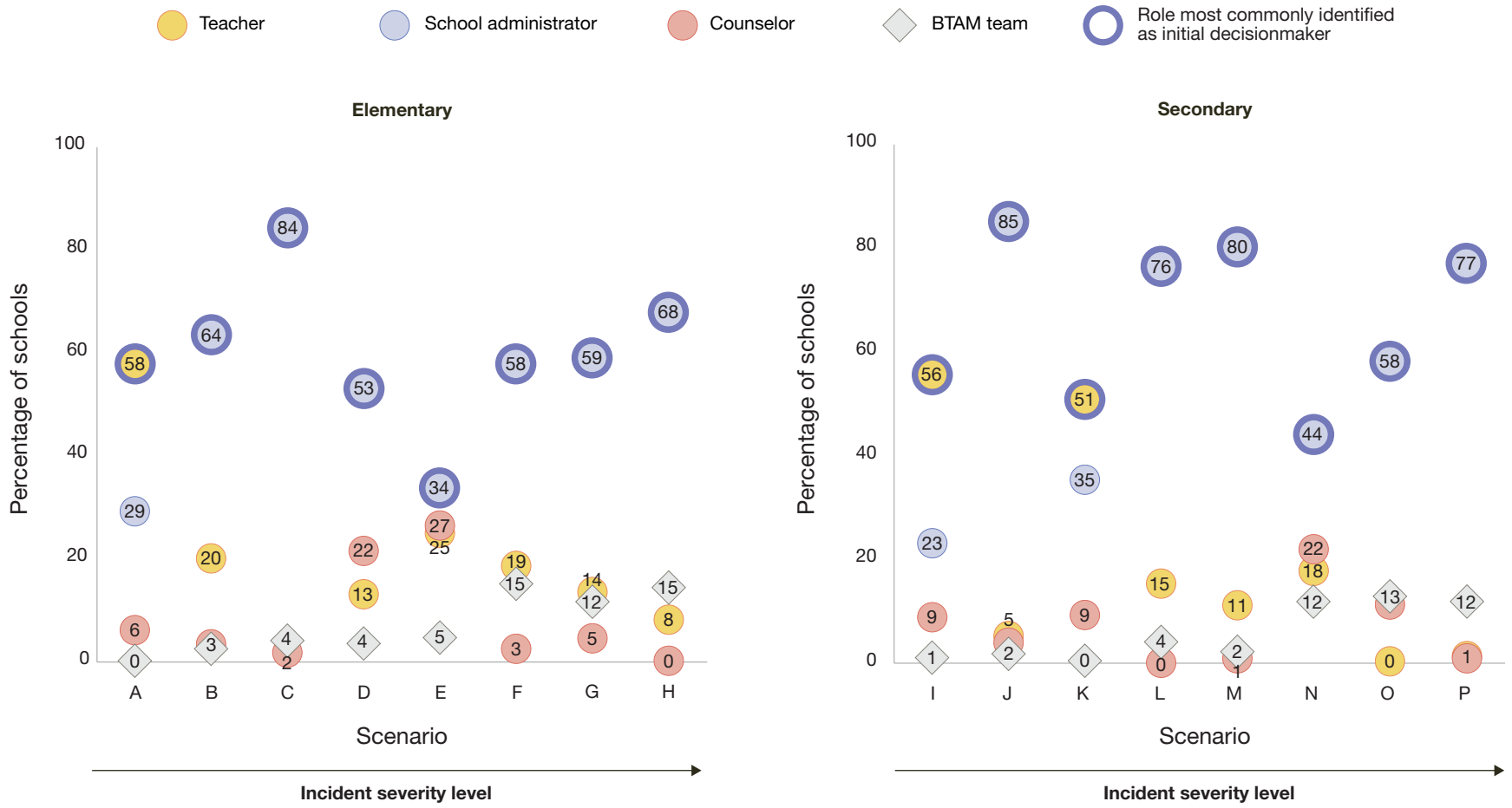
When the BTAM team was not identified as the party making the initial decision in response

[5] With the exceptions of teacher; school administrator; non-school-based law enforcement; and MTSS, PBIS, or other behavioral support team, respondents only saw each potential initial decisionmaker if they responded previously that they had such personnel at their school.

[6] We present select results here, but see Tables A.14 and A.15 in Appendix A for additional information.

FIGURE 11.1

Percentage of Schools That Identified Various Personnel as the Initial Decisionmaker, by Scenario



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which person or group is most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond to this student's behavior?" (*n* = 1,422 observations for low-severity scenarios; *n* = 1,423 observations for medium-severity scenarios; *n* = 1,421 observations for high-severity scenarios). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Some data labels have been removed for readability.

Scenario A: A student is repeatedly disruptive in class, wandering the classroom, interrupting the lesson by talking to other students, and sometimes shouting loudly to get attention. The student does not respond to multiple teacher requests to stop their behavior.

Scenario N: A student notices that another student in class is especially interested in the details of the Columbine High School shooting and the personal history of the students involved. The student repeatedly brings up the attackers by name during discussions with peers and has been searching for information about the incident on their school laptop. The teacher has also noticed that the student has become increasingly withdrawn in class.

Scenario P: A fight breaks out in the hallway during passing time, and student witnesses reported hearing one of the aggressors shout, "see you tomorrow for another round," and the bullied student replying, "Fine. This ends tomorrow." The incident involves a student who has a history of being bullied and was caught brandishing a knife (which they said they needed "to try to get all of them to stop") last school year. An investigation determined that there were unsecured firearms in the family home.

to an incident, as was the case for most respondents, we asked whether the BTAM team would be made aware of the incident. With the exception of the lowest-risk scenarios, most principals indicated that their BTAM team would be notified of the student's behavior after the initial response decision. Scenarios where this was least likely to happen corresponded to those where teachers were identified as most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond (**Scenario A** [history of misbehavior] at the elementary school level, and Scenarios I [history of misbehavior and academic issues] and K [physical altercation] at the secondary school level).

As shown in Figure 11.2, this pattern held for all scenarios in the survey—even the most serious ones. Let's look at **Scenario N** (violence fixation, withdrawal or depression). In this situation, 94 percent of secondary schools reported that their BTAM teams would be involved somehow, either as the party making the initial decision about how to respond to an incident (12 percent of respondents) or by being made aware of the incident later (82 percent of respondents).

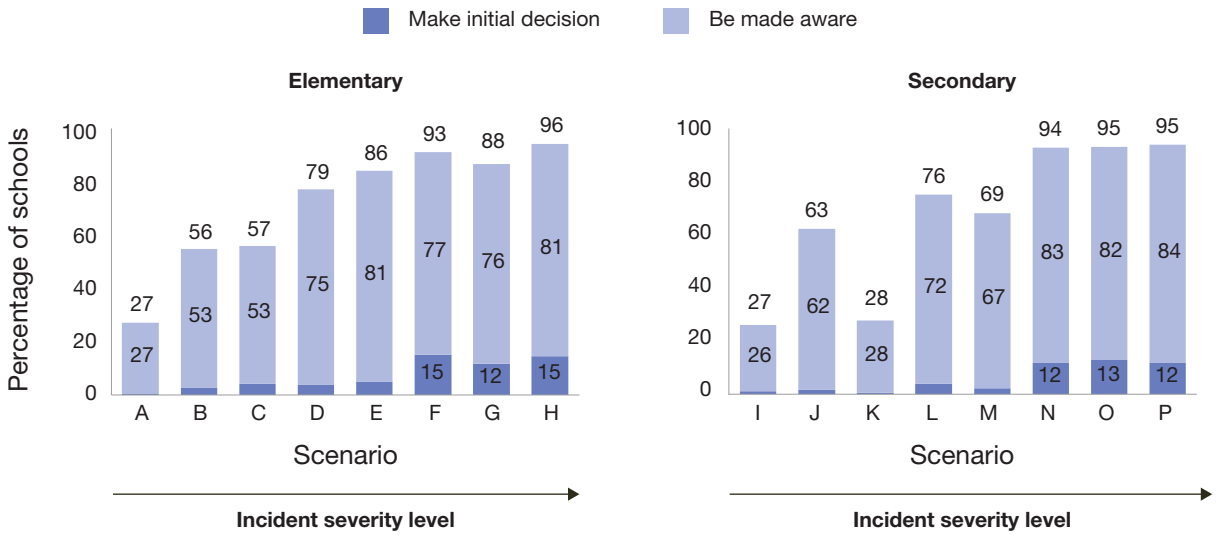
The likelihood that principals selected the BTAM team as the party responsible for making the initial decision about how to respond to an incident does increase as the scenarios get more serious. Less than 1 percent of principals identified the school BTAM team as the party making the initial decision about how to respond to behavior depicted in Scenario I (history of misbehavior and academic issues), our lowest-level scenario for secondary schools. For **Scenario P** (physical altercation, explicit threat, bullying, weapon, concerning home context), however, the highest-level scenario set in a secondary school environment, 12 percent of principals identified the BTAM team as the party making the initial decision about how to respond to an incident. Even in these very serious scenarios, principals still rarely identified their BTAM team as the entity making the initial response decision.

Across both elementary and secondary schools, our scenario data point to three types of situations that depict how schools are using BTAM teams:

- At the **low** end of the spectrum are situations that might simply be dealt with by a teacher (Scenarios A, I, and K). These scenarios involved disruptive student behavior during class (e.g., interrupting lessons by talking with other students) or a fight between two students during an athletic activity. About one-quarter of respondents (26 percent to 28 percent) indicated that their school would inform their BTAM team of these types of incidents, but in the majority of cases (72 percent to 73 percent), the BTAM team would not be notified the incident occurred.
- In the **middle** are scenarios in which principals overwhelmingly identified a school administrator as the party making the initial decision about how to respond to an incident; in these situations, schools were much more likely to make their BTAM team aware of the incident, although they still did not reach the level

FIGURE 11.2

Percentage of Schools That Involve Their BTAM Teams, by Scenario and When Involved



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "Which person or group is most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond to this student's behavior?" and "Would the BTAM team(s) serving your school be made aware of this student's behavior?" (n = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; n = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; n = 1,417 for high-severity scenarios). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Some data labels have been removed for readability.

of universally involving the BTAM team. At the elementary level, these situations included Scenario B and **Scenario C**, which depicted physical altercations paired with other potential risk factors, such as substance use or parental refusal to allow their student to participate in supports for neurodiverse learners. At the secondary level, they included Scenarios J, L, and M,[7] depicting incidents integrating a mix of risk factors, with usually only one element suggestive of potential violence. In these elementary and secondary scenarios, between 53 percent and 72 percent of principals noted that the school BTAM team would be notified of such incidents.

Scenario C: A student gets into a pushing altercation with another student on the bus. After the altercation is broken up by the bus driver, the student says they were responding to having been tripped while they were walking down the aisle. During the discussion with the student, the bus driver believes he smells alcohol on the student's breath. The parents of the other student involved in the altercation call the school the next day concerned for their child's safety on the bus.

- At the **high** end of the spectrum are those scenarios in which there was a greater likelihood for principals to identify the BTAM team as the party making the initial decision about how to respond to an incident, across grade levels. And in cases in which the BTAM team was not the initial decisionmaker, principals reported near-universal involvement of their BTAM team in response to the scenario. These included Scenarios F, G, and H at the elementary level and Scenarios N, O, and P at the secondary level. Across both sets, these scenarios included explicit references to violence paired with other concerning behaviors, such as withdrawal or depression. Nevertheless, the percentage of respondents who said that their BTAM team would make the initial decision about how to respond in these scenarios never exceeded 15 percent.

[7] Scenario L fell somewhere in between this middle group and the higher-level scenarios.

Selection of Intervention Options in Response to Incidents

After presenting respondents with each scenario, the survey presented a set of possible intervention options (see Table 11.2). The interventions spanned a variety of options, from warnings or verbal corrections of behavior to parent consultation and assessment for substance use treatment to temporary removal from school. Not all interventions are appropriate for every incident. For example, we might expect a BTAM team to only recommend substance use treatment in cases in which they know or suspect that a student is using or abusing alcohol or drugs. We acknowledged this in our instructions to principals and asked them to indicate which intervention(s) the primary decisionmaker (whether or not it is the BTAM team) would likely take or recommend in response to the behavior depicted in each scenario.

In this section, we focus on high-level patterns in principals' responses. For a complete list of the interventions options that principals selected for each behavioral scenario presented to them, see Table A.16 and Table A.17 in Appendix A.

Schools Tend to Tailor Interventions to the Specifics of an Incident and Student Needs

Figure 11.3 displays the top three most commonly selected interventions for each of our 16 scenarios. Across every scenario, each displayed intervention was selected by at least half of our respondents. Many were

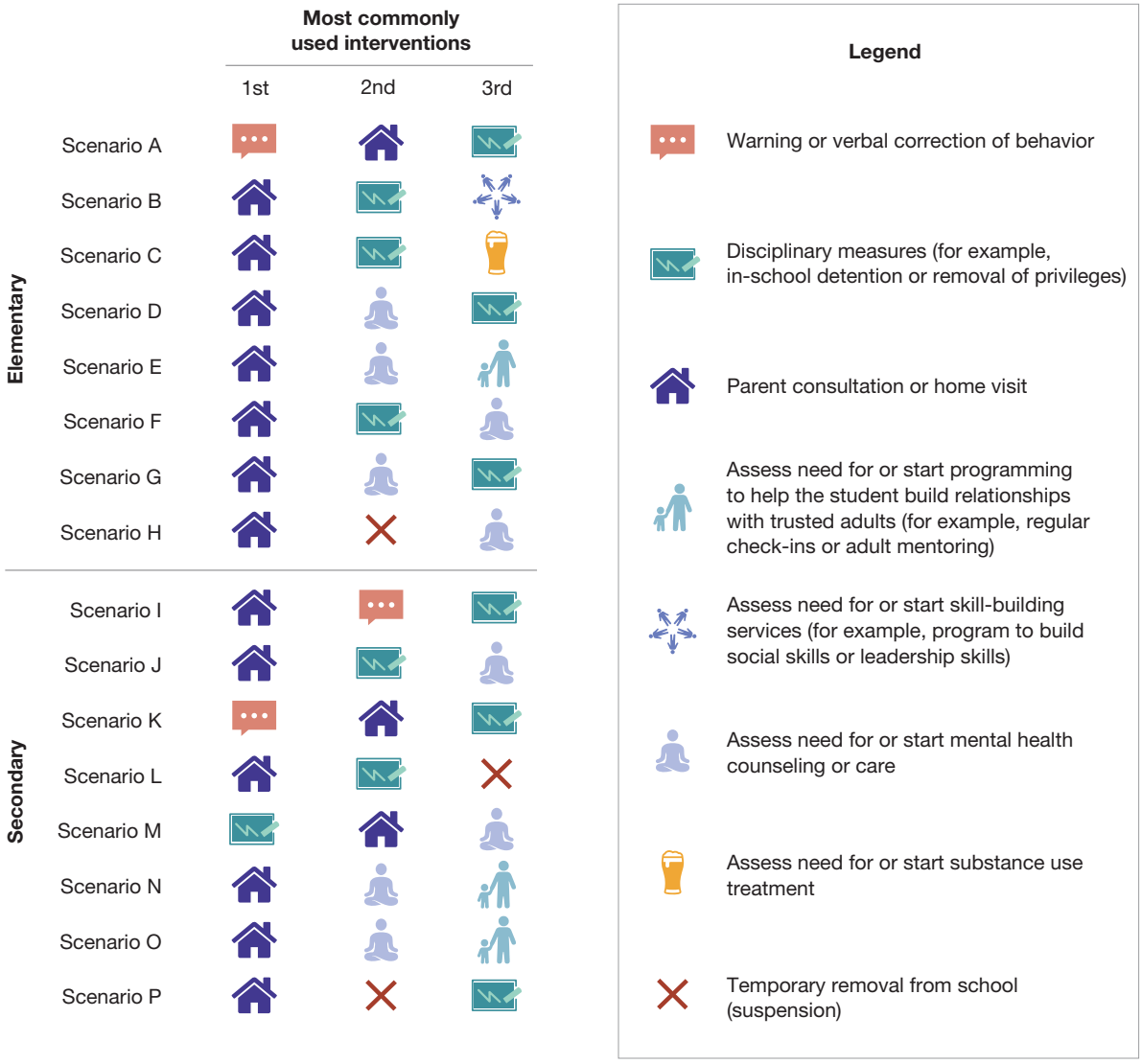
TABLE 11.2
Overview of Intervention Options Presented to Principals in Response to Scenarios

Intervention	Type[a]
Warning to named targets or victims of threats and safety planning to protect targets/victims	Target/victim support
Parent consultation or home visit	Notification
Warning or verbal correction of behavior	Supportive discipline
Disciplinary measures (e.g., in-school detention; removal of privileges)	Supportive discipline
Behavioral or movement controls (e.g., changes to arrival time or passing times)	Supportive discipline
Programming to help the student build relationships with trusted adults (e.g., regular check-ins; adult mentoring)	Support-focused
Skill-building services (e.g., social skills- or leadership skills-building program)	Support-focused
Programming to help the student build peer relationships and engagement (e.g., friend or peer mentor groups)	Support-focused
Individualized academic or vocational programming	Support-focused
Special education or disability supports	Support-focused
Mental health counseling or care	Support-focused
Substance use treatment	Support-focused
Family support and intervention programming for the student and their family	Support-focused
Temporary removal from school (suspension)	Restrictive
Permanent removal from school (e.g., expulsion, transfer to an alternative school)	Restrictive
Law enforcement action (for example, arrest), civil or criminal legal proceedings	Restrictive

[a] Interventions are grouped into categories based on Jackson et al., 2025.

FIGURE 11.3

Top Three Most Commonly Selected Interventions, by Scenario



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?" (n = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; n = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; 1,419 for high-severity scenarios). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply out of a list of interventions presented, and we display the top three most commonly selected interventions. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

selected by large majorities of respondents (keeping in mind that principals could—and would be expected to—select multiple interventions that could be part of a holistic intervention plan in response to a particular incident).

A few patterns emerge from Figure 11.3. First, in the vast majority of scenarios (13 out of 16 scenarios), a parent consultation or home visit was the most commonly selected intervention; it was the second most common intervention in the remaining three scenarios. This suggests that bringing parents into the process of responding to student behavioral concerns is the number one action schools take in response to any type of incident, whether it be low-level behavior issues or very serious threats.

The function of a home visit and who performs that visit may differ across incident types. For lower-risk incidents with limited indicators of potential violence and no concern about weapon access, parental consultation might be a phone call made by the principal. In high-risk incidents with substantial concerns about violence, a home visit might be made by a law enforcement officer to assess whether the student has access to firearms or other weapons in the home. Similarly, assessing the need for or starting mental health counseling and care was a top intervention choice for principals across most scenarios. This is somewhat unsurprising given heightened rates of depression and anxiety among youth following the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated rise in students seeking mental health services (Mahnken, 2023).

Second, despite some commonalities in the most frequently chosen options, there is clear evidence that schools selected different intervention options based on the specific information presented in the scenario. For example, in Scenario C (physical altercation, suspected substance use), principals report that they would respond in part by assessing the need for or starting substance use treatment. In **Scenario E** (violence fixation, history of academic issues, withdrawal or depression, concerning home context), principals indicated they would assess the need for or start programming to help the student build relationships with trusted adults (for example, through regular check-ins or adult mentoring programs). Broadly, these patterns suggest that schools are tailoring interventions and supports based on specific information about the student and the incident.

Scenario E: In a drawing assignment that asked students to visualize different ways to solve problems, a student draws a graphic picture of someone shooting at a group of people, including details like bleeding and other physical injuries. The teacher mentions previous unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's family about their academic progress, and that the student had recently appeared withdrawn and sad in class.

Third, schools appear to be focused on more supportive interventions, as opposed to restrictive measures, including exclusionary discipline, at least as the most frequently chosen steps in responding to incidents. When principals did select the use of disciplinary measures in response to behavior included in a scenario, they opted for supportive discipline measures, such as in-school detentions and removing privileges—versus outright exclusionary discipline, such as out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Even for the most serious scenarios, referral to law enforcement and permanent removal from school did not make principals' lists of top interventions (although principals did frequently select temporary removal from school for a few scenarios). This finding does not indicate that schools are avoiding exclusionary discipline practices altogether; indeed, our results indicate that schools are still turning to such practices, some frequently (see more on this point below). However, the patterns in Figure 11.3 suggest that exclusionary discipline and referral to law enforcement are *not the most common* way that schools address the behaviors and situations depicted across our scenarios.

There Are Some Very Clear Differences in How Schools Respond to the Least Severe and Most Severe Incidents

We expected to observe the greatest divergence in responses across the least severe and most severe scenarios. Comparing and contrasting how schools respond to the least and most severe incidents help illuminate how schools' responses change as incidents become more serious and concerns about the safety of the student and school community also therefore increase.

In Figure 11.4, we present the percentage of schools that selected specific intervention options in response to the most severe and least severe scenarios, by grade level (**Scenario A** [history of misbehavior] and **Scenario H** [history of misbehavior, physical altercation, explicit threat, history of violence, bullying, weapon] at the elementary level and **Scenario I** [history of misbehavior and academic issues] and **Scenario P** [physical altercation, explicit threat, bullying, weapon, concerning home context] at the secondary level). Figure 11.4 draws a contrast between the similarities and differences across school responses to different situations.

As noted earlier, the figure shows that schools almost always notify parents; that is, regardless of incident severity or grade level, at least 80 percent of schools consult with parents or guardians or conduct a home visit.[8] Furthermore, it is common for schools to address both low- and high-level incidents using supportive disciplinary measures, such as detention or removal of privileges; about two-thirds of schools selected these options regardless of incident level.

Our data also show that schools respond differently to more-severe incidents than they do to lower-level ones, as shown in Figure 11.4. For example, about 60 percent of schools said they would warn potential victims in the most severe situations, but less than 10 percent focused on warning potential victims in response to low-level incidents.[9] By contrast, use of verbal warnings was common for lower-level incidents but much less common in more severe cases. Only very few principals said they would use restrictive measures—such as law enforcement action or permanent removal from school—in response to the least severe incident we presented. However, notable shares of schools said that they use such actions in the most severe cases.

Scenario A: A student is repeatedly disruptive in class, wandering the classroom, interrupting the lesson by talking to other students, and sometimes shouting loudly to get attention. The student does not respond to multiple teacher requests to stop their behavior.

Scenario H: A student has a history of getting into fights with other students at school and being generally disruptive in the classroom. Earlier this year, the student complained about being singled out and bullied by many other members of the class. The student was later caught bringing a knife to school, explaining it was "for protection," and an investigation determined that there were firearms in the family home. After a fight on the playground with a classmate, the student yells that "he'd be sorry" and warned another classmate that "they shouldn't come to school tomorrow."

Scenario I: A student is repeatedly disruptive in their biology class, talking with other students or playing on their phone. Though in a course normally taken by students one grade below theirs, the student still appears to be struggling with the material. The teacher has made attempts to correct or redirect the behavior but has been unsuccessful, and reached a point where frustration is affecting the entire class.

Scenario P: A fight breaks out in the hallway during passing time, and student witnesses reported hearing one of the aggressors shout, "see you tomorrow for another round," and the bullied student replying, "Fine. This ends tomorrow." The incident involves a student who has a history of being bullied and was caught brandishing a knife (which they said they needed "to try to get all of them to stop") last school year. An investigation determined that there were unsecured firearms in the family home.

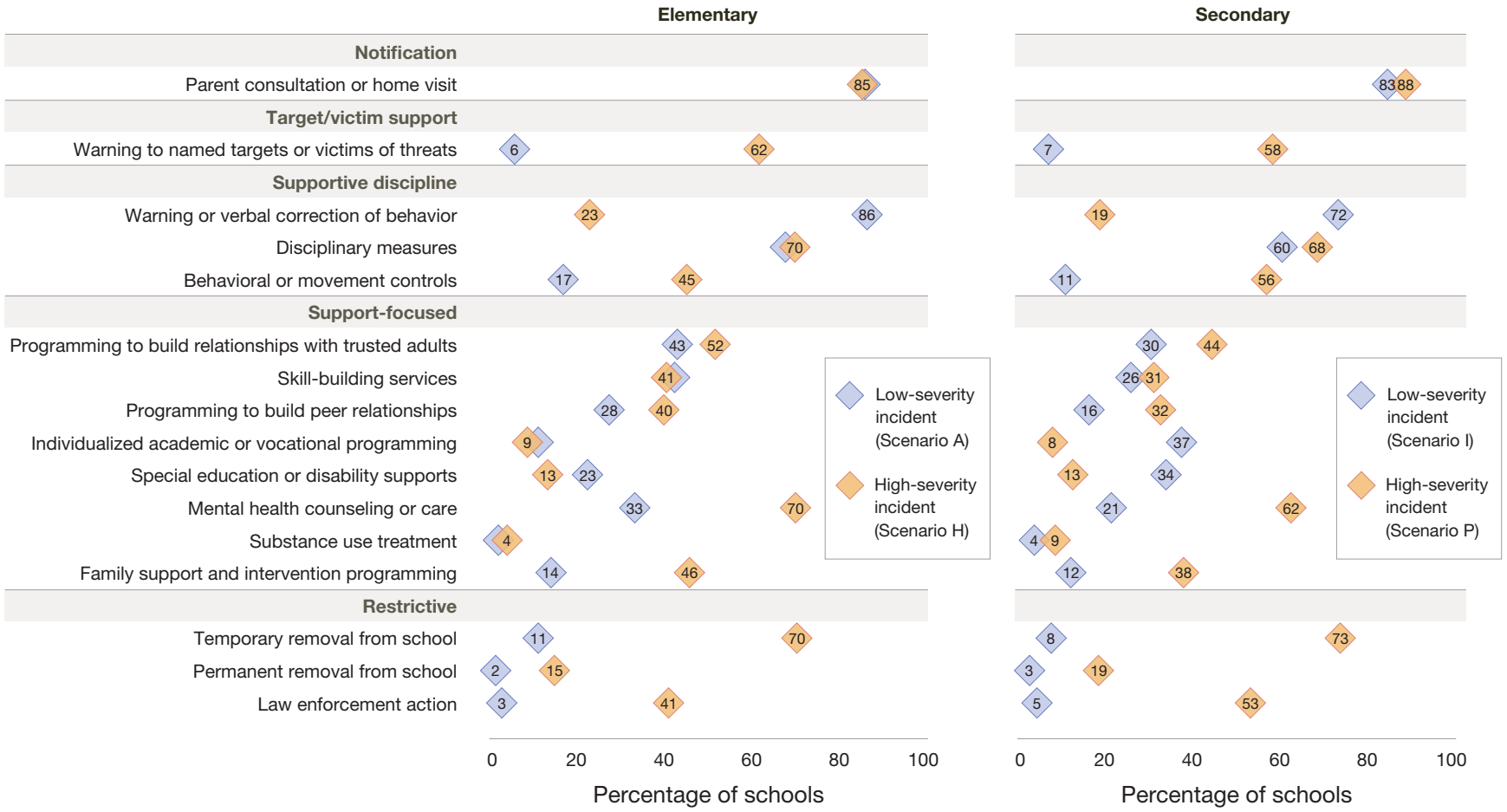
Altogether, these findings suggest that there is widespread agreement over how to respond to the lowest-level and most severe incidents and that schools are delineating in their responses to low-level versus severe incidents. Schools are responding to low-level incidents with support-focused intervention options and reserving restrictive practices for more severe incidents.

[8] As mentioned above, what that consultation or home visit is intended to accomplish may be different in different scenarios.

[9] This could very likely be because lower-level incidents depicted in our scenarios, such as disruptive classroom behavior, do not involve targets or victims of threats or actual violence.

FIGURE 11.4

Comparison of Interventions That Schools' BTAM Teams Use for the Most Serious and Least Serious Incidents



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?" (n = 1,085 observations for low-severity scenarios and n = 1,419 for high-severity scenarios). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Some data labels have been removed for readability. Some response options have also been truncated for readability. For full text of response options, see Table 11.2.

Schools Tend to Respond with a Greater Number of Interventions as Incidents Become More Severe

In addition to examining *which* specific interventions schools indicated they would use to respond to specific scenarios, we examined *how many* interventions (out of the 16 total that we asked about) schools would use to address each scenario.

Figure 11.5 shows the range of how many interventions schools selected to respond to each scenario. The typical, or median, number of interventions that schools said they would use to respond to a scenario is shown by a horizontal line. The boxes show the number of interventions selected by most schools (i.e., those schools that fall in the middle of the distribution between the 25th and 75th percentile). The vertical lines show the full range of the number of interventions chosen. As an example of how to interpret this graph, we focus on **Scenario P:** Schools selected between one and 16 interventions in response to the scenario, but most schools selected between four and nine, and the typical (median) school selected six.

As shown in Figure 11.5, we found that the vast majority of schools responded to all scenarios using multiple interventions, which is consistent with the practice of building an individualized intervention plan to respond to student behavior. Furthermore, we noticed a general trend of schools responding with a higher number of intervention options as incidents become more severe. Looking at the elementary level as an example, the typical (median) school reported implementing four interventions in response to **Scenario A** (history of misbehavior) and five interventions in response in **Scenario B** (history of misbehavior, physical altercation). At the other end of the spectrum, the typical school responded to **Scenario H** (history of misbehavior, physical altercation, explicit threat, history of violence, bullying, weapon), the most severe scenario, with seven interventions. This pattern is not surprising, because we would expect schools to do more to intervene as student behavior becomes more concerning.

Scenario P: A fight breaks out in the hallway during passing time, and student witnesses reported hearing one of the aggressors shout, "see you tomorrow for another round," and the bullied student replying, "Fine. This ends tomorrow." The incident involves a student who has a history of being bullied and was caught brandishing a knife (which they said they needed "to try to get all of them to stop") last school year. An investigation determined that there were unsecured firearms in the family home.

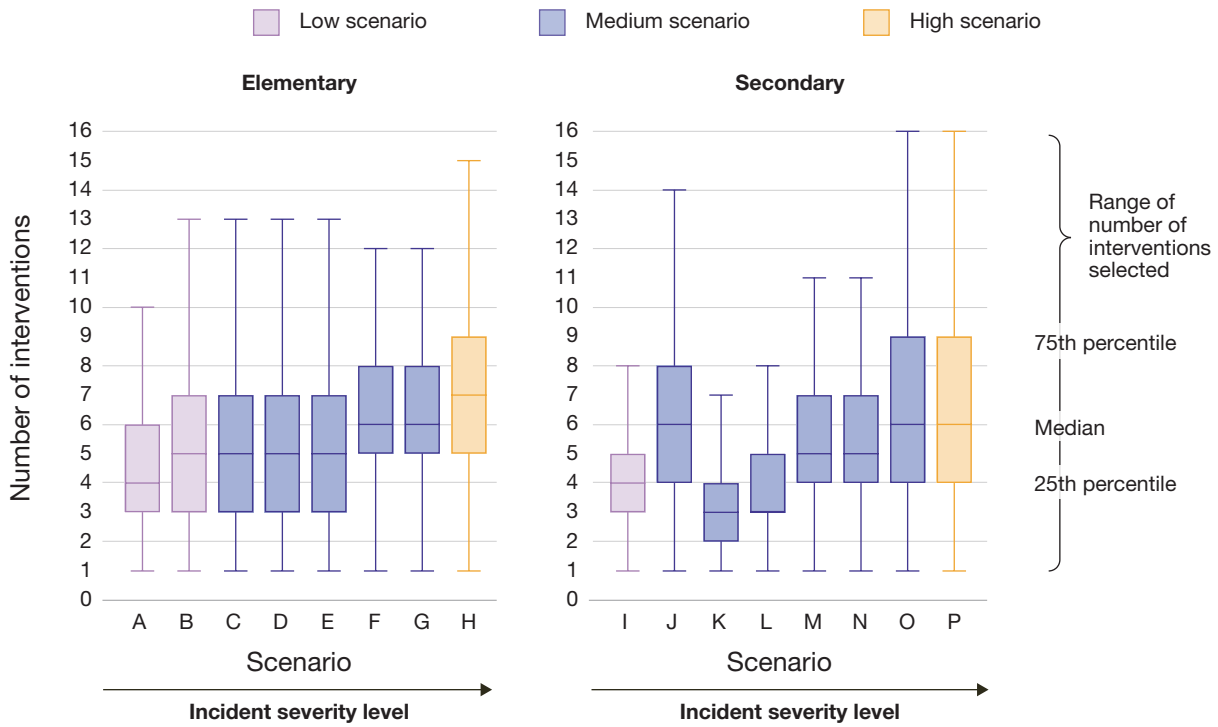
Scenario A: A student is repeatedly disruptive in class, wandering the classroom, interrupting the lesson by talking to other students, and sometimes shouting loudly to get attention. The student does not respond to multiple teacher requests to stop their behavior.

Scenario B: A student regularly engages in disruptive behavior during class, but the student's teachers do not consider the student's behavior threatening. Last school year, the family declined staff suggestions that the student might benefit from supports for neurodiverse learners. This school year, the student's behavior has escalated, and the student is involved in a physical altercation with another student that does not result in injuries.

Scenario H: A student has a history of getting into fights with other students at school and being generally disruptive in the classroom. Earlier this year, the student complained about being singled out and bullied by many other members of the class. The student was later caught bringing a knife to school, explaining it was "for protection," and an investigation determined that there were firearms in the family home. After a fight on the playground with a classmate, the student yells that "he'd be sorry" and warned another classmate that "they shouldn't come to school tomorrow."

Figure 11.5 also shows that—with the exception of a small number of schools that responded to even low- or medium-level incidents with a large number of interventions—schools tend to respond to concerning situations with a handful of interventions (usually somewhere between three and eight, depending on the specific scenario). The fact that principals did *not* report that their schools would respond to every incident with all 16 interventions provides further evidence that schools are tailoring their interventions to the specifics of indi-

FIGURE 11.5
Distribution of the Number of Interventions Taken by Scenario



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?" (*n* = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; *n* = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; *n* = 1,419 for high-severity scenarios). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Outliers were removed for readability.

vidual cases. In other words, even though we know schools have many options available to them (see Figure 9.1), schools are not blindly responding to all scenarios by throwing all available tools at any particular case.

Supportive Actions Are Part of Schools' Response to All Incidents, but the Share of Restrictive Interventions Increases as Incidents Become More Severe

Because schools typically use multiple interventions to respond to an incident, this raises questions about what specific interventions tend to compose the list of actions that schools take in response to an incident. We examined this question by sorting our 16 interventions into five mutually exclusive categories: (1) target/victim support, (2) supportive discipline, (3) notification, (4) support-focused, and (5) restrictive.[10] We then investigated what the distribution of interventions looks like across these categories and individually across each scenario. This analysis allows one to consider the balance of interventions (e.g., between support-focused and restrictive options) and how that balance might differ across scenarios. We present the results of this analysis in Figure 11.6.

Layering multiple interventions (mental health, academic, and behavioral supports) is consistent with behavioral threat management best practice (Jackson et al., 2025). Figure 11.6 shows the mean number of

[10] Table 11.2 shows which specific interventions are included in each category.

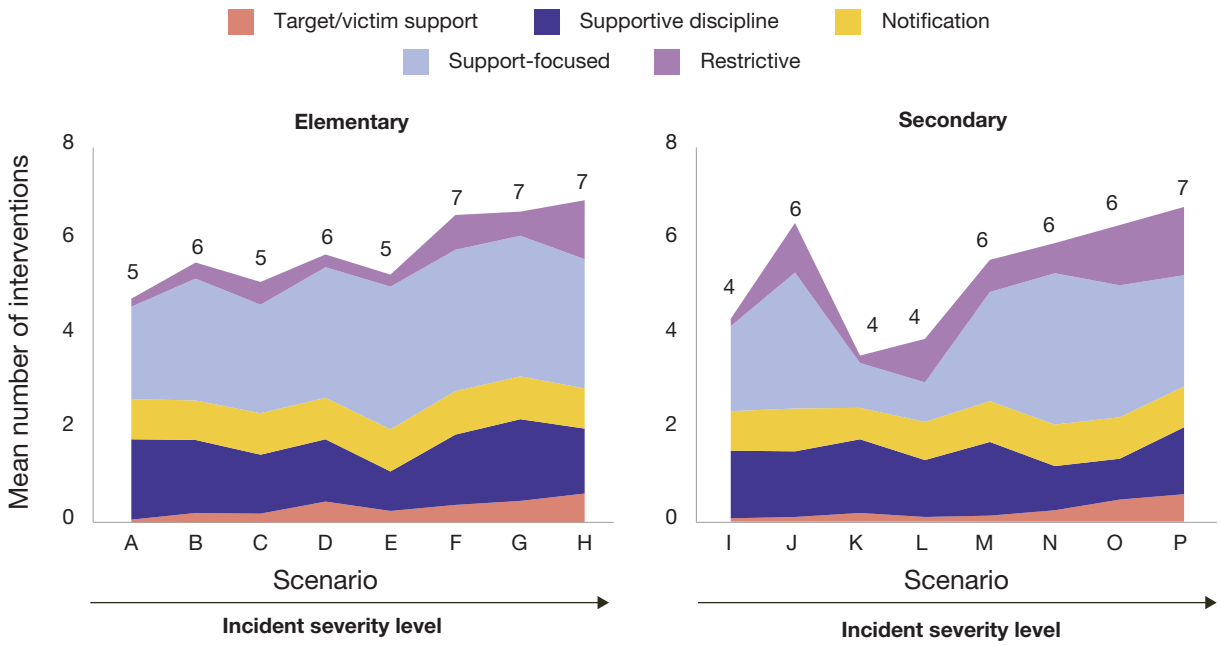
interventions that schools reported taking in response to each scenario presented. The shading shows how these interventions are distributed across our five categories. For example, elementary school principals told us they would respond to Scenario H (the most severe incident) with an average of seven interventions. That is, the average elementary school would take one intervention focused on target/victim support, one intervention focused on supportive discipline, one intervention focused on notification, one restrictive intervention, and three support-focused interventions.

Looking across scenarios, Figure 11.6 reveals a few patterns. First, schools are using a mix of approaches in their responses to all scenarios. That is, they are *not* responding to certain types of incidents with only one type of intervention and to other types of incidents with a different type of intervention. Instead, they are responding to all scenarios with a mixed strategy that employs different intervention types. However, the composition of interventions changes to some degree as incidents become more severe, though not overwhelmingly. Most notably, the share of restrictive interventions grows as the scenarios become more severe.[11]

Second, the share of support-focused interventions remains large across all scenarios.[12] That is, even for medium- and high-severity scenarios, a significant share of the intervention plans designed for at-risk students includes support-focused interventions. The share of support-focused interventions exceeds the share of supportive discipline and restrictive interventions for nearly all scenarios.

FIGURE 11.6

Mean Number of Interventions Used in Response to Scenarios and Distribution of These Interventions, by Scenario and Type



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey questions: "Which person or group is most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond to this student's behavior?" and "Would the BTAM team(s) serving your school be made aware of this student's behavior?" (n = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; n = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; n = 1,417 for high-severity scenarios). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

[11] We discuss this in greater detail in Figure 11.6.

[12] In some ways, this is a function of the data because we presented respondents with more support-focused interventions than interventions in any other category and they therefore had more such options to choose from. Nevertheless, our expectation is that if their schools did not have or use the options presented, respondents would not have selected them. See Table 11.2 for more details.

Few Principals Say Their BTAM Teams Would Use Restrictive Interventions (i.e., Exclusionary Discipline Practices or Referring Students to Law Enforcement) for Lower-Level Incidents

As discussed previously, the desire to keep students in school means that there are appropriate reasons to limit the use of exclusionary discipline, unless removing a student from school is necessary to ensure the near-term safety, functioning, or well-being of the school community. Temporary school suspensions, longer-term separations from school, and even expulsions are all tools available to and used by schools, although shorter suspensions are more frequently used compared with these other longer-term exclusionary actions. As discussed previously, the possibility that BTAM could increase the use of either exclusionary discipline or criminal justice approaches in responding to student behavior has been a concern for civil society groups and a focus of policy debate around BTAM as a school safety practice. However, BTAM is not synonymous with discipline, and concerns about misuse are often more about implementation fidelity than about BTAM as a violence prevention approach more generally. To probe these issues, we specifically examined the frequency with which principals reported using restrictive interventions across the different scenarios.

As shown in Figure 11.7, at least some schools said they would likely take or recommend these types of actions in response to examples of student behavior included in the scenarios. Principals' likelihood of indicating they would consider exclusionary discipline tended to increase along with incident severity level, though there were exceptions. That is, very few schools responded they would temporarily or permanently remove a student from school or refer them to law enforcement in response to the least severe scenarios. For the most severe scenarios, around 70 percent of schools said they would likely suspend the involved student, and between one in five and one in six said they would permanently remove the student from school. Approximately half of respondents noted they would refer the student to law enforcement for the most severe scenarios.

Importantly, schools in a smaller subset indicated that they would suspend students in response to behavior depicted in middle-level scenarios; this is somewhat in line with findings from previous studies of behavioral threat management in schools, which suggest that many schools implement short-term suspensions as an immediate response to some student behavior to give their BTAM team time to complete a behavioral threat assessment and decide on appropriate longer-term interventions, including support-focused interventions (Jackson et al., 2025). Short-term suspensions may also help ensure the immediate safety of the individual student and broader school community. A surprising number of principals also responded that they might refer students involved in middle-level scenarios to law enforcement, in particular for Scenarios J (history of misbehavior, history of academic issues, suspected substance use) and L (use or access to a weapon) in secondary schools.

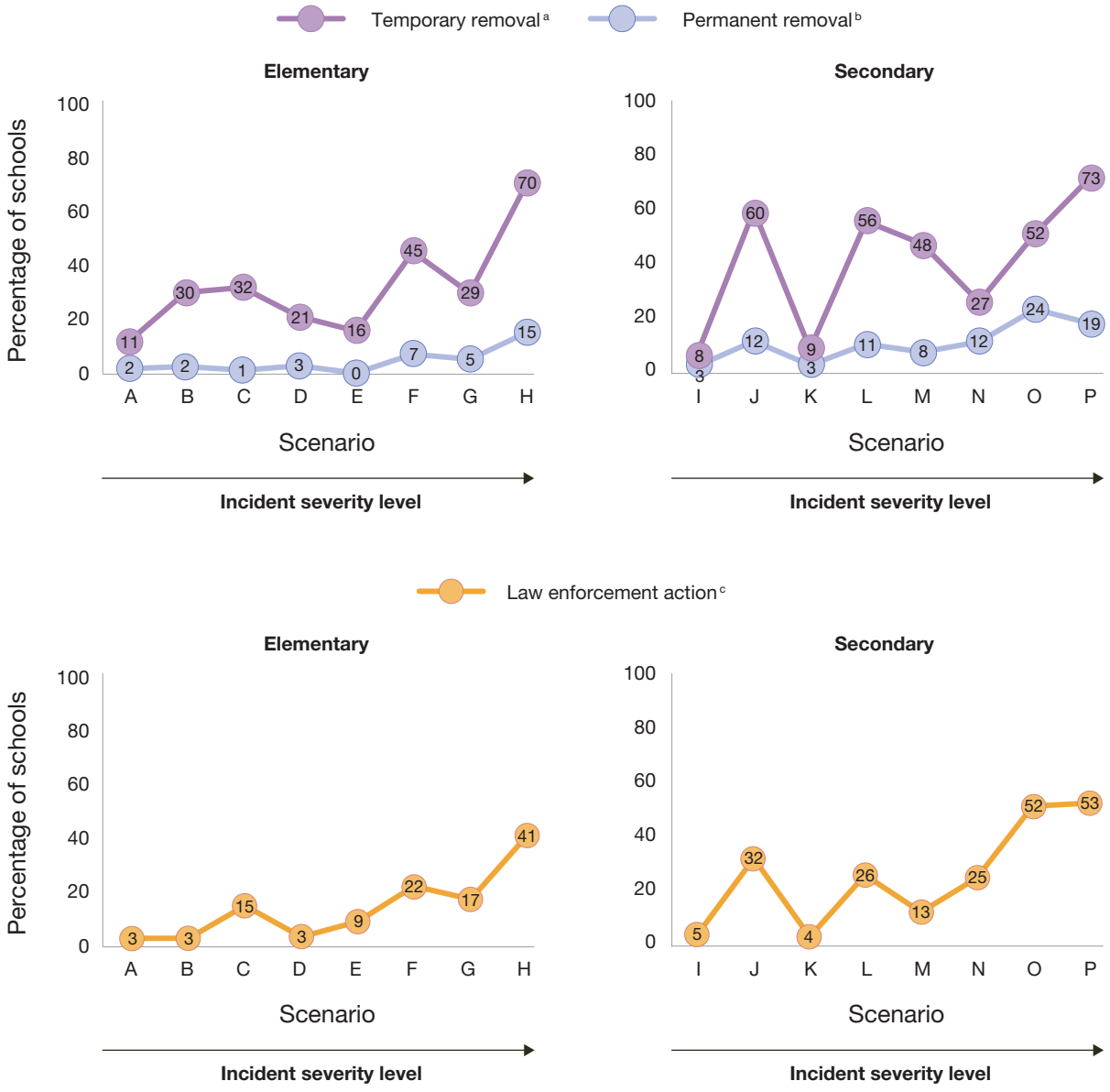
Although other studies show that most K–12 principals do not believe that exclusionary discipline measures teach students valuable lessons and help avoid future behavior incidents, 12 percent nationally still do believe that suspensions and expulsions give students the opportunity to learn from their behavior (Perera and Diliberti, 2023). In our survey, schools also appeared more likely to use these types of measures at the secondary level, compared with the elementary level.

Are Schools Using BTAM as Intended to Simultaneously Keep Schools Safe and Effectively Support Student Behavioral Change?

Policy debate around BTAM generally focuses on whether the approach increases the likelihood of students being removed from school or arrested and prosecuted, because the debate is framed around potential threats posed by students, because law enforcement can be involved in assessing and framing responses to student behavior, or for other reasons. The response to these critiques is that such outcomes are counter to what

FIGURE 11.7

Percentage of Schools That Would Use Exclusionary Discipline or Law Enforcement Action in Response to Scenarios Presented



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?" (n = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; n = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; n = 1,419 for high-severity scenarios). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

[a] For example, suspension.

[b] For example, expulsion or transfer to an alternative school.

[c] For example, arrest, civil, or criminal legal proceedings.

BTAM is actually designed to achieve: In essence, a BTAM program that is leading to the increased use of exclusionary discipline or more student arrests is "doing BTAM wrong."

Definitively answering questions about such outcomes and determining whether BTAM is achieving its dual goals of keeping schools safe while also using supportive intervention to change student behavior and reducing the need for suspension, expulsion, and criminal justice action requires hard data (on both student outcomes post-BTAM and what response would have looked like in the absence of a BTAM at school). Although some studies have conducted such analyses, the fact that data across schools and across the country are difficult to collect means existing analyses have usually focused more narrowly: either on single states or on the implementation of single BTAM models (e.g., Cornell, Allen, and Fan, 2012; Maeng, Cornell, and Huang, 2020; Cornell et al., 2025). Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider what our national-level survey data can say about whether schools are "doing BTAM right" as a complementary approach.

Results from our scenario analyses suggest that K–12 schools are generally using BTAM as intended. Principals selected different intervention options based on the nature of the scenario (Figure 11.3): As situations move from relatively low risk to much more serious, they selected very different responses (Figure 11.4). Moreover, as the complexity of a situation and risk level rise, schools tend to respond with additional interventions (Figure 11.5). Across the full spectrum of scenarios, however, each set of interventions consistently includes a strong support component (Figure 11.6). Schools do rely on restrictive measures, but these are not their first choices (Figure 11.3); their use is correlated with the severity of the scenario (Figure 11.4).

Figure 11.8 provides another way to summarize how schools responded to the different situations included in the scenarios, with the darkness of shading showing the percentage of schools that indicated they would include a specific option in an intervention plan.

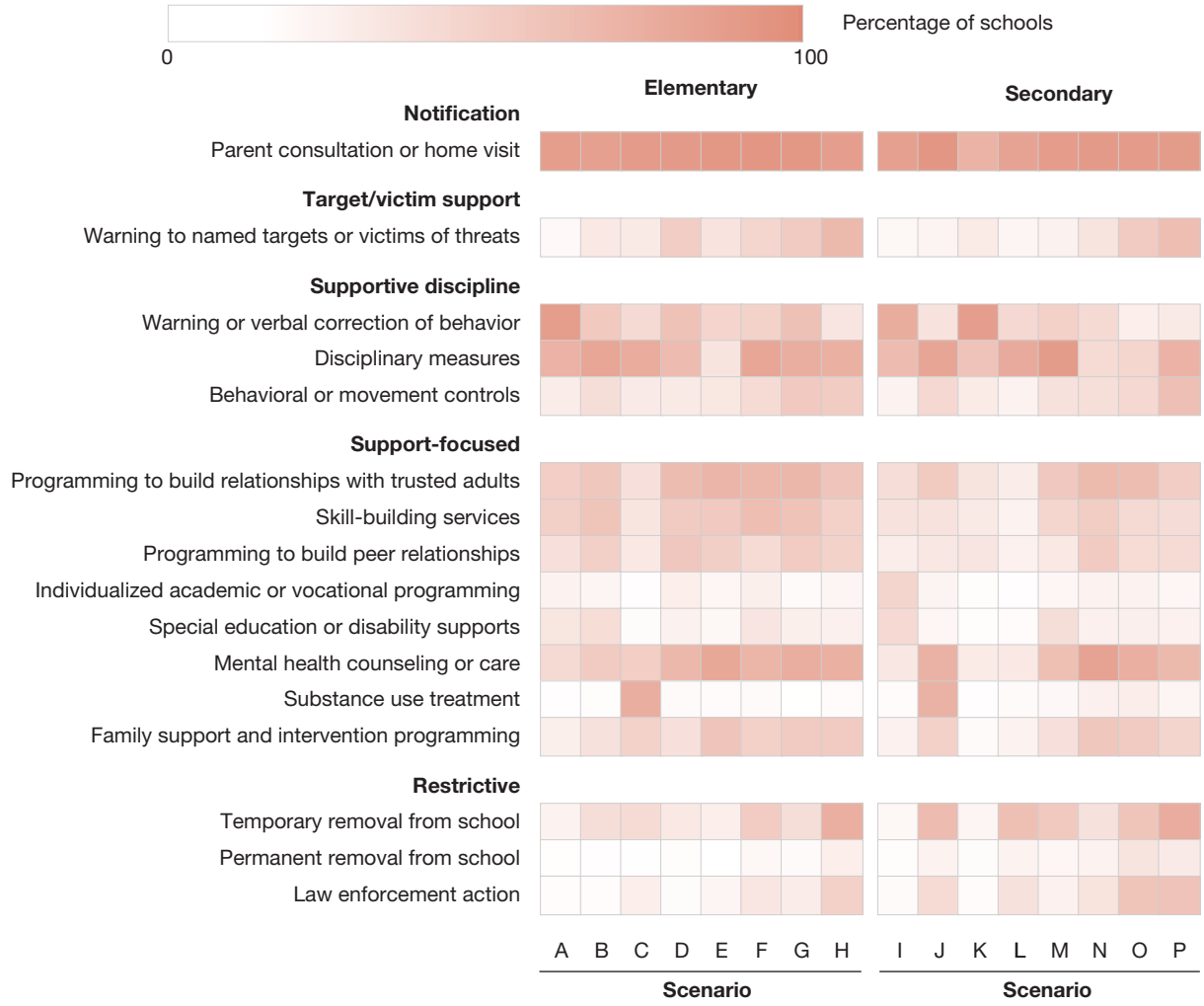
Grouped by intervention type, Figure 11.8 shows the heavy weight of parental involvement across situations and the situational relevance of target or victim support (because not all scenarios involved specifically identified targets of a threat). The weight of supportive disciplinary approaches also indicates that this is a component of most responses, as would be expected for situations that could disrupt school functioning and make others feel unsafe. However, the answer to the key question of whether schools are "doing BTAM right" appears in the previous two sections. These simultaneously depict the importance of support-focused strategies as a component of almost all intervention plans (notably mental health counseling and care across many scenarios) and the relatively light weighting assigned to all restrictive intervention options with the exception of temporary school suspensions.[13]

Although the balance between support-focused and restrictive interventions is encouraging, the number of scenarios in which at least some principals selected law enforcement involvement is likely cause for concern (Figure 11.7). Naturally, how much criminal justice involvement is "too much" in any particular case is fundamentally a policy question and also must be determined individually on a case-by-case basis. Although keeping students in school has substantial educational benefits and is likely more cost-effective than criminal justice involvement overall, some situations could be so serious that leaving student behavior management exclusively to the school would be impossible and inappropriate. Moreover, it is worth reiterating that in some states, laws or regulations *require* schools to involve police when responding to specific incidents of student behavior (e.g., threats of violence or weapons). For many of the schools included in our survey, police officers could become involved in responding to a subset of scenarios whether or not a BTAM team was in place.

[13] As noted earlier, many schools employ temporary suspension as an immediate response to an incident to ensure the safety of the individual student and broader school community, while a BTAM team conducts its threat assessment and determines the best path forward (Jackson et al., 2025).

FIGURE 11.8

Percentage of Schools That Would Use Various Actions in Response to the Scenarios Provided



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?" (n = 1,420 observations for low-severity scenarios; n = 1,420 observations for medium-severity scenarios; n = 1,419 for high-severity scenarios). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

CHAPTER 12

What Do Principals Think Are the Effects of Their BTAM Programs?

The widespread adoption of BTAM at schools across the United States has raised concerns about its impact and perceived impact on a variety of school-specific outcomes, such as safety, crime, fairness of school discipline across all students, and school climate more broadly (see, e.g., Cornell et al., 2025; Cornell, 2020; Nekvasil and Cornell, 2015). In this chapter, we explore principals' beliefs on what effects BTAM is having on their schools. This chapter includes the 82 percent of schools that have an official BTAM team, regardless of whether this team is housed at the school level, district level, or both.

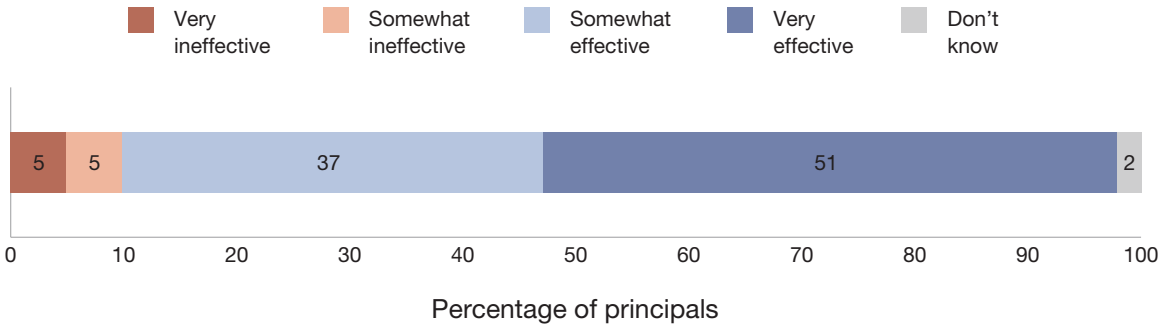
Note that our survey did not attempt to capture actual effects on such outcomes as school crime or violence rates and only captures principals' *perceptions* of these issues. Overall, our survey results indicate that principals think that BTAM is having a positive effect on feelings of school safety and school climate more generally, and at worst no effect. This chapter explores these perceptions.

Ninety Percent of Principals Think That Their BTAM Program Is Effective at Maintaining School Safety

Principals had a very positive overall perception about the effectiveness of their school BTAM program when it came to keeping their schools safe (see Figure 12.1). Nine in ten principals (88 percent) had positive perceptions, including 51 percent who said their team was very effective at maintaining school safety and 37 percent who said BTAM was somewhat effective. This widespread agreement across contexts reflects strong national confidence in BTAM as a foundational element of school safety infrastructure. Meanwhile, only 5 percent of

FIGURE 12.1

Percentage Distribution of Principals' Perceptions of BTAM Teams' Effectiveness at Maintaining School Safety



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "How effective do you believe this BTAM team is at maintaining school safety?" (n = 1,406). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

principals said they believe that BTAM was somewhat ineffective at maintaining school safety, and another 5 percent believe it to be very ineffective. Two percent of principals were not sure about the impact of BTAM on school safety.

Principals' positive perceptions about their BTAM programs' contributions to maintaining a safe school environment held across various school characteristics. That is, principals in all types of school settings—whether in a large, urban school or a small, rural school—said they believe that their BTAM program effectively helps keep their school safe. Principals who only had a district-level team or whose school only had a small BTAM team had slightly lower perceptions of those teams' effectiveness. Nevertheless, eight in ten of those principals said they believe that their BTAM program was effective.

Furthermore, principals' positive feelings about the effectiveness of the BTAM team also did not depend on the level of crime in the school. That is, principals in schools that reported having higher levels of violent crime were just as likely as their counterparts in schools that reported that they had no or only a few violent crimes to feel that their BTAM team was effective in maintaining school safety. Said another way, regardless of the crime level in their school, roughly 90 percent of principals felt that their BTAM team was effective at maintaining school safety.

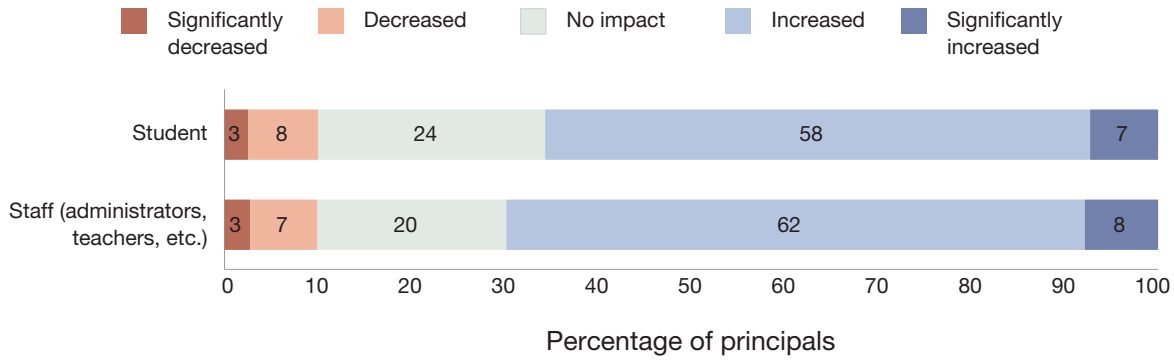
More Than 60 Percent of Principals Believe That BTAM Increases Student and Staff Feelings of Safety at School, Though Most Indicated That Effect Was Intermediate in Size

We also asked principals whether they believe that their BTAM program affected student and staff perceptions of feeling safe at school. Most principals believe that their school's BTAM program positively affected both student and staff feelings of safety (see Figure 12.2). However, principals tended to view this relationship as intermediate in size—that is, principals felt that their BTAM program *increased, but not significantly,* feelings of safety.

More specifically, 66 percent of principals reported that their BTAM program increased students' feelings of safety (including 7 percent who said BTAM significantly increased feelings of safety), and 70 percent believe that BTAM is increasing staff feelings of safety (including 8 percent who said they believe that BTAM is significantly increasing perceptions of safety).

FIGURE 12.2

Percentage Distribution of Principals' Perceptions of BTAM Program's Impact on Students' and Staff Members' Feelings of Safety



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "What impact do you think your BTAM program has had on the following outcomes at your school?" (n = 1,377). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

The fact that principals perceive a positive (though perhaps intermediate) relationship between BTAM and feelings of safety at school could suggest that schools are already relatively safe spaces, in part, because extreme violent incidents remain rare. Positive relationships could also be attributable to other factors, such as differing perceptions of safety between principals and students, between principals and staff, or between stakeholder groups. At worst, principals in our survey perceived that BTAM was neutral (i.e., did not have an impact on student or staff feelings of safety); few reported that the BTAM program was having negative impacts on these perceptions.

Interestingly, principals' perceptions of the positive impact that their BTAM program was having on student and staff feelings of safety at school were unrelated to the crime level in the school. That is, principals in schools who reported higher numbers of violent incidents were just as likely as those in schools with few to no violent incidents to perceive that their BTAM team had an intermediately sized, though positive, impact on feelings of safety.

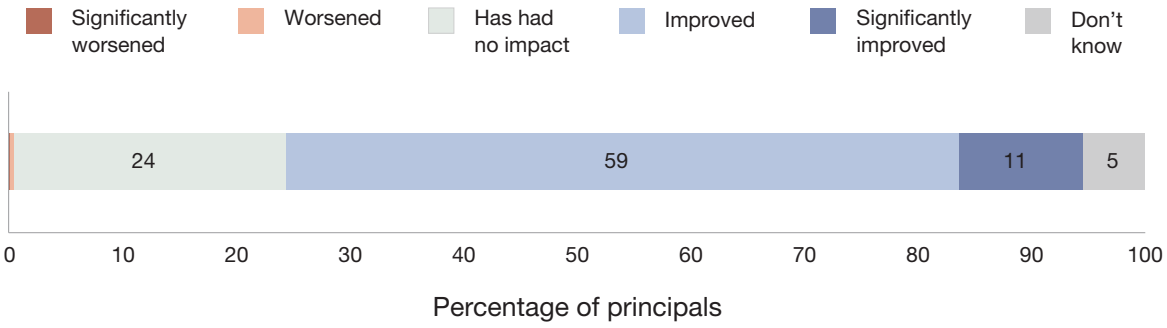
Seventy Percent of Principals Credit Their BTAM Program with Improving School Climate

In addition to principals' positive feelings about their BTAM program's contributions to school safety, most principals (70 percent) said they believe that BTAM has improved school climate overall, including 11 percent of principals who believe that BTAM has significantly improved school climate and 59 percent who believe that BTAM has improved climate (see Figure 12.3). At worst, principals felt that their BTAM program had no impact on school climate (24 percent). Virtually no principals (less than 1 percent) felt that BTAM worsened school climate. Five percent of principals were not sure of BTAM's impact on school climate. Taken altogether, these responses suggest that, on balance, principals believe that there is a modestly positive relationship between BTAM and improvements in school climate.

We did observe larger variation in principals' perceptions of BTAM's impact on school climate across school characteristics. Specifically, principals in elementary schools, suburban schools, and low- or middle-poverty schools were less likely to report that BTAM contributed positively to school climate. Moreover, principals whose schools had only had small BTAM teams were slightly less likely to indicate that BTAM improved school climate; even in these cases, however, most principals still believe that BTAM had a net positive impact on school climate.

FIGURE 12.3

Percentage Distribution of Principals' Perceptions of BTAM Team's Impact on School Climate



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "What impact do you think your school or district's BTAM program has had on school climate at your school?" (n = 1,377). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bar does not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Some data labels have been removed for readability.

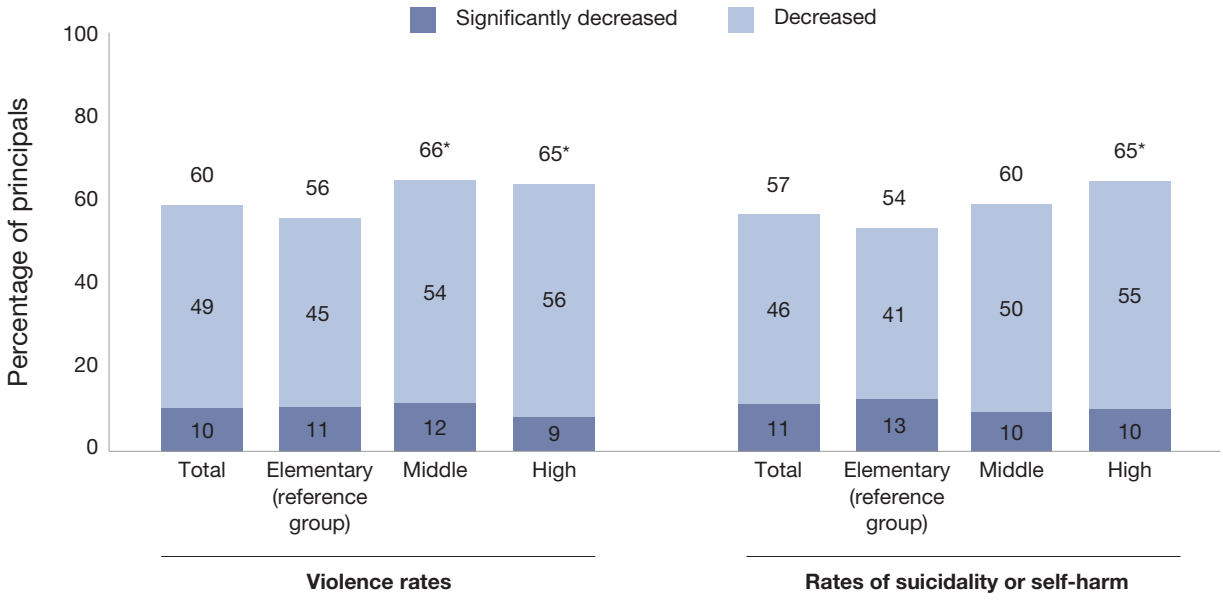
Principals Are Mostly Optimistic That BTAM Is Decreasing Violent Incidents or Suicides at School

Most principals perceived that their school's BTAM program was having some impact on levels of violence at their school. As shown in Figure 12.4, 60 percent of principals said they felt that BTAM decreased or significantly decreased violence rates, and 57 percent believe that BTAM decreased or significantly decreased rates of suicidality or self-harm. The principals who did not perceive that BTAM decreased rates of violence said they believe that the program was having no impact.[1]

Notably, principals tended to respond that BTAM "decreased," as opposed to "significantly decreased," levels of violence or suicides at their schools. Setting aside that our survey question did not define a specific threshold across response options, this finding suggests that principals believe that BTAM is influencing levels of violence at their schools to some extent. Again, this could be because schools are already relatively safe places; indeed, data show that many schools only experience one or two violent incidents per year, leaving very little room for improvement (Burr et al., 2024).

FIGURE 12.4

Percentage of Principals Who Perceived That Their School's BTAM Team Helped to Reduce Specific Negative Outcomes at Their School



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "What impact do you think your BTAM program has had on the following outcomes at your school?" (n = 1,377). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding. An asterisk (*) indicates that the percentage of principals in secondary schools who said decreased or significantly decreased was statistically significantly different from the percentage of principals in elementary schools who said similarly.

[1] Only 2 percent of principals believe that BTAM increased or significantly increased the level of violence.

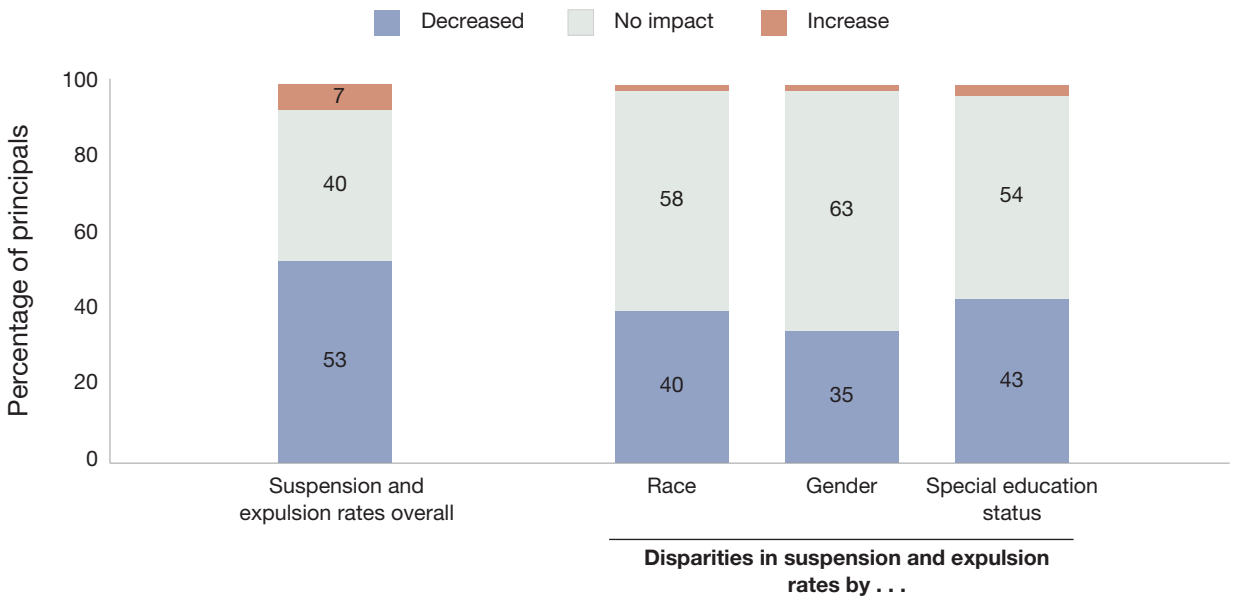
Few Principals Believe That BTAM Increased the Use of Exclusionary Discipline but Were Split over Whether BTAM Reduced or Had No Impact on Such Practices

As noted above, one concern around the use of BTAM at schools across the country is the potential for its impact on schools' use of exclusionary discipline practices overall and whether exclusionary discipline is used fairly across the student population (for a review, see Cornell et al., 2025). A BTAM program is not intended to increase the use of exclusionary discipline or criminal justice responses; instead, the approach encourages supporting interventions matched to individual student needs. We asked principals to estimate the impact of their BTAM program on the level of exclusionary discipline (suspensions and expulsions) at their school and on rates at which such practices might affect different student groups.

As shown in Figure 12.5, principals were split over whether their BTAM program decreased their use of exclusionary discipline practices or had no impact in this area. Few principals (7 percent) said they believe that BTAM programs are leading to increased use of exclusionary discipline practices. Although this represents a small subset of schools, such responses merit additional examination to identify what might be driving such changes. Most principals also believe that their BTAM programs did not contribute to disparities in the use of exclusionary discipline practices across different groups of students. At best, principals perceived that their BTAM programs were helping reduce differences in use of these practices across the student population, potentially increasing the fairness of disciplinary practices overall.

FIGURE 12.5

Percentage of Principals Who Perceived That Their School's BTAM Team Had an Impact on Use of Exclusionary Discipline



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "What impact do you think your BTAM program has had on the following outcomes at your school?" (n = 1,377). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding. Some data labels have been removed for readability. We collapsed "significantly decreased" and "decreased" as well as "significantly increased" and "increased" for readability purposes.

CHAPTER 13

What Do Principals Think About Sustaining and Improving Their BTAM Programs over Time?

In this chapter, we look toward the future to discuss what principals told us about what they think could help strengthen BTAM in K–12 schools and how their programs incorporate processes and activities focused on improving program effectiveness over time. The results from our survey on the breadth of BTAM adoption at K–12 schools across the country, as well as principals' perceptions of BTAM's value and impact, suggest that the policy challenge going forward is less about advancing adoption of BTAM as a component of schools safety efforts—the vast majority of schools already have done so—and more about how to improve existing programs. We present the data in this chapter with an eye toward continuous improvement, focusing again on those schools with official BTAM teams.

Sustainability

Even when schools adopt valuable programs that help students and lead to better outcomes—not just for school safety but also for academic, school climate, and other goals—there is no guarantee that these programs will be successfully sustained over time. Studies of program implementation in many areas have identified many risks to program sustainment, including resource constraints that force the closure of good programs; "drifting" away from careful program delivery so that over time a program morphs into something different than originally intended; and staff turnover or changes in leadership that remove the program's "champion," meaning no one is there to ensure continued quality and performance (see Lane et al., 2019, for a review).

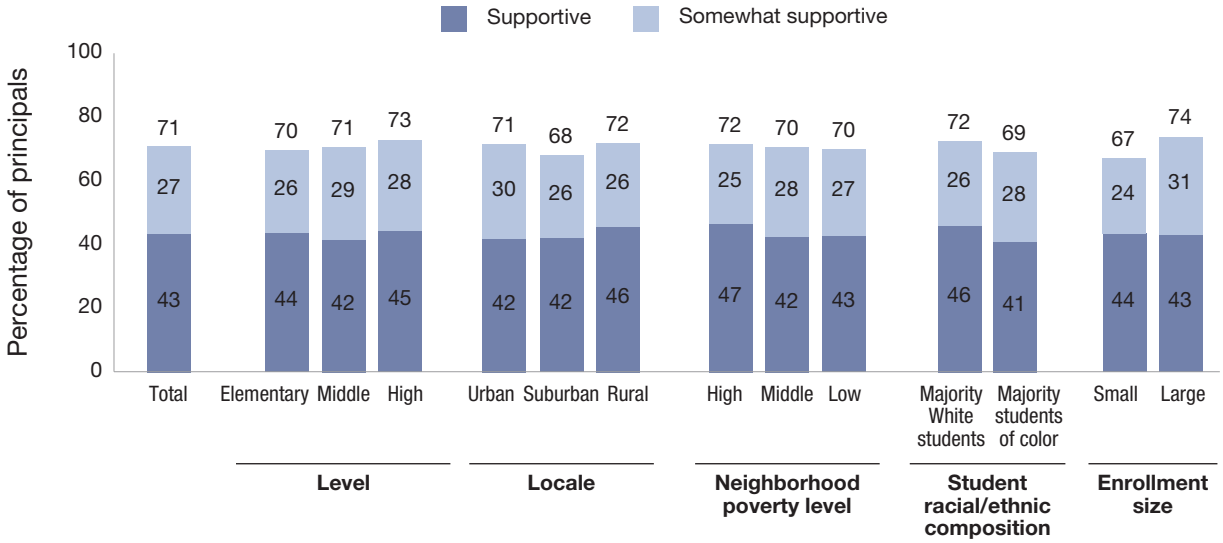
Several factors must be in place to ensure the sustainability of BTAM programs. Buy-in and ongoing support from the school community, belief across multiple groups—leaders, staff, parents, and students—that the program is working to improve school safety, and resilience to staff turnover are especially critical. As we discuss in this section, our data suggest that many schools already have some of the suitable factors in place to support the continued operation of their BTAM programs into the future, but there are areas where additional support could strengthen BTAM sustainability and continuous improvement.

More Principals Report That Their School Community Is Supportive of BTAM

Principals who serve in a variety of school settings perceive that their school community is supportive of BTAM as a school safety approach. As shown in Figure 13.1, 71 percent of principals overall, across all school characteristics, believe that their school community is supportive of BTAM. This includes 43 percent who perceive their school community as supportive and 27 percent who perceive their community as somewhat supportive. We observed only one statistically significant difference when it comes to school characteristics: Principals of large schools were slightly more likely than principals of small schools to view their community as supportive of BTAM (74 versus 67 percent, respectively).

FIGURE 13.1

Percentage of Principals Who Perceive That Their School Community Is Supportive of BTAM as a School Safety Approach



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "How supportive is your school community of BTAM as a school safety approach?" (n = 1,376). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Principals who did not see their school communities as supportive of BTAM said they believe that their communities were neutral on the topic. We do not know what informs these perspectives—it could be that school communities do not know enough about school BTAM programs to have an opinion either way or that the application of BTAM is not pervasive enough to make an impression. Only 2 percent of principals said they perceive that their school communities were not supportive of their BTAM program.

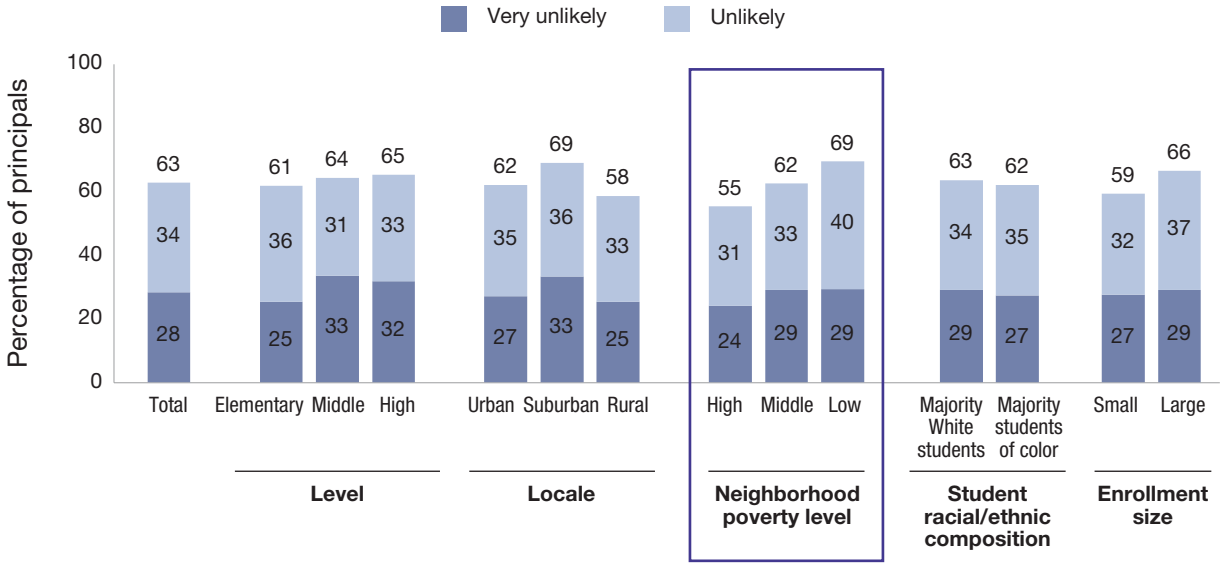
Two-Thirds of Principals Believe That Their BTAM Programs Would Withstand Leadership Changes, Though a Quarter Were Unsure How Their Departure Might Impact the Program's Sustainability

As a proxy measure to capture the resilience of a school's BTAM program to changes in staffing, we asked principals whether they perceived that a leadership change (for instance, were they to vacate their position) would result in changes to their school's use of or approach to BTAM. The question was informed by other studies on program sustainability and on BTAM program implementation specifically that drew on the expertise of school safety staff across the country who indicated that a dynamic and supportive school leader was often important for school BTAM program effectiveness (see, e.g., Jackson et al., 2025). Two-thirds of principals said they believe their school's BTAM program would withstand leadership change (see Figure 13.2).

We identified one notable difference by school characteristics. Specifically, principals in the highest poverty schools were least likely to believe their BTAM program would withstand a leadership change, suggesting that BTAM sustainability in those schools may be more vulnerable. This is notable because high-poverty schools have historically had higher levels of staff turnover, compared with lower-poverty schools (Education Resource Strategies [ERS], 2025; Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2019). Findings therefore suggest additional support may be needed to build institutional memory and leadership pipelines in high-poverty schools, where BTAM program stability may be more fragile.

FIGURE 13.2

Percentage of Principals Who Perceive That a Leadership Change Would Not Result in Changes to Their Schools' Use of or Approach to BTAM



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Would a leadership change at your school (e.g., were you to vacate your position) result in changes to your school's use of or approach to BTAM?" (n = 1,376). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Bars may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Program Challenges and Continuous Improvement

A key element of BTAM program effectiveness over the long term is incorporating processes to identify challenges and take steps to address challenges and improve performance over time.

Six in Ten Schools Have Made Changes to Their BTAM Programs to Improve Their Processes Since Initial Implementation

Approximately four in ten schools reported that their BTAM process has been generally stable, using established approaches for assessing cases and planning interventions. However, the other 60 percent reported that they have made one or more changes to the program since its initial implementation.

Most commonly, principals indicated that their BTAM process changed as they aimed to make it more effective at protecting the school and students (30 percent) or adjustments were needed for BTAM to better fit their school's needs (24 percent). Few schools reported making changes in response to specific problems, such as resource or other constraints that limited the capacity of BTAM (12 percent) or concerns in the community about how BTAM would affect students (3 percent). These patterns suggest that schools made changes to BTAM processes to help improve how BTAM worked in their specific school or community context, rather than in response to challenges that might otherwise jeopardize the effective functioning of a school BTAM program.

That said, 14 percent of schools did change their BTAM process in response to changes to state law or policy regarding BTAM. Schools located in our group of states with early legislation in 2019 (see Chapter 1) were most likely to indicate that their processes had changed in response to such shifts in state law or policy. Given that that group of states put prescriptive policies in place early regarding local use of BTAM, it is perhaps unsurprising that principals in those states told us they were affected by changes in those policies (e.g.,

since the 2019 study that provides the basis for the grouping of the states, some of those states—including Georgia and Michigan—have gone from strong encouragement of BTAM through policy or regulation to enacting laws covering school BTAM adoption) (Child Trends and the NASBE, 2021).

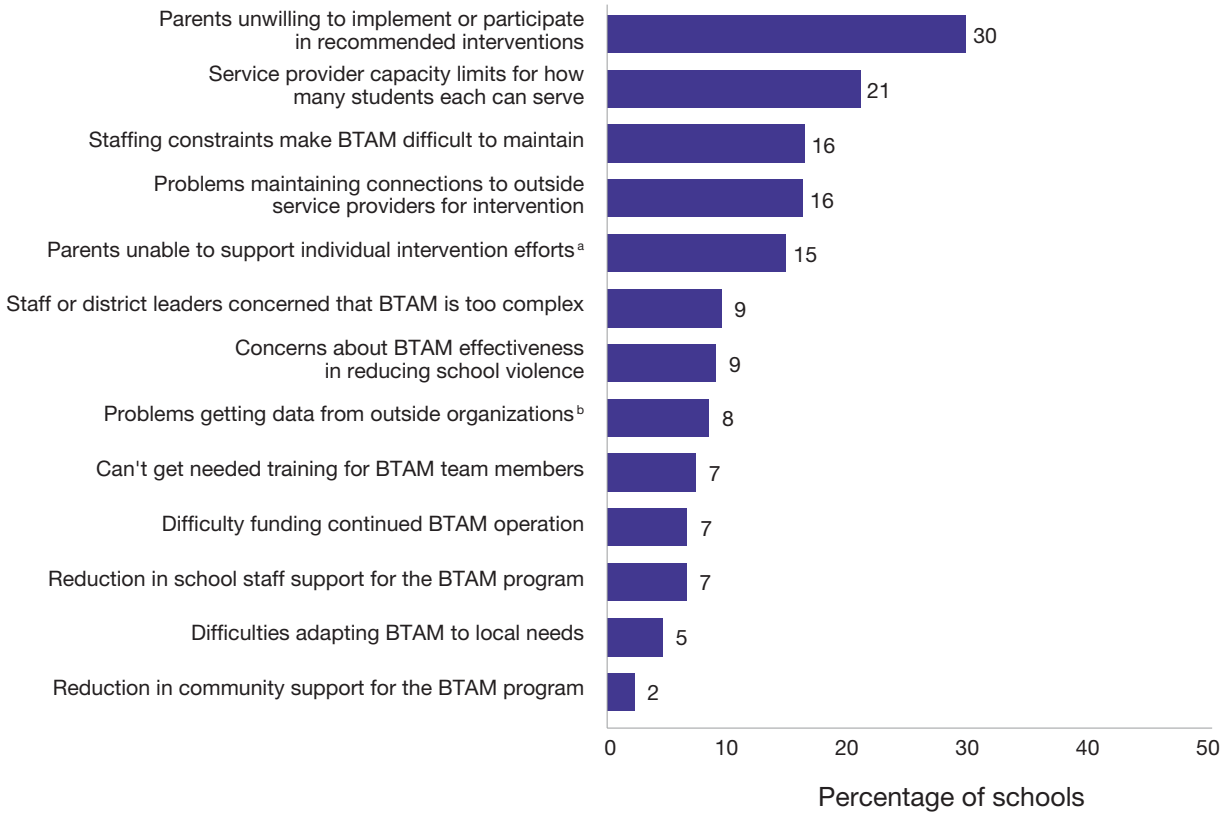
Though Reported Current Challenges Are Relatively Rare, Schools Say Their Main Challenges Today Relate to External Factors

To assess what challenges schools' BTAM programs are facing now, we gave survey respondents a menu of 13 options they could flag as current concerns (Figure 13.3). A slight majority of schools (56 percent) said their school's BTAM program is currently experiencing (or has experienced) one or more of the 13 challenges. Among those who were experiencing current challenges, half of schools identified one or two. Very few schools identified more than five challenges.

The most common challenge, selected by 30 percent of schools, relates to the unwillingness of parents when it comes to implementing or participating in recommended interventions. The second most commonly identified challenge, selected by 21 percent of schools, relates to service provider capacity limits over how many students they are able to serve. Importantly, these top two challenges relate to external factors

FIGURE 13.3

Percentage of Schools Indicating They Have Experienced the Following Challenges in Operating Their BTAM Program



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Is your school experiencing or has it experienced any of the following challenges when it comes to operating its BTAM program?" (n = 1,376). Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

[a] For example, because of costs.

[b] For example, law enforcement, medical providers.

rather than issues directly under the control of a school BTAM team or the school more generally, potentially explaining why they may be especially difficult to resolve.

Staffing constraints were identified as the top internal challenge related to BTAM; 16 percent of schools reported that staffing constraints can make BTAM difficult to maintain. Seven percent of schools also reported not being able to access necessary training, and another 7 percent reported difficulty funding continued BTAM operations.

Notably, sufficient staff time was also the top concern identified by principals who were asked questions about their experiences during BTAM's initial implementation phase. This suggests that staff capacity is likely a perennial concern for schools asked to do increasingly more to support students. The capacity of outside providers (presumably to accommodate students referred by the BTAM team) was also a top concern identified by principals during the initial implementation phase, and it remains as a top ongoing challenge.

Importantly, even though schools selected a variety of challenges, they did not coalesce around any single challenge that might indicate more systemic problems operating a BTAM program. At most, only a minority of schools experienced any one challenge. This could imply that school characteristics might be significant in determining the types of challenges schools experience when it comes to operating BTAM programs. Although the differences were small, we found some limited evidence for two challenges in particular: (1) training for BTAM team members and (2) reduction in school staff support for a BTAM program. Principals of urban schools, high-poverty schools, and schools serving a majority of students of color (highly overlapping categories) were especially likely to report experiencing these two challenges. For example, 10 percent of urban school principals said they struggled to get needed BTAM training, as did 7 percent of suburban school principals and 5 percent of rural school principals. Schools in states that did not promote BTAM via legislation or non-codified policy in 2019 were also more likely to identify training gaps as an issue, suggesting that some state policies related to BTAM may specifically include providing training to schools at no or reduced cost.

Nearly All Schools Engage in Some Form of Continuous Improvement Process, but the Scale of the Overall Process Is Limited

BTAM teams need a process to identify ongoing issues or opportunities for change with an eye toward improving performance if they want to get better over time; teams that do not proactively seek out such issues or opportunities will likely miss chances to improve outcomes related to BTAM. In our survey, we asked principals if their schools' BTAM teams engaged in any such activities, ranging from after-action reviews of past cases to systematic data analyses across cases and gathering feedback from program participants.

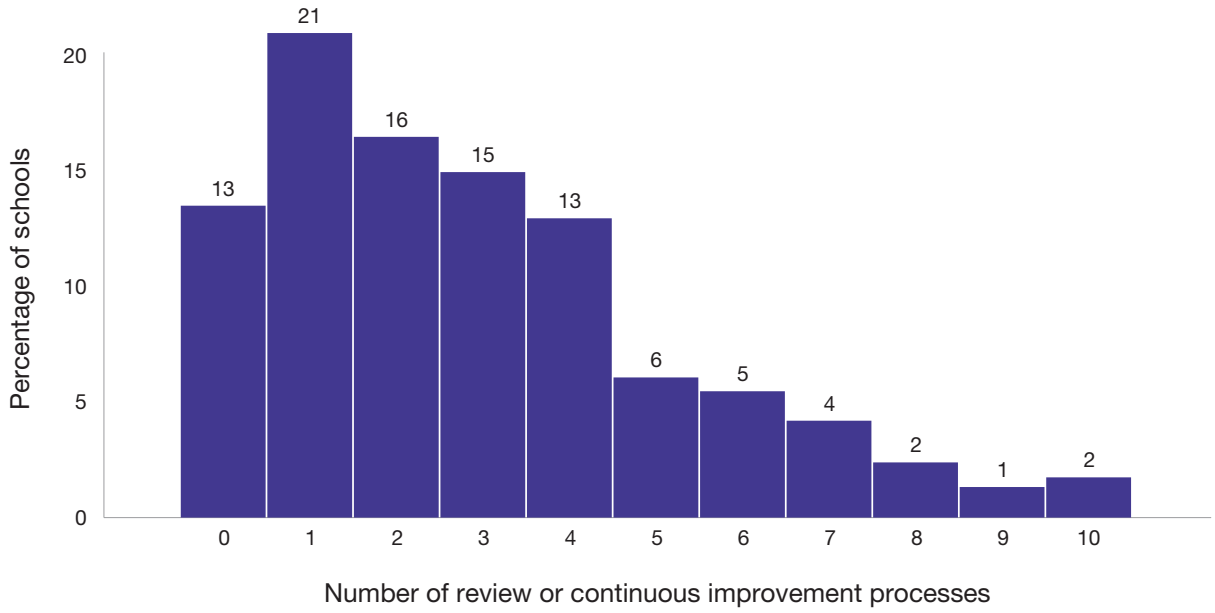
Overall, 87 percent of principals reported that their school's BTAM team engaged in one or more of the review or continuous improvement processes included as survey response options. As shown in Figure 13.4, responses clustered around a handful of review or continuous improvement processes; very few schools engaged in all or even most of the activities we asked about. (See Figure 13.5 for a full list of continuous improvement activities included in the survey question.)

When looking at any one particular review or reflection activity, only a minority of schools reported engaging in each action. Principals most commonly reported conducting after-action reviews of individual cases (48 percent reported doing so). Taken together, these data suggest that, though many schools are thinking about continuous improvement, too few are engaged in concrete activities to better understand how their BTAM teams are operating. Providing more support to schools so that they can engage in more continuous improvement activities could help them achieve better school safety outcomes over time.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, schools with large BTAM teams (meaning teams with more roles represented) engaged in more review and continuous improvement activities, compared with schools with smaller teams (see Figure 13.5). For example, 38 percent of schools with large BTAM teams validate that specific interven-

FIGURE 13.4

Percentage Distribution of Schools, by Number of Review or Continuous Improvement Processes Undertaken by BTAM Team

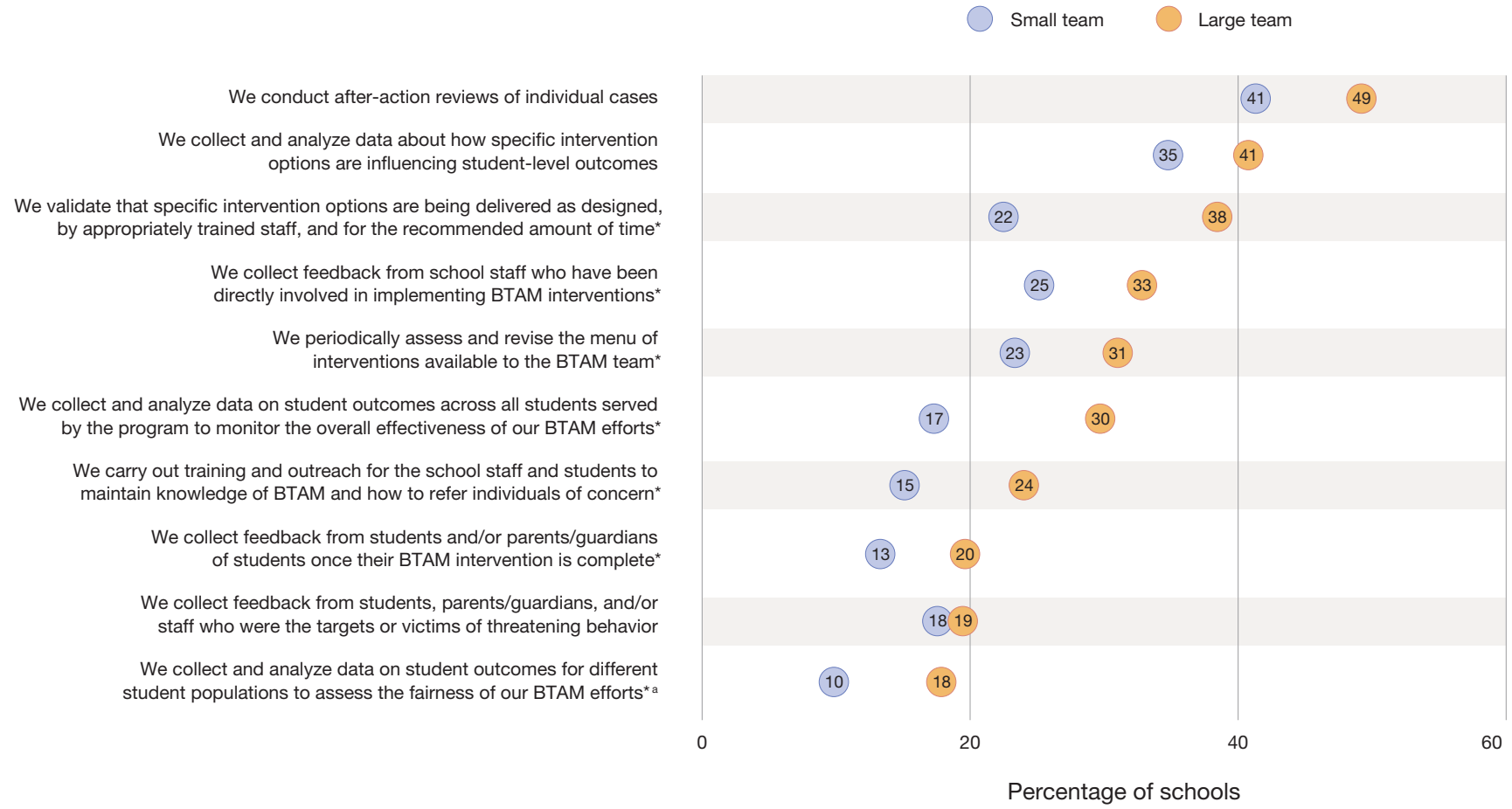


NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following processes are part of how your BTAM program operates?" (*n* = 1,376). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Percentages do not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

tion options are being delivered as designed, by appropriately trained staff, and for the amount of time recommended in an intervention plan. In comparison, only 22 percent of schools with small BTAM teams engaged in these types of activities. Schools with larger teams were also more likely to engage in other activities, such as periodic reassessments of the menu of BTAM intervention options, analysis of student outcome data, and collecting feedback from students and parents or guardians at case closure. We presume that because of their size, larger teams have more capacity to support these sorts of activities.

FIGURE 13.5

Percentage of Schools Indicating That Various Review and Reflection Processes Are Part of How Their BTAM Team Operates, by Team Size



NOTE: This figure depicts response data from the following survey question: "Which of the following processes are part of how your BTAM program operates?" (*n* = 1,376). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only those who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. An asterisk (*) indicates that the percentage of principals in schools with small BTAM teams who said their team engages in a specific review and reflection process was statistically significantly different from the percentage of principals in schools with large BTAM teams who said similarly.

[a] For example, special education students, neurodiverse students, race/ethnicity minority students, gender and sexual minority students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

CHAPTER 14

Discussion and Implications

In this report, we took an in-depth look at the state of BTAM in K–12 public schools across the country. To do so, we drew on data collected via a survey fielded to a nationally representative sample of school administrators in January 2025. The survey sought to understand how BTAM is working on the ground at K–12 schools and revealed the following key bright spots:

- **Adoption of BTAM as part of school safety efforts—or the existence of an alternative BTAM-like team—has become a nearly ubiquitous practice across U.S. schools.** This is a significant shift relative to ten years ago, when fewer than half of schools had BTAM teams in place. The rapid growth in schools' use of BTAM and widespread adoption suggest that schools should shift their focus from BTAM adoption to implementation fidelity and refining practices to ensure consistent and effective implementation. As schools move beyond establishing BTAM programs, ongoing support will be critical for institutionalizing best practices and building capacity for program sustainability.

  Even for the few schools that have not yet adopted BTAM—or that might move from using an alternative team to a dedicated multidisciplinary BTAM team—our results indicate that the foremost challenge is not schools' initial adoption of BTAM. When we asked principals who had played a role in establishing their school's BTAM program questions about the initial implementation phase, most indicated it was relatively smooth and that their program became an effective contributor to safety at their school relatively quickly. As a result, new adopters of BTAM may need more help to support the continued function of their BTAM team and improve the program's effectiveness and outcomes over time, as opposed to support from the local community to get a program off the ground.
- **State-level policies related to BTAM, whether through legislation or non-codified policy, are likely helping schools implement BTAM.** Our analyses show that schools in states that mandated or otherwise encouraged BTAM implementation at K–12 schools through non-codified policy in 2019 are ahead in terms of their BTAM implementation. Today, schools in these states are more likely to have standardized meeting schedules for their BTAM teams, as well as written SOPs and defining policy documents for their BTAM programs. This could be because schools in these states received earlier support in the form of training and/or funding for their BTAM programs.
- **Responses suggest that schools are appropriately scoping their BTAM programs to focus on the most severe and high-risk cases of student behavior.** One of the main concerns about BTAM is the possibility that schools may cast an overly wide net, such that their BTAM program addresses low-level behavioral incidents (e.g., talking back to a teacher or other disruptive classroom behavior) best suited for other school behavioral management and student support systems. Reports from school principals largely suggest this concern has not played out. Instead, our survey results suggest schools' BTAM teams have maintained a focus on those incidents that align with their core mission of identifying and intervening in potentially serious school safety concerns. We saw this both in descriptive survey results and in principals' responses to scenario-based survey items, where principals identified that BTAM teams rarely made the initial decision in response to incidents. Both analyses revealed that schools mostly use

distinct thresholds to determine which incidents warrant referral to BTAM teams, particularly in cases of significant concern. Taken together, our results suggest schools are successfully focusing BTAM on situations most likely to affect student and school safety while relying on other behavioral teams or processes for less severe cases—a critical balance that helps maintain the integrity of the behavioral threat assessment process.

- **Most schools are incorporating individualized interventions into plans developed as part of the threat management process, often tailoring supports to meet the specific needs and circumstances of students.** Principals' responses demonstrate that schools are using a variety of interventions to address the root cause of student behaviors and treat a broad range of student needs. Responses to scenario-based questions in particular reveal that schools are not overly relying on any single intervention to address student needs, which is appropriate for the types of complex cases often referred to BTAM teams.
- **School BTAM efforts generally reflect a commitment to using supportive measures that address root causes of concerning behaviors, rather than relying primarily on exclusionary discipline practices or referrals to law enforcement.** Survey results show that schools prioritize interventions, such as counseling with mental health professionals, building trusted relationships with adults, and skill-building services over restrictive measures. Even in the most severe scenarios presented to principals, supportive interventions consistently composed the largest share of response strategies. Over 75 percent said they rarely or never use exclusionary discipline, and 80 percent rarely or never arrest or prosecute students referred to BTAM teams. This pattern demonstrates that BTAM teams function as intended—as a preventative approach focused on early intervention and support rather than punishment, helping students address underlying issues while keeping them connected to school.
- **Parents are a key part of schools' behavioral threat management processes.** Though our survey results show that only 20 percent of schools directly involve parents in the intervention and support planning process, an overwhelming majority consult parents as part of this process. This suggests that schools are not conducting intervention planning in isolation and that parent buy-in is key to the success of an intervention plan. In fact, one-third of schools believe that parents' unwillingness to implement or participate in recommended interventions is a key challenge to operating their BTAM program.
- **Principals around the country believe that BTAM is having a net positive impact on improving safety at their schools and also helping to create more positive school climates.** Survey responses show that principals think BTAM is decreasing rates of crime and violence at school, as well as rates of self-harm. Many also strongly agree that BTM is a preferred approach to managing student behavior concerns, compared with previous approaches that relied primarily on exclusionary discipline measures.

Despite these strong overarching messages, our survey results also identified opportunities for future focus. In particular, principals identified five key continuing challenges:

- **Even though most schools have adopted BTAM, there is still considerable variability in the approaches they use.** According to principals' reports, schools often borrow selectively from nationally recognized, named programs and blend elements from these programs with locally developed practices. Schools rely on named programs with modifications tailored to their specific needs, while others opt for fully localized approaches. While the variability highlights the importance of schools' flexibility to choose and adapt models to be appropriate to their school context, it also presents risks. In particular, inconsistencies in implementation across schools may lead to uneven outcomes and challenges in measuring program effectiveness at scale. It also means that talking about BTAM outcomes is really talking about the outcomes of individual approaches that schools are using somewhat differently from place to

place. Observing outcomes across BTAM programs will internalize and reflect that variability. In this sense, our results highlight the need for greater coherence in guiding schools toward evidence-based practices that are adaptable to local contexts but maintain fidelity to proven frameworks.

- **There is considerable variability in training for BTAM members across schools.** Fewer than half of schools provide BTAM team members with annual training, and approximately one-quarter of schools only provide training on an as-needed basis. This inconsistency in training may hinder the ability of BTAM teams to develop critical competencies, for instance related to assessing risk, mitigating biases, and appropriately matching interventions and supports to individual student needs—all of which are foundational to effective violence prevention. Schools located in urban and high-poverty areas are particularly likely to report challenges accessing training, highlighting obstacles that additional funding sources and support could help address.
- **A related challenge is the lack of standardization across critical BTAM team functions and operations.** There is little standardization in the way of BTAM team structure and meeting frequency, information-gathering and case review processes, and program evaluation. Principals presented a mixed picture of how their BTAM teams approach these various elements, with some schools following structured processes but most relying on less formalized deliberations. The reality is that half of schools do not have formal policies guiding their BTAM program and half do not have SOPs. This means that while many schools may have implemented a BTAM program, it is not fully integrated and institutionalized in their school or school district. This inconsistency underscores the need for clearer tools and resources to help schools establish systematic and effective team operations.
- **There is also considerable variation in how BTAM teams deliver interventions and develop management plans for students.** Although most teams emphasize individualized interventions tailored to student needs, there are wide differences in how teams structure their decisionmaking, draw on inventory resources, and use decision support tools. This lack of consistency can affect the quality and effectiveness of interventions. Schools would benefit from clearer guidance and best practices to ensure that interventions are implemented effectively and fairly. The need may be driven by the strong recent adoption of BTAM, with a large percentage of schools adopting the practice in the past five years.
- **Although most schools conduct some form of review or reflection process to understand the impact that BTAM is having on student- and school-level outcomes, many lack deep or systematic approaches to continuous improvement.** Only a small percentage of schools reported that they engaged in review processes that included systematic data analysis or validation of intervention delivery by appropriately trained staff. Similarly, although many schools are engaging in one activity related to continuous improvement within their BTAM program, relying on a single method is unlikely to yield the kind and quantity of information schools need to ensure that their BTAM program is working well and will continue to do so into the future. Without multiple robust mechanisms for gathering feedback and assessing outcomes across cases, schools risk missing opportunities to improve the effectiveness of their BTAM programs and ensure that both specific interventions and the program as a whole are yielding the intended impact.

APPENDIX A

Survey Frequencies

In this appendix, we provide basic frequency tabulations for survey items included on the survey that we analyze in this report. Our survey items were administered as part of eight different modules, and not all respondents received each module (Tables A.1–A.13 in Module 1; Tables A.14–A.19 in Module 2; Tables A.20–A.30 in Module 3; Tables A.31–A.32 in Module 4; Tables A.33–A.50 in Module 5; Tables A.51–A.57 in Module 6; Tables A.58–A.60 in Module 7; and Tables A.61–A.65 in Module 8). For more information about how the survey was structured, see Appendix B.

All survey estimates presented below have been weighted to be representative of the national population of K–12 public school principals and the schools in which they serve.

Module 1: Introduction

TABLE A.1
Are You Afraid of Being the Victim of Attack or Harm at Your School?

	Weighted Percentage
No	77.7
Yes	22.3

NOTE: *N* = 1,746. This question was taken from the American Teacher Panel Omnibus survey (see Jackson et al., 2023).

TABLE A.2
Are You Afraid That Students at Your School Will Be the Victims of Attack or Harm?

	Weighted Percentage
No	59.7
Yes	40.3

NOTE: *n* = 1,745. This question was taken from the American Teacher Panel Omnibus survey (see Jackson et al., 2023).

TABLE A.3

Approximately How Many Violent Incidents Occurred at Your School During the 2023–2024 School Year?

Incidents	Weighted Percentage
0	33.5
1 to 4	38.0
5 to 10	15.2
11 to 20	7.8
21 or more	4.6
Don't know	0.9

NOTE: *n* = 1,745. According to the U.S. Department of Education's definition, *violent incidents* include rape or attempted rape, sexual assault other than rape, physical attacks or fights with or without a weapon, threat of physical attacks with or without a weapon, and robbery with or without a weapon (Burr et al., 2024, p. 3). This question was adapted from NCES's School Survey on Crime and Safety (Burr et al., 2024).

TABLE A.4

If a Student or Other Member of the School Community Became Aware of a Student Whose Behavior Indicated They Could Pose a Threat to Your School, How Confident Are You They Would Report the Concern?

	Weighted Percentage
Very confident	46.1
Confident	38.9
Somewhat confident	13.7
Not confident	1.3

NOTE: *N* = 1,746. This question was adapted from the American Teacher Panel Omnibus survey (see Jackson et al., 2023).

TABLE A.5

Which of the Following Staff Members Do You Have at Your School, Either Full or Part Time?

	Weighted Percentage
School counselor	89.0
School nurse	89.1
School social worker	56.0
School psychologist	67.3
School resource officer/school-based law enforcement officer	57.6
Non-law enforcement school security officer or guard	22.1
We do not have any of these types of staff members at our school	0.8

NOTE: *N* = 1,746. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply.

TABLE A.6

During This School Year (2024–2025), Does Your School or School District Have a Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Team or Any Other Formal Group of Persons Tasked with Identifying and Assessing Students Who Might Be at Risk for Violent or Harmful Behavior (Toward Themselves or Others)?

	Weighted Percentage
No	15.0
Yes	82.2
Don't know	2.8

NOTE: *N* = 1,746. This was a screener question used to direct appropriate modules to survey respondents. See Appendix B for more information.

TABLE A.7

Is the BTAM Team(s) Housed at the School or District Level, or Both?

	Weighted Percentage
School level	31.0
District level	16.4
We have both school- and district-level teams	52.2
Don't know	0.3

NOTE: *n* = 1,441. Column does not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team saw this question.

TABLE A.8

How Familiar Are You with the Operations of [AUTOFILL]?

	Weighted Percentage
Not very familiar (e.g., you may have referred students, but are not extremely knowledgeable about its processes)	4.2
Somewhat familiar (e.g., you have referred students and/or have knowledge of the team's processes)	24.9
Extremely familiar (e.g., you are a member of the team or lead it, or otherwise have detailed knowledge)	70.9

NOTE: *n* = 1,441. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team saw this question. The question stem autofilled with "your school BTAM team" if respondents said they had a school-level BTAM team or that they have both school- and district-level teams. The question stem autofilled with "your district BTAM team" if respondents said they had a district-level BTAM team. The question stem autofilled with "this BTAM team" if the respondent said they did not know the level of the team.

TABLE A.9

Some Schools Are Served by BTAM Teams External to a School or District. These Teams May Be Managed by a Community Organization; a Local, County, State, or Federal Government Entity; a Law Enforcement Agency; or Other Organizations. Is Your School Served by an Outside BTAM Team?

	Weighted Percentage
No	81.5
Yes	9.1
Don't know	9.3

NOTE: *n* = 1,743. Column does not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. This was a screener question used to direct appropriate modules to survey respondents. See Appendix B for more information.

TABLE A.10

Which Types of Outside Teams Serve Your School?

	Weighted Percentage
A community- or county-level team that responds to cases in schools and in the broader community	89.1
A state-level team that responds to cases as needed across the state	5.4
A team managed by a federal agency (e.g., FBI) that addresses referred cases	2.2
A different type of team not specified here	8.3

NOTE: *n* = 174. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school is served by an outside BTAM team saw this question.

TABLE A.11

How Familiar Are You with the Operation and Processes of the Outside BTAM Team(s)?

	Weighted Percentage
Not very familiar	27.6
Somewhat familiar	56.7
Extremely familiar	15.7

NOTE: *n* = 174. Only respondents who said their school is served by an outside BTAM team saw this question.

TABLE A.12

Does Your School Have a School-Based Team That Makes Decisions Regarding Serious Student Behavioral Concerns That Is Not Referred to as a Behavioral Assessment and Management (BTAM) Team?

	Weighted Percentage
No	18.2
Yes	81.0
Don't know	0.8

NOTE: *n* = 305. This could be a team associated with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or positive behavioral intervention system (PBIS) that makes decisions about individualized interventions for serious behavioral concerns. This was a screener question used to direct appropriate modules to survey respondents. See Appendix B for more information. Only respondents who said their school does not have (or does not know that their school has) a school- or district-level BTAM team saw this question.

TABLE A.13

How Familiar Are You with the Operation and Processes of This School-Based Behavioral Management Team?

	Weighted Percentage
Not very familiar (e.g., you may have referred students, but are not extremely knowledgeable about its processes)	11.7
Somewhat familiar (e.g., you have referred students and/or have knowledge of the team's processes)	21.8
Extremely familiar (e.g., you are a member of the team or lead it, or otherwise have detailed knowledge)	66.5

NOTE: *n* = 247. Only respondents who said their school has a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a behavioral assessment and management (BTAM) team saw this question.

Module 2: Scenarios

TABLE A.14

Which Person or Group Is Most Likely to Make the Initial Decision About How to Respond to This Student's Behavior? ELEMENTARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Classroom/direct contact teacher	57.8	20.2	1.9	13.2	25.1	18.7	13.6	8.3
School administrator (for example, principal or assistant principal)	29.4	63.5	84.2	53.1	33.8	57.8	58.9	67.8
School counselor[a]	6.3	3.5	1.9	21.6	26.6	2.6	4.7	0.3
School nurse[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
School social worker[a]	0.5	0.3	0.0	4.1	6.3	0.4	1.9	0.7
School psychologist[a]	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.7	1.6	1.7	0.2
SRO or school-based law enforcement officer[a]	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	3.1
Law enforcement (not school-based)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.8	2.0
Non-law enforcement security officer or guard[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
School- or district-level multi-person BTAM team[a]	0.3	2.6	4.2	3.9	4.8	15.3	11.8	14.6
Outside BTAM team serving our school[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MTSS, PBIS, or other behavioral support team[a]	3.4	8.5	1.1	3.1	0.8	2.4	4.2	1.6
Other (please specify)	2.1	0.7	6.1	0.8	1.1	0.0	2.3	1.3
N	353	335	131	148	137	137	133	687

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. This table includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

[a] Respondents saw this response option only if they indicated previously that their school had such staff.

TABLE A.15

Which Person or Group Is Most Likely to Make the Initial Decision About How to Respond to This Student's Behavior? SECONDARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Classroom/direct contact teacher	55.6	5.1	50.8	15.3	11.1	17.8	0.3	1.3
School administrator (for example, principal or assistant principal)	23.0	85.1	35.4	76.5	80.3	44.0	58.1	77.1
School counselor[a]	8.8	3.9	9.3	0.0	0.9	21.9	11.3	0.8
School nurse[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
School social worker[a]	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	3.0	0.0
School psychologist[a]	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0
SRO or school-based law enforcement officer[a]	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	6.3	4.5
Law enforcement (not school-based)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	1.8
Non-law enforcement security officer or guard[a]	0.2	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
School- or district-level multi-person BTAM team[a]	1.0	1.7	0.5	4.0	2.3	11.9	12.8	11.9
Outside BTAM team serving our school[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
MTSS, PBIS, or other behavioral support team[a]	9.7	0.5	3.7	2.4	3.2	1.2	0.9	0.3
Other (please specify)	1.1	1.9	0.4	1.3	1.6	0.0	2.5	1.8
N	734	139	128	103	134	126	107	734

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. This table includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

[a] Respondents saw this response option only if they indicated previously that their school had such staff.

TABLE A.16

Below Is a List Containing a Wide Variety of Options Schools Can Use to Respond to Concerning Student Behaviors, Depending on Their Seriousness. Most Incidents Would Involve Only a Subset of These Options. What Action(s) Would This Person or Group at Your School Likely Take or Recommend in Response to This Student's Behavior? ELEMENTARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Warning or verbal correction of behavior	86.4	48.0	33.2	54.0	37.8	40.2	55.0	23.1
Disciplinary measures (for example, in-school detention; removal of privileges)	67.7	78.4	73.5	59.7	23.9	78.5	71.3	69.8
Parent consultation or home visit	86.0	83.7	87.8	88.8	90.4	92.8	90.9	85.3
Warning to named targets or victims of threats and safety planning to protect targets/victims	5.9	20.4	19.1	44.0	24.8	36.8	46.1	61.7
Behavioral or movement controls (for example, changes to arrival time or passing times)	17.1	29.3	18.6	18.8	21.8	31.8	47.4	45.2

Table A.16—Continued

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Assess need for or start programming to help the student build relationships with trusted adults (for example, regular check-ins; adult mentoring)	43.0	50.0	27.6	59.1	64.6	63.1	63.3	51.8
Assess need for or start skill-building services (e.g., social skills- or leadership skills-building program)	42.4	51.7	23.6	46.2	47.6	57.4	53.4	40.6
Assess need for or start programming to help the student build peer relationships and engagement (for example, friend or peer mentor groups)	27.6	42.0	20.3	49.2	42.6	31.6	44.9	40.0
Assess need for or start individualized academic or vocational programming	11.3	9.4	2.1	15.4	7.9	14.9	4.5	8.8
Assess need for or start special education or disability supports	22.6	30.7	3.5	13.0	7.7	22.8	14.8	13.5
Assess need for or start mental health counseling or care	33.3	45.7	43.4	62.7	77.1	65.1	71.7	70.1
Assess need for or start substance use treatment	2.2	2.8	71.3	4.7	4.0	4.8	0.8	4.2
Assess need for or start family support and intervention programming for the student and their family	14.3	26.9	39.6	27.5	52.0	40.7	46.3	45.8
Temporary removal from school (suspension)	11.3	29.7	31.7	20.8	15.6	44.9	29.5	70.4
Law enforcement action (for example, arrest), civil or criminal legal proceedings	3.0	3.1	15.2	3.5	9.1	22.4	17.5	41.1
Permanent removal from school (expulsion, transfer to an alternative school)	1.6	2.2	1.0	2.5	0.0	6.8	5.0	15.0
N	351	335	131	148	136	137	133	686

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. This table includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

TABLE A.17

Below Is a List Containing a Wide Variety of Options Schools Can Use to Respond to Concerning Student Behaviors, Depending on Their Seriousness. Most Incidents Would Involve Only a Subset of These Options. What Action(s) Would This Person or Group at Your School Likely Take or Recommend in Response to This Student's Behavior? SECONDARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Warning or verbal correction of behavior	72.5	25.5	85.5	34.9	41.7	32.5	15.4	18.8
Disciplinary measures (for example, in-school detention; removal of privileges)	59.8	79.1	52.9	74.6	87.3	32.3	36.0	67.7
Parent consultation or home visit	83.4	92.1	67.1	80.7	87.1	89.4	88.1	87.5
Warning to named targets or victims of threats and safety planning to protect targets/victims	7.3	9.8	18.1	9.5	13.1	24.1	46.8	57.7
Behavioral or movement controls (for example, changes to arrival time or passing times)	11.2	34.2	18.1	11.6	26.8	28.6	34.9	56.3

Table A.17—Continued

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
Assess need for or start programming to help the student build relationships with trusted adults (for example, regular check-ins; adult mentoring)	30.3	47.3	24.4	16.5	48.4	61.1	58.3	44.0
Assess need for or start skill-building services (e.g., social skills- or leadership skills-building program)	25.8	25.8	18.7	12.2	36.1	44.2	33.4	31.0
Assess need for or start programming to help the student build peer relationships and engagement (for example, friend or peer mentor groups)	16.4	21.3	23.1	12.4	20.4	46.4	31.5	32.4
Assess need for or start individualized academic or vocational programming	37.2	9.9	2.2	1.8	8.3	11.5	12.0	8.2
Assess need for or start special education or disability supports	33.7	8.0	2.3	3.7	29.2	13.9	14.2	12.7
Assess need for or start mental health counseling or care	21.4	68.1	18.2	20.8	56.1	81.9	70.6	61.8
Assess need for or start substance use treatment	4.1	68.1	2.0	4.6	6.5	13.4	16.0	8.8
Assess need for or start family support and intervention programming for the student and their family	12.3	40.9	4.5	12.3	27.3	49.6	46.0	37.6
Temporary removal from school (suspension)	7.9	60.3	9.2	56.1	48.0	26.6	51.7	72.9
Law enforcement action (for example, arrest), civil or criminal legal proceedings	4.7	32.4	3.8	26.4	12.8	25.4	51.7	52.7
Permanent removal from school (expulsion, transfer to an alternative school)	3.0	12.2	3.3	11.1	8.2	12.0	23.9	18.6
N	734	139	128	103	134	126	105	733

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team.

TABLE A.18

Would the BTAM Team(s) Serving Your School Be Made Aware of This Student's Behavior? ELEMENTARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
No	72.8	45.4	44.8	22.2	15.0	8.6	13.4	4.7
Yes	27.2	54.6	55.2	77.8	85.0	91.4	86.6	95.3
N	350	326	126	142	130	114	119	589

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). This table includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Only respondents who said their school- or district-level multi-person BTAM team would not make the initial decision about how to respond to a student's behavior saw this question.

TABLE A.19

Would the BTAM Team(s) Serving Your School Be Made Aware of This Student's Behavior? SECONDARY

	Weighted Percentage							
	Scenario							
	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
No	74.2	37.3	72.2	24.7	31.3	6.3	6.1	5.1
Yes	25.8	62.7	27.8	75.3	68.7	93.7	93.9	94.9
N	727	138	127	101	131	110	92	646

NOTE: Principals were randomly assigned specific scenarios (see Appendix B). Table includes only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team. Only respondents who said their school- or district-level multi-person BTAM team would not make the initial decision about how to respond to a student's behavior saw this question.

Module 3: Inside BTAM

Respondents who indicated that their school had a school- or district-level BTAM team (or another school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a BTAM team) received this module. At the beginning of the module, respondents that indicated they had an official BTAM team received the following instructions, "You indicated that your [AUTOFILL] has a BTAM team. Please answer the following questions based on your knowledge of that team." The instructions autofilled with "school" if respondents said that they had a school level BTAM team or that they had both school- and district-level teams. The instructions autofilled with "district" if respondents said that they had a district-level BTAM team. The question stem autofilled with "school or district" if the respondent said that they did not know the level of the team. Respondents who indicated they had an unofficial BTAM team received the following instructions: "You indicated your school has a school-based team that makes decisions regarding student behavioral and other concerns. This team is not explicitly considered a behavioral threat assessment and management team. Please answer the following questions based on your knowledge of that team's practices (although the questions will refer to it as a BTAM team)."

TABLE A.20

Approximately How Many School Years Has This BTAM Team Been in Place?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
0 to 1 school year(s) (newly implemented)	12.3	12.2
2 to 4 school years	48.3	51.1
5 to 8 school years	19.4	19.2
9 or more school years	10.9	9.7
Don't know	9.0	7.7
N	1,646	1,408

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.21

Which Person(s) Are Regular Members of This BTAM Team?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
You (school leader)	84.5	84.0
District administrators	33.6	36.4
Other school administrators besides you (for example, assistant principal, other senior administrator)	66.7	68.7
School-based law enforcement (for example, school resource officer)	47.6	52.6
Non-school-based law enforcement (for example, police officer from local department who is not regularly in the school)	12.5	13.3
Psychologist, whether school-based or external	46.8	48.5
Counselor, whether school-based or external	82.4	84.2
Social worker, whether school-based or external	48.2	50.2
General instructional staff (for example, teacher)	47.5	45.2
Special education specialist	44.4	42.5
Other (please specify)	13.7	13.6
None of these personnel are members	0.4	0.2
N	1,646	1,408

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.22

What Role Does Law Enforcement Play on This BTAM Team?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Law enforcement provides a public safety perspective about school dynamics and student behavior to help assess and manage behavioral concerns	57.8	57.5
Law enforcement provides information from police and court records so the team can understand past student behavior	17.5	17.5
Law enforcement helps with decisions about when safety- and security-related actions are necessary (e.g., searching student belongings, implementing schoolwide lock down)	64.3	64.3
Law enforcement consults on the potential legal repercussions of student behavior	18.9	18.8
Law enforcement participates to initiate public safety responses when necessary (e.g., arrest or other criminal justice intervention)	32.4	33.2
N	914	854

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select up to two responses that best capture law enforcement's most important roles on the team. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and that this team includes school-based or non-school-based law enforcement saw this question.

TABLE A.23

How Effective Do You Believe This BTAM Team Is at Maintaining School Safety?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Very ineffective	4.9	4.9
Somewhat ineffective	5.3	4.9
Somewhat effective	38.8	37.3
Very effective	48.3	50.7
Don't know	2.7	2.2
N	1,644	1,406

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.24

What Program Does This Team Currently Use to Structure Its Approach to BTAM?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Salem-Kaiser	1.8	2.0
USSS NTAC (U.S. Secret Service/National Threat Assessment Center)	4.0	4.6
V/CSTAG (Virginia/Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines)	7.5	8.5
VA DCJS (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services)	1.2	1.4
VTRA (Violence Threat Risk Assessment)	3.2	3.6
We use a named program not included here (please specify):	10.2	10.6
We use a BTAM program developed locally, drawing on other models and resources to craft a process for our specific school or school district	27.4	30.1
We do not use a defined program as part of our BTAM process	24.0	17.6
Don't know	20.7	21.6
N	1,640	1,404

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.25

How Long Has Your School Used [AUTOFILL] Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
0 to 1 school year(s) (newly implemented)	13.0	12.8
2 to 4 school years	52.9	53.8
5 to 8 school years	21.4	21.5
9 to 12 school years	6.5	5.7
Don't know	6.2	6.2
N	919	867

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "Other" model, or (3) a locally developed model saw this question. The question stem was autofilled based on the respondent's answer to the question about what specific BTAM program they were using.

TABLE A.26

When Using [AUTOFILL] Program, Have You Had to Make Changes to the Program to Support Its Implementation in Your School or Community Context?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We have implemented the program as it was originally designed and specified by the developers	47.4	47.3
We have made changes to the program's form (e.g., related to materials, staffing, specification of protocols, etc.), while maintaining its core functions related to assessing and managing threats	33.0	32.7
We have made changes that directly modified the program's core functions related to assessing and managing threats	1.3	1.3
I don't know if we have made changes	18.3	18.7
N	468	445

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed or (2) an "Other" model saw this question. The question stem was auto-filled based on the respondent's answer to the question about what specific BTAM program they were using.

TABLE A.27

What Changes Have You Made to [AUTOFILL] Program to Support Its Implementation in Your School or Community Context?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We reduced the number of recommended personnel serving on the team due to resource or staff constraints	39.5	40.4
We reduced the number of recommended personnel serving on the team due to community concerns or context	6.5	5.3
We added personnel to our team beyond the recommended personnel	29.2	29.6

Table A.27—Continued

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We changed the program's recommended procedures for collecting information to assess threats	10.7	10.7
We adjusted the types of data used to assess threats because we were unable to access or use some types of data recommended by the program	16.5	16.0
We use additional data to assess threats and concerning student behavior beyond what the program recommends, in addition to using the data recommended by the program	25.1	25.8
We modified (or don't use) worksheets, checklists or other tools that come with the program	34.4	35.1
We created worksheets, checklists or other tools that didn't originally come with the program	25.2	23.3
We changed the way the program recommends assessing whether a student poses a threat to themselves or others	3.1	3.3
We don't use some of the intervention options recommended by the program because of access issues or resource constraints	17.4	17.4
We added intervention options beyond those recommended by the program to meet our local needs	21.1	20.8
Other changes (please specify):	3.5	3.2
N	162	153

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions), that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed or (2) an "Other" model saw this question, and that said their school has made changes to the model saw this question. The question stem was autofilled based on the respondent's answer to the question about what specific BTAM program they were using.

TABLE A.28

Were You Involved in the Initial Implementation of This Program in Your School or District?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No	49.5	49.0
Yes	50.5	51.0
N	918	866

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "Other" model, or (3) a locally developed model saw this question.

TABLE A.29

What Were the Main Drivers for the Implementation of Your BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
N/A; None of these were main drivers	2.7	2.0
We had a violent incident in our school or district and we implemented the program as part of our response	5.3	5.4
We were required to by state or local law	42.8	44.3
We were required to by school district policy	41.7	42.7
We had concerns about being held liable in cases of school violence	10.2	10.8
Behavioral assessment and management is a best practice for violence prevention	58.2	59.1
Our school community wanted us to have a BTAM program	5.2	5.2
Other organizations we depend on (e.g., our local law enforcement department) encouraged us to adopt a BTAM program	8.3	8.2
Other (please specify)	7.6	7.0
Don't know	2.8	3.0
N	475	452

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select up to three responses. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions); that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "Other" model, or (3) a locally developed model; and that said they were around for the initial implementation of this model saw this question.

TABLE A.30

Which of the Following Actions Do You Know Your School Took Before Implementing Its BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Our school or district administrators surveyed or met with school staff	32.2	31.1
Our school or district administrators surveyed or met with students, parents, and/or the larger school community	17.5	17.1
Our school or district administrators estimated funding and other resource levels necessary to implement the program and ensured they were available	18.5	17.5
Our school or district administrators consulted with our local law enforcement organization	41.0	42.5
Our school or district administrators inventoried what intervention programs we had available	30.9	31.3
Our school or district administrators identified and discussed participation in BTAM with relevant community and service provider organizations (e.g., mental health providers, social service agencies, non-governmental service providers)	33.8	34.3
I don't know whether any of these actions were taken	22.2	22.4

Table A.30—Continued

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
N/A; Our school or district administrators did not complete any of these actions	4.7	4.9
N	475	452

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions); that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "other" model, or (3) a locally developed model; and that said they were around for the initial implementation of this model saw this question.

Module 4: BTAM Implementation

TABLE A.31

How Long Did It Take from When Your School or District Initially Implemented Its BTAM Program to Believing Your Team Was "Working Well"?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
1 school year	36.8	37.5
2 school years	40.5	40.5
3 to 4 school years	11.0	10.5
5+ school years	1.2	0.9
Don't know	10.5	10.6
N	439	420

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions); that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "Other" model, or (3) a locally developed model; that they were around for the initial implementation of this model; and that their BTAM team is somewhat or very effective at maintaining school safety saw this question.

TABLE A.32

The Following Table Includes a Number of Positive Statements That Could Describe the Implementation of Behavioral Assessment and Management (BTAM) in a School. Indicate the Extent to Which You Agree or Disagree with Each Statement as a Descriptor of Your Experience Implementing BTAM in Your School.

	Weighted Percentage				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The financial costs of implementing BTAM did not create any issues.	1.6	9.7	14.6	44.2	29.9
It was clear BTAM was a better approach to managing student behavior concerns relative to our previous approaches.	0.3	2.6	20.9	56.3	19.9
It was easy for us to pick the BTAM program we wanted to use from the options available.	2.7	7.5	39.5	37.9	12.4

Table A.32—Continued

	Weighted Percentage				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The BTAM program we chose was easy to adapt to our local needs.	0.6	4.5	16.9	61.4	16.6
Our school community (e.g., parents, students) were supportive of our school's adoption of BTAM.	0.2	1.6	35.1	45.7	17.5
It was easy to coordinate with relevant outside partners while implementing BTAM (e.g., police, service providers).	1.1	7.2	16.5	53.7	21.5
Our school and local service providers had enough capacity to support our BTAM efforts (e.g., counselors, mental health treatment providers).	3.1	17.5	12.8	49.5	17.1
Our school staff was supportive of our school's adoption of BTAM.	0.0	1.4	14.0	63.1	21.5
BTAM was well-matched to our culture and relationships between school leaders and staff.	0.0	2.4	15.3	62.0	20.4
Our existing school records and other systems were easy to use in support of BTAM.	0.9	7.7	17.2	57.9	16.2
We had no issues sharing information among partners for BTAM purposes (e.g., FERPA or HIPAA did not hinder information sharing).	1.1	9.2	25.6	52.7	11.4
We had enough staff time to implement BTAM.	3.5	21.0	20.3	44.3	10.9
Our instructional and other school staff clearly understood the goals and reasons for implementing BTAM.	0.9	7.9	21.0	58.7	11.4
Training opportunities for BTAM team members were readily available.	2.0	13.5	18.6	49.3	16.6
It was easy to adjust school procedures to integrate BTAM into the way we dealt with student behavior and discipline issues previously.	0.9	5.6	17.0	62.5	13.9
We were able to use a staged process to implement BTAM so that it integrated smoothly into school systems broadly speaking.	1.7	10.3	25.8	53.4	8.8

NOTE: n = 450. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions); that their team was using (1) a named model that we listed, (2) an "Other" model, or (3) a locally developed model; and that said they were around for the initial implementation of this model saw this question. Table only includes data from respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team, not respondents who said they have an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. FERPA = Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; HIPAA = Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Module 5: BTAM Operations

TABLE A.33

Does Your School or District Have an Explicit Policy Document That Establishes and Defines Your BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No	29.5	24.1
Yes	47.8	52.7
Don't know	22.7	23.2
N	1,636	1,401

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.34

Has Your School or District Established Written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for How Your BTAM Team Functions on a Day-to-Day Basis?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No	35.6	31.0
Yes	44.3	49.3
Don't know	20.1	19.7
N	1,635	1,400

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.35

What Is the Scope of the Threatening or Concerning Behavior to Which Your School or District's BTAM Team Responds?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Students whose behavior is regularly disruptive to instruction	33.8	27.5
Students who are disrespectful or argumentative with teachers or other school staff	25.2	20.3
Students who may be at risk of self-harm or suicide	81.3	82.5
Students who are regularly involved in aggressive behavior toward peers (e.g., frequent verbal or limited physical conflicts without concerns about weapon use, bullying or fighting)	70.5	69.2

Table A.35—Continued

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Students with fixations on past school violence incidents, interest in violence or extremist movements (e.g., fixation on Columbine attacks, fixation on animal cruelty or abuse, viewing web sites with extremist or violent web content)	76.7	80.5
Students who have directed threats at or may be violent toward other individual students	89.2	92.6
Students who have made threats or may be violent toward school staff (e.g., threats against teachers)	88.4	91.9
Students who have made threats of or may be intending to commit mass violence against the school or school community	82.8	87.5
N	1,635	1,401

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.36

How Often Does Your BTAM Team Meet?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Once per week	9.7	9.0
Once every two weeks	9.2	8.1
Once per month	19.9	19.5
Every 2 to 3 months	6.1	6.2
Irregularly or on an as-needed basis depending on case load	55.2	57.2
N	1,635	1,401

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.37

When a Student Is Referred to Your BTAM Team for Concerning Behavior, How Often Does Your Team Use the Following Sources of Information to Assess the Level of Risk Posed by the Student?

	Weighted Percentage				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Every time
Interview with the student	0.6	2.0	7.8	16.1	73.4
Interview with witnesses (e.g., peers, staff who witnessed behavior)	1.1	1.6	9.6	23.3	64.5
Interview with potential target of a threat	1.9	3.1	16.1	25.8	53.1
Interview with parents or guardians	0.8	2.3	14.8	27.3	54.7
Interview with teacher or other school staff knowledgeable about the student	0.4	1.6	9.1	32.5	56.5

Table A.37—Continued

	Weighted Percentage				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Every time
Review student's publicly available social media or online footprint	8.1	18.7	34.1	23.9	15.3
Discipline records (including but not limited to history of prior threats)	0.4	1.7	10.5	27.5	59.8
Academic records	1.6	5.8	21.9	27.7	43.1
Special education records	0.8	1.8	14.9	24.1	58.4
Records from other schools a student attended previously inside your school district	2.2	6.0	26.2	27.1	38.4
Records from other schools a student attended previously outside your school district	3.1	10.8	30.5	26.6	29.1
Records from outside medical organizations (e.g., mental health service providers)	5.4	14.7	37.2	22.8	19.9
Records from outside governmental organizations (e.g., social services agencies; courts)	10.9	21.0	34.0	18.6	15.4
Law enforcement records	19.2	20.9	28.1	15.2	16.6
Other (please specify)	55.9	9.9	13.3	9.1	11.8

NOTE: *n* = 1,395. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Table only includes data from respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team, not respondents who said they have an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

TABLE A.38

Which of the Following Statements Best Describes How Your BTAM Team Operates When It Is Assessing the Seriousness of a Particular Student's Behavior or Potential Threat During a Team Meeting?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
All BTAM activities from meeting structure to assessment processes differ across individual cases.	23.5	20.8
BTAM meetings follow a common structure and process, though the data sought and deliberations vary significantly from case to case.	28.1	28.0
BTAM meetings follow a common structure and process, and we collect similar data for each case considered by the team.	20.4	20.3
BTAM meetings follow a common structure and process, we collect similar data for each case considered by the team, and we have standardized processes that guide the application of structured tools for conducting our assessment.	28.0	31.0
N	1,626	1,394

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

TABLE A.39

Would It Be Feasible for Your BTAM Team to Explain the Rationale Behind an Assessment Decision to a Parent, Guardian, or Other Concerned Individual (i.e., Why a Student Was Determined to Pose or Not Pose a Threat)?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No, because our BTAM files and deliberations are closed. We cannot share any information with parents, guardians, or other third-parties.	7.8	7.4
Potentially, but it would be difficult because of how much our process differs from case to case.	17.5	16.1
Potentially, but could be difficult because assessments are the result of verbal deliberations among our BTAM team members.	16.9	15.9
Yes, because our BTAM process captures detailed information on both the rationale and data behind an assessment that would provide a basis for explanation.	57.8	60.6
N	1,623	1,392

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

TABLE A.40

When Your BTAM Team Intervenes with a Student Who Is Assessed as Being at Some Risk of Causing Harm to Themselves or Others, How Commonly Are the Following Options Part of the Resulting Intervention or Safety Plan?

	Weighted Percentage				
	N/A; We Do Not Have This Option Available	We Never Use This (Though We Have This Option Available)	We Rarely Use This	We Sometimes Use This	We Often Use This
Behavioral corrections or discipline (for example, detention, removal of privileges)	1.7	2.3	7.3	42.2	46.5
Supports and safety interventions for the targets or victims of threats (for example, class changes, other protective measures)	0.7	0.6	4.6	39.3	54.9
Behavioral or movement controls in school (for example, changes to arrival or passing times)	2.2	1.9	13.9	51.4	30.7
Programming to build relationships with trusted adults (for example, regular check-ins, adult mentoring)	0.5	0.8	3.9	41.8	52.9
Skill-building services or programs (for example, social skills or life-skills programming, leadership development)	2.5	1.6	12.8	49.4	33.7
Programming to build peer relationships and engagement (for example, peer mentor groups)	3.2	2.9	18.1	49.1	26.7
Academic or vocational programming	15.2	6.2	30.0	39.6	8.9
Special education or disability supports	1.2	2.9	16.5	62.9	16.6

Table A.40—Continued

	Weighted Percentage				
	N/A; We Do Not Have This Option Available	We Never Use This (Though We Have This Option Available)	We Rarely Use This	We Sometimes Use This	We Often Use This
Mental health counseling or care	1.9	1.0	3.5	46.5	47.1
Substance use treatment	21.3	18.0	29.8	25.4	5.5
Family support and intervention programming	8.2	4.2	21.5	49.5	16.7
Temporary removal from school (suspension)	1.8	3.3	20.2	55.0	19.6
Law enforcement action (for example, arrest) or criminal justice action	3.7	16.6	36.8	36.0	6.8
Permanent removal from school (expulsion or relocation)	9.5	29.7	38.4	19.2	3.2

NOTE: *n* = 1,384. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Table only includes data from respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team, not respondents who said they have an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

TABLE A.41

Of the Following Types of Supportive Services That Can Be Part of BTAM Interventions for Students Identified as Being at Risk of Causing Harm, Which of These Are Provided Free of Charge to Students' Families Either Inside School or by Placement in an Outside Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Skill-building services or programs (e.g., social skills or life-skills programming, leadership development)	70.2	70.0
Mental health counseling or care	74.2	75.1
Substance use treatment	34.9	36.6
Family support and intervention programming	57.1	57.9
N/A; When these services are recommended by the BTAM team, the student's family must pay the costs or be reimbursed through their own insurance coverage	13.2	13.1
N	1,601	1,374

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Respondents only saw a response option if they indicated previously that this response option was used rarely, sometimes, or often.

TABLE A.42

Which of the Following Statements Best Describes the Process Your BTAM Team Uses to Build an Intervention or Safety Plan for a Student?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Our BTAM team has a standard set of actions that it takes for every student assessed as a potential school safety concern	15.7	15.9
Our BTAM team members recommend elements to add to each intervention plan based on their professional expertise and services from their discipline (e.g., a counselor identifies the types of counseling that should be included in the plan)	34.4	33.1
Our BTAM team draws on an inventory of resources available across the school and community to collaboratively choose interventions for an intervention or safety plan	27.7	27.9
Our BTAM team draws on an inventory of resources and decision support tools that help guide choices among intervention options and match interventions to individual student needs	22.1	23.1
N	1,609	1,380

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.43

To What Extent Does Your School or District's BTAM Team Typically Involve Parents/Guardians or the Student at Risk of Violent Behavior in the Intervention/Safety Planning Process?

	Weighted Percentage		
	Not Involved in Planning Decisions	Directly Participates in Planning Decisions	Consulted to Provide Information That Informs the Team's Decisions
Parents/guardians of the student being assessed	9.3	18.9	71.8
Student being assessed	16.0	17.7	66.2

NOTE: *n* = 1,379. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Table only includes data from respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team, not respondents who said they have an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions.

TABLE A.44

Which of the Following Statements Best Describes What Your BTAM Team Does After a Student's Behavioral Intervention or Safety Plan Has Been Implemented?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We do not monitor the progress of intervention/safety plans after they are implemented.	1.8	2.0
We rely on teachers, counselors, and others to monitor progress and make adjustments to interventions without directly involving the BTAM team.	25.1	24.6
We actively manage and monitor the progress of some students' progress and make adjustments as needed.	22.7	22.7
We actively manage and monitor the progress of all students' progress and make adjustments as needed.	48.1	48.9
I don't know if we monitor intervention progress.	2.3	1.8
N	1,608	1,379

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.45

How Does Your School or District BTAM Team Monitor Progress Against a Student Intervention/Safety Plan?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We receive periodic reports on progress from teachers who have direct contact with the student	66.5	65.0
We receive periodic reports from staff designated to speak with the student regularly as part of the plan (e.g., check in, check out programs)	65.3	64.8
We receive periodic reports from other school staff (e.g., counselors)	60.6	58.7
We receive periodic reports on treatment delivery and student progress from outside providers	32.3	32.3
We revisit cases during our regular BTAM team meetings when specific events occur (e.g., when a student returns to school after an absence)	40.4	39.4
We revisit cases during our regular BTAM team meetings at regular time intervals	38.1	37.7
We manually analyze data and track progress (e.g., use behavioral graphs to visualize improvements in student behavior)	30.4	30.6
We have a specific information/case management system that tracks data on the cases we are monitoring	14.5	15.4
Other (please specify):	1.5	1.5
N	1,132	984

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and one that monitors some or all students' progress after a behavioral intervention or safety plan has been implemented saw this question.

TABLE A.46

Do the Intervention or Safety Plans That Your BTAM Team Develops Include Measurable Goals or Thresholds for Student Behavior and Progress That Inform Monitoring and Decisions About Changes to the Intervention Plan?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No	38.5	39.0
Yes	61.5	61.0
N	1,132	984

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and one that monitors some or all students' progress after a behavioral intervention or safety plan has been implemented saw this question.

TABLE A.47

When Your BTAM Team Assesses Students, How Frequently Are Students Arrested or Prosecuted for Their Threatening or Concerning Behavior?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Never	42.4	39.8
Rarely	38.6	40.0
Sometimes	14.7	15.6
Frequently	3.7	3.9
Every time	0.7	0.8
N	1,607	1,378

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.48

When Your BTAM Team Assesses Students, How Frequently Are Students Expelled, Placed in a Different School, or Suspended for One Month or More for Their Threatening or Concerning Behavior?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Never	31.0	29.7
Rarely	46.2	46.0
Sometimes	19.3	20.6
Frequently	2.7	2.8
Every time	0.8	0.9
N	1,608	1,379

NOTE: Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.49

What Impact Do You Think Your BTAM Program Has Had on the Following Outcomes at Your School?

	Weighted Percentage				
	Significantly Decreased	Decreased	No Impact	Increased	Significantly Increased
Violence rates	10.5	49.1	38.6	1.4	0.4
Rates of suicidality or self-harm	11.5	45.8	40.4	2.0	0.3
Suspension and expulsion rates overall	12.5	41.0	39.8	6.4	0.3
Racial disparities in suspension and expulsion rates	8.5	31.6	58.3	1.5	0.0
Gender disparities in suspension and expulsion rates	7.9	27.1	63.5	1.5	0.0
Special and general education disparities in suspension and expulsion rates	7.5	35.8	53.9	2.7	0.0
Student feelings of safety at school	2.6	7.5	24.2	58.4	7.3
Staff (administrators, teachers, etc.) feelings of safety school	2.8	7.3	20.2	62.0	7.8

NOTE: n = 1,377. Rows may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question. Table only includes data from respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team, not respondents who said they have an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions.

TABLE A.50

What Impact Do You Think Your School or District's BTAM Program Has Had on School Climate at Your School?

	Weighted percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Significantly worsened school climate	0.2	0.1
Worsened school climate	0.3	0.3
Has had no impact on school climate	23.2	23.9
Improved school climate	59.7	59.3
Significantly improved school climate	11.2	10.9
Don't know	5.4	5.4
N	1,604	1,377

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

Module 6: BTAM Sustainability

TABLE A.51

Which of the Following Statement(s) Accurately Describe How Your BTAM Program Has Changed over the Last Few School Years?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
N/A; The process has been generally stable, using established approaches for assessing cases and planning interventions	37.8	38.6
The process has changed because we needed to make adjustments to better fit our school's needs	25.7	24.2
The process has changed because we changed the staff on the team and made changes to how the team functions	19.5	18.4
The process has changed in response to resource or other constraints that limited our capacity	12.6	12.1
The process has changed because of concerns in the community about how BTAM affects students	3.0	3.1
The process has changed because we aimed to make it more effective in protecting our school and students	29.8	30.4
The process changed because of changes to state law or policy about BTAM	13.1	14.3
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.52

How Supportive Is Your School Community of BTAM as a School Safety Approach?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
Not supportive	0.4	0.4
Somewhat not supportive	1.6	1.3
Neutral	28.2	27.8
Somewhat supportive	28.0	27.2
Supportive	41.8	43.4
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.53

Does Your School or District Budget Include Dedicated Funding to Support Your BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No, our BTAM program is implemented without dedicated staff or additional funds for programs beyond what our school already had available.	58.2	56.6
No, we fund our activities in other ways (please describe):	2.0	1.9
Yes, our program has dedicated funding in the school or district budget	21.8	22.8
Don't know	17.9	18.7
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.54

How Often Do the Members of Your BTAM Team Receive Training and/or Professional Development Related to BTAM?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
N/A; Our team members do not receive BTAM-specific training	16.1	12.6
Once at the beginning of their tenure on the team	14.8	16.3
Once per school year	34.2	35.7
At least twice per school year	11.6	12.2
On an as-needed basis	23.3	23.3
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.55

Would a Leadership Change at Your School (e.g., Were You to Vacate Your Position) Result in Changes to Your School's Use of or Approach to BTAM?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
No, very unlikely	25.9	28.2
No, unlikely	32.5	34.4
Unsure; maybe or maybe not	28.9	26.1
Yes, likely	9.0	8.1
Yes, very likely	3.7	3.1
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Columns may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.56

Is Your School Experiencing or Has It Experienced Any of the Following Challenges When It Comes to Operating Its BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
N/A; we have not experienced any challenges when it comes to BTAM operations	43.6	44.1
Concerns about BTAM effectiveness in reducing school violence	9.2	9.0
Difficulty funding continued BTAM operation	7.0	6.6
Staff or district leaders concerned that BTAM is too complex	9.2	9.5
Difficulties adapting BTAM to local needs	4.7	4.6
Reduction in community support for the BTAM program	2.2	2.2
Reduction in school staff support for the BTAM program	6.9	6.6
Problems maintaining connections to outside service providers for intervention	16.6	16.2
Service provider capacity limits for how many students each can serve	21.2	21.0
Parents unable to support individual intervention efforts (e.g., due to costs)	14.7	14.9
Parents unwilling to implement or participate in recommended interventions	30.2	29.8
Staffing constraints make BTAM difficult to maintain	17.9	16.4
Can't get needed training for BTAM team members	8.3	7.3
Problems getting data from outside organizations (e.g., law enforcement, medical providers)	8.4	8.4
Other (please specify):	2.9	2.9
N	1,603	1,376

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.57

Which of the Following Processes Are Part of How Your BTAM Program Operates?

	Weighted Percentage	
	Official BTAM Teams and Other School-Based Teams	Official BTAM Teams Only
We conduct after-action reviews of individual cases	46.4	48.1
We validate that specific intervention options are being delivered as designed, by appropriately trained staff, and for the recommended amount of time.	36.4	36.2
We collect and analyze data about how specific intervention options are influencing student-level outcomes	39.7	39.9
We periodically assess and revise the menu of interventions available to the BTAM team	29.2	29.9
We collect and analyze data on student outcomes across all students served by the program to monitor the overall effectiveness of our BTAM efforts	27.3	28.0
We collect and analyze data on student outcomes for different student populations (e.g., special education students, neurodiverse students, racial/ethnic minority students, gender and sexual minority students, socioeconomically disadvantaged students) to assess the fairness of our BTAM efforts	16.3	16.7
We collect feedback from students and/or parents/guardians of students once their BTAM intervention is complete	18.5	18.7
We collect feedback from students, parents/guardians, and/or staff who were the targets or victims of threatening behavior	18.6	19.2
We collect feedback from school staff who have been directly involved in implementing BTAM interventions	32.2	31.8
We carry out training and outreach for the school staff and students to maintain knowledge of BTAM and how to refer individuals of concern	21.9	22.8
None of these processes are part of how our BTAM program operates	14.5	13.5
N	1,602	1,376

NOTE: Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school has a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

Module 7: Outside BTAM Teams

TABLE A.58

How Does Your School/School District's Engagement with the Outside BTAM Team Begin?

	Weighted Percentage
The outside BTAM team we work with only becomes involved in a case when we seek out their assistance	54.8
We work with our outside BTAM team when we seek out their help AND when they approach us with information referred to them	32.9
The only times we work with our outside BTAM team is when they approach us about a threat or tip reported to them	8.2
Don't know	4.1

NOTE: *n* = 122. Only respondents who said their school is served by a BTAM team external to the school or district and that they were somewhat or extremely familiar with the operation and processes of this outside team saw this question.

TABLE A.59

When a BTAM Team Outside Your School or School District Is Involved in a Case, How Often Is Law Enforcement Intervention Part of the Response? (Law Enforcement Interventions Can Include Arrest, Police- or Court-Managed Diversion in Lieu of Arrest, or Prosecution)

	Weighted Percentage
Very rarely	23.6
Rarely	23.2
Sometimes	31.9
Frequently	17.9
Very frequently	3.4

NOTE: *n* = 122. Only respondents who said their school is served by a BTAM team external to the school or district and that they were somewhat or extremely familiar with the operation and processes of this outside team saw this question.

TABLE A.60

Which of the Following Statements Do You Agree with Based on Your Experience Working with an Outside BTAM Team?

	Weighted Percentage
Outside BTAM teams have access to more or different information than our school or district does, including ready access to law enforcement data and other sources	38.4
Outside teams have access to a broader variety of service providers or providers with greater capacity to deliver intervention programming than we do at the school- or district-level	54.2
Outside teams don't know as much about school environments and/or youth populations, which can be problematic when it comes to assessing the level of threat posed by student behavior	25.2
Outside teams don't know as much about the community context of my school, which can be problematic in responding to student behavior in a practical way	19.9

NOTE: *n* = 122. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school is served by a BTAM team external to the school or district and that they were somewhat or extremely familiar with the operation and processes of this outside team saw this question.

Module 8: No BTAM

TABLE A.61

Which of the Following Best Describes Your School or District's Situation with Respect to a BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage
We had a BTAM team previously, but it was discontinued.	0.0
We have considered starting a BTAM team but have not done so	12.4
We have not considered starting a BTAM team	66.0
Don't know	21.5

NOTE: *n* = 47. Column does not sum to 100 percent because of rounding. Only respondents who said their school does not have a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

TABLE A.62

Select the Reasons That You Believe Were Important in Your School or District's Decision to Discontinue Your BTAM Program.

	Weighted Percentage
None of these reasons were important	X
Concerns about BTAM effectiveness in reducing school violence	X
Funding constraints	X
Staff or district leader concerns about BTAM being too complex	X
Difficulties adapting BTAM to our local needs	X
Our local community did not support our use of BTAM	X
Problems maintaining connections to outside service providers for intervention	X
Service provider capacity limits for how many students they could serve	X
Parents unable to support individual intervention efforts (e.g., due to costs)	X
Parents unwilling to implement or participate in recommended interventions	X
Staffing constraints making BTAM difficult to maintain	X
Reduction in school staff support for the program	X
Couldn't get needed training for BTAM team members	X
Problems getting data from outside organizations (e.g., law enforcement, medical providers)	X
Other (please specify):	X
I don't know why we discontinued the program	X

NOTE: *n* = 0. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school did have a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and that this was discontinued would have seen this question, but none did. X = Response suppressed because of the small sample size.

TABLE A.63

Select the Reasons That You Believe Inform Your School or District's Decision to Not Implement a BTAM Program.

	Weighted Percentage
I don't know why we haven't implemented a BTAM program	X
Our school safety concerns don't justify implementing BTAM	X
Funding constraints	X
Staffing constraints	X
BTAM is not mandated in our state	X
BTAM would not be accepted by our local community	X
BTAM would not work well in our school culture	X
Our school staff would not support BTAM	X
Other (please specify):	X

NOTE: *n* = 6. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school does not have a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) but that their school has considered starting one but has not yet done so saw this question. X = Response suppressed because of the small sample size.

TABLE A.64

Why Do You Think That Your School or District Hasn't Pursued a BTAM Program?

	Weighted Percentage
I don't know why we haven't pursued implementing a BTAM program	57.8
Our school safety concerns don't justify implementing BTAM	5.9
Funding constraints	20.8
Staffing constraints	30.9
BTAM is not mandated in our state	16.9
BTAM would not be accepted by our local community	1.8
BTAM would not work well in our school culture	0.0
Our school staff would not support BTAM	0.0
Other (please specify)	5.0

NOTE: *n* = 32. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school does not have a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) and has not considered starting one saw this question.

TABLE A.65

Is There Anything You Think Would Prompt Your School or District to Implement a BTAM Team in the Future?

	Weighted Percentage
If we had a violent incident in our school or district and BTAM implementation became part of our response	52.1
If state or local law changed and required us to implement	60.1
If school district policy changed and required our school to implement	58.5
If concerns about liability for school violence were to increase	36.3
If our community wanted us to adopt a BTAM program	40.3
If other organizations we depend on (e.g., our local law enforcement department) encouraged us to adopt a BTAM program	34.1
Other (please specify)	3.7
I do not think any factors would prompt my school or district to implement a BTAM team	12.9

NOTE: *n* = 47. Respondents were instructed to select all that apply. Only respondents who said their school does not have a school- or district-level BTAM team (or an alternative team that performs BTAM-like functions) saw this question.

APPENDIX B

Survey Methods and How We Conducted This Analysis

In this appendix, we describe our methods for administering a survey to a nationally representative sample of K–12 public school principals via RAND's American School Leader Panel (ASLP) and for analyzing the results of that survey. As our methodology for collecting and analyzing survey data remains relatively consistent across ASLP surveys, the description of our methods below is updated from a previous publication analyzing results from another ASLP survey focused on school safety (Jackson et al., 2023).

About the ASLP

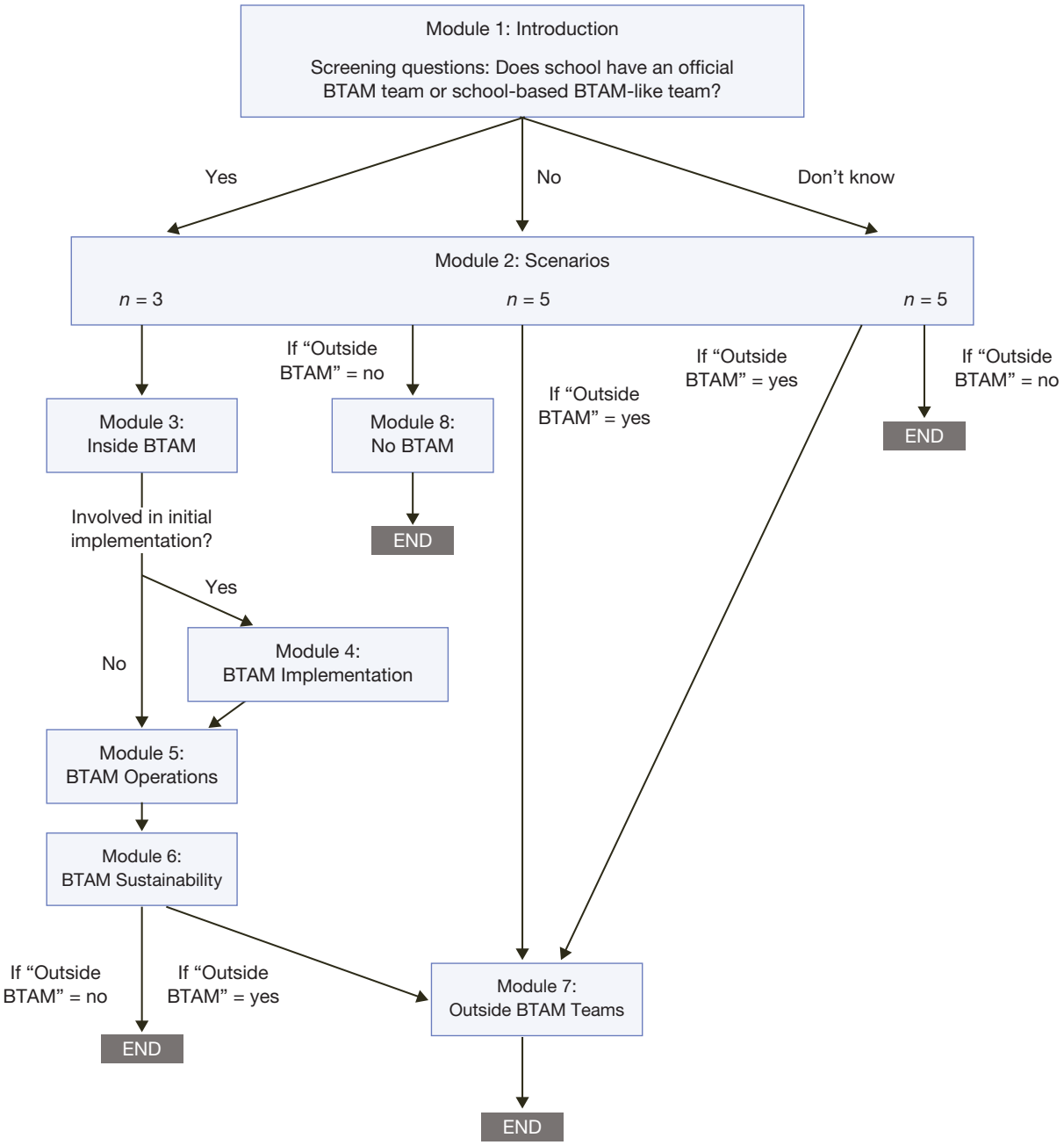
The ASLP is a panel of K–12 public school principals. It was designed to produce national estimates from the perspective of public school principals, as well as subgroup estimates by respondent and school characteristics. Principals are recruited into the ASLP using probability-based sampling methods. The sampling frame for the ASLP is a list of U.S. public school principals purchased from Market Data Retrieval (MDR), a market-research firm specializing in education. The ASLP currently includes about 8,000 principals. Principals who have joined the panel have agreed to participate in surveys several times per year and receive incentives for completing surveys. After being recruited into the ASLP, panelists are then invited to participate in specific ASLP surveys using probability-based sampling methods.

Survey Questionnaire

Survey items were designed in-house by RAND researchers and shaped by prior work on school safety and security. Although the survey sponsor provided feedback on survey items, RAND researchers maintained editorial control and were responsible for institutional review board review and approval of the final survey.

The survey was intentionally designed to gather information from both principals in schools with and without BTAM teams. More specifically, the survey was designed to allow respondents to progress through different pathways depending on their specific school context, as shown in Figure B.1. Respondents were sorted onto one of the pathways depending on their responses to some initial screener items. The main (longer) pathway was designed to collect detailed information from respondents in schools with BTAM teams. It was anticipated that this pathway would take respondents 20 minutes to complete. Respondents in schools that did not have BTAM teams (or had only an external team) progressed through a shorter survey, designed to take at the most 15 minutes to complete. These participants received more scenarios about discipline incidents at their schools.

FIGURE B.1
Modules Contained Within the Survey Instrument



Scenario Module

In the second module of the survey, respondents received scenarios that described a behavioral incident that might occur at school. Respondents were asked to read the scenario and then were asked the following questions about how their school would respond to such an incident:

1. Which person or group is most likely to make the initial decision about how to respond to this student's behavior?
2. Below is a list containing a wide variety of options schools can use to respond to concerning student behaviors, depending on their seriousness. Most incidents would involve only a subset of these options. What action(s) would this person or group at your school likely take or recommend in response to this student's behavior?
3. Would the BTAM team(s) serving your school be made aware of this student's behavior?

The follow-up questions were tailored depending on the school's situation. For example, schools that reported not having a BTAM team did not receive the third question asking whether their BTAM team would be made aware of the incident. The personnel (e.g., nurses, social workers, school-based law enforcement) that respondents saw who might respond to an incident reflected only those personnel that respondents said they had at their school.

Table B.1 lists the 16 scenarios used in the survey. All scenarios were randomly assigned. As shown in Figure B.1, the respondents on the BTAM-intensive survey pathway received three scenarios, while those on the shorter survey pathway received five scenarios. The scenarios were designed to include a mix of things, including severity of the incident (low, medium, or high) and student populations affected (e.g., special education student, general education student).

Low-severity scenarios described incidents in which BTAM teams likely should not be involved (e.g., low-level discipline incidents, such as classroom misbehavior). High-severity scenarios described incidents in which BTAM teams definitely should be involved, such as students making direct threats to themselves or others. Medium-severity scenarios were designed to describe borderline cases, in which schools might have more discretion over whether BTAM teams can or should be involved. All respondents received one low-severity scenario and one high-severity scenario. Most respondents then received one medium-severity scenario, although some respondents received three. Respondents saw their scenarios (and the associated follow-up questions) in a random order.

The scenarios were scaled to the grade level of students in the schools that principals reported serving. Principals were first categorized into school grade levels based on their reports of the grade levels of students their schools served in that school year. Principals were categorized as primarily serving middle grades if their school contained grades 7 or 8. Principals were categorized as serving primarily elementary grades if their school contained any grades from kindergarten through 6. Principals were categorized as serving primarily high school grades if their school contained any grades from 9 through 12. If principals were in a school that served both elementary and high school grades, they were randomly assigned to be elementary or high. Principals in schools serving mostly elementary grades were assigned the elementary scenarios, while principals in schools serving mostly middle or high school grades were assigned the secondary scenarios. This was to ensure that respondents received scenarios that felt more plausible for the type of incidents their schools might actually encounter in their jobs.

TABLE B.1

Description of Scenarios

Scene	Severity	Grade Level	Scenario Text
A	Low	Elementary	A student is repeatedly disruptive in class, wandering the classroom, interrupting the lesson by talking to other students, and sometimes shouting loudly to get attention. The student does not respond to multiple teacher requests to stop their behavior.
B	Low	Elementary	A student regularly engages in disruptive behavior during class, but their teachers do not consider their behavior threatening. Last school year, the family declined staff suggestions that the student might benefit from supports for neurodiverse learners. This school year, the student's behavior has escalated, and the student is involved in a physical altercation with another student that does not result in injuries.
C	Medium	Elementary	A student gets into a pushing altercation with another student on the bus. After the altercation is broken up by the bus driver, the student says they were responding to having been tripped while they were walking down the aisle. During the discussion with the student, the bus driver believes they smell alcohol on the student's breath. The parents of the other student involved in the altercation call the school the next day concerned for their child's safety on the bus.
D	Medium	Elementary	A student has an intense verbal confrontation with another student at school, shouting, "I am going to kill you for that." The student has no history of fighting or disruptive behavior but has had academic problems. A teacher who spoke with the student does not believe the threat was serious but does note that the student started crying during their conversation and would not share why they were so upset.
E	Medium	Elementary	In a drawing assignment that asked students to visualize different ways to solve problems, a student draws a graphic picture of someone shooting at a group of people, including details like bleeding and other physical injuries. The teacher mentions previous unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's family about their academic progress, and that the student had recently appeared withdrawn and sad in class.
F	Medium	Elementary	A student has a history of emotional outbursts and non-compliance with directions, including behaviors involving misuse of and damage to school property (e.g., pushing books off shelves, throwing objects). After a teacher attempts to redirect the behavior and takes their materials away, the student shouts, "You will be sorry tomorrow you did that." The school established there were firearms in the home when responding to past behavioral incidents involving same student.
G	Medium	Elementary	A peer reports that a fellow student has been repeatedly writing them disturbing notes. The student continues to send the notes after having been asked to stop and does not seem concerned about the effects they have been having on the other student. The notes have become more concerning over time, including descriptions of inappropriate contact, but do not include any explicit threats. The student is known to come from an unstable home environment, and the school became aware last year that the student was making repeated comments to their peers about a recent school shooting.
H	High	Elementary	A student has a history of getting into fights with other students at school and being generally disruptive in the classroom. Earlier this year, the student complained about being singled out and bullied by many other members of the class. The student was later caught bringing a knife to school, explaining it was "for protection," and an investigation determined that there were firearms in the family home. After a fight on the playground with a classmate, the student yells that "he'd be sorry" and warned another classmate that "they shouldn't come to school tomorrow."

Table B.1—Continued

Scene	Severity	Grade Level	Scenario Text
I	Low	Secondary	A student is repeatedly disruptive in their biology class, talking with other students or playing on their phone. Though in a course normally taken by students one grade below theirs, the student still appears to be struggling with the material. The teacher has made attempts to correct or redirect the behavior but has been unsuccessful and reached a point where frustration is affecting the entire class.
J	Medium	Secondary	A student regularly misses classes and is repeatedly late to class. The student talks back to teachers in an aggressive tone when they are confronted about their tardiness and absences. After hearing breaking glass in a school bathroom, a hall monitor checks in to find a broken beer bottle on the bathroom floor; the student had just been seen exiting the bathroom.
K	Medium	Secondary	During P.E., two students begin pushing each other during a soccer activity. When the P.E. teacher approaches and tells them to stop, both back off and apologize to varying degrees. The teacher notices and is concerned that one of the students still appears angry and agitated after the fight.
L	Medium	Secondary	A teacher observes a student in the hallway between classes showing off a pocketknife to a group of other students. When questioned, the student replies they only wanted to show their new knife to their friends. No other students present at the time report that the student made threats or engaged in other concerning behavior. The student voluntary relinquishes the knife to the teacher when asked.
M	Medium	Secondary	A student regularly distracts peers with side conversations during class and rarely completes assignments despite having a 504 plan for additional academic support. After sustained disruptive behavior, the teacher moves the student to another seat in the classroom, which causes the student to complain they were treated unfairly. The teacher is asked to come to the office to discuss the situation with the student and school staff, at which point the student begins yelling profanities at the teacher. Last year, the student needed to be restrained after becoming violent with a teacher during a school field trip.
N	Medium	Secondary	A student notices that another student in class is especially interested in the details of the Columbine High School shooting and the personal history of the students involved. The student repeatedly brings up the attackers by name during discussions with peers and has been searching for information about the incident on their school laptop. The teacher has also noticed that the student has become increasingly withdrawn in class.
O	Medium	Secondary	A classmate reports that another student at school is connected to a social media account that has posted threats targeting the school. A review of the account finds posts with pictures of weapons, discussions of grievances justifying violence, and indicators the author may be suicidal. The posts do not include specific details of planned violence but do carry an increasingly urgent and desperate tone. The student has also become increasingly isolated at school, and their grades have dropped. No information other than the classmate's word connects the student to the account.
P	High	Secondary	A fight breaks out in the hallway during passing time, and student witnesses reported hearing one of the aggressors shout, "see you tomorrow for another round," and the bullied student replying, "Fine. This ends tomorrow." The incident involves a student who has a history of being bullied and was caught brandishing a knife (which they said they needed "to try to get all of them to stop") last school year. An investigation determined that there were unsecured firearms in the family home.

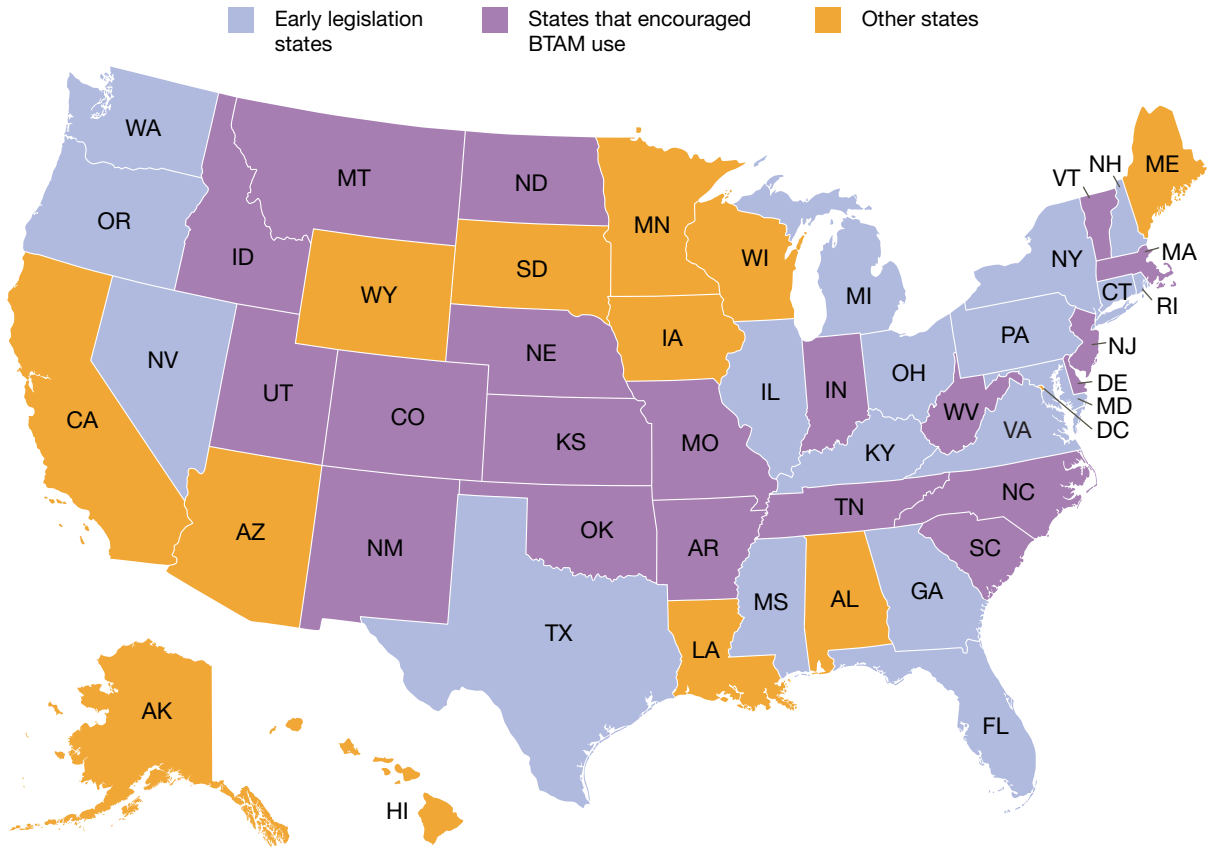
Survey Administration

Our principal survey was administered online in English between February 5, 2025, and February 24, 2025. Invited principals received multiple reminder emails to participate. Participants received an incentive upon completion of the survey, which was scaled to correspond to the length of the survey ($1 per minute). That is, those who received the longer survey received a $20 incentive, while those who received the shorter version received $15. To minimize the likelihood that respondents would change their survey answers to receive the higher incentive, respondents were not told which pathway they were on or which survey items triggered each pathway.

Survey Sampling

Before going into the field, researchers identified two main goals for analysis. The first goal was to produce estimates that generalize to the national population of U.S. public school principals and the schools in which they serve. The second goal was to facilitate comparisons in how schools operationalized their BTAM programs across three state policy contexts: (1) states that had early legislation (as of 2019), (2) states that encouraged BTAM use, and (3) other states. See Figure B.2 for a map of the U.S. policy context related to BTAM in 2019.

FIGURE B.2
BTAM State Policy Context in 2019



SOURCE: Features data compiled in 2019 by Child Trends and NASBE (2021).

Our sample was designed to support these two main goals while considering several other factors. The first consideration was researchers needed to ensure sufficient sample to unpack differences in schools' BTAM programs with some uncertainty about how many schools nationally had BTAM programs as of January 2025. Using data collected from the Department of Education's School Pulse Panel in April 2024, we estimated that about eight in ten sampled schools would have a BTAM team (NCES, 2025). A second consideration was ensuring sufficient sample size to estimate means and proportions across the three state policy contexts of interest without substantially increasing the survey design effect. A final consideration was the availability of panelists across state policy contexts within the ASLP to be sampled. There were about 6,000 active panelists in the ASLP at the time of sampling.

The final sample was chosen to target 1,650 completed surveys distributed across the three state policy contexts. The initial goal was to sample 50 percent from the early legislation states (as it was anticipated that BTAM programs would be most common in these states), 25 percent from each of the other states, and 25 percent from the encouraged BTAM use only states. As shown in Table B.2, assuming a 30 percent response rate (which is in line with historical ASLP surveys), this would require sampling 1,375 principals in both the other states and encouraged BTAM use only states and 2,750 principals in early legislation states. There were not enough panelists in the other states in the ASLP at the time of sampling to meet the desired sample. Therefore, we sampled some additional principals from the encouraged BTAM use only states to maintain the 50 percent/50 percent distribution with principals from early legislation states.

RAND researchers used probability-based sampling to invite 5,500 ASLP members to complete the survey using the ASLP as the sampling frame. Of the 5,500 members sampled, 1,665 principals fully completed the survey, and 181 principals partially completed the survey. Meanwhile, 38 sampled principals were determined ineligible for the survey. Excluding these 38 principals and the cases in which respondents did not complete a significant portion of the survey, a total of 1,746 cases received a weight. This corresponds to a 32.0 percent completion rate using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Response Rate 6 definition (American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2023).

We anticipated that about 80 percent of the 1,650 completes would receive the full survey and be asked detailed questions about their BTAM program (n = 1,320) and 20 percent would receive the shorter survey (n = 330). However, we underestimated the number of principals who would indicate that their school had another "school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a behavioral assessment and management (BTAM) team" and receive the longer survey pathway. About 250 schools told us that they have a school-based team that makes decisions regarding serious student behavioral concerns that is not referred to as a BTAM team. This means that virtually all schools received the longer survey, and only about 50 schools received the shorter pathway intended to accommodate schools that were not doing BTAM.

TABLE B.2
Survey Sample

	Sample				Completes	
	Desired Completes	Desired Sample	# of Panelists	Final Sample	Final	Completion Rate
Other states	412	1,375	1,307	1,307	423	32.4
Encouraged BTAM use only	412	1,375	1,794	1,443	481	33.3
Early legislation states	826	2,750	3,219	2,750	842	30.6
All	1,650	5,500	6,320	5,500	1,746	31.7

Survey Weighting

Principals' survey responses have been weighted to be representative of the national population of public school principals at the time the survey was administered. To provide a weighted sample similar to the population of K–12 public school principals in the United States, we created sampling weights. The weighting process accounts for the probability of selection into the survey from the panel and the likelihood an invited principal completes the survey (the response weight), and these likelihoods are combined and calibrated to reproduce the population distribution of K–12 educators. More specifically, the final analysis weights used in our analyses are the product of the following three interim weights:

1. calibrated weight of the sampling frame (a calibration weight that assigns a weight for each panelist based on individual- and school-level characteristics so that the sum of the weights along the calibration factors closely match the national characteristics of the national population of public school principals based on the NCES's National Teacher and Principal Survey)
2. sample selection weight (the inverse of the probability of selection into the survey sample using the panel as the frame)
3. survey response weight (the inverse of modeled probability of a principal completing the survey. The response adjustment is important to eliminate observed sources of response bias).

The products of these weights were subsequently recalibrated and trimmed if necessary.
As shown in Table B.3, both before and after weighting, survey respondents look similar to the population of U.S. public school principals on a variety of person-level and school-level characteristics.

Survey Analyses

We report samplewide and subgroup-specific means and proportions of variables of interest, weighted using the survey weights we describe in the previous section. Because principals' perceptions and experiences can vary depending on their school context, we examined differences in educators' responses by school characteristics (in addition to their state policy context). More specifically, we examined differences by school grade level, school and district enrollment size, locale, poverty status, and student racial/ethnic composition. We obtained data on school and district demographics by linking survey data files to the Common Core of Data (CCD) and the Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE) School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates, both issued by NCES. We explored the following categories:

- school grade level (*elementary*, *middle*, and *high*)
- school locale (*urban*, *suburban*, and *rural*)[1]
- school student racial/ethnic composition (schools in which more than half of students were Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or of two or more races were categorized as having *majority students of color*, with the remaining schools categorized as having *majority White students*.)

[1] Our definition of *locale* aligns with the four-category definition of *locale* used by NCES, with the exception that we collapsed those located in towns into the rural category.

TABLE B.3

Sample Characteristics Before and After Weighting Compared with the National Population of K–12 Public School Principals

Characteristic	Unweighted Survey Sample	Weighted Survey Sample	National Population
School locale			
Urban	25.8 [23.8, 27.9]	27.7 [25.4, 30.1]	27.7
Suburban	32.3 [30.1, 34.5]	30.9 [28.5, 33.2]	31.0
Town/rural	41.9 [39.6, 44.2]	41.4 [38.9, 43.9]	41.3
School neighborhood poverty			
Low (401 or more IPR)	25.1 [23.1, 27.1]	23.4 [21.3, 25.5]	23.3
Medium (201 to 400 IPR)	59.7 [57.4, 62.0]	58.4 [55.9, 61.0]	58.4
High (0 to 200 IPR)	15.2 [13.5, 16.9]	18.2 [16.1, 20.3]	18.3
School percentage, minority			
0%–50%	55.8 [53.5, 58.1]	51.0 [48.4, 53.6]	50.8
50%–100%	44.2 [41.9, 46.5]	49.0 [46.4, 51.6]	49.2
School level			
Elementary	55.6 [53.3, 57.9]	59.1 [56.6, 61.6]	59.1
Middle	22.3 [20.4, 24.3]	17.9 [16.1, 19.8]	17.8
High	22.1 [20.1, 24.0]	22.9 [20.7, 25.1]	23.0
School enrollment size			
Small	50.3 [48.0, 52.7]	51.4 [48.8, 54.0]	51.4
Large	49.7 [47.3, 52.0]	48.6 [46.0, 51.2]	48.6
Educator race/ethnicity			
White	79.4 [77.5, 81.3]	78.3 [76.2, 80.5]	78.2
Person of color	20.6 [18.7, 22.5]	21.7 [19.5, 23.8]	21.8
Educator gender			
Female	49.7 [47.4, 52.1]	55.5 [52.9, 58.0]	55.5
Male	50.3 [47.9, 52.6]	44.5 [42.0, 47.1]	44.5
Educator educational attainment			
Master's or less	47.8 [45.5, 50.2]	63.4 [61.1, 65.7]	63.6
Higher than master's	52.2 [49.8, 54.5]	36.6 [34.3, 38.9]	36.4

NOTE: Population data for educator-level characteristics come from the National Teacher and Principal Survey, and school-level characteristics are from the CCD and the EDGE School Neighborhood Poverty Estimates. Numbers in brackets represent confidence intervals.

- school neighborhood poverty (*low*, *middle*, or *high poverty* based on the income-to-poverty ratio [IPR] for the neighborhood surrounding the school. IPR is the percentage of family income that is above or below the federal poverty threshold set for the family's size and structure and ranges from 0 to 999. Schools with an IPR less than or equal to 200 were categorized as high poverty. Schools with an IPR of greater than or equal to 401 were categorized as low poverty. Remaining schools were categorized as middle poverty.)
- school enrollment size (schools with fewer than 450 students were categorized as *small*, whereas the remainder were categorized as *large*.)
- district enrollment size (districts serving fewer than 10,000 students were categorized as *small*, whereas districts serving 10,000 students or more were categorized as *large*.).

It is important to keep in mind that each principal who took our survey is in a school that belongs to multiple of these categories—for example, a principal in a small, rural elementary school in a small district that serves majority White students in a relatively lower-income neighborhood in a state that does not address BTAM in state policy. Thus, any patterns observed across multiple school contexts might be driven by principals in the schools that share multiple of these characteristics.

In this report, we describe only those differences among principal subgroups that are statistically significant at the 5 percent level, unless otherwise noted. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, we did not apply multiple hypothesis test corrections.

Abbreviations

ASLP	American School Leader Panel
BTAM	behavioral threat assessment and management
CCD	Common Core of Data
EDGE	Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates
HSOAC	Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center
IPR	income-to-poverty ratio
K–12	kindergarten through grade 12
MCSS	Maryland Center for School Safety
MTSS	multi-tiered systems of support
NABITA	National Association of Behavior Intervention and Threat Assessment
NASBE	National Association of State Boards of Education
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NTAC	National Threat Assessment Center
PBIS	positive behavioral intervention system
SOP	standard operating procedure
SRO	school resource officer

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About the Authors

Melissa Kay Diliberti is an associate policy researcher at RAND. Diliberti has a Ph.D. in policy analysis, a master of public policy, and a B.A. in political science and international studies.

Pauline Moore is a senior political scientist in the Defense and Political Sciences Department at RAND and a professor of policy analysis at Pardee RAND Pardee Graduate School. She has a Ph.D. in international relations.

Brian A. Jackson is a senior physical scientist at RAND. He holds a Ph.D. in bioinorganic chemistry and an M.A. in science, technology, and public policy.

Kelsey Morris is an education program specialist for the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC. He has an Ed.D. in educational leadership and an EdSp in PK–12 educational leadership and administration.

Wade Buckland is a researcher for the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC. He holds a master of teaching in special education and a master's degree in research methodology.

Lina Alathari is the chief of the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC, where she oversees the center's targeted violence behavioral research program. She has a Ph.D. in cognitive neuropsychology.

Steven Driscoll is assistant chief (outreach) of the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC. He has a master's degree in education and a bachelor's degree in criminology.

Diana Drysdale is assistant chief (research) of the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC. She has a master's degree in international policy studies.

Jacquelyn Glidden is a social science research specialist at the U.S. Secret Service's NTAC. She has a Ph.D. in human development and quantitative methodology.

As part of a longstanding effort to improve and foster the adoption of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) as a strategy to prevent targeted violence, the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) has sponsored a multi-year research effort carried out by the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center (HSOAC) focused on BTAM practices and their implementation in K-12 schools. To provide a comprehensive picture of BTAM implementation, the practices that schools are using to identify and manage potential threats to schools, and develop solutions to strengthen BTAM across the country, the research effort included a nationally representative survey of principals across the country exploring BTAM practices at their schools. These novel data are the first of their kind to collect comprehensive data on how BTAM is being operationalized in schools across the country. This report takes an in-depth look at the results of that survey, providing a picture of the state of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) in K–12 public schools across the country in 2025. The survey was fielded in January 2025. The survey sought to understand how BTAM is being implemented and operationalized at K–12 schools.

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