National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment

SIVRA-35 Assessment Tool

The Structured Interview for Violence Risk Assessment (SIVRA-35) is a thirty-five-item inventory that is used to assist Behavioral Intervention Team members and clinical staff in conducting a more thorough and research-based violence risk assessment. This supplemental guide for those trained in the SIVRA-35 provides some sample questions related to each of the 35 SIVRA items. The questions that follow are meant to give interviewers some natural-sounding language to serve as examples in conducting assessments and assigning ratings using a 0–2 scale. Given that each interview is different, questions may need to be adjusted to fit specific situations.

The SIVRA-35 is a researched-based expert system useful for assessing individuals during an in-person interview. Those using the SIVRA-35 are recommended to have completed a NABITA course on the instrument to better understand the creation, administration and interpretation of the measure. The tool should be used in conjunction with further training and study. A starting place for this would be reading this article. If you have additional questions, please contact NABITA at info@nabita.org.

COMPANION GUIDE ›

QUESTION SHEET ›

RESEARCH ARTICLE ›

QUICK SHEET ›

TRAINING VIDEO ›

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1. There is a direct communicated threat to a person, place, or system.	• Do you have any plans or desire to hurt another person? • Have you told the person of your plan? • Have you shared with anyone a plan or desire to destroy or harm a department on campus?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
2. The student has the plans, tools, weapons, schematics, and/or materials to carry out an attack on a potential target.	• Have you recently collected any materials that you would need to carry out a plan or threat against someone at our campus? • Do you have knives, guns, or weapons that you might use if people don't agree to your demands? • Have you thought about ways in which you would hurt the person with whom you are	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

	angry? • Have you taken any steps to order or purchase materials that you could use to hurt this person?	
3. The student harbors violent fantasies to counteract his/her isolation and/or emotional pain.	• Do you think or dream about what it would be like if the person who hurt you was dead? • Have you thought about what it would be like to hurt that person? How it would feel to make that person pay for the way in which you were treated? • What do you think, draw, or write about when you get stressed about all the bad things that have happened to you at this school?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
4. The student has an action plan and/or timeframe to complete an attack.	• Have you considered when you might challenge the person with whom you are angry? Would it happen in the next class? Would you seek that person out? • Are there certain events coming up, such as graduation or a test, in terms of when you might want to make the person pay for what was done to you? • When you think about getting back at the department for the way in which it treated you, how soon do you think you would do this?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
5. The student is fixated and/or focused on his target in his actions and threatening statements.	• Is there a certain person who you hold primarily responsible for all the bad things that are happening to you now? • I know you are angry at this entire group, but is there a single person in the group with whom you are angriest? • Is there a specific person who made this process for you more difficult than necessary? • When you think about getting even, who comes to mind when you think about how much pain you were caused? • In terms of getting even, who comes to mind when you think about those who don't understand how much pain they caused you?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
6. The student carries deep grudges and resentments. They can't seem to let things go and collects injustices based on perceptions of being hurt, frustrated with someone, or annoyed.	• Is there any one thing that is the central problem and that needs to be fixed for you to be able to go on with your life? • When you think about all the bad things that have happened to you at this school, is there one thing that stands out to you as the worst? • If you wanted to pay someone back for the way in which you were treated, what would be the first thing on your mind that you would need to make right?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
7. The target is described negatively in writing or artistic expression. There is a narrow focus on a particular person that has a level of preoccupation or fascination with the target. There is a pattern of this behavior, rather than a one-time act.	• Have you written in more detail about your feelings on this topic in a blog or journal? • Sometimes when people are angry at how unfairly they have been treated they make art or write in a notebook or online blog about how they feel. Is that something you do? Is this something you would share with me? • The writer Stephen Kind once said, "Fiction is the truth inside the lie" You've shared with me that you like writing fiction stories. How much of	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

	these stories mirror your life and your experiences?	
8. There has been leakage concerning a potential plan of attack	• Have you told anyone else about your plans to hurt the person who has wronged you so badly? • What kind of things do you post on social media like Facebook and YouTube? Do you ever discuss ideas you have to make people pay for having treated you badly?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
9. The student has current suicidal thoughts, ideations, and/or a plan to die.	• Sometimes, when people have gone through all of the things that you have faced, they think about killing themselves. Is that something you've thought of before? • Has it gotten so bad that not being around anymore seems like the best option? • It sounds like you are in a lot of pain because of what other people have done to you. Does it ever get so bad that you think about killing yourself?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
10. The student talks about being persecuted or being treated unjustly.	• Does it ever feel like the entire world is collaborating to keep you down? • How often do you have days where you feel like everyone is out to get you? • Do you feel like the school singles you out on issues or treats you differently than it does other students? • Do you feel persecuted by others around campus? Are they actively trying to keep you from reaching your goals?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
11. The student has engaged in 'last acts' behaviors or discusses what they want people to remember about his actions. Creation of a legacy token.	• Have you turned off your Facebook account? Why? Have you spent down or paid off all of your credit cards? Have you closed your bank accounts? • Have you thought about how you want people to remember you after you are gone? Have you written down any of these ideas or created a video explaining why you are angry? • Have you thought about what other people might like to have of your things if you were no longer around? Have you made a list of who will get your possessions if you were gone?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
12. The student seems confused or has odd or troubling thoughts. The student may hear voices or see visions that command him/her to do things.	• Are there times where you hear things that other people can't hear, or see things that you know aren't real? • Do you feel as if God has a special role for you in punishing those who have hurt you? • Could you talk about your thoughts about the government, FBI, or Secret Service? Do you think they are watching you?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
13. The student displays a hardened point of view or strident, argumentative opinion. This is beyond a person who is generally argumentative or negative.	• Do you feel very strongly about issues around religion, politics, or abortion? • Does it make you very angry and upset that others don't see things the way you do? • Would the world be a better place if everyone thought the way you did about this topic? How can you make them understand?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

14. The student has a lack of options and/or a sense of hopelessness and desperation.	• Do you feel as if things will never get better? • Have you tried to solve the problem in front of you so many times that you have lost faith and hope that you will ever be able to be free from it? • Do you feel stuck in a corner, like there is no way out?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
15. The student is driven to a particular action to cause harm.	• Is there only one way to solve this problem? Do you feel as if you have already tried everything else and deep in your heart you know what you now have to do? • Are there times you have told people what you felt they wanted to hear, but inside you really know what you have to do to make things right? • It often feels like the only way to make people understand how much they are hurting you is to make them feel the same pain they've inflicted on you, right?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
16. The student has had a recent breakup or failure of an intimate relationship, and/or the student has become obsessed in stalking or fixated on another person romantically.	• Were things better in the relationship when you two were together? Does it feel like everything is falling apart now because that person is no longer in your life? • Did you have a future planned out with this person and are now realizing that all of those plans are meaningless? • Do you feel like if you can just explain yourself in the right way, the other person would take you back?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
17. The student acts overly defensive, aggressive, or detached given the nature of this risk/threat assessment. Seeks to intimidate the assessor or displays an overly casual response given the seriousness of the interview.	• Do you feel as if it's ridiculous that you have to be in here talking to me about this? • Are you overwhelmed with rage because you have to be in here speaking with me? • Do you think it is arrogant of the school to assume that someone can figure out who you are based on this kind of interview?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
18. The student displays little remorse for his actions, lacks understanding for the view of potential victims, and acts with a detachment or bravado during the interview.	• It seems very unfair that the school is punishing you for this while other people don't have to talk to anyone about the more serious things they have done, doesn't it? • If people would just treat you the way you want to be treated, none of this would have ever happened, right? • If others got hurt because of what you did, they really had that coming, right? Next time, they should think about how they treat you before acting.	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
19. The student has a weapon (or access to weapon), specialized training in weapon handling, interest in paramilitary organizations, or Veteran/Law Enforcement status.	• Have you served in the military or armed forces? • Many people who own guns take specialized courses in combat training. Have you ever had a chance to take a course like that? • Do you study and read up on tactics and military warfare just in case you need those skills to defend yourself?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
20. The student glorifies and revels in publicized violence such as school shootings, serial killers,	• Do you find yourself daydreaming and thinking about violence and horror movies?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

or war, or displays an unusual interest in sensational violence. The student uses weapons for emotional release and venerates destruction.	• Have you ever gone to the shooting range and used a picture of someone you hated as the target? • Do you have tattoos with a violent or horror movie theme? • Do you spend time on the internet talking to others about school shootings, or watching videos of completed suicides or videos like Faces of Death?	
21. The student externalizes blame for personal behaviors and problems onto other people despite efforts to educate him/her about how others view these actions. The student takes immediate responsibility in a disingenuous manner.	• Do you feel that if other people treated you with some respect in the first place, none of this would have happened? • While we've talked about the impact of your behavior on other people on campus, do you still feel they are to blame for what happened? • I know you've said it's your fault, but it seems like you are just saying that to leave my office. Is that the case?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
22. The student intimidates or acts superior to others. The student displays intolerance to individual differences.	• Do you feel that other people deserve the same respect and understanding that you do? • You've talked about students from other cultures on campus and said that they should "just go back home." Can you talk more about that? • It sounds like if others don't see things exactly the way you do, you have trouble respecting their points of view. Did I get that right?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
23. The student has a past history of excessively impulsive, erratic, or risk-taking behavior.	• Do you like to engage in adrenaline-producing activities like sky diving, rock climbing, and driving really fast? • Are there times that you lose yourself so much in a higher-risk activity that you don't worry at all about your personal safety? • Do you engage in activities that put you at risk without thinking very much about why you are drawn to such activities?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
24. The student has a past history of problems with authority. The student has a pattern of intense work conflicts with supervisors and other authorities (e.g., Resident Advisor, Conduct Officer, Professor, or Dean).	• Have you had problems in the past with police officers, teachers, or other people in a role of authority, such as coaches or team captains? • It seems to me that you don't like being told to do things by other people and have a rather strong initial reaction to them when asked. Is that accurate? • Have you gotten in trouble before with bosses or employers for not following workplace rules?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
25. The student handles frustration in an explosive manner or displays a low tolerance for becoming upset. This is beyond avoiding responsibility or calling mom/dad or a lawyer.	• It seems like you have a "short fuse" and a tendency to "fly off the handle." Would you say that is accurate? • Do other people describe you as someone who gets upset quickly or easily? • How would you describe your tolerance for frustrations in situations when asked to do something you don't want to do?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
26. The student has difficulty connecting with other people. The student lacks the ability to form intimate relationships. The student lacks the ability to form trust.	• Do people describe you as being isolated or a loner? Do you agree with that description? • Do you feel as if your thoughts and ideas are so different from those of other people that you	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

	have trouble making connections with others? • Describe your friendships. Who do you consider to be a friend? For you, what is the difference between an acquaintance and a real friend?	
27. The student has a history of drug or substance use that has been connected to inappropriate ideation or behavior. Substances of enhanced concern are methamphetamines or amphetamines, cocaine, or alcohol.	• Do you take medications or use substances to enhance experiences? • You mentioned using substances. Do these heighten your energy or lower your hesitancy in certain situations? • Could you talk to me a little bit about you history with substances?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
28. The student has serious mental health issues that require assessment and treatment.	• Have you ever seen a counselor or psychologists for a mental health issue? • Have you ever taken medications for any psychological problems? • Can you tell me about your experiences dealing with mental health issues, either personally or within your family?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
29. If the student has serious mental health issues that require assessment and treatment, they are not receiving mental health care and support.	• Are you talking with a therapist or psychologist? • Are you receiving counseling services through your parent's or your personal insurance to help with your struggles? • Are you currently seeing a mental health counselor or psychologist for help in school?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
30. Objectification of others (perhaps in social media or writings).	• Do you often give women labels such as sluts, whores, and bitches, as you are doing here in this interview? • Have there been times where you have had trouble seeing a person's humanity beyond the group to which they belong? One example might be seeing the school as a bunch of bureaucrats who aren't interested in helping you. • I've noticed that on your Facebook page, you use racial slurs to describe African Americans and derogatory terms for homosexuals. Is that reflective of your beliefs?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
31. The student has a sense of being owed things from others such as sex, money, a relationship or grades. They act as if they deserve certain treatment and/or have an exaggerated sense of entitlement.	• You mentioned that everyone else at college seems to have a girlfriend but you do not. Do you feel like you deserve someone to be romantically interested in you? • Do you feel as if students should get a passing grade simply because they are registered and have paid for a class?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
32. The student has oppositional thoughts and/or behaviors	• Do you often think differently than people around you? • If everyone comes together on a single idea, are you often the person who sees things from a vastly different perspective? • Do you often get into arguments with others over your differences in opinion?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
33. The student has poor support and connection from faculty, administration, and staff. The student has an unsupportive family system and peers who exacerbate bad decisions and offer	• Do you no longer have a good support network of people at this school? • Have you recently found that the number of people offering support for you at school and within the community is shrinking?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

low quality advice or caring. They experience evaporating social inhibitors.	• Have you recently suffered a loss of the ability to stay in school, keep friends, or remain close to people who have been supportive of you?	
34. The student experiences overwhelming, unmanageable stress from a significant change such as losing a job, a conduct hearing, failing a class, suspension, or family trauma. This stress is beyond what would normally be expected when receiving bad news.	• Do others describe your reactions as being "over the top" or becoming hysterical when you are upset? • Could you tell me about the last time you overreacted to a situation? Is that a frequent occurrence? • How do you typically react to stress when you experience a problem without an easy solution?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2
35. The student has drastic, unexplained behavior change.	• Do you feel as if things have changed for you recently, maybe like the way you see the world is vastly different than how you used to see it? • Do other people describe you as acting "like a new person," or seem puzzled about why things have changed so drastically for you? • Would you say that generally, you are the same person you were six months ago?	○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2

Note: Dangerousness and violence, from a student , faculty, or staff member is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately predict. This training topic offers research-based techniques and theories to provide a foundational understanding and improved awareness of the potential risk. The training or tool should not be seen as a guarantee or offer any assurance that violence will be prevented.

The SIVRA-35 should NOT be used as a sole source document to separate or keep a student on campus, but rather as a part of a larger assessment contributing to a case management and intervention plan.

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