



Safe Separation from Employment for High-Concern Individuals



The FBI's Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC), Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (BAU-1), Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), offers the following suggestions for employee dismissal that may be appropriate and supportive of enhanced threat mitigation. These considerations include those that fall outside standard dismissal procedure. Rather than an all-inclusive list, these suggestions are provided as a starting point for crafting a combination of organizational policy and behavioral based threat management.

Administrative

This product was prepared by members of BTAC. Observations, opinions, and suggestions contained herein are the result of the knowledge drawn from the personal investigative experience, educational background, specialized training, and research conducted by members of BTAC and others. Employee dismissal should align with specific case facts and individual management needs.

In cases where dismissal is part of a threat management plan, the responsible organization is a primary stakeholder for threat management. This threat does not end with employee dismissal. This event may be a trigger and the employer could become a target. Organizations are encouraged to seek assistance from law enforcement if there is a credible threat. This document may not be disseminated outside your agency without authorization by BTAC.

Pre-Dismissal

Respect and Dignity

- Any investigations should be completed in a discrete and respectful manner to the employee being investigated and involve minimal persons.
- Refrain from announcing the dismissal amongst the workforce beforehand.

Benefits and Support

- Consider offering the employee short term disability or psychological assistance if warranted. This may include encouraging the use of an Employee Assistance Program, if one is in place at the organization.
- If possible, it should be noted if the employee is experiencing any personal stressors during this time and if they possess a support system to assist them.
- Extension of benefits for a period of time should be considered.
- Identify possibilities for a severance package (i.e., pay or positive reference to another employer).
- Consider allowing unemployment to be used by the individual to soften financial impact.

Law Enforcement Involvement

- For individuals exhibiting highly concerning behaviors or escalation, consider the use of a restraining/protective order. Recognize this action may exacerbate the situation; however, a restraining/protective order is a tool that can be used to assist in disruption. Use best discretion for notification and implementation based on underlying threat assessment.

- If necessary, involve local law enforcement and/or local threat assessment and threat management teams to assist with plan and share additional information that may inform and educate the actions of the company.

Communication and Coordination

- To decrease employee frustration, one coordinated voice should be in contact with the employee to keep them informed of the process and timeline for updates. Consider utilizing someone that has demonstrated positive rapport with them in the past.
- Reasoning for leave or suspension should be reflected/directed by existing policy, emphasizing that decisions/actions are not meant to be personal.
- All departments (HR, security, legal, information technology) involved in a potential dismissal should coordinate independent actions and be kept abreast of any changes to the process.
- If possible, develop and utilize a third-party monitor to report any developing concerning behaviors or leakage.

Employee Actions and Access

- Within 30-45 days prior to separation, the employee is at an increased risk for insider threat actions (theft, sabotage, etc.). Consider target hardening and user monitoring of computer systems in the early stages of termination consideration.
- While interacting with the employee it should be noted how the employee responds to constructive feedback or news of suspension/leave. Additionally, information should be gathered on historical responses to similar company actions and if co-workers are concerned about how the individual will react when/if the dismissal occurs. Consider the employees historical responses to incorporate that into future presentation of information and details.
- If the individual has secure building access, consider the removal of building access prior to their separation. Notification of this removal should be coordinated with security and completed with care and concern prior to implementation.

Leakage

- If the employee possesses social media, consider monitoring their publicly available postings for leakage or relevant commentary.
- Take note of the behavior and verbal communication of the individual during any meetings. If the individual makes a direct threat, safely and quickly conclude the conversation.

Physical Security

- If the employee is on suspension/leave, consider scheduling the meeting off-premises or in a secluded area of the workspace. Respectfully escort into and out of the building/premises. This should be done without humiliating them and allowing them to maintain dignity.
- It should be noted if the employee possesses any weapons or tools of their position (i.e., firearms, edged weapon, screwdriver, etc.). Consider removing them prior to the suspension/leave process.

Alternative Actions

- If the employee is being considered for dismissal as a result of performance issues, natural steps to improve performance through a plan and give the employee opportunity to express their grievances may serve as a positive outlet.
- If the employee is being considered for dismissal as a result of behavioral issues, steps to investigate claims should be made.

Dismissal

Respect and Dignity

- If the employee is still in company space, the location and time of the meeting should be discrete and away from the general workforce.
- End meetings in a positive tone.
- In general, do not release details of dismissal to general workforce.
- Consider asking the employee if they would like a message communicated to staff about their dismissal.

Benefits and Support

- Consider utilizing someone in the process that has demonstrated positive rapport with the employee in the past. This individual may be a representative of an employee assistance program, a respected mentor, a loved one or even law enforcement—anyone positioned to ensure the person of concern remains stable and feels he has options for the future.
- Extend severance package (i.e., pay or positive reference to another employer), if available.

Law Enforcement Involvement

- If necessary, notify law enforcement for support the day of dismissal. Allow ample time for coordination.

Communication and Coordination

- Keep the meeting brief, fact-driven, and allow the individual to ask questions, providing them with what will happen after the meeting (last paycheck, last benefit date, etc.). Do not attempt to discredit or argue the employee's point-of-view.
- Schedule any post-dismissal meetings during this time and ensure employee is interested in these services.

Dual Phase Termination or Expulsion

- A dual phase strategy has been used successfully to accomplish a separation with an emphasis on both safety and dignity.
 - The first part of a dual phase strategy is notification of the separation, which should be delivered in a minimally intrusive, minimally embarrassing manner.
 - The next phase of the process occurs at a secondary location, where a cooling off period is provided, caretaking begins, and assistance or services can be offered.

Employee Actions and Access

- Deactivate or revoke any computer or physical access permissions.

Leakage

- Take note of the behavior and verbal communication of the individual during the meeting. If the individual makes a direct threat, safely and quickly conclude the conversation and report direct to law enforcement.

Physical Security

- If the employee is on suspension/leave, consider scheduling the meeting off-premises or in a secluded area of the workspace. Respectfully escort into and out of the building/premises. This should be done without humiliating them and allowing them to maintain dignity.
- Employee may still have possessions in the workspace. Discuss retrieval of belongings under escort, third-person delivery, or via mail.
- It should be noted if the employee possesses any weapons or tools of their position (i.e., firearms, edged weapon, screwdriver, etc.). Consider removing them prior to the meeting.

Post-Dismissal

Respect and Dignity

- If employee makes unscheduled contact continue to engage positively with care and concern while maintain established boundaries.

Benefits and Support

- Continued monitoring is important (e.g., follow up with employee) if receptive to such efforts. Evaluate how their handling the dismissal and offer placement services if available. Recognize this action may increase the grievance, use best discretion for continued contact.
- Educate involved complainants/victims about security at home and work. Offer solutions to make employees feel safer, like assigned parking or rental cars.

Law Enforcement Involvement

- If necessary, request law enforcement presence for a period of time after dismissal.
- If necessary, contact local law enforcement and/or FBI¹ to request assistance with continued threat management plan or hire private investigation company to assist with continued monitoring.

Communication and Coordination

- Conduct scheduled follow-up meetings (either via telephone or off- premises) with company human resources (HR) to address any persisting questions or notify of upcoming expected end of pay or benefits.
- Continued use of discretion and sensitivity is advised.

Employee Actions and Access

- After dismissal contact immediate co-workers/former supervisors to see if any of them have been contacted by the individual.

Leakage

- Continue to monitor social media for leakage or relevant information concerning attitude toward dismissal or movement to a new employer.

Physical Security

- Verify the individual exits the premises after their dismissal meeting.
- Inform security workforce about dismissed individual, include photo and vehicle description for awareness.
- A carefully worded notification to the general workforce that the individual is no longer employee by the company should be completed for awareness. A reminder of security policies may be beneficial to prime staff for potential violations.

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¹ The FBI's **Behavioral Threat Assessment Center (BTAC)** is a national-level, multi-agency, multi-disciplinary Task Force focused on the **prevention of terrorism** and **targeted violence** through the application of behaviorally-based operational support, training and research. In this unique capacity, the BTAC provides investigative and operational support for the FBI's most complex, concerning, and complicated international and domestic terrorism investigations. In addition, the BTAC provides threat assessment and threat management support to federal, state, local, tribal and campus law enforcement partners, as well as community stakeholders, working diligently across the United States on targeted violence prevention. Significant lines of effort on targeted violence prevention include persons/adults of concern, potential active shooters, school shootings/threats, stalking and workplace violence. The BTAC's extensive and broad-ranging capabilities are enhanced through a cadre of Threat Management Coordinators (TMCs) assigned to all 56 field offices across the United States.