



NATIONAL SAFE SKIES ALLIANCE

Program for Applied Research in Airport Security

PARAS 0033 Project Summary

Project Title:	Mental Health and Airport Security
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BACKGROUND

Like many employers and public-facing entities, airports experience the effects of mental illness in the diverse populations of their facilities. These populations include passengers, employees, and the non-traveling public, some of whom may be homeless. Factors such as substance abuse, everyday responsibilities, and travel stress may contribute to or exacerbate these effects.

Signs and symptoms vary, with examples ranging from the inability to exercise good judgment and make sound decisions to acts of violence and more overt behaviors that directly threaten airport security, such as security breaches. The resulting implications of these issues at an airport are equally wide ranging. Some are direct and seem obvious, such as physical threats to aircraft or passengers. Others may not be immediately recognized as linked to mental health crises.

Considering the complexity of the issue, airports and their stakeholders are not inherently equipped with the knowledge, tools, and resources to recognize and appropriately respond to mental health incidents and crises. Information is needed to enhance the general understanding and recognition of mental illness and its impact on airports, along with response, mitigation, and management options to optimize effective and efficient use of resources, and minimize airport security implications.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to provide information and guidance to help the airport community understand and address individuals experiencing mental health crises at airports. Population segments to consider include employees, passengers, and non-traveling public. At a minimum, the resulting document should address:

- Mental Health Awareness
 - Understanding the issue
 - Recognizing occurrences
 - Identifying potential triggering events
- Impact on Airport Security
 - Resources leveraged for response
 - Stakeholders, such as concessionaires, airlines, TSA, etc.
 - Bystanders
 - Airside, landside, and terminal operations
 - Applicable metrics, including methods for tracking/categorizing incidents

- Response considerations, including anticipated outcomes and perception
- Mitigation and management:
 - Review of existing strategies and practices
 - Resource models, such as emergency services/response teams
 - Identifying and engaging relevant organizations and community resources
 - Policy and procedures
 - Training
 - Privacy, legal, and cost considerations
 - Available funding resources
- Recommendations for future research

Since not every option or idea will be feasible for all airports, the resulting guidance should be scalable so that airports of all sizes and resource levels can benefit.