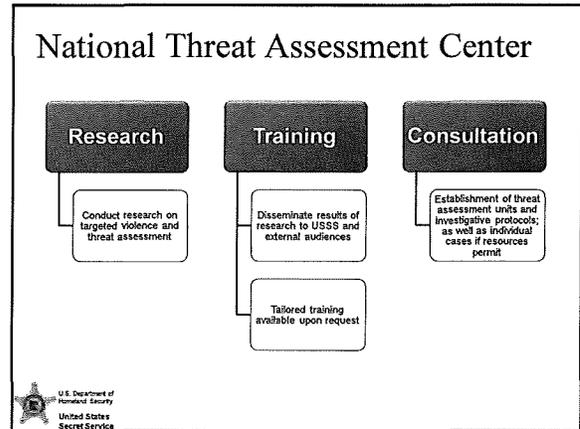


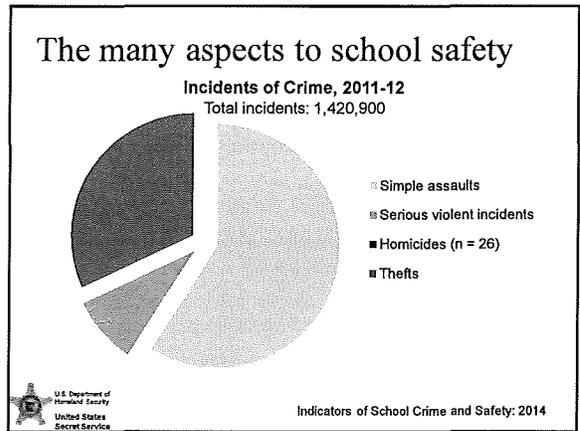
Prevention of Targeted Violence in K-12 Schools

Steven Driscoll, M.Ed.
August 29, 2016
Indiana School Safety Academy

Why is the Secret Service interested in school safety?

- Conduct investigations in elementary and secondary schools related to our mission
- Research, conducted in partnership with the Department of Education, has identified best practices for school threat assessment (the *Safe School Initiative*)
 - 37 incidents of targeted school violence
 - 25-year period (Dec 1974 – May 2000)

Our focus today

- When a student specifically selects the school or a member of the school community for harm
 - Unrelated to other criminal activity
 - Generally excludes gang violence
- We refer to this as targeted violence
- These types of incidents are rare but have a lasting effect on students, parents, educators, and the larger community



Some things we know

- There is no accurate or useful profile of a "school shooter"
- Most incidents are brief in duration
- Despite prompt law enforcement response, most incidents are stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention



Threat assessment in schools

- Threat assessment is the process for mitigating the risk of this type of violence
 - Identify
 - Assess
 - Manage
- Violence is generally a result of an interaction between the:
 - Person
 - Event
 - Situation
 - Target



New Bedford, MA Incident

- October: Student tells an administrator that she overheard students talking about a plan to attack the school. An investigation begins.
- Early November: A second student, who was part of the plotting group, told a teacher about the plot.
- Mid-November: Local law enforcement discovers a nearly-completed bomb in a vacant house.
- Late November: On a Tuesday, a janitor finds a note alluding to something bad happening on "Monday."



Points to note

- A student was comfortable enough to reach out to a school administrator with concerning information
- The school had procedures in place to assess the concerning information
- The investigation focused on the students' behavior
- The team focused on whether the students *posed* a threat, as opposed to simply having *made* a threat
- The investigation took place over the Thanksgiving holiday, and arrests were made before Monday
- School worked together with local law enforcement



Benefits of this approach

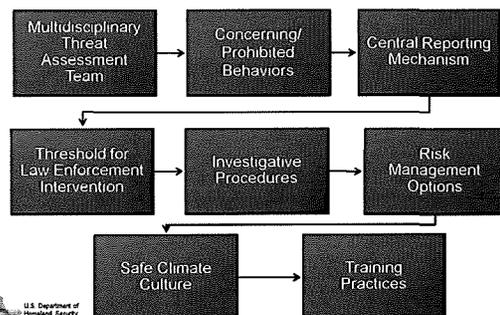
- Multiple studies from the University of Virginia show schools utilizing this threat assessment approach have:
 - Lower rates of bullying
 - Greater willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence
 - More positive perceptions of school climate
 - Fewer long-term suspensions
 - Greater rates of counseling services and parental involvement



Creating a Targeted Violence Prevention Plan



Targeted Violence Prevention Plan



Establish “threat assessment” team

- Various options for team names
- Multidisciplinary team
 - School staff
 - Guidance counselors
 - Teachers
 - School administrators
 - School resource officers/Local law enforcement
 - Mental health professionals
 - Coaches
- District-level as well as school-based teams



Define concerning behaviors

- Prohibited behaviors that trigger a threat assessment
 - Some forms of violence
 - Threats
 - Weapons at school
- Other behaviors of concern that require an intervention
 - Victim of bullying
 - Self-harm
 - Drug use
 - Truancy
 - Symptoms of depression
- Low threshold of concern
 - Not sure what it is, but something's not right



Methods of identifying concerns

- Assignments, tests
- Online postings, social media
- In-person, overheard communications
- Observed behavior
- Friends, family, teachers, other school staff



Create a central reporting mechanism

- Phone number
- Web form
- Email address
- Reporting apps
 - WeTip – Nationwide, anonymous hotline, online, mobile form
 - Safe2Tell – Colorado schools, anonymous text, online, app
 - OK2SAY – Michigan schools, anonymous call, text, app
 - AACo PD Speak Out – Anne Arundel County, MD schools, anonymous app



Law enforcement intervention

- The point at which a school decides a situation must be referred could involve:
 - Imminent or immediate threats
 - Serious violence
 - Bringing a weapon to school
- Not every inquiry requires local law enforcement

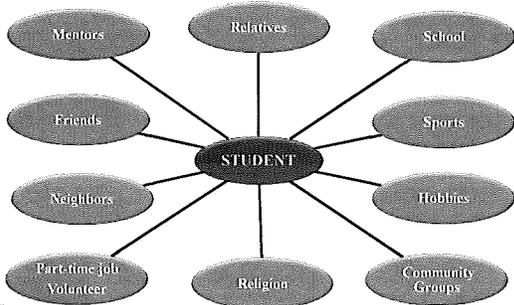


Establish investigative procedures

- Assess threats, concerning behavior, risk for violence
 - Transient or substantive threats
 - Unsure, err on side of caution
 - Respond to all incoming reports
- Assign roles in advance
- Gather information
- Corroborate – parents, friends, teachers, coaches
- Evaluate



Gather information



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Key Investigative Themes

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1. Motives

- Why did the student make the threatening or concerning statements, or engage in the concerning behavior?
- What did the student mean when he/she said/did that?
- What was the student trying to accomplish?
- Is the student angry? Do they feel wronged?
- Has the student tried to resolve the situation?
- Does the student have alternatives for dealing with the problem?

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2. Communications

- What has the student communicated about his or her feelings or ideas? Has the student mentioned feelings of depression or hopelessness?
- Has the student made threatening, violent statements about a target or alluded to some sort of violent act?
- What has the student said to friends, other students, teachers, family, the target?
- Has the student alerted or warned others not to come to school on a certain day or stay away from a certain area at a certain time?
- Does anyone monitor the student's online behavior?

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Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
I'm tired of this s[...]
f[...]
done!!!

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
if i just laid down

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
I HATE THIS S[...]

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
I should have listened.... You were right...
The whole time you were right...

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
I Hate Hears[...]
Foot Slap[...]
Now...
Happened

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
It breaks me... It actually does... I know it
seems like I'm sweating it off... But I'm not...
And I never will be able to...

Jaylen Fryberg @JaylenFryberg
Alright. You f[...]
got me.... That broke me

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Jaylen Fryberg, 15

October 24, 2014



- Marysville-Pilchuck High School in Marysville, WA
- Killed four students and wounded another, all his closest friends
- Killed himself
- "Ride or die"
- Concerning tweets and suicidal statements

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3. Inappropriate interests

- Does the student have an unusual interest in violence - school shootings or other acts of mass violence?
- Does the student admire perpetrators of violent acts, or criticize them for incompetence and not killing enough people?
- Does the student want to carry out such an act?
- Has the student conducted searches for websites with violent themes or incessantly watched or read about violence?
- Does the student have a peer group that shares a fascination with violence or extremist beliefs?



Jose Reyes, 12

October 21, 2013

Concerning Searches



- Sparks Middle School in Sparks, NV
- Killed a teacher
- Wounded two students
- Killed himself
- Concerning Internet searches



4. Weapons

- Does the student have a fascination with weapons?
- Does the student have access to weapons?
- Are there weapons in the home?
 - Are the weapons secured?
 - Does the family member treat them carelessly and without safety precautions?
 - Are the weapons left loaded?

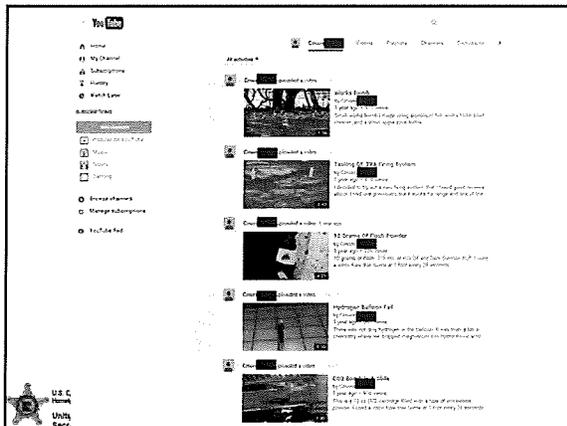


John LaDue, 17

April 29, 2014



- Waseca Junior/Senior High School in Waseca, MN
- Elaborate plans, including bombs and firearms
- Arrested after a concerned citizen notified police after seeing him access a storage unit



5. Stressors

- Has the student experienced stressors in any area of his or her life?
- Who does the student turn to when stressed?
- What does the student do to relieve stress?
- What does the student do when angry or upset?
- How does the student handle change?
- What supports does the student have?

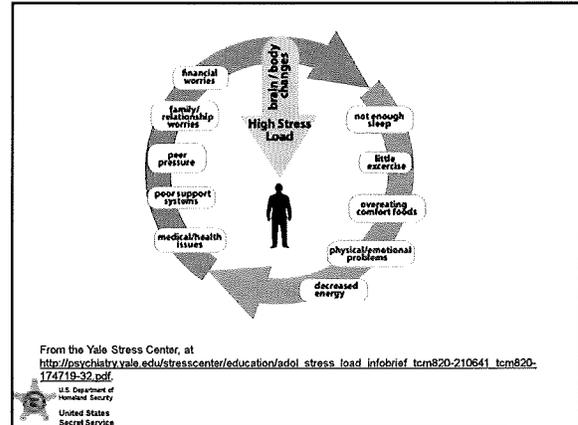


Karl Pierson, 18

December 13, 2013



- Arapahoe High School in Centennial, CO
- Intended to kill debate coach
- Killed one student
- Killed himself
- Stressor of being removed from his position as captain of the speech team



From the Yale Stress Center, at http://psychiatry.yale.edu/stresscenter/education/adol_stress_load_infobrief_tcm820-210641_tcm820-174718-32.pdf



6. Bullying

- Does the student feel bullied, persecuted, or injured by others?
- Does the student have specific examples or more of a general feeling of being bullied ?
- Forms of bullying:
 - Physical/Verbal
 - Social
 - Sexual
 - Cyber
- Does the student feel the bullying is being addressed?



Mason Campbell, 12

January 14, 2014



- Berrendo Middle School in Roswell, NM
- Wounded two students
- Survived the incident
- Victim of bullying



7. Desperation

- Is the student experiencing desperation, despair, or hopelessness?
- Has the student suffered a loss?
- Does the student have difficulty coping with conflicts, disappointments, failures, or other stressors?
- Does the student demonstrate resiliency?
- Does the student generally make good choices (alcohol, drugs, friends)?
- Does the student have a history of suicidal ideation or attempts and is he or she considering suicide now?



sinking into bed
suicidal thoughts filling my head
suicidal thoughts not gone, but sleeping
because it's other people's death I'm seeing
suicide or homicide
homicide or suicide
into sleep I'm sinking
why me I'm thinking?
suicidal and suicidal thoughts intermingling
I know my life's not worth fighting



8. Violence as an option

- Does the student think violence is acceptable or the only way to solve a problem?
- Do others support or endorse the student using violence to solve problems?
- Has the student been "dared" to commit an act of violence?



Evan Ramsey, 16

February 19, 1997



- Bethel Regional High School in Bethel, AK
- Killed one student and the principal
- Wounded two other students
- Survived the incident
- Friends encouraged his violent plans



9. Mental illness

- Is the student experiencing symptoms of mental illness?
 - About 46% of children ages 13-18 have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder
 - Of those, only about half receive mental health services
- Depression affects about 11% of adolescents by age 18
 - Can manifest differently in children or teens
 - Feeling sick, refusing to attend school, clinging behavior, sulking, feeling misunderstood, suicidal thoughts
- Anxiety affects about 25% of teens between 13-18



10. Concerned others

- Are others concerned about or for the student?
- Are others concerned that the student is focused on a specific target?
- Have others noticed a change in the student's behavior (eating, sleeping, academic performance, social habits)?
- Has there been an escalation in the student's mood or behavior?
- Does the student have a history of coming to attention?



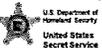
11. Capacity to carry out an attack

- Is the student organized enough to create an attack plan and then execute that plan?
- Do they have the means (e.g., access to weapons, money)
- Plans can be elaborate or relatively simple



Jared Padgett, 15

- June 10, 2014
- Reynolds High School in Troutdale, OR
- Killed one student and wounded a teacher before killing himself



12. Planning

- Is there evidence that the student has:
 - Acquired and/or manufactured weapons
 - Practiced with weapons
 - Selected and researched targets
 - Conducted surveillance
 - Tested school response
 - Rehearsed attacks and ambushes

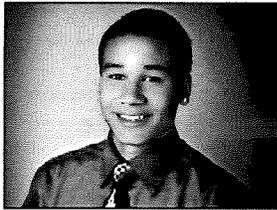


Karl Pierson, 18



Robert Butler, Jr., 17

January 5, 2011



- Millard South High School in Omaha, NE
- Killed a vice principal and injured the principal
- Killed himself
- Planning occurred shortly before incident



13. Consistency

- Are the student's statements consistent with his/her actions?
 - Are they consistent with what others are saying?
 - Are they consistent across different areas of their lives?
 - Are they consistent with past behavior?

Corroboration is critical

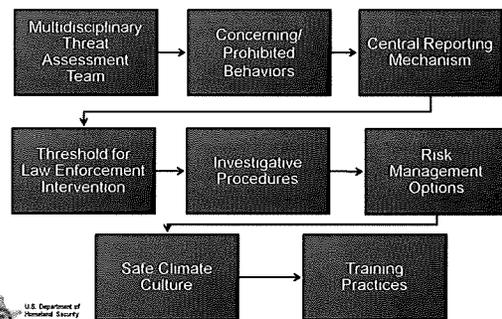


14. Remember the protective factors

- Does the student have a relationship with a responsible adult?
 - Does the student feel comfortable confiding in someone?
 - Does the student believe that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions?
- Is there evidence of a connection to other students?
- What situational or intrinsic factors are present?
 - Motivation to graduate
 - Making a sports team
 - New relationship

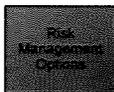


Targeted Violence Prevention Plan



Management Options

- Immediate and long-term
- Parental involvement (e.g., removing access to firearms)
- Mental health treatment
- Community resources
- Expulsion, although may have negative effects:
 - Students may be unsupervised during daytime hours
 - Lack positive peer interactions
 - No adult mentorship from teachers or other adults in school



Manage the risk of violence

- Virginia Model for Student Threat Assessment
 - Control and contain the situation
 - Protect potential targets
 - Provide support and guidance
- Develop an individual plan
- Stop managing the situation when all the concerns have been addressed



Components of safe school climates

- Fostering a climate of respect and trust
- Listening to and empowering students
- Breaking down "codes of silence"
- Prevention and intervention of bullying
- Ensuring all students have a trusting relationship with at least one positive adult role model
- Positive reinforcement
- Consider the virtual world
 - Cyberbullying
 - Concerning posts



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Safe school climate programs

- Student assistance programs – concerned teachers meet and discuss students who are having academic or behavioral problems
- Peer assistance groups – support groups led by students encourage students to come forward with information and provide support to overcome self-doubts or guilt about breaking code of silence
- Law enforcement – weekly calls coordinated by local LE that includes school resource officers, where the call members discuss concerns and share resources



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Additional considerations for law enforcement

- Build relationships with the school community
- Co-teach classes (bike safety, stranger danger)
- Serve as coaches, assistant coaches of sports teams
- Work with parents and teachers at after-school events
- Adopt a school – officer stops in once a week at a school in their beat, meet with the principal and some students, can do reports in the patrol car in the parking lot or somewhere on campus



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Training

- Frequency
- Topics for training
 - Target of training
 - Threat assessment teams
 - School resource and local law enforcement officers
 - Administrators, faculty, staff
 - Students, parents
 - Type of training (e.g., lecture, role playing)



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Staff

- De-escalation techniques
- Conflict resolution
- Violence prevention and crisis management
- Suicide awareness prevention
- Child and adolescent development
- Age- and developmentally-appropriate discipline
- Disability and special education issues
- Mental health issues
- Student and family engagement



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Students

- Non-cognitive skills:
 - Responsibility, responsible decision-making
 - Resiliency
 - Self-awareness
 - Self-management
 - Anger management
- Anti-bullying
- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution
- Code of silence



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Parents

- Recognizing when their child may be in emotional trouble or socially isolated
- Provide available resources and where to seek assistance
- Procedures for notification of concerning behavior
- Threat assessment process and their role



Resources

- The National Threat Assessment Center
<http://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>
- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
<http://rems.ed.gov/>
- The Virginia Student Threat Assessment Model
<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/projects/threat-assessment>
- Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence
<http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/schoolviolence2.pdf>



School Climate Resources

- *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* is available at
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>
- *What Makes Schools Safe? Final Report: NJSB School Security Task Force* is available at
<http://www.njsba.org/schoolsecurity2014>
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):
<https://www.pbis.org/school/swpbis-for-beginners/pbis-faqs>



Training Resources

- International Association for the Chiefs of Police:
<http://www.theiacp.org/>
- School Safety Advisory Council:
<http://www.schoolsafety911.org/>
- National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC): https://www.justnet.org/school_safety.html
- Texas School Safety Center at Texas State University:
<https://txssc.txstate.edu/>
- National Association of School Resource Officers:
<https://nasro.org/>



Mental Health Resources

- National Alliance on Mental Illness: <http://www.nami.org/>
- National Institute of Mental Health:
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>
- Mental Health First Aid (free or low-cost training on mental health issues): <http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/>



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<http://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>

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