Campus Gun Violence and Threat Assessment
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

Colleges are not immune to gun violence

1. How much violence on college campuses?
2. How can threat assessment help prevent violence?

Slides available on our website or by email. Google Virginia Youth Violence Project.

Shootings Skew Perceptions of Campus Safety

Gun violence is not a college campus problem, but a pervasive national problem.

Annual Gun Toll
32,000 deaths
84,000 injuries
116,000 total

Gun violence is not a spontaneous event, but is usually preceded by other forms of violence. A broader look at campus violence is necessary.
Campus Aggression

Violent crime occurs in a broader context of hostility and aggressive behavior.

What is Threat Assessment?

Threat assessment is a problem-solving approach to violence prevention that involves assessment and intervention in response to threatening statements or behavior. Teams seek ways to help troubled individuals.

In response to the 2007 shootings at Virginia Tech, Virginia mandated threat assessment teams for all public institutions of higher education (§23-9.2:10).
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April 11, 2016

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THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM

The purpose of the University’s Threat Assessment Team is to help preserve the safety and security of the university community by identifying and addressing potential threats in advance of a crisis. The team is a collaborative effort involving multiple departments and is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all members of the university community.

Safety/Emergency Preparedness
Dean of Students
Student Health
University Police
Human Resources
Faculty/Employee Assistance
General Counsel

40 cases per year
- 65% students
- 30% staff
- 5% faculty
- Relationship violence
- Workplace conflict
- Student-faculty conflict
- Psychosis

Although relatively little research on threat assessment in higher ed, we have conducted research in k-12 schools.

K-12 Threat Assessment Developed 2002

Research on Threat Assessment

Research on Threat Assessment

1. Threats are rarely carried out
2. Reduced suspension rates
3. Increased use of counseling
4. Improved school climate
   - Less bullying
   - More student willingness to seek help

In response to the 2012 Sandy Hook shootings, Virginia mandated threat assessment teams for all public schools.

Student Threat Assessment as a Safe and Supportive Prevention Strategy
4-year project (2015-2018)

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Selected sample of 1,865 threat assessment cases reported by 785 Virginia public schools during the 2014-15 school year.

Threat Outcomes (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat Not Attempted</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted and Averted</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Carried Out</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disciplinary Outcome (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reprimand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension out of school</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension in school</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion reduced to suspension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention after school</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed in juvenile detention</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. Caution: no control group for these schools.

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one type of outcome.
In our initial year, preliminary analyses show positive results for statewide implementation of student threat assessment.

Schools are making differentiated assessments, recognizing that most cases are not serious.

Most students are able to return to school, with few arrests or expulsions.

Similar outcomes for Black, Hispanic, and White students.

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**Resources on College Safety**

- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)
  [http://www.atapworldwide.org/default.asp](http://www.atapworldwide.org/default.asp)
- FBI Resources on School Violence
  [https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/school-violence](https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/school-violence)
- Homeland Security
  [https://www.dhs.gov/school-safety](https://www.dhs.gov/school-safety)
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA)
- National Behavioral Intervention Team Association
  [https://nabita.org/](https://nabita.org/)
- US Dept of Education data on campus crime
- US Dept of Education Campus Security
  [http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.htm](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.htm)

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**Research Questions**

1. How can we create a climate of respect and concern for others?
2. How can systems of care be more responsive to troubled individuals?
3. What interventions have lasting benefits?
Firearm Deaths
USA 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>21,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>11,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal intervention</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33,636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CDC Causes of Death, Table 10
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_02.pdf

Homicide Locations

- FBI NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System)
- 18,873 homicide incidents
- 2005-2010
- 1/3 U.S. population


Restaurants have 10x more shootings than schools.
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- 246 homicides in 14 years, average 17.5 per year;
- 11,230 campuses × 17.5 = 642
- Average campus has a homicide every 642 years


College Campus Aggravated Assaults


On-Campus Crimes

Figure 33. Number of on-campus crimes reported and number per 10,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by selected type of crime: 2001 through 2011

- Intensive interventions:
  - Protect actions and interventions
  - Ongoing counseling and mental health services
  - Community-based treatment

- At-Risk Persons:
  - Some problem behaviors or conflicts
  - Persons with very serious behavior problems
  - Protect actions and interventions
  - Intensive monitoring and supervision
  - Ongoing counseling and mental health services
  - Community-based treatment

- Campus Prevention:
  - All students, staff, etc.
  - Campus security program
  - Student code of conduct
  - Community-based services for all students and staff

Threat assessment is part of a comprehensive approach