Importance of the Evaluation of Threats

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Threat Assessment

1. The school shooting that inspired the Columbine shooters
2. The rationale for threat assessment
3. How threat assessment works.

Contributing Factors

- Bullying
- Mental Illness
- Peer Influences
- Access to guns

Case example: How schools permit and even promote bullying
- School newspaper
- Rest room monitoring
- Hallway teasing
- Classroom mischief
- Uneven enforcement
- Marching band initiation
- Gym class humiliation
- Group rivalry

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Dr. Cornell has studied youth violence for nearly 30 years and has assisted numerous schools in the development of violence prevention programs. He has authored more than 200 publications in psychology and education, including two books: Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence and School Violence: Fears versus Facts.
Evaluation of Threats
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November 8, 2013

Prevention Opportunities

Bullying
Mental Illness
Peer Influences
Access to guns

Why is snitching so reviled?

Snitch: blabbermouth, canary, fink, narc, rat, sneak, squealer, stoolie, stoolpigeon, tattletale, etc.

Teach students to distinguish snitching from seeking help

Snitching: informing on someone for personal gain
Seeking help: attempting to stop someone from being hurt

FBI Recommendations on School Violence

“Although the risk of an actual shooting incident at any one school is very low, threats of violence are potentially a problem at any school. Once a threat is made, having a fair, rational, and standardized method of evaluating and responding to threats is critically important.” (FBI report p 1)

Secret Service/DOE Recommendations:

- Create a planning team to develop a threat assessment program.
- Identify roles for school personnel.
- Clarify role of law enforcement.
- Conduct threat assessments of students who make threats of violence.

Threat Assessment

1. Identification of threats made by students.
2. Evaluation of seriousness of threat and danger it poses to others, recognizing that all threats are not the same (e.g., toy guns are not dangerous).
3. Intervention to reduce risk of violence.
4. Follow-up to assess intervention results.
6 Principles of the Threat Assessment Process

(abridged from Secret Service/DOE Guide)

1. Targeted violence is the result of an understandable process, not a random or spontaneous act.
2. Consider person, situation, setting, & target.
3. Maintain an investigative, skeptical mindset.
4. Focus on facts and behaviors, not traits.
5. Use information from all possible sources.
6. Making a threat is not the same as posing a threat. Ask "Is this student on a path toward an attack?"

Key point

Threat assessment is not designed to determine whether a student has MADE a threat, but whether a student POSES a threat.

Field-Test Schools

22 Elementary schools
6 Middle schools
4 High schools
3 Alternative schools
35 Total

Team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal or Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Leads team, conducts Step 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Resource Officer</td>
<td>Advises team, responds to illegal actions and emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Staff (School psychologists, counselors, social workers)</td>
<td>Team member to conduct mental health assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required to serve on team</td>
<td>Report threats, provide input to team. No additional workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers, aides, other staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School divisions may further specify team roles and include other staff to meet local needs.

No Magic Formula or Crystal Ball

There is no formula, prescription, or checklist that will predict or prevent all violent acts. School authorities must make reasoned judgments based on the facts of each individual situation, and monitor situations over time.
What is a threat?

A threat is an expression of intent to harm someone.

Threats may be spoken, written, or gestured.

Threats may be direct or indirect, and need not be communicated to the intended victim or victims. ("I’m going to get him.")

Weapon possession is presumed to be a threat unless circumstances clearly indicate otherwise. ("I forgot my knife was in my backpack.")

When in doubt, assume it is a threat.

What did the students threaten to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit/Beat Up</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kill</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut/Stab</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Bomb</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 188 cases

A primary goal of threat assessment is to prevent violence.
Continuum of Threats

- Warning of impending violence
- Attempts to intimidate or frighten
- Thrill of causing a disruption
- Attention-seeking, boasting
- Fleeting expressions of anger
- Jokes
- Figures of speech

Step 1. Evaluate the threat.

- Obtain an account of the threat and the context from the student and witnesses.
- Write down the exact threat.
- Obtain student’s explanation of the threat’s meaning and his/her intentions.
- Obtain witness perceptions of the threat’s meaning.

Document your evaluation.

Typical Questions

1. Do you know why I wanted to talk to you?
2. What happened today when you were [place of incident]?
3. What exactly did you say and do?
4. What did you mean when you said/did that?
5. How do you think [person threatened] feels about what you said?
6. What was the reason you said that?
7. What are you going to do now?

Witness Questions

1. What happened today when you were [place of incident]?
2. What exactly did [student who made threat] say and do?
3. What do you think he/she meant?
4. How do you feel about what he/she said?
5. Why did he/she say that?

All threats are not the same.

“I could just kill you for that!” (laughing)
“I’m gonna kick your butt.”
“There’s a bomb in the school.”
“Wait until I get my gun!”
“Let’s really make them pay for what they did.”

Context matters...
Step 2. Transient or Substantive?

- Determine whether the threat is transient or substantive.
- The critical issue is not what the student threatened to do, but whether the student intends to carry out the threat.
- When in doubt, treat a threat as substantive.

**Transient versus substantive threats**

**Transient threats**
- Often are rhetorical remarks, not genuine expressions of intent to harm.
- At worst, express temporary feelings of anger or frustration.
- Usually can be resolved on the scene or in the office.
- After resolution, the threat no longer exists.
- Usually end with an apology or clarification.

**Substantive threats**
- Express intent to physically injure someone beyond the immediate situation.
- There is at least some risk the student will carry out the threat.
- Require that you take protective action, including warning intended victims and parents.
- May be legal violations and require police consultation.
- When in doubt, treat threats as substantive.

**Substantive threats: Factors to consider**
- Age of student
- Capability of student to carry out the threat
- Student’s discipline history
- Credibility of student and willingness to acknowledge his or her behavior
- Credibility of witness accounts
- When in doubt, treat threats as substantive.

**Presumptive indicators of substantive threats**
- Specific, plausible details. (“I am going to blast Mr. Johnson with my pistol.”)
- Threat has been repeated over time. (“He’s been telling everyone he is going to get you.”)
- Threat reported as a plan (“Wait until you see what happens next Tuesday in the library.”)
- Accomplices or recruitment of accomplices.
- Physical evidence of intent (written plans, lists of victims, bomb materials, etc.)
**Case examples: Transient or substantive threat?**

1. Two elementary students to throw paper wads pretending to bomb one another.
2. Two middle school students get in a shoving match. One says, "I'm gonna bust you up."
3. A boy turns in an English essay that describes an especially violent scene from a war.
4. Two students get into a fight. After they are separated, both are sullen and quiet.
5. A student says he is being bullied. He was warned that if he told anyone, they would beat him up.

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**Step 3. Responses to a transient threat.**

- No need to take safety precautions.
- See that threat is resolved through explanation, apology, making amends.
- Provide counseling and education where appropriate.
- Administer discipline if appropriate.

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**Transient versus substantive threats**

- Transient Threats 70%
- Substantive Threats 30%

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**Who made transient threats?**

![Graph showing number of transient threats by grade level]
The disconnect between youth violence and school safety practices

Zero Tolerance

A policy that mandates a severe punishment that is applied to all violations regardless of the circumstances.

From APA Zero Tolerance Task Force Report, 2006

Suspension Practices

Suspension is a practice that has more negative than positive effects on students:

- Fall behind in their classes
- Feel alienated and rejected
- Continue to misbehave and be suspended
- Drop out of school
- Juvenile court involvement

The school-to-prison pipeline

Transient versus substantive threats

Zero tolerance is not needed for student threats of violence. Threat assessment is a more flexible and effective alternative.
**Evaluation of Threats**

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November 8, 2013

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**Who made substantive threats?**

![Graph showing number of substantive threats by grade level](image)

**Step 4. Serious or very serious substantive threat?**

- Substantive assault threats are classified **serious**. ("I'm gonna beat him up.")
- Substantive threats to kill, rape, or inflict very serious injury are classified **very serious**. ("I'm gonna break his arm.")
- Substantive threats involving a weapon are classified very **serious**.

**Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.**

- Take precautions to protect potential victims. May consult with law enforcement.
- Notify intended victim and victim's parents.
- Notify student's parents.
- Discipline student for threat.
- Determine appropriate intervention for student, such as counseling or dispute mediation.
- Follow up to verify that threat has been resolved and interventions in progress.

**Substantive Case Steps**

**Step 1. Evaluate the threat.**

- Interview the student who made threat and any witnesses.
- Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made, the student's intentions, and the victims' interpretations of the threat.

**Step 2. Decide whether the threat is transient or substantive.**

- Does the student express remorse and retract the threat?
- Is the student willing to make amends or resolve the conflict?
- What is the student's history of discipline problems?

**Step 4. Decide whether the threat is serious or very serious.**

- Did this threat involve a weapon, or a threat to kill, rape, or inflict severe injury?

**Step 5. Respond to the serious substantive threat.**

- Take protective action by notifying parents of perpetrator and victims.
- Take disciplinary action consistent with school policy.
- Identify any other student support or intervention needs.

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**Communication and Problem Solving**

*Threat assessment is a problem-solving approach that requires communication and cooperation among all parties.*

*This process must not be hindered by FERPA.*
Confidentiality Versus Prevention of Violence

“In an emergency, FERPA permits school officials to disclose, without consent, education records, including personally identifiable information from those records, to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals.”

Can school officials share their observations of students?

“FERPA does not prohibit a school official from disclosing information about a student if the information is obtained through the school official’s personal knowledge or observation, and not from the student’s education records.”

Can school officials share their law enforcement unit records?

“Under FERPA, investigative reports and other records created and maintained by these ‘law enforcement units’ are not considered ‘education records’ subject to FERPA. Accordingly, schools may disclose information from law enforcement unit records to anyone....”

Very serious cases are relatively rare

Very Serious → Substantive Threats

Transient Threats
**Evaluation of Threats**

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**How many student threats?**

- 15 (8%) **Very serious**
- 42 (22%) **Serious**
- 131 (70%) **Transient**

188 Total threats reported
16,434 Students

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**Step 6. Conduct a Safety Evaluation for a Very Serious Substantive Threat.**

Safety Evaluation conducted by a team.
- Principal leads the team.
- School psychologist or other mental health professional conducts Mental Health Assessment.
- School resource officer consults on legal issues.
- School counselor leads intervention planning.

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**Very Serious Substantive Threat: Case Example of 8th Grade John**

- 8th grade John reported by another student to have a hit list.
- Tells former girlfriend, “I’m gonna get even with you and all your friends by blowing you all away with a shotgun.”
- John denies hit list or threatening statement. Later acknowledges anger at several classmates and at Alice, his former girlfriend.

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**Very Serious Substantive Threats**

- Threat Reported to Principal
  - Step 1. Evaluate Threat.
  - Step 2. Decide if threat is clearly transient or substantive.
  - Step 3. Respond to transient threat.
  - Step 4. Decide if the substantive threat is serious or very serious.
  - Step 5. Respond to serious substantive threat.

**Key Point**

In a threat assessment, we try to determine why a student made a threat, and therefore how we can prevent the threat from being carried out.

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**Immediate responses to a Very Serious Substantive Threat**

- Take precautions to protect potential victims.
- Consult with law enforcement promptly.
- Notify intended victim and victim’s parents.
- Notify student’s parents.
- Begin Mental Health Assessment.
- Determine safety during suspension.
Very Serious Substantive Threat: Case Example of 8th Grade John

- Principal contacted SRO. They inquire about John’s access to firearms.
- Parents summoned to school. John is suspended, referred for evaluation.
- Parents of victims are informed of threat, reassured about school’s actions.

Law Enforcement Investigation of Very Serious Substantive Threats

- Interview suspects and witnesses.
- Conduct searches for weapons and other evidence of planning.
- Serve as a resource for students with fears or information to share.
- Take appropriate protective action.

Mental Health Assessment

- Not a prediction model.
- Identify any mental health needs.
- Identify reasons why threat was made.
- Propose strategies for reducing risk.

Key Point

Our mental health assessments are not designed to PREDICT violence, but to find ways to PREVENT violence.

Reviewed 221 studies of diverse school-based violence prevention programs
Average effect size = .25 for demonstration programs, which would reduce fighting 50% in a typical school

- Routine practice programs much less effective than demonstration programs (ES .10 vs .25)
- Need to study routine school practices.
Numerous Effective Programs

- Anger management
- Bullying prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Family therapy
- Parenting skills
- Problem-solving
- Social competence
- Substance abuse resistance
- Etc.

Very Serious Substantive Threat: Case Example of 8th Grade John

John describes feeling rejected by Alice, teased by other boys.

John admits hit list. Denies intent to hurt anyone. “They was messing with me and I was messing back.”

John is willing to attend mediation sessions.

Parent interview

- Parent knowledge of threat
- Current stressors, family relations, childhood history
- Recent behavior and mental health
- School adjustment
- Peer relations and bullying
- History of aggressive and delinquent behavior, exposure to violence, access to weapons
- Willingness to assist in a safety plan
- Parent attitude toward school and Law enforcement

Very Serious Substantive Threat: Case Example of 8th Grade John

John’s mother reports that John was treated for depression, stopped his medication a few months ago.

John is stressed over parental separation and conflict.

John does not have history of violence, does not have ready access to firearms.

Mental Health Assessment Report Template

Identifying Information

Give the student’s name, age, grade, school, and other relevant identifying information.

Reason for Referral

State that this evaluation was requested by the school principal because the student made a threat of violence that was judged to be a very serious, substantive threat. Describe the threat, including the exact statement or threatening behavior, and when and where it took place.

Sources of Information

Describe or list the sources of information used in this report, including information from the principal, interviews with the student and witnesses, any parent interviews, and any psychological tests or scales administered.

Major Findings

Describe how the child presented and any important aspects of the child’s mental state, including any indicators of mental disorder; identify any stresses, conflicts, or unmet needs that affect the child’s functioning or bear on the threat incident.

Review the child’s understanding of the threat and its meaning from his or her perspective. Note whether the child has a history of violence or aggressive behavior, and any findings from the assessment that raise concerns about the child’s potential for violence, such as access to firearms, peer encouragement to fight, drug use, or inadequate home supervision.

Recommendations

In general, the mental health professional should not be expected to make a definitive statement that a child is or is not dangerous; rather, the report should present the assessment in a way that allows the reader to draw conclusions based on the data. The report may identify risk factors and protective factors, and express concerns where there appear to be compelling risk factors. More specifically, the report should present recommendations for reducing the risk of violence, and it is the nature of these recommendations that should convey the nature and degree of concern about the potential for violence. In all cases, the goal is to reduce the risk of violence rather than predict violence. Recommendations may include a wide range of strategies, but should address both any immediate safety needs to protect potential victims and broader efforts to resolve conflicts or problems that precipitated the threat.
Step 7. Follow up with action plan.

- Determine action plan to reduce risk of violence.
- Identify appropriate interventions for student.
- Schedule follow-up contact with student to assess current risk and update plan.

Very Serious Substantive Threat: Case Example of 8th Grade John

- John returns to outpatient treatment. Parents recognize impact of their conflict on John.
- Dispute with boys is investigated. John attends mediation sessions with other students. Mutual apologies are given.
- John meets with SRO, agrees to report further problems to him. School counselor establishes relationship.

Threat Documentation Form

This form may be photocopied.

Typical Threat 1

- On interview, the student says he has no plans to harm the classmate and that he just lost his temper. He offers to apologize.
- What kind of threat?

Typical Threat 1

- An angry student says “I’m gonna kill you” to a classmate.
- What do you do?

Typical Threat 2

- A student tells a friend that he is going to beat up Joe in the back parking lot after school today. The friend tells you.
- What do you do?
**Typical Threat 2**

- On interview, the student denies making such a statement. He says that what he does after school is his own business.
- What kind of threat?

**Typical Threat 3**

- A student sends an email threatening to "blow away the preps" at school. When interviewed, the boy says he has a right to free speech. He has a history of discipline problems and students say they are worried.
- What kind of threat?
- What do you do?

**Typical Threat 3**

- This threat is **substantive** because it cannot be easily resolved. It is **very serious** because it involves a threat to kill.

**3 Pathways to Violent Behavior**

- Psychotic Path
- Conflict Path
- Antisocial Path

**Look for patterns, not a single profile.**

- Antisocial youth -- instrumental crime
- Conflicted youth -- reactive anger
- Psychotic youth -- delusional motive

**Antisocial Youth**

- Instrumental crimes
- Under-controlled aggression
- Antisocial peers
- Delinquent history
- Early childhood problems
- School discipline history
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High school senior with history of school and community behavior problems, drug use, family discord
• Suspended from school for profanity, defiance, tobacco
• Took car from classmate and shot him

Psychotic Youth
• Delusional motive
• Auditory hallucinations
• Substance abuse
• Resentment over mistreatment
• Alienation from peers
• Odd behaviors

Seung-Hui Cho

Main Reports
1. Governor’s Review Panel Report
2. VA Tech Internal Review
3. Report to President Bush on Virginia Tech
   http://www.hhs.gov/vtreport.html

Childhood Timeline
• 1984 Born in Seoul Korea, shy and frail as infant, did not want to be touched
• 1992 Family moved to U.S.
• 1997 Diagnosed “social anxiety disorder”, receives counseling around acculturation
• 1999 Suicidal/homicidal writings, wants to repeat Columbine – diagnosed “selective mutism” and “major depression”, antidepressants for 1 year, seemed successful

Adolescent Timeline
• 2000 IEP for shyness and lack of speech, no behavior problems
• Monthly language therapy in school
• Mental health counseling center until 11th grade, did not want to continue
• 2003 Graduates with 3.5 in Honors Program, seen as successful case
• Disability status not indicated in records sent to Va Tech

College Year 3
• Fall 2005 returned to dorm, suitemates try to befriend him, but he says little. They take him to parties and he sits alone. Stabs carpet in girl’s room, and they stop taking him places.
• Called suitemate and identified himself as Cho’s twin and “question mark. Posted Facebook messages as Cho’s twin
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Seung-Hui Cho

College Writing Class
- Fall 2005 Professor concerned with violent writing, withdrawn behavior.
  In paper wrote about other students in class,
  “I don’t know which uncouth, low-life planet you come from but you disgust me. In fact, you all disgust me. You low-life barbarians make me sick to the stomach that I wanna barf over my new shoes. If you despicable human beings... keep this up, before you know it you will turn into cannibals-eating little babies, your friends. I hope y’all burn in hell for mass murdering and eating all those little animals.”
- Students afraid to come to class. Photographing classmates with camera under desk. Professor refused to teach him. Removed from class, refuses counseling, Care Team reviews case.

Seung-Hui Cho

College Stalking
- Nov 2005 Female students report Cho for stalking, IMs with strange aliases, going to room in disguise. Referred to Judicial Affairs, phone screening with counseling center.
- Dec 2005 Police tell him no contact with female student. Sent IM to suitemate “I might as well kill myself now.” Police take to CSB, where hospitalized as “imminent danger to self or others.” Diagnosed mood disorder NOS.

Seung-Hui Cho

College Hospitalization
- Dec 2005 After overnight hosp stay, not seen as danger to self or others, so released by court but ordered to outpatient treatment. Goes to college counseling center, seen as not psychotic. Does not return.
- April 2006 Professor concerned about his writing, Cho was angry and was asked to leave office.
- Spring 2006 Creative writing about man who hates students, plans to kill them and himself.

Seung-Hui Cho

College Year 4
Fall 2006 Professor contacts dean, but dean finds no mention of mental health issues or police reports. Professor encourages counseling, which Cho declines. By now, 6 professors have expressed concern about Cho.

Seung-Hui Cho

Prior to Attack
- Feb 2007 orders handgun online
- Mar 2007 rents van, buys 2nd gun, background check fails, practices, buys ammo
- April 8 videotapes manifesto in hotel
- April 13 bomb threats at 3 halls
- April 14 Asian male seen in hood, door reported chained, more ammo bought
- April 15 normal phone call to family

You sadistic snobs, I may be nothing but a piece of (expletive deleted) You have vandalized my heart, raped my soul, and tortured my conscience. You thought it was one pathetic boy’s life you were extinguishing. Thanks to you, I die, like Jesus Christ, to inspire generations of the weak and the defenseless people.
Statements from Cho Video

- You had 100 billion chances and ways to have avoided today, but you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off.

- Do you know what it feels like to be spit on your face and have trash shoved down your throat? Do you know what it feels like to dig your own grave? Do you know what it feels like to have your throat slashed from ear to ear?

- Do you know what it feels like to be burned alive? Do you know what it feels like to be humiliated and be impaled — impaled upon a cross and left to bleed to death for your amusement?

- You had everything you wanted. Your Mercedes wasn’t enough, you brats. Your golden necklaces weren’t enough, you snobs. Your trust fund wasn’t enough. Your vodka and Cognac weren’t enough. All your debaucheries weren’t enough. Those weren’t enough to fill your hedonistic needs. You had everything.

- You sadistic snobs, I may be nothing but a piece of (EXPLETIVE DELETED). You have vandalized my heart, raped my soul, and tortured my conscience. You thought it was one pathetic boy’s life you were extinguishing. Thanks to you, I die, like Jesus Christ, to inspire generations of the weak and the defenseless people.

- You just love to crucify me. You loved inducing cancer in my head, terrorizing my heart, and raping my soul all this time.

- I didn’t have to do this. I could have left. I could have fled. But, no, I will no longer run. It’s not for me. For my children, for my brothers and sisters that you (EXPLETIVE DELETED). I did it for them.

Conflicted youth

- Reactive violence of victims
- Over-controlled hostility
- Few previous overt behavior problems
- Over-sensitive to shame
- Intense need for approval, status
- Suicidality

Bullying motivated many of the school shootings

Research on Threat Assessment

1. Initial field-test study
2. Memphis field test
3. High school climate study
4. High school suspension study
5. Randomized controlled trial

What did the students threaten to do?

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</tbody>
</table>

N = 188 cases
How did schools respond to 188 threats?

- Arrest: 6
- Expel: 3
- Suspend: 94

Follow-up interviews on student threats

- Interviews conducted with school principals at end of school year and again the following fall.
- Follow-up time periods averaged 148 days until end of school year.
- Four students did not return to school after the threat, 17 left within 30 days after threat.

Follow-up on student behavior after the threat

According to school principals interviewed after approximately one year.

Memphis Field-Trial

Memphis Public Schools resolved 209 threats in 194 schools, including 110 threats to kill, shoot, or stab.
- 5 permanent expulsions, 3 incarcerations
- Office referrals declined >50%
- No reports of any threats carried out

Virginia High School Climate Study

- 95 high schools using the UVA threat assessment model
- 131 using locally developed models
- 54 not using threat assessment

School Psychology Quarterly, 2009
Evaluation of Threats
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Findings for Virginia Model Schools
• Less bullying and other victimization
• Greater student willingness to seek help
• Perceive adults as more caring and fair
• Fewer long-term suspensions

Controlled for school size, poverty, minority %, school security measures, and neighborhood violent crime.

School Psychology Quarterly, 2009

Reductions in Long-Term Suspensions Following Adoption of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines

Dewey G. Cornell, Anne Gregory, and Xitao Fan

Abstract
This quasi-experimental study examined the adoption of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines in 23 high schools. After training, school administrators and other staff members demonstrated substantial increases in knowledge of threat assessment principles and decreased commitment to zero tolerance approaches. Schools using the guidelines showed a 55% reduction in long-term suspensions and a 79% reduction in bullying infractions from the pretreatment year to the posttreatment year, in contrast to a control group of 26 schools not using the guidelines.

School Psychology Quarterly, 2009

High School Discipline Study

• Compared 23 high schools implementing threat assessment with 26 control high schools (no threat assessment).
• Used school records of suspensions and discipline infractions for baseline year prior to training and follow-up year after training.

NASSP Bulletin, 2011
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Randomized Controlled Trial

- 40 schools (K-12)
- Randomly assigned
- 1 year follow-up
- 201 students

School Psychology Review, 2012

Randomized Controlled Trial

Students in threat assessment schools...
- Received more counseling
- More parent involvement
- Fewer long-term suspensions
- Fewer alternative placements

Logistic regression odds ratios: 3.98, 2.57, .35, and .13

Outcome Odds for Students in Threat Assessment versus Control Schools

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Threat Assessment Group</th>
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<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Odds ratios control for effects of student gender, race, grade, and threat severity. Table shows how likely an outcome would be for a student attending a school with threat assessment in comparison to a control school without threat assessment.

Virginia Public Schools

133 school divisions
2,002 public schools
1.2 million students

Schools Using Virginia Guidelines

Association of Threat Assessment with Suspensions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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Evaluation of Threats
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

November 8, 2013

Years Using TA Associated with Suspensions

Schools using Virginia TA

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<tr>
<td>One year increase in number of years using UVA TA (1-5)</td>
<td>17% fewer</td>
<td>5% fewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( p < .05 \) for both LTS and STS
Same control variables

Liability Protection

- Follow recognized standards.
- Make reasonable decisions. (Perfection is not required.)
- Maintain adequate documentation. (Post hoc records are inadequate.)

Training Workshops

California
Colorado
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Indiana
Kansas
Maryland
New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
Tennessee
Vermont
Washington
Wisconsin

2013 NREPP Listing!


Threat assessment is part of a comprehensive approach

Schoolwide Prevention
  - All students

At-Risk Students
  - Students with some problem behaviors

Intensive Interventions
  - Students with serious behavior problems

Social skills groups
  - Short-term counseling
  - Wraparound and other school programs
  - Transition and other academic support
  - Special education evaluation and services

http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu

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