Overview

1. Our schools are safe.
2. Prevention does not require prediction.
3. Threat assessment works.

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Public concern over a recent series of mass shootings:

- Jan 2011 shopping center in Tucson AZ (6)
- Sep 2011 restaurant in Carson City NV (5)
- Jul 2012 movie theater in Aurora CO (12)
- Aug 2012 Sikh temple in Oak Creek WI (7)
- Sept 2012 business in Minneapolis MN (7)
- Dec 2012 school in Newtown CT (28)
- Sept 2013 Washington Navy Yard (12)
The media were quick to assert that mass shootings were increasing.

The Sandy Hook shooting was part of a national problem with gun violence, not school violence.

- Approximately 31,000 gun fatalities each year
- Suicide (62%), homicide (35%), & accidental shootings (3%)
- Approximately 85 deaths per day

Source: National Vital Statistics
http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/dataRestriction_inj.html

Cases with 4 or more victims
Chart from James Alan Fox, Northeastern University
http://boston.com/community/blogs/crime_punishment/2013/01/responding_to_mother_jones.html

Mass shootings in the U.S., 1976-2011

FIGURE 1
Percent change in rate of violent victimization since 1993

Firearm Deaths per 100,000

Selected countries. Note that some countries have a higher death rate than the U.S. — Jamaica, Honduras, El Salvador, Swaziland, Brazil, South Africa, Colombia, Mexico, Panama. Data from United Nations Homicide Statistics.
Homicides At School vs Outside of School

Ages 5-18

Where do violent crimes occur in Virginia?

2011 Virginia Murder Offenses

Source: Data from page 46, Crime in Virginia 2011, Virginia State Police. Data for schools k-12 and colleges are combined.

Should we put armed guards in shopping centers?

2011 Tucson shooting, 6 killed

Should we put armed guards in theaters?

Colorado shooting at 'Dark Knight' opening leaves 12 dead

Should we put armed guards in school buses?

US school bus driver shot dead, child abducted in Alabama

Do not copy without permission
434-924-8929
Where do we need police protection?

- Location A -- highest crime rate
- Location B -- medium crime rate
- Location C -- lowest crime rate

Unless we have unlimited police resources, we should place any additional officers in locations with the highest crime rates.

What if the media devotes 95% of its coverage to crime in Location C?

- Location A -- highest crime rate
- Location B -- medium crime rate
- Location C -- lowest crime rate

Media coverage should not compromise an objective assessment of crime rates and security needs.

How many elementary schools in the U.S.?

- 67,000 public elementary
- 16,000 private elementary
- 83,000 total elementary schools

[Source: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84]

How many homicides occur in U.S. elementary schools?

- 30 homicides 1992-2011
- 26 homicides at Sandy Hook
- 56 total homicides in 21 years

[Source: http://www.schoolsafety.us/media-resources/school-associated-violent-deaths]

Where do homicides occur in U.S. elementary schools? 1992-2011 pre-Sandy Hook

- 7 (23%) Inside school
- 23 (77%) Outside school
  - 9 Parking lot
  - 6 Playground
  - 8 Other outside areas

[Source: http://www.schoolsafety.us/media-resources/school-associated-violent-deaths]
How frequently will a homicide occur at the average elementary school?

- Total 56 homicides in 21 years
- \( \frac{56}{21} = 2.67 \) homicides per year
- 83,000 elementary schools
- \( \frac{83,000}{2.67/year} = \) 1 case every 31,086 years

School-Associated Violent Deaths 1994-2010

2013 data from CDC School-Associated Violent Death Study - http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/savd.html

School violence is not increasing.

Arming our teachers is not that easy

Gun group offers training for Utah teachers

Sandy Hook Shooting Inspires Bulletproof Kids Clothing

Fear mongering
Schools Are Training Second-Graders to Attack Mass Shooters

A kindergarten student in California is being punished for his imaginary shooting.

6 year old pointed finger and said “pow!”

http://www.sott.net/article/255552-6-year-old-suspended-for-pretend-gunshot

Zero Tolerance Suspensions After the Newtown Shootings

It seems unreasonable to try to make our schools completely secure from attack.

What else can we do?

Prevention means “to keep something from happening”

Prevention does not require prediction.
Crisis response is not prevention.

A crisis occurs when prevention has failed.

Prevention must start before the gunman is at your door.

Prevention does not require prediction.

We cannot predict who will get cancer, but we can identify risk and protective factors that reduce cancer rates dramatically.

We cannot predict who will have an accident, but safety regulations make safer roads, cars, and drivers.

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.

Critics say, “We can’t predict who will be violent, so prevention is not possible.”

However,....
• 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.

Governor’s School and Campus Safety Task Force

40 members, Led by Secretaries of Public Safety, Education, and Health and Human Resources
http://dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/SchoolCampusSafetyTaskForce/

2013 Legislation
1. HB 1871 Bullying; defines term, school boards shall include policies & procedure in code of student conduct.
2. HB 2343 Funding for facility and security upgrades
3. HB 2344 School safety; threat assessment teams, model critical incident response training program, etc.
5. HB 2346 Lock-down drills; every public school is required to have at least two practices per year, etc.
6. HB 2347 Juvenile information sharing, permits principals to share juvenile records with threat assessment teams
7. SB 1376 Certain persons; immunity for those reporting, etc., individual posing credible danger of injury.
8. SB1378 Enhanced penalty for straw man gun purchases

Governor’s School and Campus Safety Task Force

Community Services
• Suicide prevention training
• Expanded outpatient mental health services, drop-off centers
• Mental health first aid training (response to persons in distress)

School Security
• Mandatory lockdown drills
• School emergency manager
• Restored SRO funding
• Security checklists and crisis management plans
• Critical incident response training
• Funding for facility upgrades
Governor’s School and Campus Safety Task Force

School-based Prevention

- Statutory definition of bullying
- Anti-bullying training
- Threat assessment teams in all schools
- Civil immunity for reporting threats

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

West Paducah, Ky. DEC. 1, 1997

Three students killed, 5 wounded in shooting

Carneal pleads guilty in shootings

Contributing Factors

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

Bullying
Mental Illness
Peer Influences
Access to guns

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

Team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</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 counselors, psychologists, social workers)</td>
<td>Team member to conduct mental health assessments. Team member to take lead role in follow-up interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required to serve on team Teachers, aides, other staff</td>
<td>Report threats, provide input to team. No additional workload.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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 Type</th>
<th>Number of Threats</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit/Beat Up</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kill</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoot</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut/Stab</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Bomb</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 188 cases
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

Transient versus substantive threats

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.

Very serious cases are relatively rare
**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.

**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.

*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.*
Key Point

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

Follow-up on student behavior after the threat

According to school principals interviewed after approximately one year.

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

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

Behavioral Disorders, 2008
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_

Virginia High School Climate Study

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

_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_

High School Discipline Study

Long-Term Suspension Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Trained Schools (n = 23)</th>
<th>Competent Schools (n = 26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_School Psychology Review, 2012_

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

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>LTS</th>
<th>STS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used Virginia Threat Assessment Guidelines</td>
<td>19% fewer</td>
<td>8% fewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
School Safety Trends and Threat Assessment
Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.

October 19, 2013

2013 NREPP Listing!

Training Workshops

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

Summary

1. Our schools are safe.
2. Prevention does not require prediction.
3. Threat assessment works.

Slides available on website

Virginia Youth Violence Project
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