



A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT
AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

Presented by:

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**Prevention
Preparation
Response
Recovery**

The presentation will:

- Briefly review the research and basic principles regarding threat assessment and threat management
- Summarize the risk factors identified with targeted violence
- Review a system for assessing and managing potential violence in the schools
- Provide case example

Assessing Student Threats: Implementing the Salem-Keizer System (2nd Edition)

VanDreal, McCarthy, Swinehart, Speckmaier, Elliott, Okada, Rainwater, Novotney, Rutledge, Mendoza, Byrd

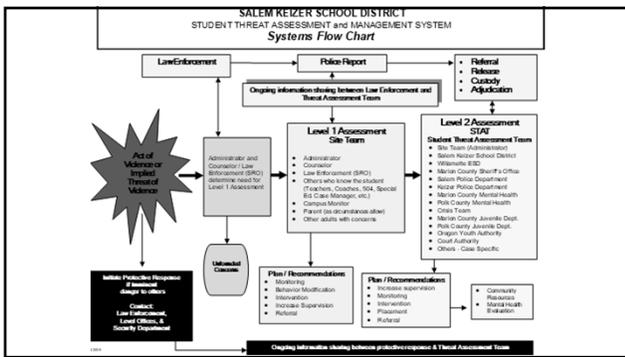
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Schools are the safest place for our students

Yet... horrific events occur

- * Response in education and community policy has varied from highly reactive policy making to avoidance and denial.
- * Furthermore, students and community members frequently make threats or use threatening talk as a means of socializing and communicating. How do we know when a threat is real, when do we worry and how do we respond?



AGGRESSION CONTINUUM
(from Eric M. Johnson, PhD.)

- Bombing
- Shooting
- Raping
- Stabbing
- Beating
- Strangling
- (Violent Aggression: serious or lethal injury)
- Sexual coercion
- Fighting
- Hitting with objects
- Throwing objects
- Slugging
- Kicking
- Scratching
- Biting
- Slapping
- Pushing
- (Aggression Behavior: low to moderate injury)



CONTEXT AND SITUATION

WHAT IS THREAT ASSESSMENT?

As defined by the Secret Service (*Threat Assessment in Schools* pg. 29): "The primary purpose of a threat assessment is to prevent targeted violence. The threat assessment process is centered upon analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in a given situation. The appraisal of risk in a threat assessment focuses on actions, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to mount an attack and is engaged in planning or preparing for that event."

Context and Situation

The assessment of the "unique" interaction and dynamics between the perpetrator, the target and the situation they share. The question is "does the person 'pose' a threat," not "did the person 'make' a threat."



Targeted and Reactive

•REACTIVE / AFFECTIVE / IMPULSIVE

•TARGETED / PREMEDITATED / PREDATORY

Reactive Aggression



- Absence of planning
- Elevated emotional state
- Aggressor feels under immediate threat



Targeted Violence

(Fein&Vossekuil, 1998)

- Targeted violence is not reactive.
- It is not the result of someone going mental or "snapping."
- It is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behaving.
- The aggressor will display "attack-related" behaviors that move along a continuum of idea to action, including justification, planning, rehearsing, and logistical preparations.



ATTACK RELATED BEHAVIOR

Behavior that supports the threat as a more serious consideration...

EXAMPLES:

- PLANNING
- PREPARATION
- WEAPONS ACQUISITION
- REHEARSAL
- SCHEDULING
- OTHERS?

Inhibitors (Adult)

- Employment
- Finances
- Health
- Residence
- Children
- Family
- Looking to the future
- Resolving the grievance

What are examples of inhibitors in the youth population?

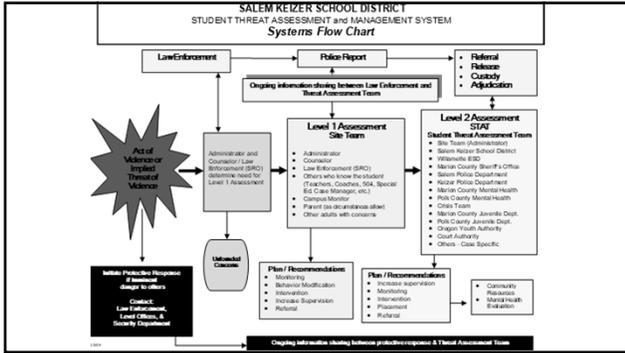


RESEARCH SUMMARY

1. What kind of communication has the student/s made regarding their intention to harm others? Is the communication a statement of anger such as "I'm going to kill you..." or does it involve details of planning or an ongoing consideration of an attack?
2. Is there a motive? Does the student experience or perceive severe rejection of bullying from other students?
3. Are there indications of behavior that increase the possibility of violence occurring (plan, acquiring weapons, rehearsal or simulation, other preparations, scheduling)?
4. Is there a specific target?
5. Is there peer collaboration? Are peers aware of or concerned about a potential attack?
6. Does the situation involve student/students who are out of alternatives, marginalized and disenfranchised, low on psychological reserves, out of acceptable coping strategies, and willing to accept the consequences of carrying out the threat?
7. Are there indications of identification shifts, fixation, last resort behavior, or novel aggression?
8. Are there personality or behavioral traits, family dynamics, School system issues or social dynamics that lead to a more vulnerable and potentially escalating situation.

STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM





JUSTIFICATIONS

1. Concerns regarding violence and school safety.
2. Response to (ORS 339.250) requiring policy and procedure.
3. Zero-Tolerance Policy, expulsion. Reactive public policy measures.
4. Psychological Safety.



Advantages of a Threat Assessment System

- Shared ownership, shared responsibility. Decreased liability.
- Multi-discipline, multi-agency.
- Expeditious but methodical.
- Community collaboration and ownership.
- Identification of risk in clear terms.
- Interventions and supervision strategies that fit the situation and accurately address risk.
- Promotes observation and supervision.
- Increases both the physical safety of a community and the psychological sense of safety.

The Threat Assessment System objectives are:

1. Assess threats of potentially harmful or lethal behavior and determine the level of concern and action required.
2. Organize resources and strategies to manage situations involving people that pose threats to others.
3. Maintain a sense of psychological safety within the community.



Organizing a system

- Need, justification and authorization.
- Community ownership, commitment, and responsibility.
- Policy and procedures necessary for functioning. (Legal counsel)
- Organize resources, design system and refine.
- Training, implementation, more training.
- Maintenance of program, trouble-shooting and ongoing training.

QUESTIONS?