

Threat Assessment

Revision Date: 1/12/16

Oral, written, physical, social media, or any threat directed to the school community

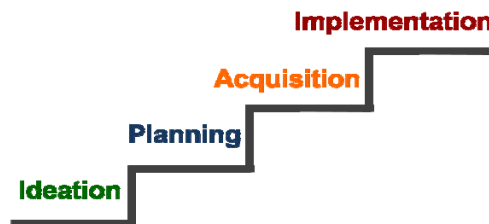
Background

This Threat Assessment process was developed by SIGMA Threat Associates based on findings from the largest federal study of school shootings in the US. This study was a collaboration between the US Secret Service and US Department of Education which reviewed 37 incidents and 41 attackers, focusing on operational information - what could be detectable and usable.

Threat Assessment involves asking: Is this student on a pathway to violence? Using a team can be particularly effective for gathering and evaluating information, and intervening if necessary. Threat Assessment and case management is not an adversarial process. Engagement with a person of concern can be critical to preventing violence or harm.

Major Facts About School Shootings

School-based attacks are rarely sudden, impulsive acts. They typically follow a pathway to violence, depicted below.



Prior to the attacks, others usually knew of attacker's idea/plan.

Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.

There is no accurate or useful profile of the "school shooter".

Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack.

Most attackers had significant difficulties with losses or failures. Most were suicidal.

Many felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.

Most attackers had access to weapons - and had used weapons, prior to the attack.

In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.

Despite prompt law enforcement response, most incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention.

Most were very brief in duration.

References:

Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative*. Washington DC: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education.

Deisinger, E., Randazzo, M., O'Neill, D., & Savage, J. (2008). *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*. Stoneham, MA: Applied Risk Management, Inc.

Implications for Prevention

Incidents of school violence can be prevented.

Information about a student's ideas and plans for violence can be observed or discovered before harm can occur, but information available is likely to be scattered and fragmented.

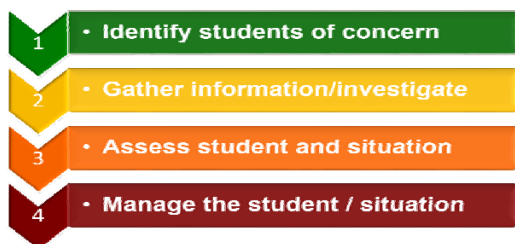
Key is to act quickly upon an initial report of concern, gather other pieces of the puzzle, then assemble to see what picture emerges.

Reference:

Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative*. Washington DC: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education.

What is School Threat Assessment?

A systematic process that is designed to:



Threat assessment is fact-based and deductive:



References:

Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative*. Washington DC: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education.

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Steps in the School Threat Assessment Process		
If at any point during this evaluation the threat is determined to be imminent, refer to the response actions located in the School Crisis Guide (ie: Active Shooter, Bomb Threat, Hostage) and notify law enforcement. All steps listed in this assessment should be followed in order. Contact with additional officials (ie: police, superintendent) should be made once the team deems it necessary.		
√	DATE / TIME	
		Learn about a student of possible concern May happen through a variety of means: teacher, anonymous tip line, student, parent, law enforcement. Identify the areas where additional liaison may be needed: after school programs, weekend sports teams, parents, employers. Notify principal and activate School Crisis Team.
√	DATE / TIME	
		Gather information about the student and his/her situation Seek out information from multiple sources about the student and his/her situation. Who might have information? teachers/administrators, school staff, coach/employer, parents, social media sites/internet, local law enforcement, after-school/weekend programs, community-level entities, student of concern. Recognize that violence is a dynamic process. It stems from interaction between the student, their situation, and their setting. Avoid reliance on single factors/single sources of information Utilize multiple collateral data sources: credible, first-hand knowledge, evaluate and minimize impact of bias. Anticipate and assess impact of the investigative process on the student and his/her situation.
√	DATE / TIME	
		Use information to answer 11 key questions 1. What are the student's motive(s) and goals? What first brought him/her to someone's attention? 2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack? 3. Has the student shown any inappropriate interest in school attacks/attackers, weapons, incidents of mass violence? 4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors? 5. Does the student have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence? 6. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair? 7. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult? 8. Does the student see violence as an acceptable, desirable – or the only – way to solve a problem? 9. Are the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions? 10. Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence? 11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood the student will engage in violence / resort to violence?
√	DATE / TIME	
		Make Evaluation / Assessment Focus on facts of specific case. Focus on the student's behavior rather than the student's traits. Focus on understanding of context of behavior. Examine progression of behavior over time. Corroborate critical information. Answer two assessment questions: Does the student pose a threat of harm, whether to himself, to others, or both? That is, does the student's behavior suggest that he or she is on a pathway toward harm? If yes, then develop and implement a case management plan. If no, proceed to the second question: If the student does not pose a threat of violence, does the student otherwise show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care? If no, the case can be closed; if additional information becomes available the case can be reopened. If yes, then develop and implement a referral and monitoring plan; the referral and monitoring plan may include referral to a mental health agency.
√	DATE / TIME	
		Develop and implement case management plan
References: Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). <i>Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative</i> . Washington DC: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education. Deisinger, E., Randazzo, M., O'Neill, D., & Savage, J. (2008). <i>The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams</i> . Stoneham, MA: Applied Risk Management, Inc.		

Additional Resources

United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education. The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States. July 2004. <<https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>>
United States Secret Service, United States Department of Education, and National Institute of Justice. An Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools. October 2000. <http://cecp.air.org/download/ntac_ssi_report.pdf>
Federal Emergency Management Agency. Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans. 2013.
<http://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf>