Strategies for Preventing School Violence in the U.S.

Marisa Reddy Randazzo, PhD
SIGMA Threat Management Associates

AGENDA

- Facts About School Shootings
- How Prevention is Possible
- 6 Strategies for School Violence Prevention and Threat Assessment
- Summary
- Resources & Contact Info

Understanding School Shootings and School Violence

Safe School Initiative Final Report
http://www.sigmatma.com/about/resources

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WHAT WE KNOW

Facts about school shootings in the US:

• School shooters typically don’t “just snap.” Instead, they plan their attacks beforehand.
• Their planning behavior is often observable and follows a “pathway to violence.”
• In most cases, they tell people beforehand that they are planning a school shooting. They disclose plans through social media, homework assignments, comments to friends, etc.


WHAT WE KNOW

Facts about school shootings in the US:

• Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack. They were already on multiple “radar screens.”
• Most attackers had significant difficulty coping with losses or failures or were even suicidal. We know how to help someone who is suicidal.


IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION

• Many school attacks 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.
• Assessment involves asking: Is this student on a pathway toward violence?
6 Strategies for School Violence Prevention and Threat Assessment

**STRATEGY NUMBER 1**

1. Start a School Threat Assessment Team
   - Multi-disciplinary membership
   - Can be school-specific or
   - Can serve multiple schools
   - Can include a district-level oversight team

**STRATEGY NUMBER 2**

2. Get School Threat Assessment Training for the Team
   - Be sure to vet trainer credentials
   - Train all team members at once, if possible
   - Include tabletop exercises
STRATEGY NUMBER 3

3. Identify Resources In School and Community
   ▪ Develop list of support & intervention resources
   ▪ Develop points of contact for each
   ▪ Consider options in other districts / regions
   ▪ Consider options available remotely

STRATEGY NUMBER 4

4. Encourage People to Report Concerns
   ▪ Dispel misconceptions about threat assessment.
     ▪ Primarily support-focused process.
     ▪ Goals are to maintain safety and connect person with necessary help
     ▪ Reporting allows something to be done.
     ▪ Early reporting allows greater range of options.

STRATEGY NUMBER 5

5. Assess and enhance school climate:
   ▪ Surveys for faculty, staff, students, parents, others
   ▪ Data-driven enhancements
   ▪ Student input for solutions and implementation
   ▪ SHARE RESULTS!
STRATEGY NUMBER 6

6. Enhance Connections with All Students
   ▪ Powerful protective factor
   ▪ Examples of low-cost / no-cost options
     ❑ Reach-Out
     ❑ Names / Stickers
     ❑ Desk / Project Requests

SUMMARY

▪ It is possible to prevent school violence.
▪ School threat assessment can identify and help address a broad array of problematic behavior.
▪ Program components should include access to:
  ▪ Multi-disciplinary team
  ▪ Threat assessment training
  ▪ Intervention resources
▪ Enhancing a school’s climate can help enhance school safety...
▪ …as can efforts to foster more connections between students and adults in school/community.

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RESOURCES
Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model

Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Behavior and Creating Safe School Climates
www.SigmaTMA.com

The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the US
www.SigmaTMA.com

DHS Academic Community Exercise Starter Kits
www.dhs.gov/esks

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D.
SIGMA Threat Management Associates
703-647-7419
Info@SigmaTMA.com

Website: www.SigmaTMA.com
Twitter: @SigmaTMA
@marisarandazzo

Instagram: @sigmathreatmgmt

LinkedIn: Sigma Threat Management
Facebook: Sigma Threat Management