

Campus Safety

CONFERENCE 2019

Making Campuses Safer — TOGETHER

Train the Trainer: Creating a Threat Assessment Team

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CampusSafetyConference.com

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- Access to the presentation
- Q&A Session at end
- Evaluations
- Social Media



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About Me

- Retired after 27 years of being a Police Lieutenant from Ocean Township NJ located in Monmouth County.
 - Upgraded all safety and security practices and policies
 - Upgraded the physical security of the buildings for the district
 - Implemented a student and staff training program to bring the "Best Practices" to the district
- Certified Public Manager (CPM)
- Owner and CEO of True Security Design
 - Concentrates on providing the best most up to date training programs for the Law Enforcement, School and Business communities.

Today's Session

Session Takeaways

- Properly identify students of concern.
- Be able to determine their risk for violence or other harmful actions.
- Create a plan to address and manage that risk.

School and College VIOLENCE....

- Violence in our schools and colleges is a reality that is not going away.
- We must prepare our students and staff to respond quickly when violence erupts.
- Learning to lock down, flee or fight to survive are important skills we all need when an Active Shooter attacks.



BUT....

**what if we could identify potentially dangerous students
BEFORE they attack and intervene before the bullets start flying.**

What is a Student Threat Assessment?

A **Student Threat Assessment (STA)** helps your administrators and staff identify students of concern and recognize the signs of potential violence before an attack happens.

It helps your staff see the hidden meanings behind student writings, drawings, social media comments, Kill lists, veiled threats and rumors for what they are:

WARNING SIGNS of danger!



What is a Student Threat Assessment?

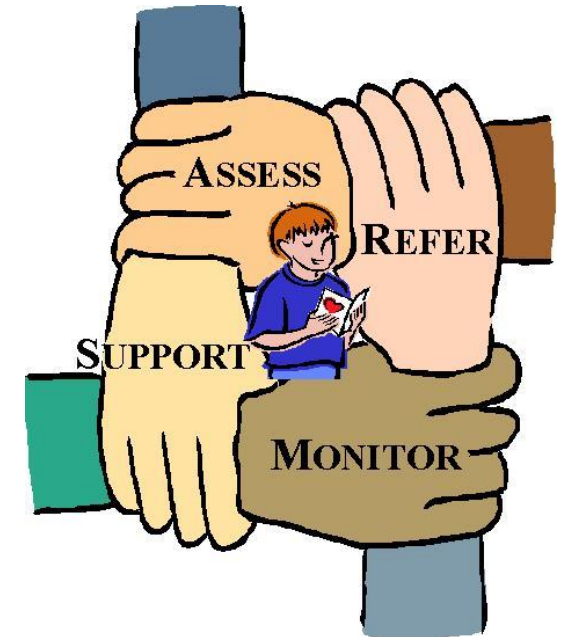
While there is no specific Active Shooter Profile, there are some common traits we can look for in student behavior and actions to help us identify who may be at risk for striking out violently.

We can also learn to recognize physical signs of mental changes a person might go through as they prepare to attack their fellow students.

The Student Threat Assessment TEAM

Identifying students of concern and understanding the signs of potential violence gives us an edge when it comes to protecting our campuses, if we use that knowledge to act!

We act by establishing a **Student Threat Assessment Team** in our districts and university's, whose members are properly trained to respond to threats and concerns about violence in a timely manner with the goal of intervening before violence happens and then developing a follow up process to ensure the intervention is maintained.



How do we develop a Student Threat Assessment Team?

- Developing the **Student Threat Assessment Team (STAT)** starts with a policy.
 - The College/ University or School District creates a policy to describe the creation of the team and the purpose of the student threat assessment process.
 - The policy includes selection criteria, how and when the team will be used.
 - Some policies include specific team members such as...
 - Administrators
 - Teachers
 - Counselors
 - SRO's or local police.



Policy

The policy should also include possible interventions, what reports will be filled out, who will review the reports, who the reports will be shared with, when and under what circumstances law enforcement will be notified, what in school resources will be used and what the process of monitoring will be and how follow up services will be implemented.



A success criteria should also be established as well as a referral plan if more serious interventions or services are required by the student.

Once the policy is established you choose your team

It is important that we don't use only counselors, but we include a wide variety of disciplines such as administrators, teachers, security, guidance personnel, child study team, and nurse or other members of the school staff and the SRO or local police.

Your criteria might be: Time in the district, specific education, job title, skill sets, experience or any other qualifier you feel is important to make the team representative of your district and the disciplines in your school.

To stipend or not to stipend?

This is an individual school decision when it comes to compensating team members for their time outside of their regular work day.

Student Threat Assessment Teams may have to respond before or after the regular class day begins or ends; threats don't work on a time table.

Back up team members should also be considered to cover for vacation, sick days etc.



How does the team get trained?

This is one of the many training programs we offer at True Security Design (www.TrueSecurityDesign.com), but you can also look to your local or state Dept. of Education for training.

How long does the training take?

Most teams can be put together quickly once the prep work is done: Policy, Team Criteria etc. Usually the on-scene training takes one to two days for the team members.

What factors does the team look for?

Properly identify students of concern:

- What signs do students display that can indicate potential violence may be in the offing?
- Verbal and non verbal threats, direct or indirect, vague or veiled threats, comments made to others on social media, or simply manifesto type of social media comments.

What factors does the team look for?

Drawings, writings, doodles, journals, cartoons:

All of these “Expressive” acts of creation can reveal the intent or problems a student is having and the potential for a violent outburst.

We must learn to decipher these expressions and determine if they are indeed portents of danger or if they are simply dark or ironic humor.

Be able to determine their risk for violence or other harmful actions

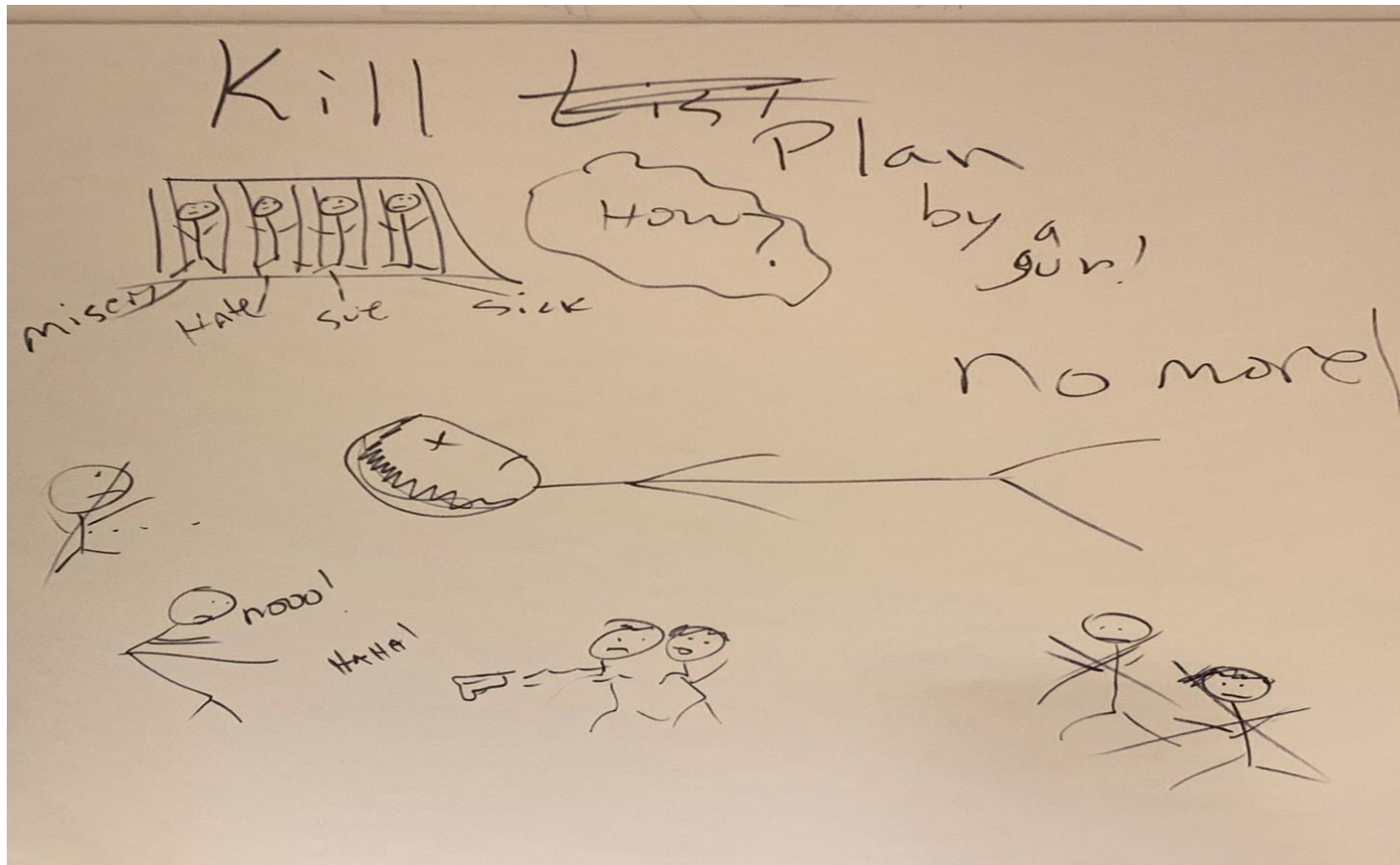
Understanding the hidden meanings of writing, drawing and words....



A dangerous drawing...

- This drawing was by a high school freshman.
- There were many concerns here.
- The action was first person, violent and deadly.
- It revealed violent intent that was confirmed by an interview with the child who drew it.

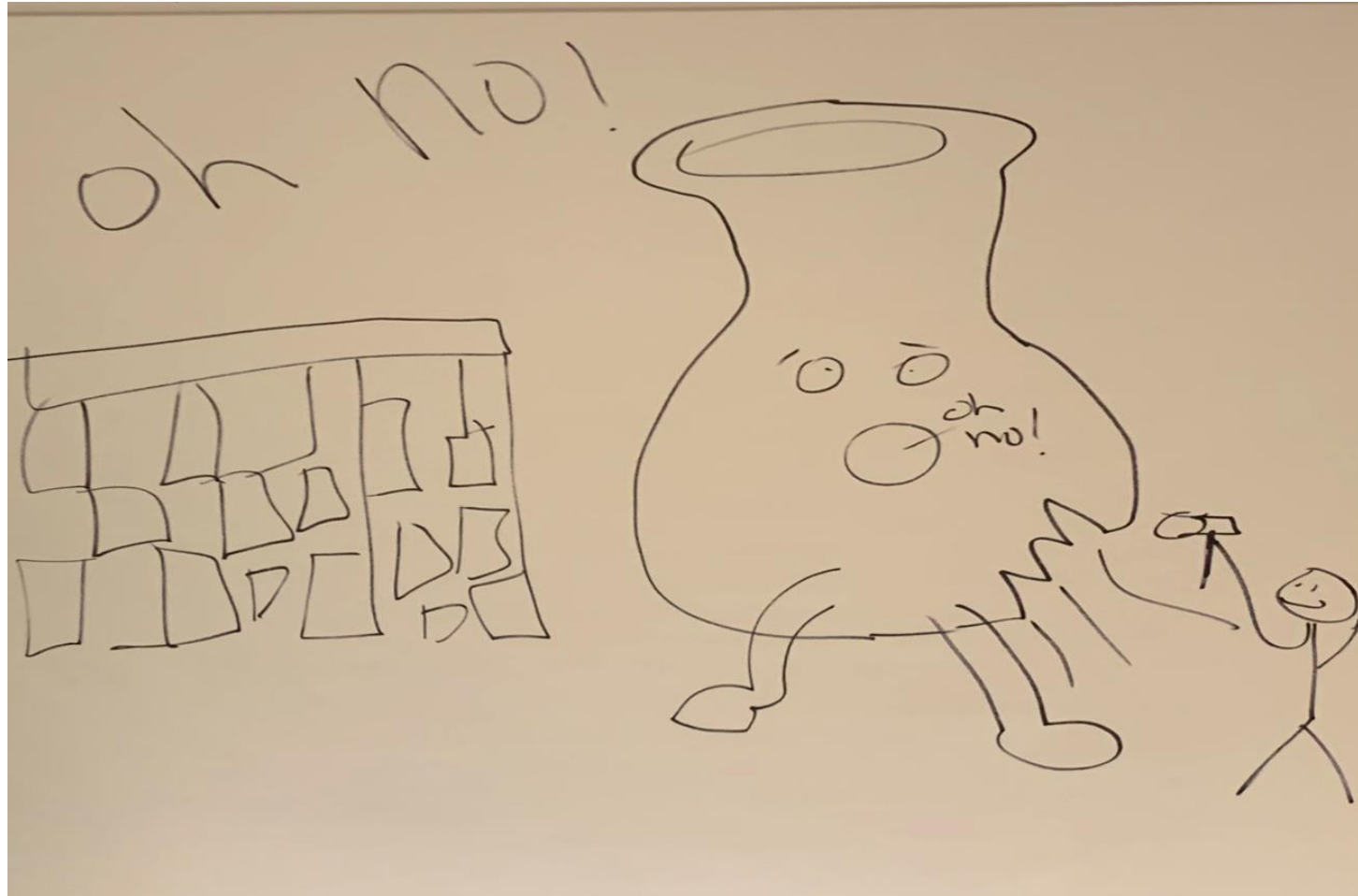
Deciphering the drawing...



Non dangerous drawing, ironic humor...

- This drawing concerned the teacher, so it was investigated right away and determined through interview to be non-threatening.
- It was not first-person violence.
- There was no per se violent intent to kill in the drawing.
- It was poor humor.

Ironic Humor



Social media, comments, and rumors

- Many times students of all ages will make comments designed to send a message.
- The more sophisticated the young person the more they may be able to mask their intentions to as not to be held accountable.

To accomplish this they may make veiled threats:

- “If I don’t get a passing grade on this exam you all be sorry”.
- “Go ahead keep pushing me, find out what happens next!”

Evaluating a threat helps us to put the threat into context and determines its potential. The threats can be grouped as:

Low Risk

- Unrealistic, not thought out. Implausible.

Medium Risk

- More realistic
- Perhaps vague, but no indications the person has taken concrete steps to follow through.

High Risk

- Very realistic, direct, and indications are the person has taken steps to take action.
- Call police.



A Matrix is often helpful...

A **Threat Matrix** can help us make decisions on what actions to take depending on the content of the threat and the surrounding factors.

A matrix puts the threat into terms of realism, history, potential, danger and what the proper response should be. Is the student capable of carrying out threat or has weapons, has he/ she taken steps towards the threat, it is immanent? The answer determines action.

Threat Made	Indication student is capable of acting on threat?	Student has taken steps to act on the threat?	Threat is Imminent?	Action to be taken by staff
I'll kill you	No history of violence, no access to weapons.	No indicators of any planning	No time line for the threat was indicated.	Refer to school admin for further investigation.
I'll kill Bob and Mary tomorrow morning for picking on me!	Yes, student has violence history and access to guns.	Yes, a written diagram of where to attack Bob and Mary found in locker.	Yes, violence is threatened in less than 24 hours.	Call police immediately.

Social Media...

- Social media is the medium of communication for a large percentage of young people and adults alike.
- Social media gives us a bigger reach with our comments. It allows us to be more than we are by creating a persona we desire.
- It allows us to express ourselves in privacy but can reveal many things about our private lives and intent.



Rumors and Kill lists....

Many time students may hear a rumor about another student saying or doing something threatening.

But they don't tell the authorities.

WHY?

Two Reasons:

#1 They don't want to be a "rat".

#2 They don't trust anyone in school or at home....



Anonymous reporting would help

There are many ways to allow students to report potentially dangerous comments anonymously.

- Phone APP's / Tip Lines / Drop boxes
- Many threats have been uncovered by anonymous tips.



Kill Lists...

- Falls under written threats and are often misunderstood.
- A written or drawn plan to kill either particular people or a group of non-specific people.
- Requires serious investigation.
- Can be idle fascination about venting pain and anger or it can be a part of a concrete plan that has already been set in motion.
- Police should be involved.

Clothes make the man, or woman...

In addition to the written or drawn threat, we can see exterior signs of potentially brewing violence. This is the preparation phase of an attack.

- The attacker may take on some clothing associated with the attack
 - Military style clothing
 - Raid gear
 - Vests
 - Gun belts
 - Other items associated with a violent action- Paramilitary.



Virginia Tech Shooter...



Columbine Shooters...



Dallas Active Shooter.....



Can we spot violence before it erupts?

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Fascination with weapons or talk of weapons

- We often see this fascination with weapons as part of the power associated with some of the shooters.
- The weapons do command our attention.
- Guns in robberies are there for a reason, it gives the robber control.
- Many shooters are looking for control over the things they cannot control.

Extreme talk...

- On either end of the spectrum of human behavior we see people who have beliefs that can be described as extreme.
- Most of us exist somewhere in the middle, we go back and forth on issues, but we are centered.
- A person espousing any kind of extreme positions, beliefs, or comments can indicate a potential problem.

Shooters are bullied.... Right?

- Not always.
- Some shooters were victims of bullying, others were not, in fact a BULLY can also be an indicator of a potentially violence person.
- The bullying can be attempt to overcome a weakness, perceived or real and bullying allows the person to be more powerful.
- An isolated person, or a socially disaffected person can be an indicator or look at when combined with comments or actions.

Create a plan to address and manage the risk...



Once we have identified a potentially dangerous person... what next?

The team assembles and reviews the threat to determine the next step.

We ask...

- Is it an “Immediate and active ” threat?
 - That’s within the next 24 hours
- Is it a found threat or delivered threat?
 - What’s the difference?
- Do we know anything about the person making the threat?



Action Steps...

We need to know where the person making the threat is, are they on campus, in a dorm room or a classroom?

- Do we need to make an immediate intervention with law enforcement?
 - We make an immediate intervention with law enforcement if our assessment tells us the threat is immediate and active.



Action Steps...

- **If the threat is not immediate and active**, we can plan our intervention with our team if there are no weapons involved
- If the student is contained in a classroom, and office or on a sports field where we can be confident, they will not be able to attack if we approach.



The danger of attack will help decide...

- The potential for the student to act out violently will determine if you proceed as a team or if you involve law enforcement for the intervention.
- If you have local or campus police on the team that will help coordinate the activities.

Part of the plan must include readily available resources...

As part of the planning when developing the team

- Identifying your resources in advance and having them at the ready when they are needed.
- Will help you when the response must be quick.

Trying to put together additional staff, mental health personnel, interview rooms and other items needed

- To address the threat and get the intervention process moving
- It is hard if you have to scramble to locate resources you need together.

Obtain methods to organize an assessment and how to document what is found

- Find ways to prioritize the information collected to create a “Road Map” for action

Developing the policy is the start...

- Having the proper reports and referral documents
- Contacts and connections to local mental health centers
- On campus medical team
- Any mobile mental health groups on board (Buy in) is vital for the successful intervention.



Create any contracts or Memorandums of Agreement in advance and get them signed so you are ready to go.

Understand how to present the findings of the assessment to the staff as well as to the parents and guardians

- Making sure your efforts are coordinated and easy for everyone to understand

Parents and Guardians..

- In many instances the Parents or Guardians of the potentially violent student may not be aware of the student's problems.
- This is either purposeful due to poor parenting and engagement or it can just be a consequence of our busy world.
- Parents will be wary of your actions and concerned of the consequences for their child no matter the age of the student, middle school, high school or college.



Parents and Guardians....

- You should consider how to contact the parents and guardians, when to contact them and what to say once you make contact.
 - Police can help guide you on local and state law
- You want their cooperation, not a defensive response.
- Build this into your process.

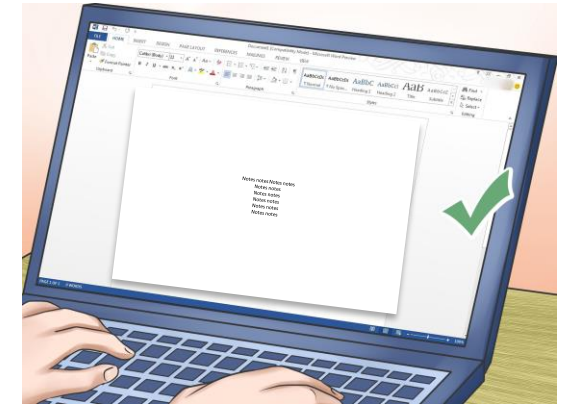


The Investigation

Criminal and Civil

The Investigation

- If there has been any steps taken towards carrying out an attack, such as the gathering of weapons, compatriots, written plans, surveillance (Physical or electronic), notes, journals or any other tangible evidence of the plans to attack this will all be part of a criminal investigation.
- Preserving evidence is essential, consult with an expert or your local or state police for guidance.



Investigative Concerns

Stopping an attack before it happens is the goal of the developing the Student Threat Assessment Team but getting the troubled student the help they need is also important long term, but there is more.

We have to ask:

- Were there other conspirators?
- Where are the weapons and what types? Guns, bombs or the materials to make them.
- The police will need all of this information.

The Aftermath

Part of the team's goals should be to have a plan in place to deal with the after effects of an actual or thwarted attack on your campus. It will affect the lives of every staff member, student, their parents and guardians and your local community.

Having a plan to include:

- 1-The availability of counselors
- 2-Continuity of operations
- 3- A well prepared Press Information Officer



Student Threat Assessment Team Training

In addition to their school related job skills your STAT Team should also have training in:

- 1- Verbal De-Escalation Techniques
- 2- Active Shooter Response Training
- 3- Interview Skills

Conclusion.

- **Creating a Student Threat Assessment Team is not a luxury.** It is recommended by the office of US Homeland Security.
- **It is the next step we must all take to be prepared to combat violence in our schools and on our campuses.**
- **Preventing violence is a much better option than responding to an attack as it happens.....**

Reminders

- Access to the presentation
- Evaluations
- Social Media

Contact Info

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