

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SALEM- KEIZER SYSTEM, A THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR THE SCHOOLS

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Website

<http://www.studentthreatassessment.org>

The presentation will:

- Briefly review basic concepts regarding youth aggression within the schools.
- Provide a brief review of the research pertaining to extreme aggression (called violence) in the schools.
- Summarize the risk factors identified with school violence.
- Review a system for assessing potential school violence and decreasing its impact.
- If time allows, review a case example.

READING:

Assessing Student Threats: A Handbook for Implementing the Salem-Keizer System

by John Van Dreal

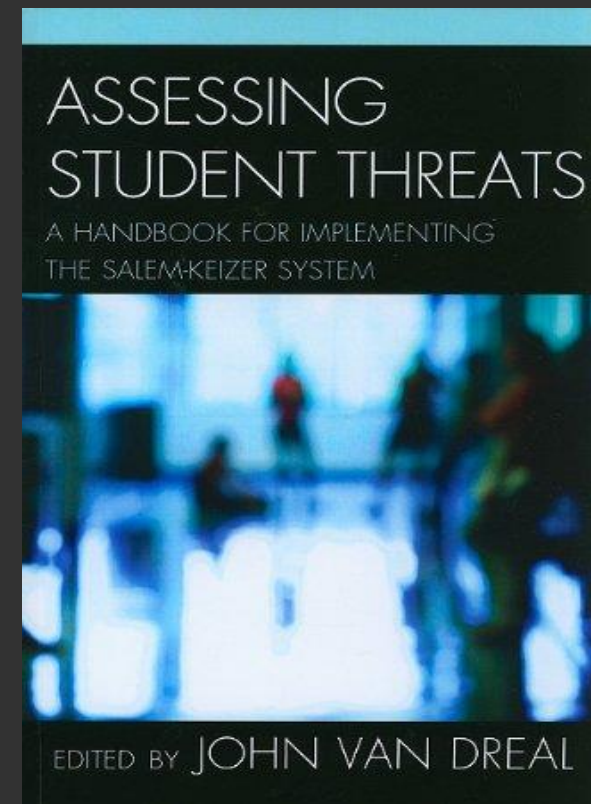
(VanDreal, Swinehart, Speckmier, Elliott, Rainwater, Okada, Spady, Mendoza, Byrd)

Rowman and Littlefield

(800) 462-6420.

email orders@rowman.com.

website <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/>



COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING

Willamette University

- Youth and adult threat assessment
- Campus security
- Domestic violence
- Protocols, templates, process guides
- Implementation of system

Website

<http://www.willamette.edu/events/tat/>

SCHOOL CLIMATE



- 1. Assess the emotional climate. Promote listening and paying attention.**
- 2. Adopt a strong, but caring position against the “code of silence.”**
- 3. Implement systems to prevent and intervene in bullying.**
- 4. Involve all members of the school community in creating a safe and respectful school culture.**
- 5. Foster and develop trusting relationships between each student and at least one adult at school.**
- 6. Create mechanisms for sustaining a safe school climate (such as a system that assesses and manages potential violence.)**

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.

We don't do:

- Predictive Profiling
- Enhanced Professional Judgment
- Artificial Intuition

AGGRESSION CONTINUUM

(from Eric M. Johnson, PhD.)

Bombing
Shooting
Raping
Stabbing
Beating
Strangling
Sexual coercion
Fighting
Hitting with objects
Throwing objects
Slugging
Kicking
Scratching
Biting
Slapping
Pushing

(Violent Aggression: serious or lethal injury)

(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.”

In other words, it is the assessment of the “unique” interaction and dynamics between the perpetrator, the target and the situation they share. The question is “does the student ‘pose’ a threat,” not “did the student ‘make’ a threat.”

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 / affective aggression



Reactive / Affective Type

- Absence of planning
- Usually associated with elevated emotional state
- Perpetrator of violence feels under immediate threat

TARGETED AGGRESSION

Targeted aggression/ violence



TARGETED VIOLENCE

(Fein&Vossekuil, 1998)

- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior.
- Violence stems from an interaction between the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation and the target.
- The subject will display “attack-related” behaviors that move along a continuum of idea to action, including thinking, planning and logistical preparations.

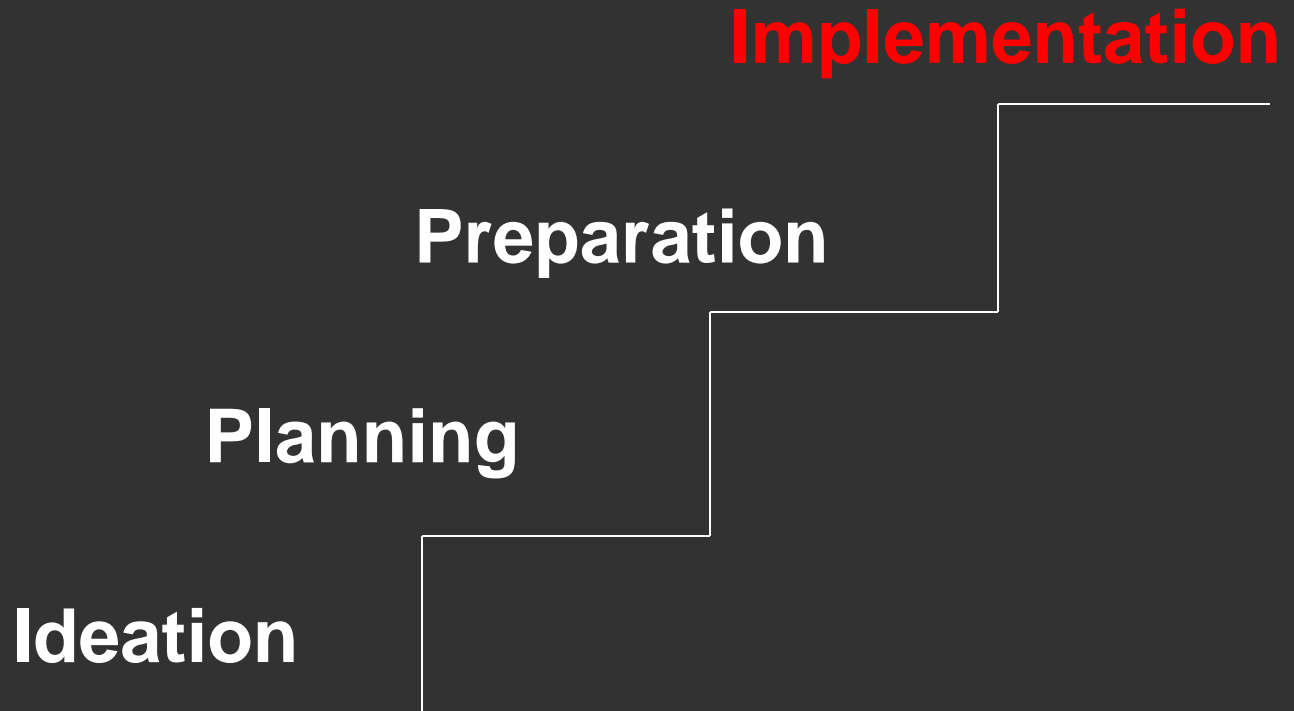
ATTACK RELATED BEHAVIOR

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

EXAMPLES:

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

Targeted Violence (process)



J.A.C.A. -Gavin DeBecker

- Justification
- Alternatives
- Consequences
- Ability

The Exceptional Case Study Project (ECSP)

- **The Exceptional Case Study Project was initially completed by the United States Secret Service in 1998. The project analyzed 83 persons who had engaged in assassination attacks or near-attack behaviors from the previous 46 years. The results of the study provided an objectified definition of targeted violence and concluded that targeted attackers do not have consistent profiles.**
- **The study also noted that mental illness plays almost no role in determining violence potential but did identify and emphasize the concept of “attack-related behaviors.” Finally, the study noted that most attackers consider many targets prior to attacks and that risk is best determined through an investigation of the attack-related behaviors as they relate to the potential**

USSS RESEARCH

Critical Factors (*consistently present in histories of school shooters*):

- Peer Relationships Problems.
- Weapon Fascination and access.
- Recent loss, humiliation.
- Signs of depression, suicidal ideation or actions.
- Disconnect from adults.

Contributing Factors (*associated with aggression, but not consistently present*):

- Poor school achievement. (grades, truancy, class disruption, suspension).
- Negative parent-child relationship (family distress, poor supervision).
- Exposure to violence.
- Substance abuse.
- Mental illness.

(USSS research continued)

Key Points:

- **Shootings were rarely impulsive.**
- **No consistent profile of school shooter.**
- **Shooters had difficulty coping with loss and failure.**
- **Shooters perceived or experienced severe longstanding rejection and bullying by peers.**
- **Motives were mostly revenge and problem-solving.**
- **Peers knew of plan ahead of time (some collaborated).**
- **All attackers used guns. Most shooters had ready access to guns. Some made considerable efforts to acquire guns.**
- **Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to attack.**
- **All shooters were of concern to parents, teachers and / or peers.**

FBI Critical Incident Response Group

Personality Traits and Behavior:

- **Leakage**
- **Low Tolerance for Frustration**
- **Lack of Resiliency**
- **Poor Coping Skills**
- **Failed Love Relationship**
- **Injustice Collector**
- **Signs of Depression**
- **Narcissism**
- **Alienation**
- **Dehumanizing Others**
- **Lack of Empathy**
- **Exaggerated Sense of Entitlement**
- **Attitude of Superiority**
- **Exaggerated or Pathological Need for Attention**
- **Externalizes Blame**
- **Masks Low Self-Esteem**
- **Anger Management Problems**
- **Intolerance**
- **Inappropriate Humor**
- **Seeks to Manipulate Others**
- **Lack of Trust**
- **Closed Social Group**
- **Change of Behavior**
- **Rigid and Opinionated**
- **Unusual Interest in Sensational Violence**
- **Fascination with Violence-Filled Entertainment**
- **Negative Role Models**
- **Behavior Appears Relevant to Carrying out a Threat**

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FBI Critical Incident Response Group

Family Dynamics:

- **Turbulent Parent-Child Relationship**
- **Acceptance of Pathological Behavior**
- **Access to Weapons**
- **Lack of Intimacy**
- **Student "Rules the Roost"**
- **No Limits or Monitoring of TV and Internet**

School Dynamics:

- **Student's Attachment to School**
- **Tolerance for Disrespectful Behavior**
- **Inequitable Discipline**
- **Inflexible Culture**
- **Pecking Order Among Students**
- **Code of Silence**
- **Unsupervised Computer Access**

FBI Critical Incident Response Group

Social Dynamics:

- Media, Entertainment, Technology
- Peer Groups
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Outside Interests
- The Copycat Effect

Five necessary but not sufficient conditions for a rampage shooting:

- 1. Perception of self as extremely marginal within the social world that has value. Bullying and social exclusion lead to marginalization and increase frustration and depression.**
- 2. Psychological problems and vulnerability. Mental illness, severe depression and abuse decrease emotional, psychological and coping reserves, thus magnifying impact of marginalization.**
- 3. Cultural scripts. Cultural or media models of violence are readily available as examples of solving problems, getting even, releasing discomfort or elevating social status.**
- 4. Failure of surveillance systems. Systems intended to identify troubled youth are ineffective or non-existent.**
- 5. Gun availability.**

Supervisory Special Agent Andre Simons

From anecdotal observations and work on the report Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education.

- Significant personal stress, humiliation, and/or perceived failure
- Aggressive Martyrdom (Reid Meloy).
- Psychologically transformational acts
- The brittle student
- Leakage, hyper profanity, negative emotional language, lack of future planning, weapons investigation or possession, and an inability to take personal responsibility for actions and outcomes.
- Solution to perceived problems
- Wills, manifestos, infamy and notoriety
- Pseudo-commando

OTHER RESEARCH, OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

RESEARCH SUMMARY

- 1. What kind of communication has the student 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 personality or behavioral traits, family dynamics, School system issues or social dynamics that lead to a more vulnerable and potentially escalating situation.**

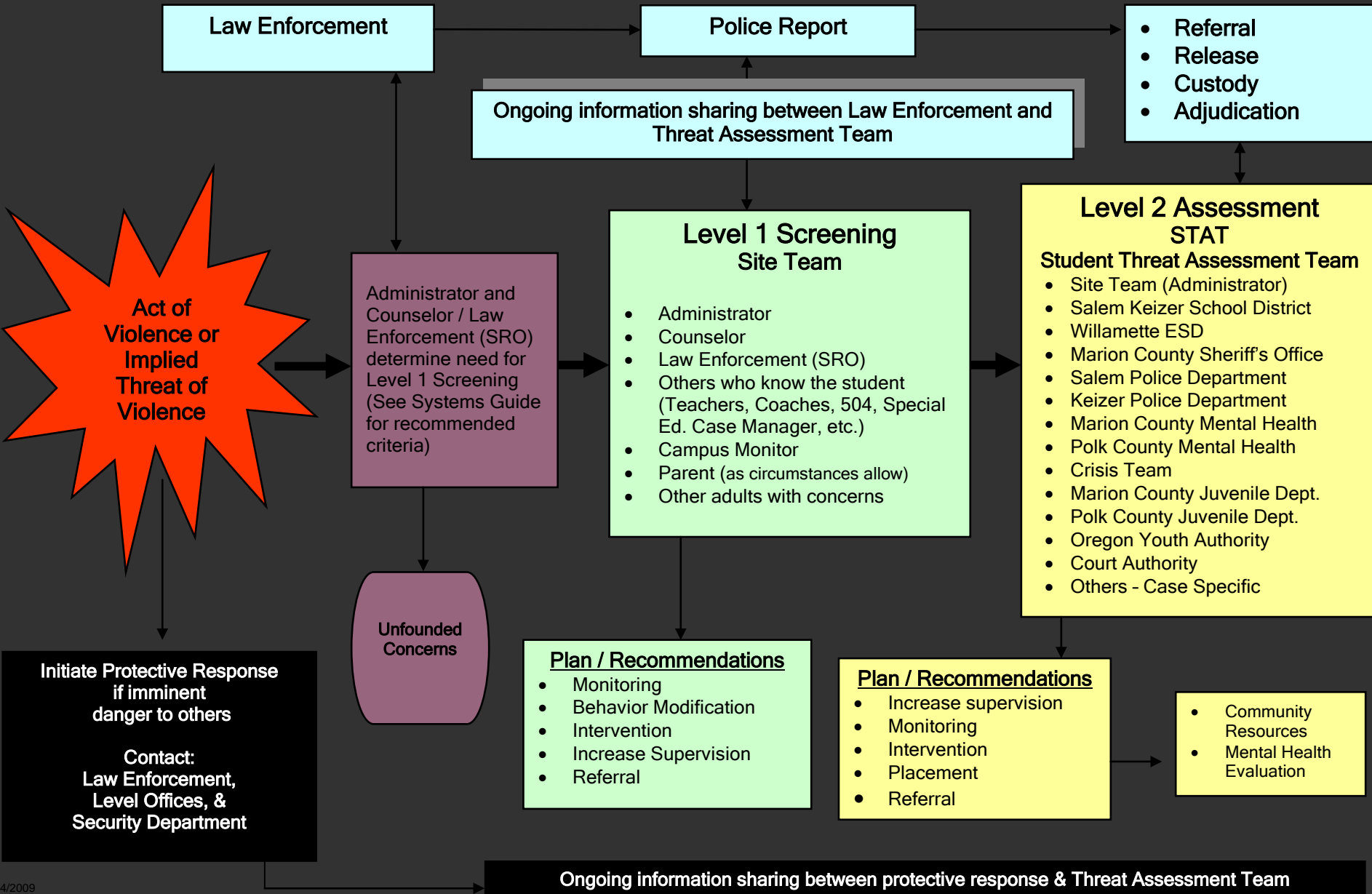
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SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Systems Flow Chart



DEFINITION OF A THREAT

**The intention
to commit harm to a target
or be a menace or source of danger to a target.**

SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT
 STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
Level 2 Referral and Guidelines

**Threat
Concern**



- 1. Call:**
 Law Enforcement
 Security Department
 Level Offices
- 2. Follow:**
 District Safety Guidelines

**Level
1**

Reasons to proceed with Level 2 referral.			
Student brought gun to school or attempted to acquire gun with possible intent to harm others	Unable to confidently answer items on Level 1 Protocol	Safety concerns significant and beyond Site Team's ability to supervise and secure within the building	Exploration of community resources is needed to assist in supervision

Concerns are identified (or dismissed) and team is confident in supervision, safety and resources.

Level 2

SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT
STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
Flow Chart - Level 2

**Student Threat Assessment Team
Level 2 Assessment Steps**

THREAT

Site Team completed the **Level 1 Screening** and requests further investigation and/or consultation.

Initiate Level 2 Process

**Step #1
Consultation - Investigation Team**

(Meets w/Site Team at School Building)

1. Collects information
2. Begins Level 2 Assessment
3. Assists Site Team w/Mgt. Plan

Team Includes:

- School Psychologist
- Mental Health Practitioner
- Law Enforcement

As Needed

- Oregon Youth Authority
- Dept. Human Services
- Juvenile Dept.
- Other case managers

Investigation Team schedules case for further STAT review

**Step #2
(Further Consultation and Investigation)**

Convenes weekly.

- Site Team (Administrator)
- Salem Keizer School District
- Willamette ESD
- Marion County Sheriff's Office
- Salem Police Department
- Keizer Police Department
- Marion County Mental Health
- Polk County Mental Health
- Crisis Team
- Marion County Juvenile Dept.
- Polk County Juvenile Dept.
- Oregon Youth Authority
- Court Authority
- Others - Case Specific (Case Managers; Protective Services, etc.)

SALEM KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Flow Chart - Level 2

Student Threat Assessment Team Level 2 Assessment Steps



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Oregon Task Force On School Safety Proposal:

(For more information, contact Dave Novotney,
Superintendent, Willamette ESD at

dave.novotney@wesd.org

or John Van Dreal, Director, Safety and Risk Management
Services at Salem-Keizer SD at

vandreal_john@Salkeiz.k12.or.us).

Legislative contact is Rep. Jeff Barker, Dist. 28

The statewide system would be administered by a state agency, an ESD, or a school district, and would support regional trainings and develop connections with specialists and consultants.

The system would divide the state into eight regions, each overseen by a threat assessment coordinator. One of these eight coordinators would serve as Lead Coordinator, overseeing the system and other coordinators in addition to a region.

The role of the coordinators would be to:

- Train key school staff to use Level 1 protocols in school-based threat screenings.
- Consult with school and community-based threat assessment teams.
- Coordinate Level 2 protocols, deploying multi-disciplinary teams to schools to assess risk and assist in supports and interventions.
- Prepare threat assessment summaries.
- Serve as a representative on regional multi-agency threat assessment teams that review Level 2 assessments and help provide a pathway to community services.

94% of administrators stated that:

- **STAT effectively identified potentially dangerous students and situations.**
- **STAT had positive effects on school safety.**
- **STAT provided important information necessary for support, discipline, and placement decisions.**
- **STAT fulfills a valuable role in schools.**

In the same survey, 90% of administrators reported that STAT increased efficient coordination with law enforcement and mental health.

CASE REVIEW

Paul and Roger

PAUL (age 16, Sophomore)

- **Students reported that Paul had a knife and that he had cut his girlfriend on the hand.**
- **Paul was called in and found to be carrying a large lock-blade hunting knife.**
- **Paul's girlfriend confirmed this and also reported that Paul was very controlling and aggressive with her. She also reported that she was very afraid of him and thought he was eventually going to kill someone because he frequently talked of fighting or killing others who were harassing or tormenting him.**
- **Paul's girlfriend later denied reporting this and recanted her story. Her mother reported that she and her daughter were very fearful of Paul and did not want to be involved in any further problems. They refused to press charges.**

- **Further investigation indicated that Paul was a survivor of longstanding and considerable domestic violence (by his now imprisoned step-father). His mother had also been a victim and was isolated, fearful and hyper-vigilant, a condition she fostered in Paul. She also justified Paul’s “right” to carry a weapon and even suggested that he be allowed to carry a gun as he was constantly in conflict with other youth who threatened him, beat him and tormented him.**
- **Further investigation indicated that Paul was marginalized, isolated and a victim of some peer bullying and victimization; however, Paul also appeared to be somewhat paranoid, in search of conflict, and preparing for a defensive or even pre-emptive strike against those he considered his enemies.**

- **Paul was undiagnosed but appeared depressed and highly anxious.**
- **Paul was disconnected and had no identifiable positive relationships with pro-social adults.**
- **Paul justified his fearful preparation for combat but denied any abusive behavior toward his girlfriend, reporting that he was playing with her when he accidentally cut her hand.**
- **In an effort to make a deal, Paul informed on Roger, his sometimes friend, who often had several knives at school.**

ROGER (age 15, Freshman)

- Roger was searched and found to be in possession of 8 knives, varying in size and style. Most of the knives were of the fantasy or heroic type design with much ornamental and embroidered features.
- Roger reported that he had the knives at school to show his friends because they were all very interested in weaponry, especially the type that accompanied fantasy games such as Dungeons and Dragons.
- Roger and his friends were viewed as average students who were somewhat immature and often involved in game playing.
- Roger had a history of impulsive and oppositional behavior as well as poor academics in middle school, but had been far more successful his first year in high school. He was involved in a school play and also participated in the school orchestra.
- Roger lived with his father. His mother had abandoned the family.

- **Roger's father was very cooperative with investigation and reported being very worried about Roger. He had started Roger in counseling a year prior. He appeared to be an attentive father who was doing his best with limited resources but who would welcome help.**
- **Roger had a good relationship with his father and two teachers in the school.**
- **Further investigation did not uncover any information supporting attack motive, ideation or preparation with Roger or his friends. In fact, further investigation confirmed that the boys were fascinated by knives and swords but were not using them or planning to use them as weapons against each other or other students.**

QUESTIONS?