School Safety

Dewey Cornell, Ph.D.
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

434-924-8929
Email: youthvio@virginia.edu
Website: youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu

Main Points

1. Decisions about school safety must be based on facts, not fear.
2. School violence is a small part of a larger problem of gun violence.
3. Threat assessment can identify serious threats.
4. Help all students to be healthy and successful in school.

Traumatic Effect of School Shootings

School shootings are so traumatic that they convince everyone that we extensive schools are unsafe and require extensive security measures.

Shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida

What is the best way to prevent more shootings?
Annual Gun Toll
- 32,000 deaths
- 84,000 injuries
116,000 total

318 Shootings per day

For every shooting in a school, there are 1,900+ outside of schools

If schools were impregnable, it would only stop .05% of shootings
Less than 1 tenth of 1 percent

The real problem is gun violence, not school violence.

Where do we need police protection?

- Location A -- highest crime rate
- Location B -- medium crime rate
- Location C -- lowest crime rate

Unless we have unlimited police resources, we should place any additional officers in locations with the highest crime rates.

What if the media devotes 95% of its coverage to crime in Location C?

- Location A -- highest crime rate
- Location B -- medium crime rate
- Location C -- lowest crime rate

Media coverage should not compromise an objective assessment of crime rates and security needs.
Extra security in Hillsborough schools would cost $4 million

**School security measures could cost millions locally**

Additional Florida School Security Could Cost $100 Million

School security wish list would cost Marion County $160M

Armed guards in every Minn. school would cost $138 million

NRA proposal would cost state schools about $130 million.

(DeAngelis, Brent, & Ianni, 2011)

We should prevent shootings rather than simply prepare for them.

Crisis response is not prevention.

A crisis occurs when prevention has failed.

**Prevention means “to keep something from happening”**

Prevention must start before the gunman is at your door.

Extra security in Hillsborough schools would cost $4 million

**School security measures are expensive and deprive schools of resources that could be allocated to preventive measures such as anti-bullying programs and counseling services.**

Armed guards in every Minn. school would cost $138 million

NRA proposal would cost state schools about $130 million.

*Every Per Pupil dollar spent for Security is a Per Pupil dollar NOT spent for Instruction.*
Critics say, “We can’t predict who will be violent, so prevention is not possible.”

However,....

Prevention does not require prediction.

We cannot predict who will have an accident, but safety regulations make safer roads, cars, and drivers.

We cannot predict who will get cancer, but we can identify risk and protective factors that reduce cancer rates dramatically.

The FBI, Secret Service, and Dept of Education recommended a threat assessment approach more than 15 years ago.

Violence prevention requires a comprehensive approach

What is Threat Assessment?

Threat assessment is a problem-solving approach to violence prevention that involves assessment and intervention with students who have threatened violence in some way.
Threat Assessment is a violence prevention strategy.

1. Family members, friends, or others seek help when concerned about someone in distress or who is threatening violence.
2. The threat assessment team evaluates the seriousness of the threat.
3. The team initiates assistance to address the underlying problem, conflict or need. In the most serious cases, protective action is taken.

Threat Assessment

1. Identification of threats made by students.
2. Evaluation of seriousness of threat and danger it poses to others, recognizing that all threats are not the same (e.g., toy guns are not dangerous).
3. Intervention to reduce risk of violence.
4. Follow-up to assess intervention results.

Accurate Threat Assessment Avoids 2 Errors …

1. Over-reaction

School Suspends Second Grader for Eating His Pop-Tart Into the Shape of a Gun

2. Under-Reaction

Threat assessment is not designed to determine whether a student has MADE a threat, but whether a student POSES a threat.
Key Point

In a threat assessment, we try to determine why a student made a threat, and therefore how we can prevent the threat from being carried out.

Research on Threat Assessment


Governor’s School and Campus Safety Task Force

40 members, Led by Secretaries of Public Safety, Education, and Health and Human Resources

http://dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/SchoolCampusSafetyTaskForce/

Virginia mandates threat assessment for K-12 public schools

§ 22.1-79.4. Threat assessment teams and oversight committees.

A. Each local school board shall adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students consistent with the model policies developed by the Virginia Center for School Safety....

C. Each division superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team ....

Student Threats to Harm Others

Selected sample of 1,865 threat assessment cases reported by 785 Virginia public schools during the 2014-15 school year
Types of Threats (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kill</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use weapon</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit, beat</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stab, cut</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomb</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one type of threat.

Intended Victim (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole school/group</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/administrator</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 threat cases from 785 schools. One case can involve more than one victim.

Threat Outcomes (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat Not Attempted</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted and Averted</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Carried Out</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 cases.

Disciplinary Outcome (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reprimand</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension out of school</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension in school</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion reduced to...</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention after school</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed in juvenile detention</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 cases.

School Placement Outcome (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to alternative school</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebound instruction</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to regular school</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 1,865 cases.

Disciplinary Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages for 785 schools.

No statistically significant differences for White vs Black or White vs Hispanic students.
Threat Assessment
Online Educational Program for Parents

To preview the 25 minute program: http://www.schoollasessment.com/
Preview code: vpmr9q

Do not share or disseminate this code. To use this program or other programs for students, parents, and team members, contact
Dr. Jennifer Maeng at jlc7d@virginia.edu

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America
Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence

February 20, 2018

School shootings and widespread community gun violence are far greater in the United States than other nations. America cannot be great and realize its promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness if our children are not safe from gun violence.

Although security measures are important, a focus on simply preparing for shootings is insufficient. We need a change in mindset and policy from reaction to prevention. Prevention entails more than security measures and begins long before a gunman comes to school. We need a comprehensive public health approach to gun violence that is informed by scientific evidence and free from partisan politics.

A public health approach to protecting children as well as adults from gun violence involves three levels of prevention: (1) universal approaches promoting safety and well-being for everyone; (2) practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties; and (3) interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent.

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence
in the United States of America
Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence

Endorsed by 240+ organizations and 4,000+ individuals

- American Federation of Teachers
- American Psychological Association
- Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
- National Educational Association
- National PTA
- National Association of Social Workers

To read and sign
https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence

Eight-Point Plan to Prevent Gun Violence

1st Level
1. A national requirement for all schools to assess school climate and maintain physically and emotionally safe conditions and positive school environments that protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault;
2. A ban on assault-style weapons, high-capacity ammunition clips, and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms.

2nd Level
3. Adequate staffing (such as counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers) of coordinated school- and community-based mental health services for individuals with risk factors for violence, recognizing that violence is not intrinsically a product of mental illness;
4. Reform of school discipline to reduce exclusionary practices and foster positive social, behavioral, emotional, and academic success for students;
5. Universal background checks to screen out violent offenders, persons who have been hospitalized for violence towards self or others, and persons on no-fly, terrorist watch lists.

3rd Level
6. A national program to train and maintain school- and community-based threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners. Threat assessment programs should include practical channels of communication for persons to report potential threats as well as interventions to resolve conflicts and assist troubled individuals;
7. Removal of legal barriers to sharing safety-related information among educational, mental health, and law enforcement agencies in cases where a person has threatened violence;
8. Laws establishing Gun Violence Protection Orders that allow courts to issue time-limited restraining orders requiring that firearms be recovered by law enforcement when there is evidence that an individual is planning to carry out acts against others or against themselves.
Eight-Point Plan to Prevent Gun Violence

Congress and the executive branch must remove barriers to gun violence research and institute a program of scientific research on gun violence that encompasses all levels of prevention. We contend that well-executed laws can reduce gun violence while protecting all Constitutional rights.

It’s time for federal and state authorities to take immediate action to enact these proposals and provide adequate resources for effective implementation. We call on law enforcement, mental health, and educational agencies to begin actions supporting these prevention efforts. We ask all parents and youth to join efforts advocating for these changes, and we urge voters to elect representatives who will take effective action to prevent gun violence in our nation.

Concluding Points

1. School violence is a small part of a larger problem of gun violence
2. Schools are much safer than the public thinks.
3. Threat assessment can help schools respond to student threats.

http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu