

BEHAVIORAL THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS:
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING, ASSESSMENT & MANAGING THREATENING BEHAVIORS

GENE DEISINGER, PH.D.
 MANAGING PARTNER



Presentation for:
 2nd Annual K-12th Grade School Emergency Preparedness Workshop
 Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
 April 27, 2015

www.SIGMATMA.com

GENE DEISINGER, PH.D.

Sigma Threat Management Associates

- Managing Partner / Co-Founder

Virginia Center for School & Campus Safety

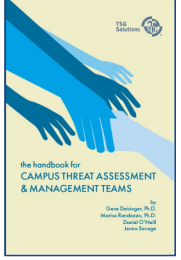
- Threat Management Consultant


Education, Training & Certifications:

- Ph.D., Counseling Psychology;
- Licensed Psychologist (IA);
- Certified Health Service Provider in Psychology;
- Certified Law Enforcement Officer (until 11/14);

Experience:

- Virginia Tech (Retired 11/2014)
 - Deputy Chief of Police
 - Director, Threat Management Services
- Iowa State University
 - Primary Threat Manager 1994-2009
- Lead Author:
 - The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams (2008)*



 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT:
The Standard Is Evolving & The Bar Has Been Raised

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

A systematic process that is designed to:

- IDENTIFY** situations/persons of concern
- INVESTIGATE** & gather information
- ASSESS** situation
- MANAGE** the situation/mitigate risk

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

HAVING A TEAM IS NOT ENOUGH

Organizations must have a systematic process that:


- Utilizes effective & relevant multi-disciplinary approach, capable of addressing all threats;
- Enables centralized awareness of developing concerns through active outreach programs & consultations;
- Facilitates a thorough & contextual assessment;
- Implements proactive & integrated case management;
- Monitors & re-assesses case on a longitudinal basis;
- Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice;
- Adapts to challenges & changing needs.

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Utilizes an effective & relevant multi-disciplinary approach to address all threats

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM

Multi-Disciplinary Involvement by:

- Administration/Management
- Human Resources
- Security / Law Enforcement
- Mental Health Consultant
- Legal

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

ADDRESS ALL THREATS

Perpetrator's Affiliation:

- Student: 60%
 - Current: 40%
 - Former: 20%
- Employee: 11%
 - Current: 6%
 - Former: 5%
- Indirectly Affiliated: 20%
- No known Affiliation: 9%

Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*.

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

HAVE A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Enables centralized awareness of developing concerns through an active outreach program & consultative process

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

WHERE TO REPORT?

SOURCE: OIG Report #140-07: Investigation of the April 16, 2007 Critical Incident at Virginia Tech. Prepared by Office of the Inspector General for Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services – Commonwealth of Virginia

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

FACILITATE INTERVENTION

For effective bystander intervention, people need to know:

- Their role and responsibility
 - GOAL: Consult about concerns
- What to consult about
- Where (and with whom) to consult
- Reports/Consultations are wanted
- Something will be done
- Regular reminders of issues and process

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

CENTRALIZED REPORTING & TRIAGE

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.


© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

WHAT TO CONSULT ABOUT / REPORT?

- Communicated threats of violence
- Threatening behavior(s)
- Unusual or significantly disruptive behavior
- Unusual correspondence or communications
- Stalking
- Domestic violence
- Harassment, bullying, intimidation
- Concerns for well-being of others
 - Major life stressors
 - Acute mental illness
 - Suicidality

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE



© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

BUILDING AWARENESS

Outreach/Awareness presentations

- Administration, students, employees, parents
- Other institutions

Training Sessions

- Reporting & case management process;
- Verbal de-escalation
- Incident survival

Information: Available and sustained

- Website
- Daily News e-mail
- Social Media

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

**Facilitates a thorough
& contextual assessment**

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

CONTEXTUAL ASSESSMENT

Violence is the product of an interaction among four factors:

- S** The **subject** who may take violent action;
- T** Vulnerabilities of the **target** of such actions;
- E** An **environment** that facilitates or permits violence, or does not discourage it; and,
- P** **Precipitating events** that may trigger reactions.

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

FACTS ABOUT TARGETED VIOLENCE

Perpetrators of serious targeted violence don't "just snap."

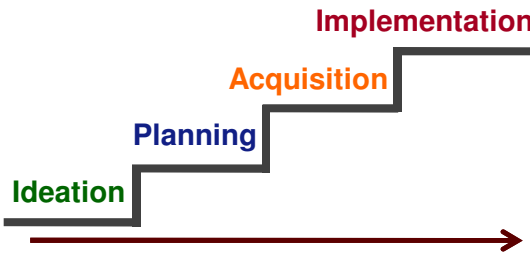
These incidents are not impulsive or random.

- Most (over 75%) consider, plan, and prepare before engaging in violent behavior;
- Most (over 75%) discuss their plans with others before the attack.

Source: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Dept. of Education (2002).
 Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative.

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE



© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Implements proactive & integrated case management plans

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INTEGRATION OF PROCESSES

Comprehensive Safety Planning
 Pro-active plans in place to:

- Prevent and mitigate violence
 - Identify at-risk situations
 - Assess situations
 - Intervene & manage concerns
- Prepare for potential violence
- Respond to violent acts and
- Recover from the event.



© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INTEGRATED CASE MANAGEMENT

Effective case management integrates interventions across the (relevant) domains:

- S** De-escalate, contain, or control the **subject** who may take violent action;
- T** Decrease vulnerabilities of the **target**;
- E** Modify physical and cultural **environment** to discourage escalation; and,
- P** Prepare for & mitigate against **precipitating events** that may trigger adverse reactions.

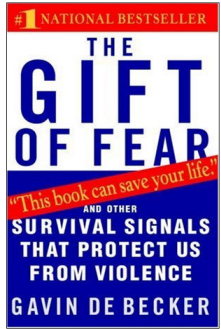
© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

REMEMBERING WHO WE SERVE

What targets/victims want:

- Care
- Certainty
- Consistency
- Communication

- Gavin de Becker
 "The Gift of Fear"



© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Monitors & re-assesses the situation on a longitudinal basis

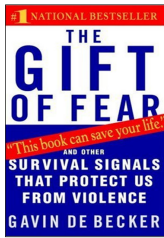
© G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

KEY POINTS ABOUT VIOLENCE

Dangerousness is not a permanent state of being nor solely an attribute of a person.

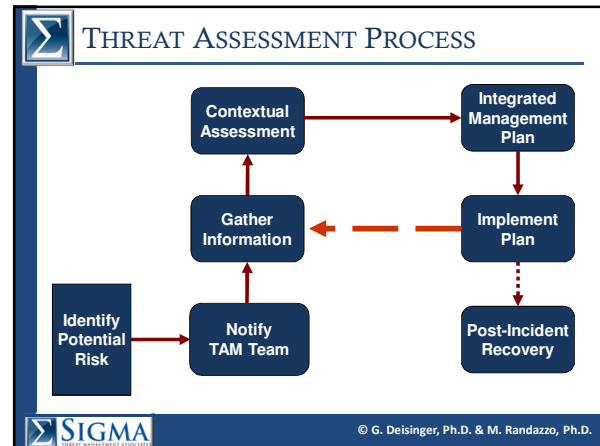
Dangerousness is **situational** & based on:

- J**ustification;
- A**lternatives;
- C**onsequences; and
- A**bility.



Source: Gavin de Becker
The Gift of Fear

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.



EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- Comprehensive;
- Systematic and theory driven;
- Collaborative;
- Socio-culturally relevant;
- Appropriately timed;
- Delivered by well-trained staff;
- Utilize multiple & varied methods;
- Sustained over time;
- Continuously evaluated and improved.

Source: Nation, M., et al (2003). What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs. *American Psychologist*, 58, 449-456.

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

WHAT LAWS MAY APPLY?

- Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- State Privacy Laws
- Federal Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act
- State public accommodations laws / disability-related employment laws
- Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA")
- State Patient-Health Care Professional Privileges
- Freedom of Information / Open Records Laws
- Institutional Policies

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS

Policies with TAM-related implications:


- Workplace violence prevention
- Threat assessment & management
- Harassment & discrimination
- Crisis management
- Employee discipline
- Interim suspension
- Fitness for duty
- Direct threat evaluations
- Weapons
- Bomb threat

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

WHY THREAT ASSESSMENT?

Recommended by:


- Safe School Initiative (2002)
- Virginia Tech Review Panel (governor's panel)
- Report to President from U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, Health & Human Services;
- Numerous professional associations:
 - AASCU, ASJA, IACLEA, MHEC, NAAG, NASPA
- Several state task forces on campus safety:
 - CA, FL, IA, IL, KY, MA, MO, NC, NJ, NM, OK, PA, WI, VA

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

WHY THREAT ASSESSMENT?

Required by legislation:

- Virginia
 - Public Institutions of Higher Education
 - K-12 School Divisions
- Illinois – All Institutions of Higher Education
- Connecticut – All Institutions of Higher Education

 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

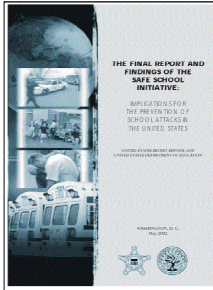
The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States (2002)


Joint Project of the:

- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education

Source: *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* by Bryan Vossekuil, Robert A. Fein, Ph.D., Marisa Reddy, Ph.D., Randy Borum, Psy.D., & William Modzeleski (2002).

Available at:
www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_finalreport.pdf



 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

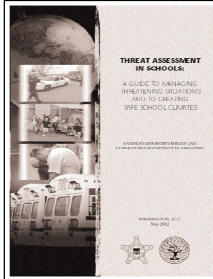
Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates (2002)


Joint Project of the:

- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education

Source: *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* by Robert A. Fein, Ph.D., Bryan Vossekuil, William S. Pollack, Ph.D., Randy Borum, Psy.D., William Modzeleski, & Marisa Reddy, Ph.D. (2002).

Available at:
www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_guide.pdf



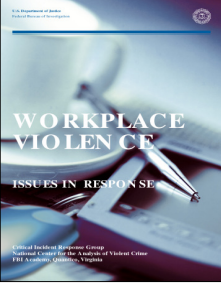
 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.


INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Workplace Violence: Issues in Response. (2004)

U.S. Department of Justice
 Federal Bureau of Investigation

Available at:
www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence



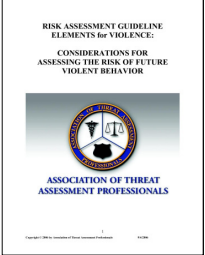
 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.


INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence: Considerations for Assessment the Risk of Future Violent Behavior (2006)

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)
www.atapworldwide.org

Available at:
downloads.workplaceviolencenews.com/rage-v.pdf



 © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education (2010)

Joint Project of the:

- US Secret Service
- US Department of Education
- Federal Bureau of Investigation

Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*.



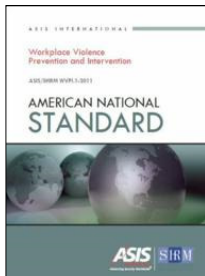
Available at:
www.llis.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/campus-attacks.pdf

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention American National Standard (2011)

Society for Human Resource Management & ASIS International



Available at:
www.abdi-secure-e-commerce.com/asis/ps-1092-30-1967.aspx

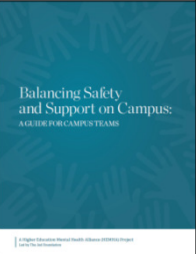
SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Balancing Safety and Support on Campus: A Guide for Campus Teams (2013)

Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA)

Led by the Jed Foundation



Available at:
www.hemha.org/campus_teams_guide-1.jpg

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE



Available at:
rems.ed.gov/EOPGuides
 Released: 6/18/13

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:

Adapts to challenges & changing needs

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.


INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE

CHALLENGES

Communication and Coordination are Critical!


- Multiple processes that manage cases:
 - Student Assistance / CARE Team
 - Threat Assessment
 - Sexual Harassment / Title IX
 - Domestic Violence / Dating Violence / Stalking
 - Insider Threat
 - Dignitary Protection
- Mind the Gap!
 - Clarify mission/roles
 - Designate authority and responsibility
 - Share membership
 - Communicate regularly
 - Integrate case management strategies

SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

 **CHALLENGES**

Continued focus only on students as subjects of concern

- Need to address all sources of threatening behaviors.

 SIGMA

 **WHEN YOUR ONLY TOOL IS A HAMMER. . .**

Over-Reliance on Control-Based Strategies

- Discipline
- Suspension
- Administrative orders
- Court orders
- Criminal prosecution
- Termination

© G. Deisinger, Ph.D.
& M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

Never equate separation with safety

 SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.

 **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.
Managing Partner
SIGMA Threat Management Associates
888-820-1401, ext. 2
Mobile: 540-392-5284
GDeisinger@SigmaTMA.com
www.SigmaTMA.com

 SIGMA © G. Deisinger, Ph.D. & M. Randazzo, Ph.D.