Assessing Student Threats

What's My Role?

November 7, 2016

What You Should Know

• Incidents of extreme school violence are usually not sudden or impulsive.

• In most incidents, the student made some type of verbal or written threat to others, but they may not have directly threatened the specific person.

• No accurate “profile” exists.

What You Should Know

• Most perpetrators exhibited some type of behavior prior to the incident that indicated a need for help.

• Many attackers had considered or attempted suicide.

• Many of these students believed they had been bullied.

What You Should Know

• Access to weapons was readily available.

• In most cases, other students were involved.

• Most shootings were stopped by someone other than law enforcement.

Bystander Study

• The relationships between the bystanders and the attackers varied.

• Some bystanders took no action while others actively conveyed information.

• School climate affected whether bystanders came forward.

Bystander Study

• Bystanders often misjudged the immediacy of the planned attack.

• In some situations, parents and parental figures influenced whether the bystander reported the information.

Implications

• Schools should ensure a climate in which students feel comfortable sharing information with a responsible adult.

• School districts should develop policies that address the many aspects of reporting a threat.

• Educators should be trained in the policies and procedures.

Student Threat Assessment Purpose

• Systematic response to threats

• Key knowledge identifying those students who may actually pose a threat

• Reassurances to school community that school personnel are capable of responding appropriately

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Personality Traits
- Lack of Empathy
- Exaggerated Sense of Entitlement
- Inappropriate Humor – Mean, Belittling, Insulting, Macabre
- Exaggerated or Pathological Need for Attention
- Inability to Form Relationships
- Injustice Collector
- Lack of Sympathy
- Inappropriate Humor
- Anger Management Problems
- Sign of Depression

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Litigation Protection Strategies

- Establish internal reporting procedures
- Establish external reporting procedures
- Train all staff on the topic
- Establish a Threat Assessment Team

- Investigate all threats of violence
- Communicate with parents
- Document all efforts including actions taken even if the threat is unfounded or unsubstantiated