



A Reconsideration of Safe School Policies and Practices after Tragic Mass Violence in Newtown, Connecticut and Parkland, Florida

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Session Learning Objectives



- Events that Made Safety the Focus of American Education
- Crisis Intervention, School Safety, and Threat Assessment Recommendations of the US Department of Education and the Secret Service
- New Considerations and Case Law Requiring Trauma Informed Care in Schools

Ground Rules for Working with Schools

- Framing today's session – didactic/prompts/lived experiences
- Think about what you can contribute to schools in your community from your expertise and experience
- Listen actively and attentively to school personnel and officials
- Speak from the heart – You have a unique voice and experiences
- Ask for clarification from anyone in the room
- Share generously with each other. Offer information and supporting evidence or experiences whenever possible
- Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion
- Build on one another's comments toward shared understanding and increased trauma informed services to children and youth in Schools



Community Based Research Partnership 1997-2018

- USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
- LAUSD – School Mental Health
- RAND HEALTH – Los Angeles, DC, Pittsburgh
- UCLA NIMH Partnered Research Center for Quality Care
- UCLA TIES for Families
- UCLA Depts. of Psychiatry and Pediatrics/Geffen School of Medicine
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Events That Changed the Culture of Education



- 1984 – Los Angeles 49th Street Elementary School
- 1995 - Oklahoma City – Murrah Building Bombing
- 1999 - Columbine HS
- 2001 - 9/11 Terrorist Attacks NYC/DC
- 2005 - Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- 2007 - Virginia Tech/University
- 2012 - Sandy Hook Elementary School -Newtown CT
- 2018 - Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS – Parkland FL



LAUSD Trauma Informed Beginnings

February 1984



- 49th Street School
- Sniper Shooting – 57 high power rounds
- Two killed – 9 y/o child and an adult
- 12 students and faculty wounded
- Led to the creation of the first school district crisis team in the country



CHECK IN:

Thoughts, Feelings, Reactions

Question

What safety challenges have you faced in your schools?



Safe School Initiative 2000

US Dept. of Education and Secret Service

- Joint study on targeted school violence
- Develop useful information from prior school attacks to prevent future attacks
- Reviewed 37 incidents 1974-2000
- Interviewed 10 attackers in prison
- Thinking, planning and pre-attack behaviors



Safe School Initiative 2000

- 81 percent of school shooters told classmates or teachers of their plans including identifying their targets
- Many shifted their intentions from one target to another
- Shooters came from a range of economic backgrounds from working to upper middle class



The Perpetrators

- 75% used guns, 15% knives
- Cluster Effect – Contagion
- 50% of attackers made a plan at least 2 weeks before
- Three quarters of school shooters were bullied
- A similar percentage were severely depressed and suicidal



Bethel, Alaska - Feb. 19, 1997

Evan Ramsey: Killed 2
and wounded 2 at Bethel
Regional High School
because he was 'bullied' –
Secret Service Threat
Assessment



Through a Trauma Lens

ACES Red Flags – Evan Ramsey



- At 5, his father was imprisoned after a police standoff
- His mother became an alcoholic
- At 7, he and two brothers were removed from his home and placed them in foster care
- Within a 4 year period he lived in 11 different foster homes,-allegedly abused by several foster parents
- He suffered from depression since early childhood
- He attempted suicide when he was 10 years old



Bethel, Alaska - Feb. 19, 1997

Evan Ramsey is serving 198 years in federal prison: "If somebody had said something my crime wouldn't have happened."



Recommended Threat Assessment Team Members



Core Members at the School Site

- Site Administrator – Principal/Educator
- School Police Officer
- School-site Mental Health Professional
(Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker,
Attendance Worker, or Nurse)

Additional Members from Local District

- District Administrator and/or Legal Counsel

Recommendations for a District Level Threat Policy



LAUSD BULLETIN 1119.1

“All threats made against individuals or groups...must be taken seriously and investigated to determine whether they pose a real danger to students or staff. Threats which initially appear or ultimately prove to be pranks or hoaxes are also taken seriously due to the severe disruption that false threats often impose on the daily operation of a school...”



Risk Assessment – 11 Key Questions

1. Is the individual moving on a path towards violent action?
2. Is there evidence to suggest movement from thought to action?
3. What can be done to control the progression of the threat?



CHECK IN:

Thoughts, Feelings, Reactions

Quiz

Describe the difference between a threat assessment protocol and a crisis response protocol.



A Tale of 3 Cities

Meaningful and Effective Threat Assessment Must Take Place at the Community Level:

- Newtown, Connecticut - Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting - December 14, 2012
- 20-year-old Adam Lanza fatally shot 20 children between six and seven years old, as well as six adult staff members
- Perpetrator was not a student at the School
- **School had met school safety standards**



A Tale of 3 Cities

Meaningful and Effective Threat Assessment Must Take Place at the Community Level:

- Parkland, Florida – Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School
- February 14, 2018
- 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz killed 14 students and 3 staff
- Seventeen more were wounded
- Perpetrator was not a student at the School
- **School had met school safety standards**

A Tale of 3 Cities



Meaningful and Effective Threat Assessment Must Take Place at the Community Level:

- Tucson, Arizona – Safeway Market, Shopping Center - January 8, 2011
- Jerod Loughner 22, killed six, including a 9 yr old girl and wounded 14, including Gabby Giffords
- Loughner attended Pima Community College
- After a Threat Assessment Loughner was expelled on September 29, 2010
- **School had met school safety standards**

Child Trauma



- It is the number one health public health issue of our time
- *ACES* – Link to Adulthood - traumatic stress is linked to obesity, diabetes, depression, heart disease and suicide
- It has a negative impact on childhood development, learning and school behavior
- Early identification and intervention can transform trauma into resilience and new ways of coping

CHECK IN:

Thoughts, Feelings, Reactions



Question

What are examples of threat assessment risk factors?

Updated Threat Assessment Risk Factors



- Transition age youth
- Depression, Suicidal/Homicidal
- Social Isolation
- Mobility and fluidity of threats
- Recent loss or threat of loss of important relationship
- Internet connection with Ideology of hate
- Identification with School Shooters or Culture where violence plays a role in status, power
- Access to and experience with guns especially high powered weapons of war



Peter P. v. Compton Unified

- Class Action Suit
- Plaintiffs are students in High School
- Filed in Federal Court in May 2015
- Civil Rights Action – Schools not providing 504 Accommodations for Students with Complex Trauma





The Attorneys and the Law

- Public Counsel
- Irell and Manella LLP

Violations of the Rehabilitation act, the Americans with Disabilities and McKinney Vento Children have the right to a free and appropriate public education. This lawsuit seeks relief on behalf of the students in Compton suffering from the effects of severe trauma.



Risk Factors For Childhood Trauma

Plaintiff Peter P.

- Poverty – Especially Urban Poverty
- Family Member Incarceration
- Domestic Violence
- Abuse and Neglect
- Family Chaos and Conflict
- Homelessness/Housing Insecurity

(Kiser,2007)



Proposed Lawsuit Remedies

- **Comprehensive and ongoing training, coaching, and consultation** for all adults who work in schools - including teachers, administrators, counselors, clerical and custodial staff
- **Implementation of restorative practices** and district policies to prevent, address, and heal after conflict.
- **Employment of appropriately trained** health and human services staff: counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses



A Place to Begin – Identifying At Risk Students

Chronically Absent Students

Expelled and Suspended Students

Students in Foster Care/Juvenile Justice

Special Education

Hostile, Angry, Acting Out Students

Depressed Withdrawn Students

Bullied Students

Stephen C. vs. Indian Bureau of Education: A Landmark Class Action Lawsuit



- Plaintiffs are students and their parents from the Havasupai Elementary School with support from the Havasupai Tribal Counsel
- Filed in Federal Court in August 2018
- Civil Rights Complaint and Ruling
- of students attending BIE schools
- Schools Are Not Providing 504 Accommodation Services for Students with Complex Trauma

Risk Factors For Childhood Trauma Havasupai Plaintiffs



- Poverty
- Historical Trauma
- Childhood Trauma and Adversity
- Family Separation
- Family Member Incarceration
- Domestic Violence
- Family Chaos and Conflict
- Homelessness/Housing Insecurity





The Attorneys

- The Native American Disability Law Center
- Public Counsel
- The American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico
- The Stanford Youth and Education Law Project
- Munger, Tolles and Olson, LLP
- Sacks Tierney, P.A.



Proposed Lawsuit Remedies

- BIE schools must have a sufficient and stable number of teachers, staff and mental health ‘counselors’
- Bring an end to forced attendance at boarding schools off Tribal Lands
- Ensure culturally relevant education reflective of Native culture, language and history
- Adhere to the Trust Doctrine, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Legal Obligations of the Federal Government



“This landmark ruling amplifies and adds power to the national movement of students, parents, educators and scientists across the country know we cannot provide equal access to education until we recognize and address the impact of trauma and childhood adversity in our Schools.”

~Kathryn Eidman, Attorney, Public Counsel



CHECK IN:

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Thought

One of our session goals for today was to explore “events that made safety the focus of American Education”. What are your thoughts now about that statement?

Anecdotes and Feedback



Sharing

Volunteers to share a story or potential threat they may be concerned about.

Resources



Websites: Rand.org and CBITS.org for Information about Evidence Based Interventions

- 1) The Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools
- 2) Support for Students Exposed to Violence
- 3) Bounce Back
- 4) Psychological First Aid/Listen Protect Connect Model and Teach

National Center for Traumatic Stress Network

NCTSN – Trauma Informed Schools



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