

# AN INTRODUCTION TO A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

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Website

<http://www.studentthreatassessment.org>

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## READING:

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

Edited by John Van Dreal

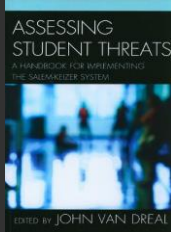
(VanDreal, Swinehart, Speckmier, Elliott, Rainwater, Okada, Spady,  
Mendoza, Byrd)

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## COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING October 13-15, 2015 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/>

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## COMPARE HUMAN HISTORY TO ONE CALENDAR YEAR. START JANUARY 1

(First... 200 Million Years: Hominids)

180 Thousand Years ago: Modern man (*Homo sapiens*) =  
1 year, January 1 through December 31

60 Thousand Years ago: Out of Africa =  
Late August.

9 Thousand Years ago: Written History =  
Mid October.

3 Hundred Years ago: Science and Enlightenment =  
2:26 pm, December 31

1 Hundred Years ago: Industry and Technology =  
7:15 pm, December 31

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## AGGRESSION CONTINUUM (from Eric M. Johnson, PhD.)

- Bombing
- Shooting
- Raping
- Beating
- Stabbing
- Strangulation
- (Violent Aggression: serious or lethal injury)
- Sexual coercion
- Fighting
- Hitting with objects
- Throwing objects
- Slugging
- Kicking
- Scratching
- Biting
- Slapping
- Pushing
- (Aggression Behavior: low to moderate injury)



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## Targeted and Reactive

- REACTIVE / AFFECTIVE / IMPULSIVE
  
- TARGETED / PREMEDITATED / PREDATORY

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## Reactive / Affective Type

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

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## 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.

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## ATTACK RELATED BEHAVIOR

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

### EXAMPLES:

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

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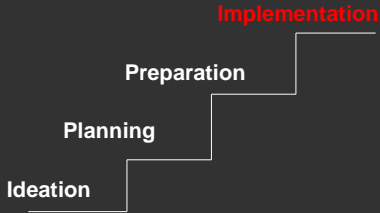
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## Targeted Violence (process)



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## 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."

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## 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."

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## 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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## Violence or Aggression? Targeted or Reactive?

- Vindictive
- Bullying
- Disturbed Youth
- Gang
- Relationship, Stalking
- Rampage Shooting

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## 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.)

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**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

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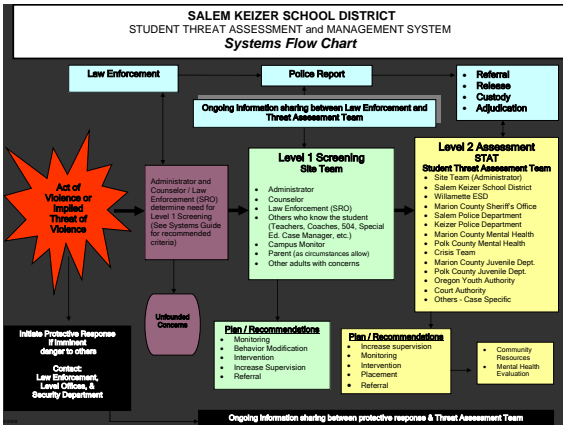
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**DEFINITION OF A THREAT**

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

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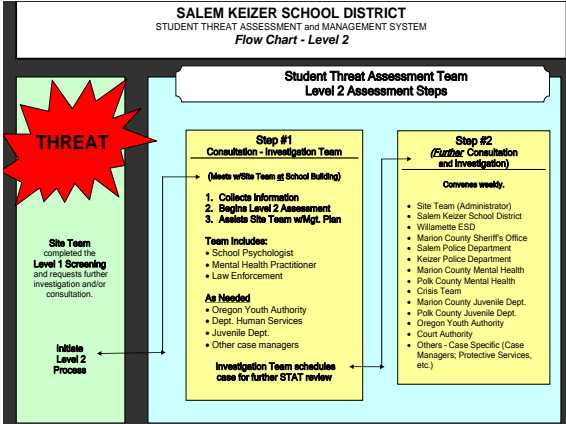
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## Organizing a system

- Need, justification and authorization.
- Community ownership, commitment, and responsibility.
- Policy and procedures necessary for functioning. (Legal counsel)
- Organize resources, design system and refine.
- Training, implementation, more training.
- Maintenance of program, trouble-shooting and ongoing training.

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## Choosing Team Members (Modified from US Dept of Ed. and USSS)

- An ability to relate well to others.
- An awareness and sensitivity to the difference between harming and helping in an intervention.
- A reputation for fairness and trustworthiness.
- A questioning, analytical and even skeptical mindset.
- Training in the collection and evaluation of information from multiple sources.
- Discretion and an appreciation for the importance of keeping information confidential.
- Familiarity with the contemporary issues of school and community safety.
- The ability to serve as a formal link or liaison between various systems (a "boundary spanner"; a "team player" who believes in the project and the process.)
- In-depth knowledge about their own organization, resource availability, and both political and ethical boundaries.
- Full credibility and respect within their own organization.

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**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.

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