

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS  
HIGH SCHOOL

# REPORT OF THE ONONDAGA COUNTY SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE

A Joint Initiative Between the Offices of the  
Onondaga County District Attorney  
Onondaga County Executive  
Onondaga County Sheriff  
City of Syracuse Mayor

August 13, 2018

Parkland, Florida  
February 14, 2018



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**In Memoriam**

Alyssa Alhadeff

Scott Beigel

Martin Duque

Nicholas Dworet

Aaron Feis

Jaime Guttenberg

Chris Hixon

Luke Hoyer

Cara Loughran

Gina Montalto

Joaquin Olivero

Alaina Petty

Meadow Pollack

Helena Ramsay

Alex Schachter

Carmen Schentrup

Peter Wang

and to all of the other lives lost to senseless acts of gun violence.

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# ONONDAGA COUNTY SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE

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August 13, 2018

Like many communities across the nation, concern over the safety of our children spread through Onondaga County, New York following the February 14, 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Many of our county's residents, much like ourselves, watched as students filed out of the school with their hands above their heads, as parents pleaded to find their children, and, as we soon found out, that 17 lives had been taken by a gunman in another senseless tragedy. Parkland just as easily could have been our community, but as the leaders you tasked with protecting you and your loved ones, we wanted to ensure that we continue to do everything in our power to ensure that it would not be.

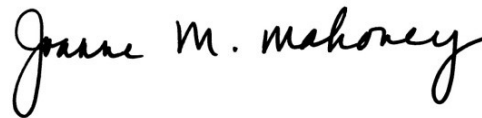
Shortly after the Parkland shooting, a task force was formed as a joint effort of the offices of the Onondaga County District Attorney, the Onondaga County Office of the County Executive, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office, and the Mayor of Syracuse. We assembled the best and the brightest minds from across our great community in a host of different areas – educational administration, law enforcement and criminal justice, public affairs, psychology, emergency management, local government, and, perhaps our greatest assets, students, teachers, and parents from within the county. School safety is a multifaceted, multidisciplinary issue, and we wanted to ensure that our task force reflected this. Our group held its first meeting on March 8, 2018, and have worked tirelessly since to determine the best practices and areas of improvement we could, as a county, make to improve our schools in the areas of student and teacher training, threat assessment, school grounds safety, and law enforcement.

This report is the culmination of the work that our task force has completed over the last five months. In it, you will find recommendations that are based not only on the lessons learned from Parkland and other communities, including Columbine and Sandy Hook, but also those that are based on research, evidence, and the many years of combined experience our team members have to offer. While Parkland may have been the catalyst for this task force, the reality is that many of the lessons learned since our group's inception address not only the worst episodes of school violence, but also the challenges our educational institutions face on a daily basis.

We thank the members of our task force for their endless dedication to school safety and the security of the children and schools within our county.



William J. Fitzpatrick  
Onondaga County District Attorney



Joanie Mahoney  
Onondaga County Executive



Sheriff Gene Conway  
Onondaga County Sheriff's Office



Mayor Ben Walsh  
City of Syracuse

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### February 14, 2018

Just after 2:20 p.m. on February 14, 2018, a 19-year-old former student arrived at the campus of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Armed with a semiautomatic rifle and more than 300 rounds of ammunition, he entered the school's Building 12, which housed 30 classrooms that were in use by more than 900 students and faculty members.<sup>1</sup> After

warning a freshman student that he encountered to leave the building, he opened fire on the building's first floor. Several students are killed or injured both in the hallway and in classrooms before the perpetrator moved to the second floor.



Hearing the gunshots and screams below, teachers on the second floor acted quickly. Despite hearing the fire alarms that were set off by the smoke from the perpetrator's gun, they worked quickly to secure their rooms, cover the windows, and usher students to corners of the rooms out of eyesight of the perpetrator. As a result, no one was killed on the second floor.

On the third floor, where the perpetrator proceeded to next, students made their way out of classrooms in response to the blaring fire alarm, which potentially drowned out the sounds of the gunfire. Heading toward the east stairwell, they encountered the perpetrator, who again opened fire, killing several more students. Hearing the shots, teacher Scott Beigel unlocked his door to let students in, only to be killed in the process. With a number of the classrooms locked, the students were trapped in the hallway, though some were able to flee to safety when the perpetrator stopped to reload his gun.

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<sup>1</sup> Evan Perez, "Florida school shooter could have fired many more bullets," *CNN*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/27/us/florida-school-shooter-ammunition-left/index.html>; Stephen Hobbs, Yiran Zhu, and Aric Chokey, "New details: How the Parkland school shooting unfolded," *Sun-Sentinel*, April 24, 2018, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/sfl-florida-school-shooting-timeline-20180424-htmlstory.html>.

After entering the teacher's lounge on the floor and attempting to shoot fleeing students through the windows,<sup>2</sup> the perpetrator dropped his weapon and fled from the school, mixed in with the other students who were evacuating. After an area-wide manhunt, he was taken into custody by law enforcement 79 minutes after the shooting began. In the attack, 17 people were killed and 17 others were injured. Three weeks after the shooting, the perpetrator was indicted on 34 counts of first-degree and attempted first-degree murder; his trial still is pending at the time of this report.<sup>3</sup>

## The Task Force

As concern spread throughout local communities, much like the rippling effect witnessed across the United States, leaders decided that action was needed to ensure that a similar incident did not take place within Onondaga County. A joint task force was formed by William Fitzpatrick (Onondaga County District Attorney), Joanie Mahoney (Onondaga County Executive), Gene Conway (Onondaga County Sheriff), and Ben Walsh (City of Syracuse Mayor) to address the issues highlighted by the Parkland shooting and implement practices and protocols within the community that would act as a response not only to the attack but those clear misses that allowed it to happen. The Onondaga County School Safety Task Force (OCSSTF) subsequently was formed.

The task force joined together stakeholders within the broader Onondaga County community in a variety of areas including, but certainly not limited to, education, law enforcement, emergency response, and government. Parents and students within the community also were recruited to join the group given their respective experiences within the county's multiple school systems. A total of 59 members comprised the OCSSTF (a list of participating members can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this report).

Four key areas were identified as points of focus and subsequently formed the OCSSTF's committees. The first was **student and teacher training** (chaired by Dr. Christopher Brown, superintendent of the West Genesee School District). The second area was **threat assessment** (chaired by Dr. James Knoll, a forensic psychiatrist from Upstate Medical University specializing in the topic). **School grounds safety** served as the third topic (chaired by Frank Fowler, Syracuse Police Department chief) with **law enforcement** identified as the last area of inquiry (chaired by Gene Conway, Onondaga County sheriff).

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* The windows were hurricane resistant due to local building codes and therefore did not shatter when the perpetrator fired his weapon at them.

<sup>3</sup> Elliott C. McLaughlin, "Prosecutors will seek death penalty in Parkland school massacre," *CNN*, March 13, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/13/us/nikolas-cruz-parkland-massacre-death-penalty/index.html>.

The first meeting of the OCSSTF took place on March 8, 2018. Subsequent meetings were held on April 5, May 16, June 21, and July 26 in which the broader committee continued to work through ideas, review potential solutions, and determine the best practices that were to be presented. This report is a culmination of each of these meetings, as well as the numerous individual sessions held by each of the subcommittees, and was made public at the final meeting of the committee on August 13, 2018.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Report**

This report is divided into five main parts. The first four of these are the individual reports and recommendations forwarded by each of the subcommittees based on their various meetings and feedback from the OCSSTF at large. The fifth part incorporates additional recommendations that the committee wanted to include but that did not necessarily fit within the first four areas.

Each of these sections begins with an overview of the Parkland shooting. By highlighting the issues identified in this and other shootings, it serves as the foundation from which to build recommendations. A general synopsis of the findings of each subcommittee then are offered, followed by the overarching recommendations related to each of the subcommittees' major themes.

The final section of this report includes three appendices. The first provides a list of the standing members of the OCSSTF, without whom this report would not be possible. The second provides an important case study of what happens "when everything is done right." This case study reviews the efforts of law enforcement and other stakeholders both in the county and across the nation to help stop the threat of a mass shooting at Syracuse University before the plan could come to fruition. The final appendix is a synopsis of key excerpts from the recently released (July 2018) report from the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center. This report establishes a threat assessment model that can be used by schools both in Onondaga County and across the nation to help identify students of concern, assess their potential for violence, and intervene in order to manage the risk before it escalates into a full-blown episode of violence.

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<sup>4</sup> Though the initial work of the committee to produce this report has completed, there are plans to reconvene the task force periodically to assess the consistent efficacy of the recommendations enclosed, offer new recommendations as needed, and provide general support to schools and the Onondaga County community as a whole.



## Major Recommendations

The following is a list of major recommendations offered by the task force. Each are discussed further in their respective parts.

### Student and Teacher Training

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1. Adopt the Standard Response Protocol to ensure uniformity and consistency in the language associated with active shooter trainings.
2. Encourage a school climate that empowers students to “see something, say something.”
3. Other trainings that should be mandatory for school districts and their employees include crisis prevention, mental health awareness, and Stop the Bleed.
4. Employ a tip-based communication program where students and other school-based stakeholders can report concerns to the appropriate channels. This committee recommends using tip411.
5. Employ the NaviGate Prepared® software platform to improve location-based information availability to responding law enforcement in times of crisis. The technology also can be used by school personnel to take attendance by room in a similar situation.
6. Include first responders (e.g., police, fire, EMS) as well as student transportation services (e.g., school buses) in drills and reunification exercises.

### Threat Assessment

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1. Define concerning and prohibited behaviors.
2. Create a central reporting mechanism to include anonymous reporting (overlaps with point # 4 under Student and Teacher Training).
3. Determine a threshold level for law enforcement intervention.
4. Establish a two-level threat assessment process to include both school- and county-based teams to identify threats, conduct case reviews, and follow up as needed.
5. Develop effective risk management options to include both mental health referrals and options within the juvenile justice system.

6. Conduct regular trainings for all vested stakeholders as well as the Level 1 and Level 2 threat assessment teams.

### School Grounds Safety

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1. Ensure that all classroom doors have locks capable of being secured from the interior of the room. Preference is given to those that do not need a key to be secured.
2. Ensure that all necessary stakeholders, such as faculty (including substitute teachers), staff (including front office, maintenance), and administrators, have the keys necessary to be able to secure their location.
3. Conduct annual evaluations of existing safety protocols and make recommendations as needed.
4. Ensure that any devices and protocols implemented are supported by evidence. Do not make significant investments into products that appear effective but are not proven to be.

### Law Enforcement

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1. Establish a countywide unified active shooter response plan.
2. Incorporate the Department of Emergency Communications (9-1-1 center) in all aspects of planning, preparation, and training involving emergency first responders.
3. Armed school resource officers (SROs) should be the preferred method of providing safety within schools.
4. Work with schools to establish clear and plain language to be used within their safety plans to improve law enforcement coordination during times of crisis (overlaps with point # 1 under Student and Teacher Training).

## PART I. STUDENT AND TEACHER TRAINING

Chair: Dr. Christopher Brown, Superintendent, West Genesee School District

### Lessons from February 14, 2018

*The investigation into the Parkland shooting revealed a number of vulnerabilities with regard to student and teacher training. Perhaps one of the most glaring issues to surface was the fact that Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School never had participated in an active shooter drill, despite that schools across the nation – particularly in the wake of the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School – routinely prepare for such events.<sup>5</sup> While teachers in the district had received enhanced training for active shooter scenarios, no plan was in place for students to know how to respond to such an incident nor how to protect themselves.*

*As a result, when the shooting erupted and panic ensued, students and, to an extent, their educators, relied on what they knew. When the fire alarms were activated from the smoke of the perpetrator's weapon, many fled their classrooms to evacuate their building as taught to do in a standard fire drill. The result was that a number of students, particularly those on the third floor who were hindered in hearing the gunshots due to their distanced proximity from the start of the shooting, ended up coming face-to-face with the perpetrator; some, like Meadow Pollack, lost their lives as a result.*

*Further complicating the issue was that there also was no call to initiate a lockdown during the shooting.<sup>6</sup> While the training the teachers had received earlier in 2018 associated specific language with the term "Code Red," meaning that the school should go into an immediate lockdown when such a call was made, this was not initiated on the day of the shooting. One of the school monitors who had seen the perpetrator approaching Building 12 instead radioed out to another monitor to "keep [their] eyes open."<sup>7</sup> The monitor held back on calling for a Code Red as he did not have a visual on a weapon. By the time the school did go into a lockdown (done informally based on the reports of the shooting and not through a direct order), it was too late – the shooting already was in process.*

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<sup>5</sup> See Larry Barszewski, "Almost 20 years after Columbine, Broward requires no active shooter drills for high schoolers," *Sun Sentinel*, March 2, 2018, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-florida-school-shooting-no-active-shooter-drill-20180302-story.html>. In New York State, schools are mandated to conduct four (4) active shooter drills per academic year.

<sup>6</sup> Curt Anderson, "WATCH: Video details the moments before Parkland school shooting," *PBS*, June 6, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/watch-video-details-the-moments-before-parkland-school-shooting>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## Findings of the Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee

Through their work, the Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee determined that their recommendations were to be focused on one key component of any training or communications protocol: **consistency**. With 18 school districts and 119 separate K-12 institutions in Onondaga County alone, ensuring consistency within and between districts is imperative to the success of any plan or protocol. Given that multiple agencies are likely to respond to an emergency at any one of these schools in any given district, ensuring consistency in plans, language, and communication tools can only serve to improve the response and ultimately save lives.

Over the course of several subcommittee meetings, the group focused on trainings and communication strategies that would best help prepare students, faculty, staff, and other school stakeholders for any emergency situation. In the area of training, the Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee identified that it is IMPERATIVE that active shooter training (among other forms of emergency preparedness) be consistent, involve as many people as possible, be varied, and be conducted frequently. Similarly, consistency also is key in the area of communication. The Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee specifically advocated that any communication tools employed should be able to be learned quickly (and by a variety of learners), have good support features, and be able to be purchased as part of a cooperative or through grant funding to ensure that they are available to a broader range of institutions.

## Recommendations

The OCSSTF Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee offers several recommendations to address those issues highlighted by the Parkland investigation and concerns of the Onondaga County school communities (including teachers, staff, students, and parents), as outlined below:

1. **Adopt the Standard Response Protocol™ from the I Love U Guys Foundation as the primary active shooter and emergency situation training.**

New York State has worked to standardize the language that is commonly associated with school-based emergencies.<sup>8</sup> The five emergency responses designated by the state are (1) Lockdown, (2) Lockout, (3) Shelter-in-Place, (4) Hold-in-Place, and (5) Evacuation.

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<sup>8</sup> Linda Bakst, "A new guide to school emergency response planning is rolled out," *New York State School Board Association*, March 16, 2015, <https://www.nyssba.org/news/2015/03/12/on-board-online-march-16-2015/a-new-guide-to-school-emergency-response-planning-is-rolled-out/>.

The actions and directives engrained in the Standard Response Protocol™ (SRP) are “functional annexes” of the State’s safety planning objectives.<sup>9</sup> Further, all resources associated with SRP are available to schools and districts free of charge. A minimal expenditure in the form of time to train is needed, but the protocol is designed such that a “train-the-trainer” model can be used, thereby enabling a broader spectrum of individuals (e.g., teachers, staff, school administrators, law enforcement) to deliver the necessary information to students quickly and efficiently.

SRP also can be utilized in conjunction with other active shooter protocols including, but not limited to: Run, Hide, Fight; Avoid, Deny, Defend; and A.L.i.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate). Schools are encouraged to review each of these, as well as other, protocols and determine which is the best fit based on their individual community needs.

**2. Encourage a school climate that empowers students to “see something, say something.”**

Research has found that the number one reason that school shootings and other episodes of school-based violence are averted is because students with knowledge about the intended plan come forward.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the increasingly punitive nature of schools may lead students to fear retaliation from faculty or administrators if they were to come forward with information (such that they are “guilty by association”). A similar factor is the issue of “snitching,” whereby students, from a young age, are discouraged from tattling on others. Collectively, these may foster a persistent code of silence among students. Accordingly, schools and districts should work together with students to improve school culture and emphasize the importance of coming forward with such information. This can be encouraged not only by promoting “see something, say something” but also through the use of anonymous tip lines, discussed below.

**3. Incorporate additional protocols, including crisis prevention, mental health awareness, and Stop the Bleed.**

Crisis prevention and mental health training are imperative. In the context of school-based violence events like Parkland, they are necessary to helping to stop a threat before it comes to fruition.<sup>11</sup> Still, as such events are particularly rare,<sup>12</sup> having such

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<sup>9</sup> For a full description of the Standard Response Protocol™, visit <http://iloveguys.org/srp.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Madfis, “Insight from averted mass shootings,” in Jaclyn Schildkraut (ed.), *Mass Shootings in America: Understanding the Debates, Causes, and Responses* (pp. 79-84), Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO (2018).

<sup>11</sup> See also Part II on Threat Assessment.

<sup>12</sup> Jaclyn Schildkraut, Margaret K. Formica, and Jim Malatras, *Can mass shootings be stopped? To address the problem, we must better understand the phenomenon* (Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government, May 22, 2018), <http://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/5-22-18-Mass-Shootings-Brief.pdf>.

plans in place also will address more common concerns for students, including (but certainly not limited to) depression, suicidality, and problems stemming from home.

The Stop the Bleed training is another imperative tool that all schools should train their faculty and staff on.<sup>13</sup> This program teaches the basics of bleeding control through the use of pressure techniques, use of dressings, or the application of a tourniquet. In emergency situations, these applications have been proven to save lives by buying precious time until medical professionals can arrive on scene and administer first aid.

**4. Employ a tip-based communication program where students and other school-based stakeholders can report concerns to the appropriate channels.**

As noted above, creating an atmosphere in which students feel safe to come forward with information is necessary and one way in which to achieve that goal is to offer an anonymous tip-based reporting system. The OCSSTF Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee recommends the tip411 program.<sup>14</sup> This program allows anonymous tips to be submitted to school districts and also allows the schools, district, and even law enforcement to have two-way anonymous communication back to the person(s) providing the information. The instant communication also can significantly speed up the investigation process and help schools and law enforcement respond more quickly to possible threats and emergency situations.

Tip411 currently is in use by the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office, who have expressed both satisfaction and success with the platform. A co-service option with OCM BOCES also has been established. While it is not the intent of this subcommittee or the task force at large to recommend commercial, for-profit companies, this program is being listed specifically by title because there are no known competitors at the time of this writing.<sup>15</sup>

**5. Employ the NaviGate Prepared® software platform to improve location-based information availability.**

Given that a number of different agencies will respond in times of crisis, many of whom will be unfamiliar with the layout of a given building (an issue first identified in relation to the Columbine shooting), having access to the most updated plans is imperative in order to be able to quickly neutralize a threat and secure a scene. The NaviGate Prepared® software platform includes three-dimensional images of each area of a

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<sup>13</sup> For more information, visit <https://www.dhs.gov/stopthebleed> or <https://www.bleedingcontrol.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> For more information, visit <https://home.tip411.com/>.

<sup>15</sup> While there are certainly other tip programs, none to the knowledge of this Subcommittee have the two-way anonymous communication features built in to tip411.

building (taken during the program's setup with the institution) in each building within a school district.<sup>16</sup> This enables law enforcement outside the building to know how to quickly navigate once inside and also identify and avoid any obstacles.

This platform also has benefits for school personnel. The NaviGate Prepared® application can be downloaded to most devices and used to take attendance room by room during an emergency. This information also is transmitted to law enforcement, as well as school officials, so that during an emergency, they know where all students are located. This not only can be a time saver, it can help to save lives.

**6. Include first responders in drills and reunification exercises.**

Many people will be involved in the response to an actual emergency. Accordingly, it is important that, in addition to schools conducting their own active shooter trainings (as identified earlier), other vested stakeholders participate in such exercises. This can include first responders (e.g., law enforcement, fire, and EMS), transportation services (e.g., bus companies), emergency management, and even the media.

By including all parties in drills and reunification exercises, it not only further adds to the perceived culture of preparedness, it helps to break down barriers with students and ensure greater compliance (and potentially less fear) in the event of an actual emergency. Further, by working together, these stakeholders will also ensure consistency in response practices, communication plans, and vocabulary of protocols in use to ensure that a crisis can be handled as quickly, efficiently, and safely as possible.

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<sup>16</sup> For a full list of features associated with the platform, visit <https://www.navigateprepared.com/safety-software/>.

## PART II. THREAT ASSESSMENT

Chair: Dr. James Knoll, Director of Forensic Psychiatry, Upstate Medical University

### Lessons from February 14, 2018

*The Parkland shooting revealed a number of missed opportunities to intervene in the life of the perpetrator before the attack came to fruition. Over a 16-month period at Stoneman Douglas, he had faced disciplinary action 25 times, including once for assault.<sup>17</sup> He had a similar disciplinary history in middle school, averaging three incidents per month in just the 2013-2014 school year alone.*

*Additionally, there were numerous other warning signs. The perpetrator had a fascination with weapons and often posted images of himself with guns and knives on social media; in one Instagram post, he mentioned that he wanted to shoot up his school (the information was transferred to Stoneman Douglas's school resource officer but it is unclear what action, if any, was taken). Another school resource officer reported to a peer counselor that the perpetrator was engaging in self-harm, cutting and ingesting gasoline in an attempt to commit suicide; his interrogation by police revealed similar patterns.<sup>18</sup> Despite this, a mental health clinician declined to detain him on an involuntary mental health hold, citing him as a low risk.*

*Just over three months before the shooting, the family he was staying with called the Broward County Sheriff's Office and requested that they remove the perpetrator's weapons, concerned over whether he would use them to harm others.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps most important was that students who had seen and/or interacted with the perpetrator on a daily basis also expressed concerns over his increasingly erratic behavior and reported it to school authorities. With all of these concerns raised, the school had requested a threat assessment be conducted but it is unclear if*

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<sup>17</sup> Brett Murphy, "Numerous missed opportunities before Florida shooter killed 17 at Broward high school," *Naples Daily News*, February 18, 2018, <https://www.naplesnews.com/story/news/2018/02/18/numerous-missed-opportunities-before-florida-shooter-killed-17-broward-high-school/349666002/>; Bob Norman, "School considered shooting suspect potential 'threat' year before massacre," *Local 10 News*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.local10.com/news/parkland-school-shooting/school-considered-shooting-suspect-potential-threat-year-before-massacre>; Washington Post Staff, "Red flags: The troubled path of accused Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz," *The Washington Post*, March 10, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/timeline-parkland-shooter-nikolas-cruz/>.

<sup>18</sup> "Transcribed from video recording: Interview of Nikolas Cruz," accessed August 7, 2018, <http://www.trbas.com/media/media/acrobat/2018-08/47229820736860-06130906.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> See Part V for discussion of Red Flag laws.



one was or what the results were. Additional tips about the perpetrator's potential to be a school shooter also went unaddressed by multiple agencies.<sup>20</sup>

## What is Threat Assessment?

A *threat* communicates the possibility or intention of causing harm.<sup>21</sup> *Threat assessment* is a formal process of gathering information to analyze and understand a threat and determine the level of risk posed to the target of the threat. A Threat Assessment and Management (TAM) team is an interdisciplinary group of professionals that includes law enforcement, mental health providers, and other security stakeholders collaborating in a structured effort to accurately assess and then mitigate the risk of violence.<sup>22</sup> The TAM team does not attempt to *predict* violent behavior but instead works diligently and collaboratively to prevent these acts from occurring

The relation between threat assessment and threat management is a fluid one, with continuous efforts to gather and reassess evolving risk. The process forms the basis for the TAM team's threat management strategy. To further specify, threat assessment is a fact-based process of identifying and analyzing observable behaviors or communications in order to evaluate a potentially dangerous individual. The process typically consists of the following:

1. *Identification* of threats – usually via “leakage” or concerns of 3rd party social contacts
2. *Evaluation* of the seriousness of the threat and danger it poses
3. *Intervention* to reduce risk of violence by implementing a threat management plan
4. *Follow-up* to assess intervention results

TAM teams first triage a threat and then assess a person of concern using structured professional judgment to better determine risk and whether the person is likely to be on a path towards targeted violence. *Structured professional judgment* is a term that refers to the use of an organizing methodology that relies on clinical and/or operational expertise within a structured application or protocol. Risk factors are identified and operationally defined, which then help focus the threat assessment and management.

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<sup>20</sup> Washington Post Staff, “Red flags: The troubled path of accused Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz,” *The Washington Post*, March 10, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/timeline-parkland-shooter-nikolas-cruz/>.

<sup>21</sup> J. Reid Meloy, Stephen Hart, and Jens Hoffmann, “Threat assessment and threat management,” in J. Reid Meloy and Jens Hoffmann (eds.), *International Handbook of Threat Assessment* (pp. 3-17), New York: Oxford University Press (2014).

<sup>22</sup> Andre Simons and J. Reid Meloy, “Foundations of threat assessment and management,” in Vincent B. Van Hasselt and Michael L. Bourke (eds.), *Handbook of Behavioral Criminology* (pp. 627-644), New York: Springer (2017).

The TAM team's "assessment drives and informs the development of a dynamic threat management strategy that varies in intensity and intrusiveness depending on the person and the situation."<sup>23</sup> Effective TAM teams utilize principles identified by the U.S. Secret Service, FBI, and broader threat assessment research literature.<sup>24</sup> For example, certain core principles have been identified, which serve as a foundation for threat assessment:

- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior.
- Targeted violence is the result of interactions among the individual, situation, setting, and target of violence.
- Threat management requires an investigative, thorough, and inquisitive approach.

When a threat assessment request is made, it is best approached by a multidisciplinary team. In addition to a range of expertise, the other advantages of the TAM team include shared responsibility by a multi-agency group, community collaboration, and a consistent, reliable method of resolving crises. The initial stages of threat assessment involve data gathering, collateral interviews, and analysis of warning behaviors. Analysis of warning behaviors and other factors helps the TAM team evaluate motivation, intent, and efforts toward targeted violence. The TAM team's assessment is context dependent and focuses on the analysis of relevant factors, such as the individual's historical, clinical, dispositional, and situational factors.

## Findings of the Threat Assessment Subcommittee

The Threat Assessment Subcommittee has concluded that Onondaga County should formulate and implement a multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team (TAT) as recommended by the FBI, U.S. Secret Service, and Department of Homeland Security.<sup>25</sup> A

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> National Threat Assessment Center, *Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, July 2018), [https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS\\_NTAC\\_Enhancing\\_School\\_Safety\\_Guide\\_7.11.18.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf). See also Department of Defense, Defense Science Board, *Task force report: Predicting violent behavior* (Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, August 2012), <https://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2010s/PredictingViolentBehavior.pdf>; Dewey Cornell and Jennifer Maeng, "Statewide implementation of threat assessment in Virginia K-12 schools," *Contemporary School Psychology*, 22, 2 (2017): 116-124; Robert A. Fein, Bryan Vossekuil, William S. Pollack, Randy Borum, William Modzeleski, and Marissa Reddy, *Threat assessment in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, May 2002), [https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi\\_guide.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ssi_guide.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

threat assessment approach to school violence has been shown to:

- Effectively identify potentially dangerous students and situations
- Have positive effects on school safety
- Provide important information for support, discipline, and placement decisions
- Increase efficient coordination between all the dedicated parties

A TAT model has already been successfully utilized in other states. For example, the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS), under the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), developed and provided model policies and procedures to help local school boards establish and operate threat assessment teams to support their schools.<sup>26</sup>

We believe the initial foundations and expertise already exist for a TAT model in Onondaga County in the form of invested school districts, law enforcement, legal professionals, and forensic mental health evaluators. Thus, establishing a functional TAT in Onondaga County would be a matter of obtaining the necessary resources and operationalizing a reliable threat assessment protocol.

## **Recommendations**

The OCSSTF Threat Assessment Subcommittee recommends establishing a protocol similar to that outlined by the U.S. Secret Service and further detailed by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety. Although details will need to be further refined to best meet the needs of Onondaga County schools, the TAT model would consist of the following steps:

**1. Define concerning and prohibited behaviors.**

Such behaviors could include threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying, criminal behaviors, or other concerning behaviors. These concerning behaviors may occur along a continuum and schools also should identify behaviors that may not clearly be indicative of violence yet warrant some type of intervention.

**2. Create a central reporting mechanism.**

School staff and community should establish reporting mechanisms to include (but not necessarily be limited to) anonymous reporting.

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<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the Virginia threat assessment protocol, see Dewey Cornell, "The Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines: An empirically supported violence prevention strategy," in Nils Böckler, Thorsten Seeger, Peter Sitzer, and Wilhelm Heitmeyer (eds.), *School Shootings: International Research, Case Studies, and Concepts for Prevention* (pp. 379-400), New York: Springer (2013).

3. **Determine a threshold level for law enforcement intervention.**
4. **Establish threat assessment procedure consisting of a two-level threat assessment process.**
  - a) Level 1 (Screening is conducted by an on-site team): The Level 1 TAT conducts a triage process which serves to screen cases and determine their appropriateness for review and/or action by the Level 2 TAT. In respect to structure, the Level 1 TAT should have a designated team leader, typically a principal or other senior administrator for the school(s). The Level 1 team also may include:
    - i. School administrator
    - ii. Counselor or school psychologist
    - iii. Law Enforcement (school resource officer)
    - iv. School staff who know the student
    - v. Parent (as circumstances allow)
    - vi. Other adults with concerns
  - b) Level 2 (A multidisciplinary expert TAT): The Level 2 TAT performs a more thorough, in-depth assessment and analysis. The Level 2 team also assists the Level 1 on-site TAT with management and prevention plans. The Level 2 team should include:
    - i. A Level 1 TAT representative or leader
    - ii. Local law enforcement, including a detective
    - iii. County mental health representative(s)
    - iv. County juvenile justice authority
    - v. District Attorney designee
    - vi. Forensic mental health evaluator
  - c) Both Level 1 and 2 TATs should conduct regular case reviews and follow up.
5. **Develop effective risk management options.**

Such options should include (though not be limited to) mental health referrals or juvenile justice options.
6. **Conduct regular trainings for all stakeholders, including the Level 1 and 2 teams.**

## PART III. SCHOOL GROUNDS SAFETY

Chair: Frank Fowler, Chief, Syracuse Police Department

### Lessons from February 14, 2018

*While there were some unintended successes in terms of school grounds safety in the Parkland shooting,<sup>27</sup> there were issues highlighted that, had they not been present, could have potentially mitigated the loss of life. The first was that the perpetrator never entered a single classroom, yet he was able to kill 6 people – including students Nicholas Dworet, Helena Ramsay, and Carmen Schentrup – who were secured in their respective rooms (13 others were injured in five separate classrooms, all without the perpetrator entering).<sup>28</sup> Instead, he shot through the windows that were part of each room’s entry design.*

*The second glaring issue was the fact that the doors to the classrooms could not be secured from the interior.<sup>29</sup> Instead, teachers had to open their doors, utilize their keys to secure the lock on the exterior (assuming that they could, under duress, find the correct key), and then close the door and resume their lockdown. Given how quickly the events unfolded, particularly on the first floor of the building, many were left vulnerable and unable to secure their rooms despite that he did not enter any.*

*Both of these issues, however, were not new – they had been highlighted in previous school shootings.<sup>30</sup> The issue of being able to shoot through windows into classrooms was found to be problematic in the 2005 attack at Red Lake High School in Red Lake, Minnesota as the perpetrator gained entry to a classroom using this tactic and subsequently killed five students and their teacher before committing suicide.<sup>31</sup> The issue with the door locks also had been*

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<sup>27</sup> As noted at the onset of this report, the perpetrator was unable to shoot fleeing students because he could not break through the hurricane-resistant glass with his weapon. This, however, was not a function of active shooter safety preparedness but a requirement of the state building code to be compliant for weather-related disasters.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Hobbs, Yiran Zhu, and Aric Chokey, “New details: How the Parkland school shooting unfolded,” *Sun-Sentinel*, April 24, 2018, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/sfl-florida-school-shooting-timeline-20180424-htmlstory.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Patricia Mazzei, “Parkland gunman carried out rampage without entering a single classroom,” *The New York Times*, April 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/parkland-shooting-reconstruction.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Jaclyn Schildkraut and H. Jaymi Elsass, *Mass shootings: Media, myths, and realities* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> “10 years after Red Lake shootings, memories still haunt,” *Twin Cities Pioneer Press*, March 17, 2015, <https://www.twincities.com/2015/03/17/10-years-after-red-lake-shootings-memories-still-haunt/>.

raised following the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting when teachers similarly could not secure their rooms without potentially facing the perpetrator.<sup>32</sup>

## Findings of the School Grounds Safety Subcommittee

As noted in Part I, there are 18 school districts and 119 schools within Onondaga County's geographical limits. Further, similar to findings of the Student and Teacher Training Subcommittee, disparity exists within and between districts in terms of the procedures and protocols being used. What also has been determined through site visits made by members of the School Grounds Safety Subcommittee is that there are definitive improvements to be made to school buildings across the county. Members within the community have echoed similar sentiments, such as the need for door locks that can be secured from the interior.

It is important to note, however, that each school and its respective buildings must be assessed separately as each will vary in needs. Metal detectors, for example, may be beneficial for certain schools but not others.<sup>33</sup> The needs of schools may vary location, enrollment size, or other factors. Accordingly, the needs of each school must be considered independently in order to make the best decisions for the institution and its community.

## Recommendations

The OCSSTF School Grounds Safety Subcommittee recommends addressing those issues highlighted in the Parkland shooting aftermath, as well as other school shootings that occurred prior, as follows:

- 1. Ensure that all classroom doors have locks that are capable of being secured from the interior of the room.**

Research has found that, on average, school and mass shootings are over in five minutes or less.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, a key to survival is building a time barrier between

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen J. Sedensky, *Report of the State's Attorney for the judicial district of Danbury on the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School and 36 Yogananda Street, Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012* (Danbury, CT: Office of the State's Attorney, 2013), [http://health-equity.lib.umd.edu/4223/1/Sandy\\_Hook\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://health-equity.lib.umd.edu/4223/1/Sandy_Hook_Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> It should be noted, however, that this committee does not support the use of metal detectors in schools based on the empirical evidence of their lack of effectiveness and harm to school climate. For a review, see Jaclyn Schildkraut and Glenn W. Muschert, *Columbine, 20 years later and beyond: Lessons from tragedy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> J. Pete Blair and Katherine W. Schweit, *A study of active shooter incidents, 2000-2013* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014), <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/>

oneself and an active shooter and the best way to do that is with a door lock. No one has ever been killed behind a locked door in a school shooting because the locking technology failed.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the number one recommendation by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission in their assessment of the shooting was that all classrooms should be equipped with doors that lock from the inside.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to deciding to outfit classroom doors with interior locks, consideration also should be given to what type of mechanism is used. Though concern exists with relation to fire, building, or Department of Education codes, researchers have recommended that deadbolt locks be used when possible for two key reasons.<sup>37</sup> First, deadbolts are stronger than push-button or thumb-turn locks and can typically withstand more force against them. Second, in times of crisis, people’s motor skills may be highly compromised, which can inhibit their ability not only to find a key but to use it correctly to secure the room. This Committee echoes these recommendations when possible.

**2. Ensure that all necessary stakeholders have the keys necessary to secure their locations.**

In the event that locks are selected that require keys to be used, it is imperative that all school stakeholders – not just permanent teachers but also substitute teachers, front office staff, maintenance, and others – have keys to secure their respective locations and, for those in the most critical positions (e.g., administration, building supervisors and maintenance), be provided master keys to secure all areas as needed during an attack. One of the teachers who was killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, Lauren Rousseau, was a substitute teacher;<sup>38</sup> several individuals in

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[september/fbi-releases-study-on-active-shooter-incidents/pdfs/a-study-of-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-u.s.-between-2000-and-2013](http://www.fbi.gov/newsroom/special-operations/active-shooter-incidents/a-study-of-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-u.s.-between-2000-and-2013).

<sup>35</sup> As noted, people were killed in Red Lake and Parkland because the perpetrators shot through a window, either gaining entry (Red Lake) or simply killing people inside the room without entering (Parkland). The only other case of an active shooter incident in a school where someone was killed behind a locked door was in the 2006 attack at Platte Canyon High School in Bailey, Colorado. Student Emily Keyes was killed by an armed intruder who was barricaded behind the locked door with her and another student. Even at Columbine, where the perpetrators had uninterrupted access to the school for nearly 50 minutes and were armed with numerous improvised explosive devices, they never attempted to breach a locked door. In sum, door locks have been proven to save countless lives during school shootings.

<sup>36</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, *Final report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Committee* (Hartford, CT: Sandy Hook Advisory Committee, 2015), [http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC\\_Final\\_Report\\_3-6-2015.pdf](http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC_Final_Report_3-6-2015.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> M. Hunter Martaindale, William L. Sandel, and J. Pete Blair, “Active-shooter events in the workplace: Findings and policy implications,” *Journal of Business Continuity & Emergency Planning*, 11, 1 (2017): 6-20.

<sup>38</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, *Final report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Committee* (Hartford, CT: Sandy Hook Advisory Committee, 2015), [http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC\\_Final\\_Report\\_3-6-2015.pdf](http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC_Final_Report_3-6-2015.pdf).

similar capacities throughout Onondaga County have expressed similar concern to this subcommittee about not being able to secure their classrooms in times of crisis.

3. **Conduct annual evaluations of existing safety protocols and make recommendations or updates as needed.**

Putting plans in place is not wholly sufficient for ensuring school safety. Instead, protocols as well as accompanying technologies (e.g., door locks) must be routinely evaluated and updated as needed. At a minimum, such evaluations should be conducted once a year, though more frequently when possible is recommended. To facilitate this process, the School Grounds Safety Subcommittee recommends that schools utilize Safe and Sound School's Straight-A Safety Improvement model.<sup>39</sup> These helpful toolkits provide free resources as schools work to **Assess, Act, and Audit** their safety plans.

4. **Ensure that any devices and protocols implemented are supported by evidence.**

Particularly in the wake of high profile incidents like Parkland, school safety and security have become a consumer market.<sup>40</sup> While many of these devices are touted as being effective and give the appearance of safety, the reality is that the evidence simply does not support such claims.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the School Grounds Safety Subcommittee recommends that for all products and protocols being considered, relevant stakeholders seek to determine what empirical evidence, if any exists, supports their implementation. If no such research exists, it is recommended that the stakeholders seek an outside evaluation from a neutral third party to determine the potential effectiveness and return on investment.

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<sup>39</sup> For more information on the Straight-A Safety Improvement model, toolkits, and additional resources, visit <https://www.safeandsoundschools.org/programs-2/straight-a-safety-improvement/>.

<sup>40</sup> Recent estimates, for example, suggest that in 2017, school safety expenditures topped \$2.7 billion; see Jim Dearing, "School security systems industry – US market overview," *HIS Markit*, February 26, 2018, <https://technology.ihs.com/600401/school-security-systems-industry-us-market-overview>.

<sup>41</sup> Jaclyn Schildkraut and Glenn W. Muschert, *Columbine, 20 years later and beyond: Lessons from tragedy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019).



## PART IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Chair: Gene Conway, Sheriff, Onondaga County Sheriff's Office

### Lessons from February 14, 2018

*One of the most controversial issues stemming from the Parkland shooting were the actions – or, more specifically, the lack thereof – of school resource officer and former sheriff's deputy Scot Peterson, who failed to enter the Building 12 as the shooting took place inside.<sup>42</sup> The only armed person at the school as the shooting was taking place, Peterson reported that he believed the gunfire to be coming from outside, which led to his decision to position himself at the exterior of the building rather than entering. He also claimed he missed information due to a routing of 9-1-1 calls and received other conflicting reports. Surveillance footage further showed that he maintained his position for 27 minutes; given that the shooting was over in less than 7 minutes, however, he then subsequently failed to render aid to the injured.<sup>43</sup>*

*Another issue related to law enforcement response stemmed from an order given by a Broward County Sheriff's Office captain who took control of the scene early on. Despite that law enforcement practices have changed significantly since Columbine,<sup>44</sup> such that officers immediately work to neutralize the threat, the captain ordered the officers to create a perimeter rather than entering the building.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the first officers did not even enter the building until four minutes after the perpetrator had fled the scene, meaning that he encountered no interference from law enforcement during his attack. Two officers from another county SWAT team who were training nearby, however, were temporarily suspended when they went to the school to try to help with the response.<sup>46</sup>*

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<sup>42</sup> Scott Stump, "Officer Scot Peterson defends his actions during Parkland shooting," *Today*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.today.com/news/officer-scot-peterson-defends-his-actions-during-parkland-shooting-t130225>.

<sup>43</sup> Glenn Harlan Reynolds, "Looking for 'solutions' to mass killings? Start with punishing failure," *USA Today*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/04/09/mass-killings-failures-hold-law-enforcement-accountable-column/497285002/>.

<sup>44</sup> Jaclyn Schildkraut and Glenn W. Muschert, *Columbine, 20 years later and beyond: Lessons from tragedy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> Wanda J. DeMarzo and Nicholas Nehamas, "Deputies were told to set up 'perimeter' around Parkland shooting. That's not the training," *The Miami Herald*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article203015289.html>; Matt Finn, "Commanding officer initially ordered responding deputies to 'stage' not enter Stoneman Douglas, sources say," *Fox News*, February 28, 2018, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/28/commanding-officer-initially-ordered-responding-deputies-to-stage-not-enter-stoneman-douglas-sources-say.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Nehamas, "Two SWAT officers responded to the Parkland rampage uninvited. They've been punished," *The Miami Herald*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article203903054.html>.

## Findings of the Law Enforcement Subcommittee

Presently in Onondaga County, there are 14 law enforcement agencies (police and sheriff).<sup>47</sup> In the event of an active shooter situation at a school, any or all could be called in to assist with the response in addition to state and federal authorities. As a result, consistency across training procedures and communication strategies is particularly important to ensure that there is little confusion and time wasted when every second counts.

With having numerous agencies, however, comes the inherent issue of inconsistency. Each agency follows its own training regiment and protocol. Some train within the agency, others utilize external training facilities. Other potential problems include differences in incident command structures and communication language between agencies. These inconsistencies can turn into incompatibilities in the event of an actual emergency in which multiple agencies must not only respond but work together fluidly to address the situation.

In light of other school shootings, beginning with Columbine, law enforcement training related to active shooters has made two important shifts in practice.<sup>48</sup> First, in lieu of waiting for SWAT teams to respond, active shooter situations now are seen as patrol officers' problems; thus, these officers now are provided with tactical training and related equipment in addition to the tools necessary to perform routine patrol. Second, patrol officers, unlike SWAT, do not work in fixed teams and, as indicated, may have to work with officers from multiple jurisdictions beyond their own agency. Accordingly, interagency or "team training" is imperative for improving coordination and consistency in responses.

## Recommendations

The OCSSTF Law Enforcement Subcommittee offers several recommendations to address those issues highlighted here:

### 1. **Establish a countywide unified active shooter response plan.**

The unified response plan will be shared with every law enforcement agency in Onondaga County and will serve as a guiding document for a multiple agency response to an active shooter or aggressive deadly behavior incident in the community. This plan also can be used as a template for training as well as the development of drill scenarios with other planning disciplines (e.g., fire, rescue, EMS) being involved.

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<sup>47</sup> See [http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/agdir/by\\_county.html#Onondaga](http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/agdir/by_county.html#Onondaga) for the full list.

<sup>48</sup> For a summary of changes in law enforcement training since Columbine, see Jaclyn Schildkraut and Glenn W. Muschert, *Columbine, 20 years later and beyond: Lessons from tragedy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019).

2. **Incorporate the Department of Emergency Communications (9-1-1 center) in all aspects of planning, preparation, and training involving emergency first responders as it pertains to active shooter situations in school settings.**

Their internal policies and procedures for this type of situation should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis with law enforcement input. Communication procedures should be included in the Onondaga County Active Shooter Response Plan.

3. **Armed school resource officers (SROs) should be the preferred method of providing safety within schools.**

They are an established and formally trained component of a law enforcement agency specifically designed for the purpose of providing security as well as serving as a resource and educator within the school setting. Given that these are one of the most consistently used forms of school security, proper training is necessary.<sup>49</sup>

4. **Work with schools to establish clear and plain language to be used within their safety plans to improve law enforcement coordination during times of crisis.**

Clear language on school plans will only help to minimize confusion and reduce unnecessary time spent in staging and executing by emergency responders. The use of clear and plain language must be standard and uniform throughout Onondaga County.

The Law Enforcement Subcommittee stresses the components of **communication**, **consistency**, and **coordination** as key to any successful response to and resolution of an active shooter situation. As these situations likely will involve and result in multiple agency response, the need for sufficient training is paramount and available resources should be utilized as a means to accomplish such training. The Law Enforcement Subcommittee recognizes and supports the New York State Preparedness Training Center in Oriskany as a recommended venue for such training.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## PART V. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two additional proposals were considered by the OCSSTF at large. As they largely fell beyond the topical scope of the subcommittees and their respective work, we present the discussion of and recommendations related to each here.

### Addressing Requests to Arm Teachers

One of the more common proposals that arose in the wake of the Parkland shooting and similar attacks was to arm teachers.<sup>50</sup> Proponents of gun rights suggest that “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.”<sup>51</sup> Conversely, others argue that firearms have no place in academic settings.<sup>52</sup> While educators themselves have expressed mixed support for a such a policy, the general consensus has been that they would not carry a firearm even if they were permitted to.<sup>53</sup>

There are several practical considerations that first must be addressed when deciding whether to implement such a policy:

- Firearms could fall into the wrong hands, potentially causing an increase in gun-related deaths at school.<sup>54</sup>
- The more students, faculty, and staff that are gathered in close proximity, the greater the likelihood for accidental discharges or other unintended injuries.<sup>55</sup>
- The presence of firearms in an education setting can have a negative influence on the relationship building between students and their teachers.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Jaclyn Schildkraut and Glenn W. Muschert, *Columbine, 20 years later and beyond: Lessons from tragedy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Nadia E. Nedzel, “Concealed carry: The only way to discourage mass school shootings,” *Academic Questions*, 27, 4 (2014): 429-435.

<sup>52</sup> Valerie Strauss, “Michelle Rhee: ‘Guns have no place in schools,’” *The Washington Post*, December 19, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2012/12/19/michelle-rhee-guns-have-no-place-in-schools/?utm\\_term=.d0d3fbe0d98d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2012/12/19/michelle-rhee-guns-have-no-place-in-schools/?utm_term=.d0d3fbe0d98d).

<sup>53</sup> Jason Husser, Kaye Usry, Daniel Anderson, and Owen Covington, “What North Carolina teachers think about guns in schools,” *ELON Poll*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.elon.edu/e/CmsFile/GetFile?FileID=1245>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Debra Ciamacca, “I was a Marine. Now I’m a teacher. Don’t give me a gun,” *TIME*, February 23, 2018, <http://time.com/5172852/trump-guns-teachers-nra/>. In the aftermath of the Parkland shooting, a number of reports surfaced about teachers bringing guns to school that accidentally discharged; see, for example, Erik Ortiz, “3 students injured when California high school teacher fires gun during safety course,” *NBC News*, March 14, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/3-students-injured-when-california-high-school-teacher-fires-gun-n856481>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

- Teachers generally believe that few, if any, of their colleagues actually could stop an active shooter if they were armed.<sup>57</sup>
- No evidence exists that the presence of an armed individual would deter a school shooter.<sup>58</sup>

Beyond the general practical considerations of allowing guns into educational institutions, the broader evidence about firearms accuracy is of significant concern. Despite considerable training and improvements in firearms technologies over more than 100 years, law enforcement officers still have an average hit rate (the number of times a bullet hits the intended target) of one in five (or 20%), both in active shooter training simulations<sup>59</sup> and real-world scenarios.<sup>60</sup> Civilians produce even lower accuracy rates. Further, these concerns aside, the data suggest that civilians have been more successful in ending an active shooter event *without* a gun – in 19 cases occurring in schools alone, perpetrators were subdued by unarmed civilians; in no case, however, was an attack terminated by an armed civilian firing their gun at a perpetrator.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, upon reviewing the evidence and considering the broader implications of an armed teachers policy, it is the recommendation of the OCSSTF that teachers **not** be permitted to carry firearms in their classrooms or on school grounds.

## Red Flag Laws

Another proposal that has been gaining momentum across the nation is red flag laws, also known as extreme risk protection laws.<sup>62</sup> These laws permit a judge to order law enforcement to temporarily remove firearms from individuals that are deemed a potential

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<sup>57</sup> See Husser et al. (2018).

<sup>58</sup> Michael Hansen, "There are ways to make schools safer and teachers stronger – but they don't involve guns," *Brookings*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/02/27/there-are-ways-to-make-schools-safer-and-teachers-stronger-but-they-dont-involve-guns/>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard D. Rostker, Lawrence M. Hanser, William M. Hix, Carl Jensen, Andrew R. Morral, Greg Ridgeway, and Terry L. Schell, *Evaluation of the New York City Police Department firearm training and firearm-discharge review process* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2008), [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/public\\_information/RAND\\_FirearmEvaluation.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/public_information/RAND_FirearmEvaluation.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, "ALERRT active attack data," accessed August 7, 2018, <http://activeattackdata.org/index.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Nathalie Baptiste, "What you need to know about red flag gun laws," *Mother Jones*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/03/what-you-need-to-know-about-red-flag-gun-laws/>; Nicole Guadiano, "'Red flag' laws that allow for temporary restrictions on access to guns gains momentum across nation," *USA Today*, March 25, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/03/25/red-flag-laws-allow-temporary-restrictions-access-guns-gain-momentum-across-nation/454395002/>.

risk to themselves or others. Depending on the state, petitions for removal (similar to the request made by the Parkland shooter's aunt<sup>63</sup>) can be initiated by either a family member or law enforcement officer. An expedited hearing is scheduled based upon the evidence of danger presented by the petitioner, at which time the gun owner can respond to the complaint. If the judge finds that the removal of any guns is warranted, they will sign a temporary order that permits confiscation of the weapons anywhere from several weeks to a full year; the individual also is barred from acquiring new weapons during that time.

Prior to the Parkland shooting, only five states – California, Connecticut, Indiana, Oregon, and Washington – had red flag laws on the books.<sup>64</sup> After the shooting, Florida passed their own version of the legislation, as did Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont. As of the time of this report, similar legislation is pending in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Current law in New York permits the temporary removal of a firearm from an individual who has a pending criminal or family offense (the order must subsequently be issued either by criminal or family court, depending on who has jurisdiction over the offense).<sup>65</sup> In other words, unless a person has been accused of a crime, their weapons cannot be seized even if they do pose a threat of harm to themselves or others. Following Parkland, Governor Andrew Cuomo introduced the Red Flag Gun Protection Bill, which was similar to the legislative efforts of other states. While it passed the State's Assembly, the State Senate refused to vote on the bill.

Despite the setbacks faced with the State's previous legislative attempts to institute a red flag law in New York, it is the recommendation of the OCSSTF that a red flag law be passed in the state that permits the temporary confiscation of weapons from persons deemed, through evaluation, to be a danger to themselves and others as well as procedures to ensure they cannot purchase additional weapons with such an order in place.

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<sup>63</sup> Washington Post Staff, "Red flags: The troubled path of accused Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz," *The Washington Post*, March 10, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/national/timeline-parkland-shooter-nikolas-cruz/>.

<sup>64</sup> Sean Campbell and Alex Yablon, "Red flag laws: Where the bills stand in each state," *The Trace*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/03/red-flag-laws-pending-bills-tracker-nra/>.

<sup>65</sup> Stephon Johnson, "'Red flag' bill fails in Albany; Cuomo and others criticize GOP," *Amsterdam News*, June 28, 2018, <http://amsterdamnews.com/news/2018/jun/28/red-flag-bill-fails-albany-cuomo-and-others-critic/>.

## **APPENDIX 1. LIST OF OCSSTF MEMBERS**

The following is a list of task force members as well as their respective organizations.

### **Chairpersons**

|                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| William Fitzpatrick | Onondaga County District Attorney |
| Gene Conway         | Onondaga County Sheriff           |
| Joanie Mahoney      | Onondaga County Executive         |
| Ben Walsh           | Mayor, City of Syracuse           |

### **Members**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Julie Abbott-Kenan | Vice President, Skaneateles School Board   |
| Jaime Alicea       | Superintendent, Syracuse City School District  |
| Bill Bleyle        | Commissioner, Onondaga County 9-1-1 Center   |
| Deanna Bonferraro  | Parent, Syracuse City School District  |
| Habiba Boru        | Mayor's Scheduler, City of Syracuse  |
| Doreen Brisson     | Deputy, Onondaga County Sheriff's Office   |
| Bill Bronner       | Senior Investigator, New York State Police   |
| Christopher Brown  | Superintendent, West Genesee School District   |
| Kevin Buttenschon  | Federal Bureau of Investigation  |
| Jeremy Cali        | Assistant District Attorney, Onondaga County D.A.'s Office   |
| Lyla Cam Hua       | Student, Henniger High School  |
| Sanjay Chhablani   | Professor, Syracuse Law School   |
| Michaela Clark     | Teacher, LeMoyne Elementary School (Syracuse City School District)                                   |
| Bill Crist         | Superintendent, Syracuse Catholic Diocese  |
| Michael Crowell    | Chief, Manlius Police Department   |
| Kelly Cunningham   | Teacher and Parent, Skaneateles School District  |
| Jenny Dombroske    | Director of School-Based Communications, Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services  |
| Frank Fowler       | Chief, Syracuse Police Department  |
| Todd Freeman       | Principal, Split Rock Elementary School  |
| Damien Golden      | Officer, Manlius Police Department and School Resource Officer, Fayetteville-Manlius School District |
| Andrea Hahn        | Operations Manager, Syracuse Academy of Science  |
| Scott Jessie       | Director of Nursing, Emergency Services at Upstate Hospital  |

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Jennifer Kelly     | Parent, Syracuse City School District  |
| Matt Keough        | Principal, Christian Brothers Academy  |
| Marty Knaul        | School Resource Officer, Baldwinsville Police Department   |
| James Knoll        | Director of Forensic Psychiatry, Upstate Medical University  |
| Betsy Lehmann      | Deputy, Onondaga County Sheriff's Office   |
| Brittany Mangano   | Officer, Dewitt Police Department  |
| Jody Manning       | District Superintendent, OCM BOCES   |
| John Mannion       | Teacher, West Genesee High School (West Genesee School District)                                     |
| Gabrielle McCall   | Student, Homer Central High School / OCM BOCES   |
| Gladys McCormick   | Associate Professor, Syracuse University   |
| Matt McDonald      | Superintendent, Baldwinsville School District  |
| Derek McGork       | Deputy Chief, Syracuse Police Department   |
| Marissa Mims       | Teacher and Board Member, Fayetteville-Manlius School District                                       |
| Michael Monds      | Chief, Syracuse Fire Department  |
| Jerry Morrison     | Outreach/Education Coordinator, Upstate Trauma Center  |
| Mike Musengo       | Sergeant, Syracuse Police Department   |
| Kim Nasby          | RN and Trauma Injury Prevention Coordinator, Upstate Trauma Center                                   |
| Elijah Nieves      | Student, Public Service Leadership Academy at Fowler   |
| Sharon Owens       | Deputy Mayor, City of Syracuse   |
| Don Patti          | Sergeant, Syracuse Police Department   |
| John Paul          | Officer, Manlius Police Department and School Resource Officer, Fayetteville-Manlius School District |
| Samantha Pierce    | Parent, Syracuse City School District  |
| Sarah Pierce       | Lead Crime Analyst, Finn Institute for Public Safety / Onondaga County Crime Analysis Center         |
| Karen Rein         | Executive to Ann Rooney, Onondaga County Executives' Office  |
| Ann Rooney         | Deputy County Executive for Physical Services, Onondaga County                                       |
| Megan Root         | President, Syracuse Teachers Association   |
| Jaclyn Schildkraut | Associate Professor, SUNY Oswego   |
| Nicole Semmens     | Parent, Syracuse City School District  |
| Dan Wears          | County Commissioner, Onondaga County Emergency Management  |
| Thomas Winn        | Chief, Town of Camillus Police Department  |
| Steve Young        | Investigator, Onondaga County D.A.'s Office  |



## **APPENDIX 2. CASE STUDY ON THE AVERTED SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SHOOTING**

*As reported by Deputy Chief Derek McGork, Syracuse Police Department, and Assistant District Attorney Jeremy Cali, Onondaga County District Attorney's Office<sup>66</sup>*

On March 13, 2018, Syracuse Police Department (SPD) received a call in their Criminal Intelligence Section from the Madison County Sheriff's Office reporting a suspicious person. The day prior, Syracuse University (SU) student Xiaofeng "Lincoln" Zhan (herein after "X") had visited The Gun Shop, located at A.J.'s Archery in Nelson, NY, and was inquiring about purchasing an AR-15. During conversation, the employee at The Gun Shop learned that X, a Chinese national, was in the U.S. on a F-1 student visa.

The employee also learned that X held a valid New York State hunting license at the time of inquiry. As the conversation progressed, X inquired about "high-capacity shotguns," adding that though he was not familiar with firearms, he belonged to a shooting club west of Syracuse where he could fire the weapon he was purchasing. Though ultimately refusing to sell X any firearms due to his behavior being "suspicious," the employee was able to capture important information on a Firearms Transaction Record form (used for a background check, though the employee also did not run one because he was not selling any guns). At the end of the interaction, the employee followed X to his vehicle, recorded the license plate number, and reported the encounter to the Madison County Sheriff's Office.

When the plate was run, it returned an address in Syracuse, NY. SPD determined that X was enrolled as a student at SU and attempts to locate him began. At the same time, SPD connected with the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office, SU's Department of Public Safety, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office, and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and all agencies met later in the day on March 13 to formulate a plan.

At the time, X's motive, as well as his whereabouts, were unknown. Getting a search warrant would have been nearly impossible as no crime had yet been committed and considerations of applying a federal crime for trying to purchase a gun as a foreign national would have

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<sup>66</sup> An additional read from the media perspective can be found here: Douglass Dowty, "Police: How Syracuse University student was stopped while planning mass shooting," *Syracuse.com*, April 5, 2018, [https://www.syracuse.com/crime/index.ssf/2018/04/police\\_how\\_syracuse\\_university\\_student\\_was\\_stopped\\_while\\_planning\\_mass\\_shooting.html#incart\\_m-rpt-1](https://www.syracuse.com/crime/index.ssf/2018/04/police_how_syracuse_university_student_was_stopped_while_planning_mass_shooting.html#incart_m-rpt-1).

been fruitless as X was covered under the hunting license exception.<sup>67</sup> X had secured his hunting license two days earlier.

Further investigation into X's background revealed several important pieces of information. Through the legal process, records were obtained on his psychiatric history, which revealed that he had sought care at two separate facilities prior to the present incident. He was a heavy drinker who also expressed suicide ideation (particularly driving his vehicle into a tree). He was withdrawn, had expressed feelings of losing control and indicated that he might act violently, and reported feelings of violence towards others, though no one in specific. The reports indicated that his psychiatric condition could have stemmed from an unknown issue that occurred when he was a student at Northeastern University several years earlier. A subsequent investigation by the Boston Police Department and Northeastern University followed after they were notified but revealed nothing specific to the situation at hand.

During the March 13 meeting, SPD also contacted relevant mental health professionals, who were subsequently debriefed on the available information. Concerned over the situation, they both worked with SPD and the other agencies to ensure that X could not legally purchase a gun as a result of the corresponding mental health concerns. These concerns were fueled further by X's desire to purchase an AR-15 and other high-capacity weapons, which were similar to those used in, among others, Aurora, CO (2012); Newtown, CT (2012); San Bernardino, CA (2015); Orlando, FL (2016); Las Vegas, NV (2017); Sutherland Springs, TX (2017); and Parkland, FL (2018). The agencies subsequently learned that X was in Mexico for Spring Break, having left that same day; he was due to return on March 19.

Over the following two days (March 14-15), legal processes were served on psychiatric offices to notify them of the situation. SPD's continued investigation revealed that before leaving for Mexico, X had attempted to purchase a Mossberg tactical assault rifle at the Dick's Sporting Goods at Destiny USA. This gun, however, does not conform to the provisions set forth by the NY SAFE Act<sup>68</sup> and could not be sold nor legally possessed in the state. X had been advised of this and left the store.

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<sup>67</sup> Full-time non-resident students who attend a college or university in New York State are eligible to obtain a hunting license by providing a sportsman education certificate and a letter from the institution's registrar verifying enrollment in the present academic year; see "Free/reduced fee sporting licenses," NY Department of Environmental Conservation, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6097.html>.

<sup>68</sup> The NY SAFE Act was passed following the December 14, 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT and is one of the nation's most comprehensive gun control packages and assault weapons ban. More information can be found here: "NY SAFE Act gun reform," New York State Government, accessed August 6, 2018, <https://safeact.ny.gov/>.

On March 16, SPD was contacted by an employee of the apartment complex where X lived. The employee had heard an alarm coming from X's apartment and knocked, receiving no answer. Concerned, he used a master key to enter the apartment for a safety check. While he did not find X, he found several live rounds of ammunition laying out on the desk.

That same day, another student traveling with X in Mexico wrote to SU's administration about concerns over X's behavior while on the trip. The student informed the school that X had displayed signs of severe depression, had discussed suicide and verbalized extreme negative thoughts, and described him as mentally unstable. The student also indicated that they and other students in the group feared for their own safety.

On March 19, the day that X was due to return from Mexico, a search warrant was obtained for his apartment and his vehicle that was parked at the airport. The subsequent search of the apartment revealed, among other items, the live rounds that had been detected earlier in the safety check, two different dot sights, a shotgun shoulder carrier, a scope, used gun range targets, and a receipt from a range in California where X had purchased a gun rental and paid for range fees. A flash drive also was recovered at the apartment that held images of different firearms and X engaging in target practice at a range.

Between March 19 and 20, while X was in transit back to the U.S., mental health professionals assisted law enforcement by providing a "pick-up" order to be executed when he returned. At the same time, the investigation details were forwarded to federal authorities in Washington, DC, who subsequently revoked X's student visa. As a result, when he entered the Newark International Airport en route back to Syracuse, he was detained by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE). On March 20, 2018, X was formally deported back to China.

### **What Went Right?**

- The gun shop employee contacted 9-1-1 about X's suspicious behavior
- X was on Spring Break, allowing for an uninterrupted investigation
- Students spoke up about their concerns over his behavior
- The alarm at X's apartment triggered additional concerns brought to police
- Collaboration across disciplines (law enforcement, mental health, academia)

There are still obstacles, but these actions undoubtedly saved lives.

### **APPENDIX 3. EXCERPT FROM THE U.S. SECRET SERVICE'S REPORT *ENHANCING SCHOOL SAFETY USING A THREAT ASSESSMENT MODEL: AN OPERATIONAL GUIDE FOR PREVENTING TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE (2018)***

*In July 2018, the National Threat Assessment Center (NATC), part of the U.S. Secret Service, released a report aimed at utilizing threat assessment protocols to prevent incidents of targeted school violence like the Parkland shooting. The following is a summary of the report's main takeaways.<sup>69</sup>*

Over the last 20 years, NATC has conducted research, training, and consultation on threat assessment and the prevention of various forms of targeted violence. Following the tragedy at Columbine High School in April 1999, the Secret Service partnered with the Department of Education on a study that examined 37 incidents of targeted violence that occurred at elementary and secondary schools (i.e., K-12). The goal of that study, the *Safe School Initiative (SSI)*, was to gather and analyze accurate and useful information about the thinking and behavior of students who commit these types of acts. The findings of the *SSI*, and an accompanying guide, served as the impetus for establishing threat assessment programs in schools. In 2008, the agencies collaborated again and released a report that further explored one of the key *SSI* findings, namely, that prior to most attacks, though other students had information about the attackers' plans, most did not report their concerns to an adult. The findings of this report, known as the *Bystander Study*, highlighted the importance of creating safe school climates to increase the likelihood that students will speak up in order to prevent an attack.<sup>70</sup>

The information gleaned from these studies underscores the importance of establishing a threat assessment process in schools to enhance proactive targeted violence prevention efforts. The goal of a threat assessment is to identify students of concern, assess their risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and identify intervention strategies to manage that risk. This guide provides actionable steps that schools can take to develop a comprehensive targeted violence prevention plan and create processes and procedures for conducting threat assessments on their campus. These steps serve as minimum guidelines and may need to be adapted for a particular school or district's unique resources and challenges. For institutions that already have prevention plans or threat assessment capabilities in place, these guidelines may provide additional information to update existing

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<sup>69</sup> The full report can be accessed here: National Threat Assessment Center, *Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: An operational guide for preventing targeted school violence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service, July 2018), [https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS\\_NTAC\\_Enhancing\\_School\\_Safety\\_Guide\\_7.11.18.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> All publications related to studies conducted by the U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) are available from <https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac/>.

protocols or to formalize the structures of reporting, gathering information, and managing risk.

When establishing threat assessment capabilities within K-12 schools, keep in mind that **there is no profile of a student attacker**. There have been male and female attackers, high-achieving students with good grades as well as poor performers. These acts of violence were committed by students who were loners and socially isolated, and those who were well-liked and popular. Rather than focusing solely on a student's personality traits or school performance, we can learn much more about a student's risk for violence by working through the threat assessment process, which is designed to gather the most relevant information about the student's communications and behaviors, the negative or stressful events the student has experienced, and the resources the student possesses to overcome those setbacks and challenges.

## **Creating a Comprehensive Targeted Violence Prevention Plan**

Ensuring the safety of our schools involves multiple components, including physical safety, emergency management, and violence prevention efforts in the form of a threat assessment process. This process begins with establishing a comprehensive targeted violence prevention plan. The plan includes forming a multidisciplinary threat assessment team, establishing central reporting mechanisms, identifying behaviors of concern, defining the threshold for law enforcement intervention, identifying risk management strategies, promoting safe school climates, and providing training to stakeholders. It can also help schools mitigate threats from a variety of individuals, including students, employees, or parents.

This guide provides basic instructions for schools on creating a targeted violence prevention plan, the focus of which is to decrease the risk of *students* engaging in harm to themselves or the school community. These recommendations serve as the starting point on a path to implementation that will need to be customized to the specific needs of your school, your student body, and your community. When creating these plans, schools should consult with legal representatives to ensure that they comply with any applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

### **Step 1. Establish a multidisciplinary threat assessment team**

The first step in developing a comprehensive targeted violence prevention plan is to establish a multidisciplinary threat assessment team (hereafter referred to as the "Team") of

individuals who will direct, manage, and document the threat assessment process. The Team will receive reports about concerning students and situations, gather additional information, assess the risk posed to the school community, and develop intervention and management strategies to mitigate any risk of harm. ...

## **Step 2. Define prohibited and concerning behaviors**

Schools need to establish policies defining prohibited behaviors that are unacceptable and therefore warrant immediate intervention. These include threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying or harassing others, and other concerning or criminal behaviors. Keep in mind that **concerning behaviors occur along a continuum**. School policies also should identify behaviors that may not necessarily be indicative of violence, but also warrant some type of intervention. These include a marked decline in performance; increased absenteeism; withdrawal or isolation; sudden or dramatic changes in behavior or appearance; drug or alcohol use; and erratic, depressive, and other emotional or mental health symptoms. ...

## **Step 3. Create a central reporting mechanism**

Students may elicit concern from those around them in a variety of ways. They may make threatening or concerning statements in person, online, or in text messages; they may engage in observable risky behavior; or they may turn in assignments with statements or content that is unusual or bizarre. When this occurs, those around the student need a method of reporting their concerns to the Team.

## **Step 4. Determine the threshold for law enforcement intervention**

The vast majority of incidents or concerns that are likely to be reported can be handled by school personnel using school or community resources. For example, the most common types of reports submitted to Safe2Tell Colorado during the 2016-2017 school year were related to suicide, bullying, drugs, cutting (self-harm), and depression.<sup>71</sup> Some of these common reports may not require the involvement of law enforcement. Those that do warrant law enforcement intervention include threats of violence and school attacks, which constituted Safe2Tell's sixth and seventh most common types of reports, respectively. ...

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<sup>71</sup> Safe2Tell Colorado, *Data 2 Report, 2016-2017* (Denver, CO: Colorado Office of the Attorney General, 2017), <https://safe2tell.org/sites/default/files/u18/End%20of%20Year%202016-2017%20Data2Report.pdf>.

## **Step 5. Establish assessment procedures**

Teams need to establish clearly defined processes and procedures to guide their assessments. Note that any safety concerns should be immediately address before the procedures described below [in the full report] take place. When followed, the procedures should allow the Team to form an accurate picture of the student's thinking, behavior, and circumstances to inform the Team's assessment and identify appropriate interventions. ...

## **Step 6. Develop risk management options**

Once the Team has completed a thorough assessment of the student, it can **evaluate whether the student is at risk for self-harm or harming someone else** at school. Concern may be heightened if the student is struggling emotionally, overcoming setbacks or losses, feeling hopeless, preoccupied with others who engaged in violence to solve problems, or has access to weapons. Remember, the Team is not attempting to predict with certainty if violence will happen. Instead, evaluate the presence of factors that indicate violence might be a possibility. Teams can then **develop risk management strategies that reduce the student's risk for engaging in violence** and make positive outcomes for the student more likely. ...

## **Step 7. Create and promote safe school climates**

A crucial component of preventing targeted violence at schools relies on developing positive school climates **built on a culture of safety, respect, trust, and social and emotional support**. Teachers and staff in safe school environments support diversity, encourage communication between faculty and students, intervene in conflicts, and work to prevent teasing and bullying. Students in safe school climates feel empowered to **share concerns with adults**, without feeling ashamed or facing the stigma of being labeled a "snitch." Administrators can take action to develop and sustain safe school climates. ...

## **Step 8. Conduct training for all stakeholders**

The final component of a comprehensive targeted violence prevention plan is to identify training needs for all stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and administrators; students; parents; and school resource officers or local law enforcement. **School safety is everyone's responsibility**. Anyone who could come forward with concerning information or who might be involved in the assessment process should be provided with training. Effective training addresses the goals and steps of an assessment, the type of information that should

be brought forward, and how individuals can report their concerns. It might be beneficial for staff and students to hear presentations, see videos, and role-play scenarios so they have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and the steps they can take to keep their school safe. Each audience will require a slightly different message, but some stakeholders may also benefit from attending training together, such as parents and students, or school faculty/staff and law enforcement personnel. When developing a training program, consider how frequently each stakeholder will receive training, and whether to vary the delivery method of trainings. Also, each audience may have unique needs. ...