Multi-Disciplinary Approach To Threat Assessment and Management

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www.atapworldwide.org
This presentation will review the collaborative, multi-agency structure of the Mid-Willamette Valley Adult Threat Advisory Team located in Salem, Oregon.

The presentation will provide:

- An overview of an existing multi-disciplinary, multi-agency threat assessment and management system
- A review of basic threat assessment/management
- A review of the steps and developmental procedures necessary to implement that system.
- Case reviews
Threat Assessment in the Mid-Willamette Valley

- In 1998, The Marion County Threat Assessment Team was formed through the collaboration of the Sheriff’s Office, the Oregon State Courts and Salem Keizer School District. The team addressed threats against public figures, threats in the workplace and schools, domestic violence and stalking.

- In 2000, using this model as an example, the Salem-Keizer School District led a collaboration of law enforcement agencies and youth service public agencies in the development of a student threat assessment system.
The threat assessment system in place today includes an Adult Threat Advisory Team and a Student Threat Assessment Team. Both teams operate through screening and assessment protocols, supervision and management consultation, and the access of available community resources.

The system is operated from a collaboration of the public agencies that serve adult and youth populations (including law enforcement). Members of this collaboration are trained to the highest standards available.
Adult Threat Advisory Team

- *Marion County Sheriff’s Office
- *Salem Police Department
- Oregon State Police
- Keizer Police Department
- Dallas Police Department
- *Marion County District Attorney’s Office
- Salem-Keizer School District
- Willamette Educational Service District
- Marion County Health Department
- Marion County Risk Management
Associate Members

- Chemeketa Community College
- Willamette University
- US Dept Of Veterans Affairs
- State Courts-Marion County
- Oregon State Supreme/Appellate Courts
Team Principles

- “FIRST WE DO NO HARM“
  - Arrest/Jail is not always the best option!
- The team does not manage cases
- The team does not investigate cases
- Control of the case remains with the presenting agency
- The team is advisory only
- We do not assess people, we assess situations
- The team does not generate reports
- The team does not profile
- Confidentiality!!!!
Advantages of a Threat Assessment System

• Shared ownership, shared responsibility. Decreased liability.
• Multi-discipline, multi-agency.
• Expeditious but methodical.
• Community collaboration and ownership.
• Identification of risk in clear terms.
• Interventions and supervision strategies that fit the situation and accurately address risk.
• Promotes observation and supervision. Student system safely keeps many students in school who would otherwise be removed through expulsion or by other means.
• Increases both the physical safety of a community and the psychological sense of safety.
Goal of Threat Management

1. Prevent Violence
2. Resolve the perceived conflict
The Threat Assessment System objectives are:

1. **Assess** threats of potentially harmful or lethal behavior and determine the level of concern and action required.

2. **Organize** resources and strategies to **manage** situations involving people that pose threats to others.

3. **Maintain** a sense of psychological safety within the community.

We don’t do:
- Predictive Profiling
- Enhanced Professional Judgment
- Artificial Intuition
Principles of Threat Assessment
(Fein & Vossekuil, 1998)

- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable and often discernible process of thinking and behavior.
- Violence stems from an interaction between the potential attacker, past stressful events, a current situation, and the target.
- The subject will display “attack-related” behaviors that move along a continuum of idea to action, including thinking, planning, and logistical preparations.
Keys To Assessment/Management

- Assess behaviors associated with targeted violence to identify and understand motivation and future actions
- Open ended assessment of behavioral patterns and motivations
- Identify targets & potential attackers
- Assess verbal, written and implied threats
- Identify patterns of behavior & pre-attack behaviors
- Assess frequency, recency & severity of contacts
- Assess location on continuum
- Interrupt forward motion through management plan
The assessment of the “unique” interaction and dynamics between the perpetrator, the target and the situation they share. The question is “does the person ‘pose’ a threat,” not “did the person ‘make’ a threat.”
Becky,

It hurts me that you aren’t talking to me anymore, especially considering what you and I have shared together. Maybe you and I need to go back to Smith Park.
Threat Management Process

- Determine the Facts
- Initial Assessment
- Immediate Actions
- Investigation
- Continuous Assessment
- Develop Management Plan
- Follow Up
“What’s going on in the person’s life?”
(Palarea, 2007)
Holistic Threat Assessment
(Palarea, 2007)

*Can be aggravating or mitigating*
Conducting the Assessment: Individual Factors

- History of violence: frequency, severity, recency, outcome
- Triggers & situations when violence is used
- Methods of violence/Weapons used
- Threats and follow-on behaviors
- Criminal history
- Educational & skill sets
- Mental health factors: suicidality, paranoia, psychosis, depression
- Substance abuse factors: frequency, recency, substance used, behavior under intoxication
Inhibitors

- Employment
- Finances
- Health
- Residence
- Children
- Family
- Looking to the future
- Resolving the grievance
J.A.C.A.-Gavin DeBecker

- Justification
- Alternatives
- Consequences
- Ability
Targeted Violence Type (process)

- Ideation
- Planning
- Preparation
- Implementation

Escalation and De-escalation are key!!!!
Level of Risk

- Assigning a level of risk.....do we want to do this?? *(low risk vs. moderate risk vs. high risk)*
  - A false sense of “safety” for the victim
  - Often times does not validate the (v)’s perspective of the risk
  - Factors are constantly fluctuating (low one minute, high the next)
  - Level of risk dependent upon indicators and inhibitors in place
Management Techniques

- Arrest/incarceration
- Hospitalization
- Protective order
- Outpatient counseling for suspect
- Administrative actions
- Implement physical security
- Leverage suspect’s social network
- “Educate” suspect
- Safety Planning
What Can We Do to Help?

- Public Safety Overrides
- Bail Increase
- Red flag for prosecution and Courts
- Enhanced Sentencing
- Safety Planning
- Conditions of Probation
- Psychological Evaluations
- Access to Social Services
The Basics….

1. Agency-wide funnel of information
2. Authority
3. Capacity
4. Systems Relationships
What We Need From You

Trust Your Instincts!!!!

- Summary of your concerns....aggravating factors, approach behavior, significant steps towards violence....
- Inhibitors that may be present
- Good contact info for those involved
- Call DC Bellshaw or Lt Okada immediately if imminent threat is present
- DO NOT indicate in your report that you are routing to Threat Assessment!
Considerations

- Becoming personally involved
- Cookie cutter
- Coordination with other entities
- Acting as a team
- Constant updating of information
- Interference from “interested” parties
- Need to involve others
Organizing a system

- Need, justification and authorization.
- Community ownership, commitment, and responsibility.
- Policy and procedures necessary for functioning. (Legal counsel)
- Organize resources, design system and refine.
- Training, implementation, more training.
- Maintenance of program, trouble-shooting and ongoing training.
Choosing Team Members
(Modified from US Dept of Ed. and USSS)

- An ability to relate well to others.
- An awareness and sensitivity to the difference between harming and helping in an intervention.
- A reputation for fairness and trustworthiness.
- A questioning, analytical and even skeptical mindset.
- Training in the collection and evaluation of information from multiple sources.
- Discretion and an appreciation for the importance of keeping information confidential.
- Familiarity with the contemporary issues of school and community safety.
- The ability to serve as a formal link or liaison between various systems (a “boundary spanner”, a “team player” who believes in the project and the process.)
- In-depth knowledge about their own organization, resource availability, and both political and ethical boundaries. (No car-salesmen needed.)
- Full credibility and respect within their own organization.
**Student Threat Assessment Bibliography (Selected)**

**Research Papers, Articles, and Presentations**

- DeWaal, F. Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Human and Other Animals.
- Project MEGIDDO. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Department of Justice.

**Books**