

# Preparing for and Responding to Threats

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# School Threats

ARE  
YOU PREPARED?

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# FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

- TYPICAL EVENING IN OHIO – 7:00PM
  - HS FOOTBALL GAME
  - STUDENT SECTION DRESSED IN THEME
- STUDENTS BEGIN RECEIVING TWEETS FROM AN ACCOUNT “@ANONYMOUS RULER” 8:00PM
  - TWEETS ARE HARRASSING & RUDE IN NATURE
  - TWEETS BECOME MORE AND MORE AGGRESSIVE
- STUDENTS BEGIN REACHING OUT TO HS PRINCIPAL TO MAKE HIM AWARE

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**FRIDAY -10:30PM**

- PRINCIPAL THROUGHOUT THE EVENING REMINDS STUDENTS TO REACT RESPONSIBLY WITH THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA
- HS PRINCIPAL CONTACTS:
  - SUPERINTENDENT
  - TWITTER TO SHUT DOWN THE ACCOUNT OF @ANONYMOUSRULER
  - CYBER-BULLYING RESEARCH CENTER

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**YOU TUBE VIDEO POSTED  
SATURDAY 3:00AM**

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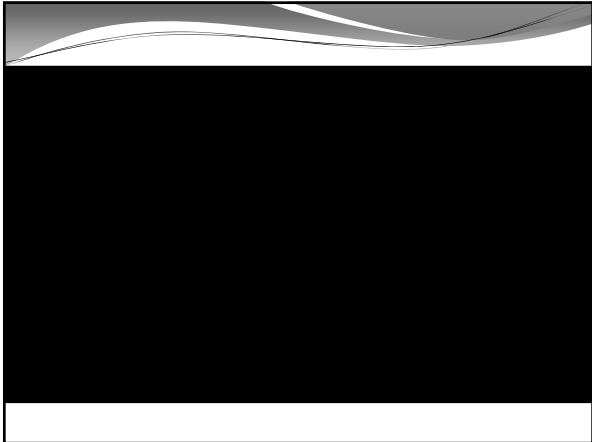
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## PANIC SETS IN-SATURDAY AM

- POLICE DEPARTMENT BEGINS RECEIVING CALLS
  - PARENTS CONCERNED ABOUT SAFETY
  - RUMOR MILL BEGINS STIRRING IN RESPONSE TO THE VIDEO
- EMAILS SENT TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT
- SUPERINTENDENT INFORMS BOARD
- HS PRINCIPAL SHARES INFORMATION WITH PD
  - DETECTIVE ASSIGNED TO THE CASE
  - INVESTIGATION BEGINS

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## CONSIDERATIONS

PARENT COMMUNICATION-Control the Message

- WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID?
  - HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?
- WHEN?
  - TIMING IS EVERYTHING.
  - PRIOR TO INVESTIGATION BEING CONCLUDED?
- HOW?
  - PHONE BLAST
  - EMAIL BLAST
  - SOCIAL MEDIA

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## VIDEO MAKES THE NEWS

- SUNDAY - INVESTIGATION CONTINUES
  - POLICE DEPARTMENT CONFIDENT THEY KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE SUSPECT
  - MEETING IS SET FOR MONDAY AT 10:00AM
  - POLICE ASK THE DISTRICT NOT TO RELEASE ANY STATEMENT AT THIS POINT
- ABC NEWS CHANNEL REPORTS THE THREAT

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THE NEXT VIDEO



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LABOR DAY - MONDAY

- WARRANT ISSUED
- SUSPECT TAKEN INTO CUSTODY
- INTERROGATION UNCOVERS
  - DISTURBING STATEMENTS
    - INCLUDING PLANS FOR A SCHOOL ATTACK
- IDENTITY RELEASED BY NEIGHBOR THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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DESCRIBE THE SUSPECT

YOUR TURN TO PARTICIPATE

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## The Safe School Initiative

The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative (2002)

- Collaboration between the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education
- Reviewed 37 of the last 40 school shootings

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## The School Shooter “Profile” - Misconceptions

- “He just snapped”
- Trench-coat or black-clothes wearing loners
- No friends (Dylan Klebold went to his senior prom just 3 days prior to killing classmates at Columbine High School)
- Influenced by violent television shows or violent video games

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## Safe School Initiative Findings – The Attacker “Profile”

- Most attackers had significant difficulties with losses or failures.
- Mental health: 78% had exhibited a history of suicidal thoughts or attempts.

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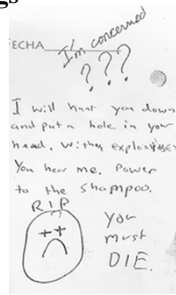
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### Safe School Initiative Findings – the Attacker Profile

- Most had access to weapons – and had used weapons – prior to the attack.
- Most attackers had engaged in behaviors, prior to incident, that concerned others.
- Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.



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### Safe School Initiative Findings – The Attacker “Profile”

- Most attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
- Evan Ramsey – Bethel Alaska , February 19, 1997
  - 11 foster homes between 1988 and 1991
  - Abused by several of his foster parents
  - Bullied at school – was suicidal
  - Understood that if he killed 2 people, he would get the death penalty

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### Safe School Initiative Findings

- 93% of the perpetrators exhibited concerning behavior prior to the attack, suggesting attacks might be avoided with threat assessment.
- In 81% of the school shootings, at least one other person had some type of knowledge of the attacker’s plan
- Of those individuals who had prior knowledge, 93% were peers of the perpetrators – friends, schoolmates or siblings.

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## GAHANNA-JEFFERSON SUSPECT

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## AFTER THE ARREST

- PREPARATION FOR PRESS CONFERENCE - 3:00PM
  - PREPARE PRESS STATEMENT
    - STICK TO THE FACTS
    - PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF THE MINOR
    - CALM THE SITUATION - SAFE TO RETURN TO SCHOOL
  - SCHEDULE EXTRA SECURITY FOR TUESDAY
  - SCHEDULE SEARCH DOGS FOR TUESDAY MORNING
  - PHONE BLAST MESSAGE
  - EMAIL BLAST MESSAGE

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## What is Threat Assessment?

- The process of identifying, assessing and managing persons who have the interest and ability to commit acts of targeted violence in our schools.

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**School Safety Task Force**  
Recommendations and Resources

Local Partnerships are Vital in Managing School-based Critical Incidents  
June 2013

MIKE DeWINE

- Ohio Attorney General School Safety Task Force Report (June 8, 2013)
- Instructs all Ohio schools to form threat assessment teams and begin using threat assessment model
- <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications/Publications-for-Schools/School-Safety-Task-Force-Report>

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**Prevention is Possible**

- Many school attacks can be prevented.
- Most often the information about a student's ideas and plans for violence is discoverable in advance.



- However, information is often scattered and must be pieced together.
- Key is to act quickly upon an initial report of concern, gather other pieces of the puzzle, then assemble to see what picture emerges.

Credit: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S. (2002)*; SIGMA Threat Management Associates (2013).

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**Threat Assessment:  
Forming the Team**



1. Mental Health Consultant (internal or external)
2. School Administrator
3. Local Law Enforcement or SRO
4. Ad hoc members when needed
5. One person should be your designated "Threat Assessment Coordinator" for intake

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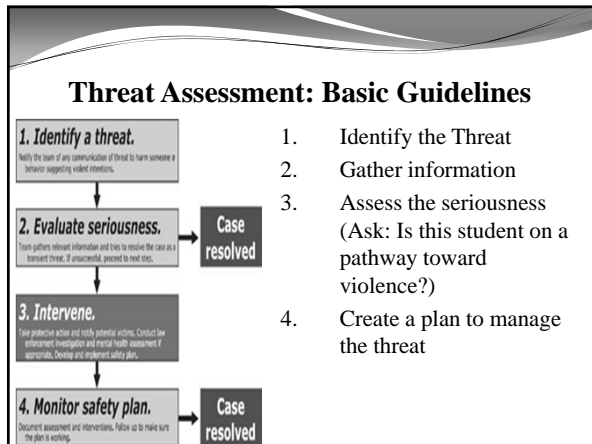
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### The Team's Information Gathering - Sources of Information

- Teachers/Administrators – Is there a trusted adult?
- Other school staff – Consider bus drivers, food service, janitorial staff
- Friends/classmates – approach cautiously
- Coach/teammates
- Parents – approach cautiously
- Social media sites/Internet – Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, blogsearch.google.com
- Local law enforcement
- After-school/weekend programs
- Community groups
- Others?

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### After Information Gathering – The Threat Assessment Analysis

- (1) What are the student's motive(s) and goals?
- (2) Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack or harm others?
- (3) Has the student shown inappropriate interest in any of the following:
  - Workplace, school, or campus attacks or attackers;
  - Weapons (including recent acquisition of a weapon);
  - Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers); or
  - Obsessive pursuit, stalking, or monitoring others.
- (4) Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors?
- (5) Does the student have the capacity to carry out an act of violence?

Credit: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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**After Information Gathering –  
The Threat Assessment Analysis**

- (6) Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?
- (7) Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible person (e.g., a teacher, family member, coach, counselor, advisor, etc.)?
- (8) Does the student see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or only way to solve problems?
- (9) Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?
- (10) Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?
- (11) What circumstances might affect the likelihood of violence?

Credit: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (2002).

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**After Information Gathering –  
The Threat Assessment Analysis**

Make the Assessment:

Question 1: Does the student pose a threat of harm, whether to him/herself, to others, or both? Does the student's behavior suggest that he or she is on a pathway toward harm?

Yes: Develop and implement a case management plan.  
No: Proceed to Question 2

Question 2: If the student does not pose a threat of harm, does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care?

If Yes, develop a case management plan.

Credit: SIGMA Threat Management Associates (2013).

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**Resources**

- Homeland Security, [http://learningservices.us/roundtable/webinar\\_securityassessments.pdf](http://learningservices.us/roundtable/webinar_securityassessments.pdf) (2013).
- U.S. Department of Justice, *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective*.
- U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe Schools Climates* (2002).
- U.S. Secret Service, *Threat Assessment: Defining an Approach for Evaluating Risk of Targeted Violence* (1999).

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# QUESTIONS?

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Dear Gahanna-Jefferson Parents and Guardians,**

**The Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools takes the safety of our students and staff seriously and is our number one priority. With that said:**

**Friday evening around 8:00 PM several GLHS students received inappropriate, rude, and harassing tweets from a student using the account @AnonymousRuler. Many students responded very positively and also made Mr. Carter aware of the messages. In addition, Mr. Carter contacted Twitter to shut down the twitter account on Saturday, which was deactivated at approximately 3:00am. Mr. Carter also contacted the CyberBullying Research Center for assistance.**

**Also, early Saturday morning an anonymous video was posted on YouTube which was disturbing in nature and created fear and anxiety to both students and parents of our schools. The video was of a masked character from the movie, "V for Vendetta" with a computer voice over. High School Principal, Mr. Carter worked closely with Gahanna Police Department throughout the investigation over the weekend.**

**A second video was posted Monday morning in response to the ABC News Channel 6 report. The second video claimed that no harm was intended to anyone but alluded that it was toward crashing the school computer network. The person responsible admitted to being angry about how students were leading their lives.**

**A search warrant was issued and executed Monday morning at approximately 10:30am. The alleged person responsible has been taken into custody by the Gahanna Police Department and will be charged with inducing panic under Ohio Revised Code 2917.31.**

**For added security purposes, a Columbus Bomb Squad unit will be sweeping the entire Gahanna Lincoln High School prior to school starting Tuesday morning for precautionary reasons. In addition, added police personnel will be on hand throughout the day on Tuesday to ensure the safety of students and staff.**

**We as a District have taken this extremely serious and have worked closely with the Gahanna Police Department to protect the students and Staff of our Schools. The Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools want to thank the Gahanna Police Department for their support and especially thank Detective Choung for his work on bringing this to closure.**

**Gahanna Hearts and Global Minds,**

**Francis R. Scruci, Superintendent**