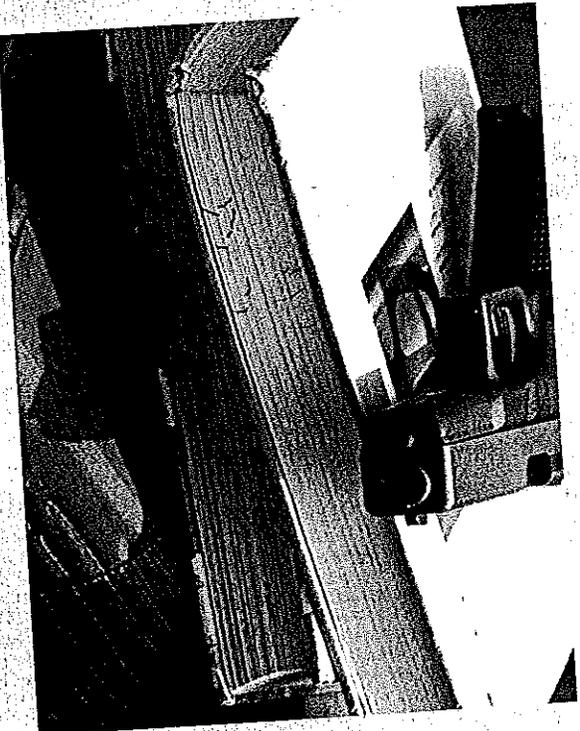


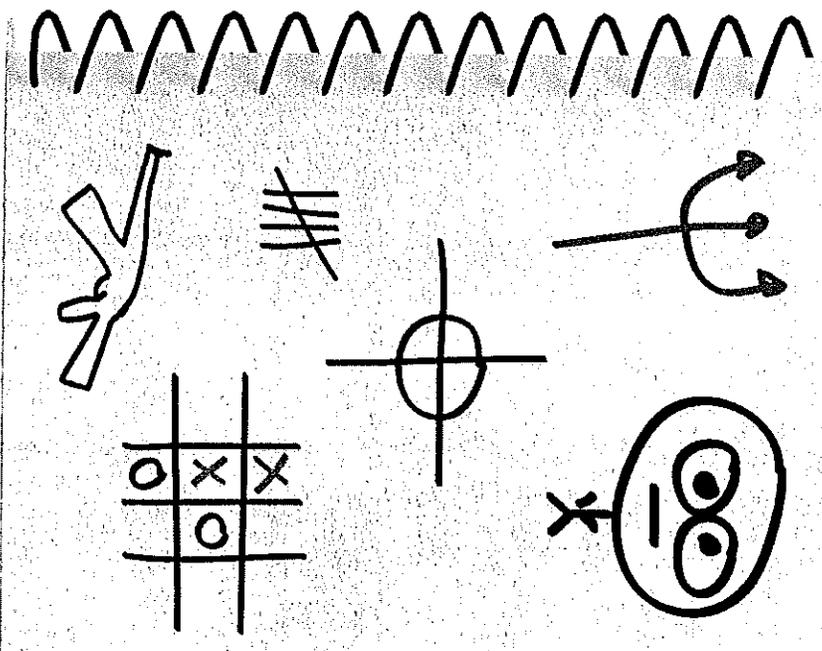
School Threat Assessments: The Basics

Senate Subcommittee on School Safety
February 13, 2013
Capital Building
Hartford, Connecticut

Dr. S. David Bernstein
Forensic Consultants, LLC

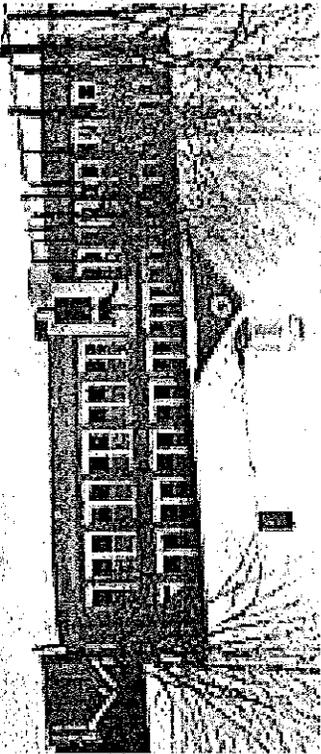


Themes for the lecture



- ◉ Goals of Student Threat Assessment
- ◉ Three biggest Risk Factors to Consider
- ◉ Other Risk Factors to Assess
- ◉ Types of Data
- ◉ Case Biopsy (Time Permitting)

Brief History of School Violence



- ◎ WORST CASE OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN THE USA
 - > 1927, Bath Township, Michigan, Andrew Kehoe (55) murdered his wife and then used dynamite to blow up the school. 45 people dead (38 children) and 58 wounded. Killed himself
- ◎ WORST CASE OF TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE
 - > Seung-Hui Cho, 23-year old Virginia Tech
 - > killed 32 people, wounded 17, and then killed himself

Duty to foresee, forewarn, and protect against violent behavior

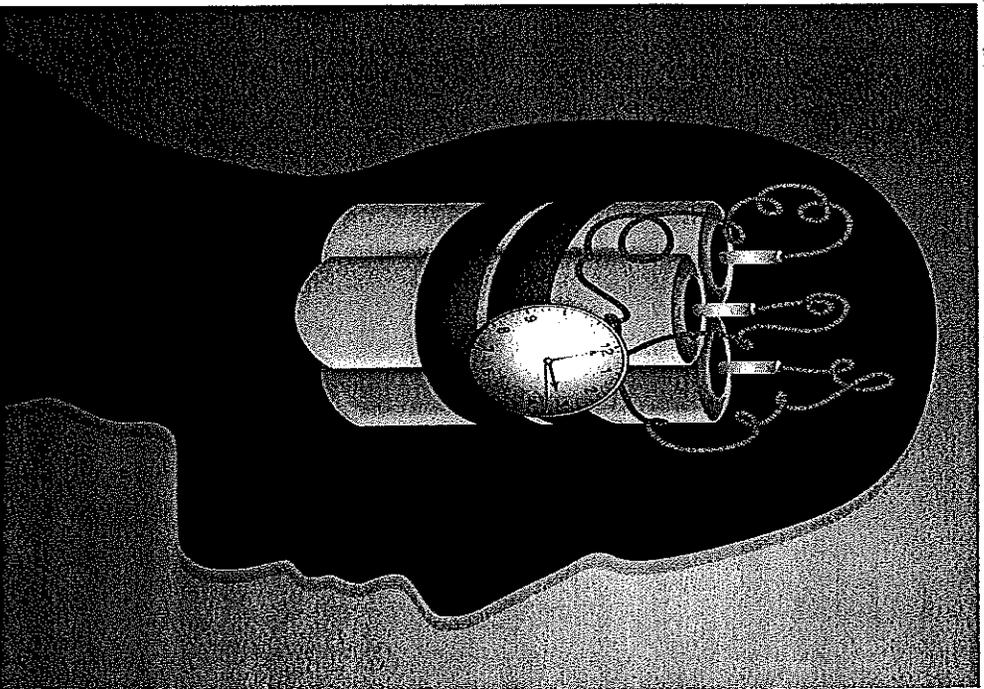
- The pressure is on for schools to be more diligent than ever in identifying students who pose an immediate or potential threat of violence to the school community.

○ **Prevention VS Intervention**

The Importance Of Establishing Clear Policies And Procedures

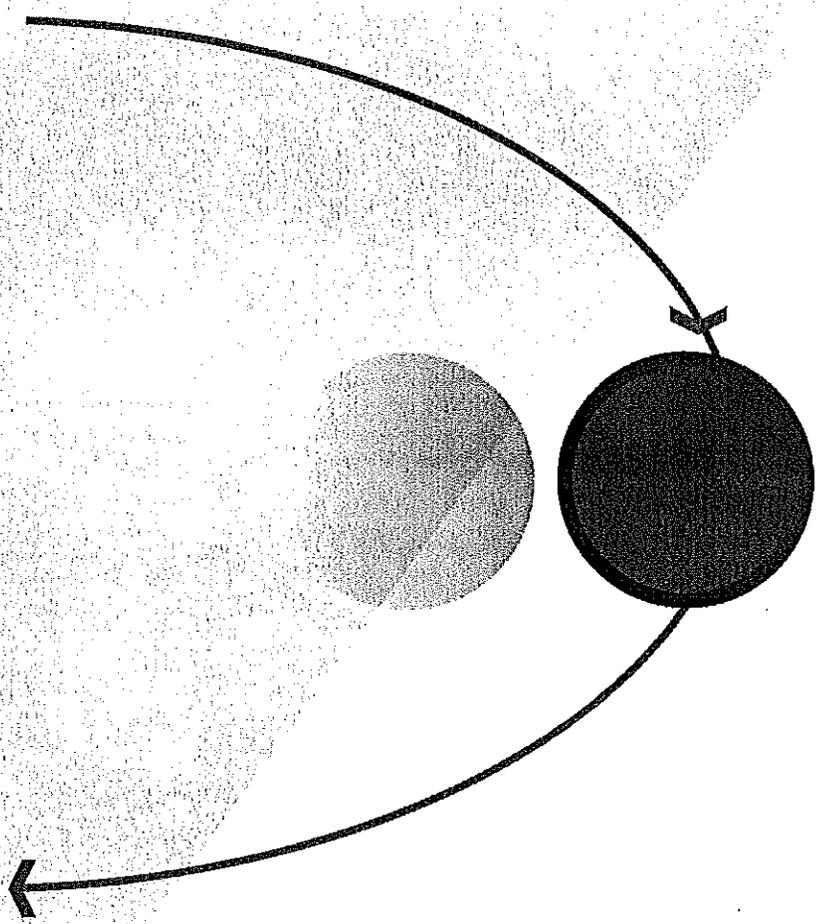
- It is important to have specific, well articulated procedures for exploring allegations of actual or potential violence
 - > ANY student that the school deems as meeting the behavioral guidelines of **DEFINED BEHAVIORS** (Triggered, Red Flag Behaviors) is subject to undergoing a "Focused Threat Inquiry" at the discretion of the school by a Threat Management Team. If deemed necessary by the team, Threat Assessment is ordered.

Central Reporting of Potential Red Flag Behaviors

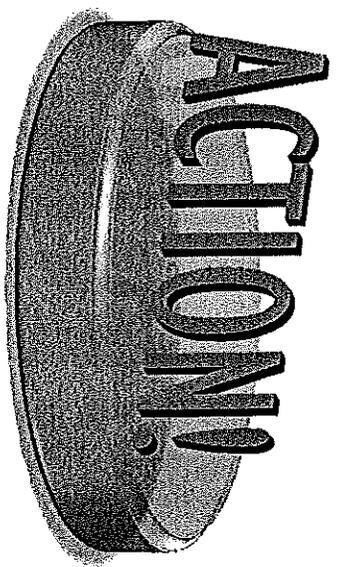


- ◉ CENTRAL REPORTING- IDENTIFY AND PUT IN PLACE SOMEONE THAT ALL REPORTS GOES TO (LINKING/FBI)
 - > The three blind men and the elephant
 - > In almost all cases the shooter told someone or gave information to someone, which if it had been known, might have stopped the incident
 - > Public Act 11-232 takes the following steps to reduce the incidence of student bullying... “Each school will designate a safe school climate committee to identify and address bullying patterns in the school, review bullying reports and school policies, advise the school district on its safe school climate plan, and educate the school community on issues related to bullying.”
 - > LINKING SOFTWARE – Central Database for ALL reported behaviors with weight put on Red Flags (Within school or Within State)

“Ball In The Air Scenario”
Is Behavior Increasing or
Decreasing?



Pathway/Movement Data

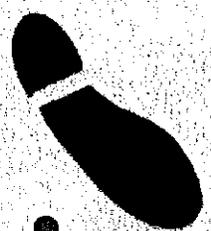


● Research/
planning



● Gathering
Materials/
Actual Practice
Behaviors

● Virtual
Practice
Behaviors

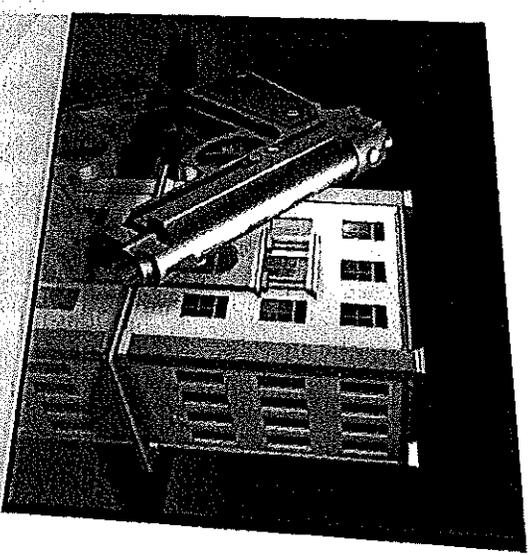


● Hypothetical
Planning/Often
discussion



● Thoughts/Fantasy

What the Research Tells Us



The Three Greatest Risk Factors

Bullying Relationship

◎ Relationship To Bullying/Victimization

- > Cited in almost all known "Rampage" shootings
- > Real or perceived-Same result
- > INJUSTICE COLLECTORS



◎ Cho Seung-Hui, 23-year old Virginia Tech gunman, Killed 33 people on campus, including himself.

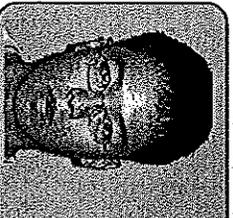
- > "You have vandalized my heart, raped my soul and torched my conscience. You thought it was one pathetic boy's life you were extinguishing. Thanks to you, I die like Jesus Christ to inspire generations of the weak and the defenseless people." "
- > Your Mercedes wasn't enough, you brats. Your golden necklaces weren't enough, you snobs. Your trust funds wasn't enough. Your vodka and cognac wasn't enough. All your debaucheries weren't enough. Those weren't enough to fulfill your hedonistic needs. You had everything."

Bullying/victimization (Cont)



- ◎ **Luke Woodham**, 16 year old, Pearl, Mississippi, killed his ex-girlfriend and her best friend and injured seven others in the 1997 school shooting (Also killed his mother prior to the shooting, while she was sleeping).
 - > "I do this on behalf of all kids who have been mistreated."
 - > I am not insane, I am angry. I killed because people like me are mistreated every day. I did this to show society, push us and we will push back. ... All throughout my life, I was ridiculed, always beaten, always hated. Can you, society, truly blame me for what I do? Yes, you will. ... It was not a cry for attention, it was not a cry for help. It was a scream in sheer agony saying that if you can't pry your eyes open, if I can't do it through pacifism, if I can't show you through the displaying of intelligence, then I will do it with a bullet.

Depression With Suicidal Thoughts



**Seung Hui
Cho**
Virginia Tech
32k/17w



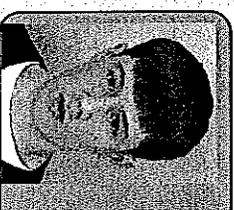
**Luke
Woodham**
Pearl,
Mississippi
3k/7w



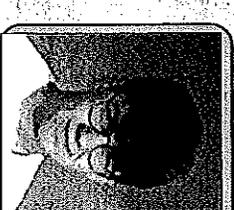
**Michael
Carnel**
A. Paducah,
Kentucky
3k/5w



**Dylan
Klebold**
Columbine
13k/24w



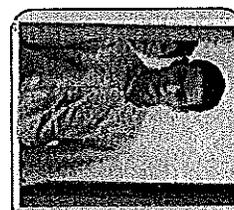
Kip Kinkel
Springfield,
Oregon
4k/25w



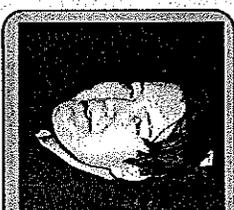
**Andrew
Wurst**
Edinboro, PA
1k/3w



Eric Harris
Columbine
13k/24w



**Evan
Ramsey**
Bethel, Alaska
2k/2w

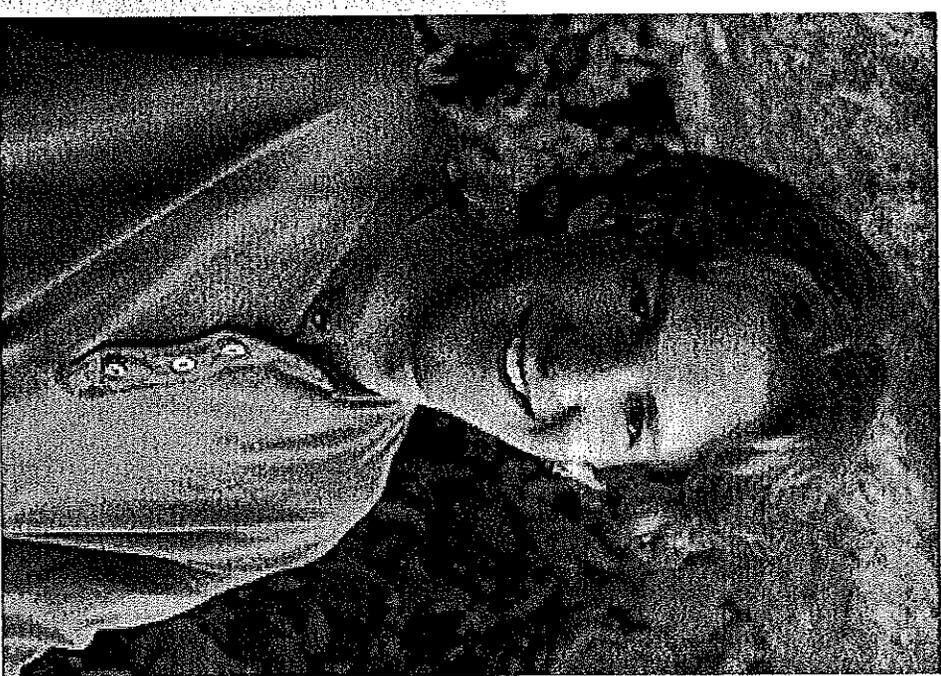


**Jeffrey
Weise**
Red Lake, MN
9k/5w

Depression with suicidal thoughts (Cont)

◉ "I am in eternal suffering, in infinite directions in infinite realities."

◉ **"Oooh God I want to die so bad...** such a sad desolate lonely unsalvageable I feel I am... not fair, not fair!!! Let's sum up my life... the most miserable existence in the history of time."



Case Management...or...

OK, Now What!

- Kids **WILL** eventually go back to school
- Develop a plan that moves the student away from regarding violence against the target as a viable option
- What is the perceived motivation for the violence
- What supports need to be put in place to decrease risk
- From the perspective of the student, what needs to change for the student to lower their risk of targeted violence (DOJ)

What To Do Proactively

- In about 80% of school shootings at least one person had information the person was thinking about or planning an attack (LEAKAGE)
- In nearly 66% two or more people had information
- The people who knew were almost always peers, friends, schoolmates, siblings
- You have to let your kids know... "If you have any information that you even think might be important you have to say something... **EVEN IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THE PERSON, THINK THEY'RE JOKING, OR JUST VENTING/BLOWING OFF STEAM/ANGRY**

Prevention- What We Can Do To Make Our Schools Safer NOW

- ◉ Solid Core Doors
- ◉ Level 4 Ballistic Glass
- ◉ Alert words/ Phrases
- ◉ Panic Buttons
- ◉ Drills (Active Shooter/Round Table)
- ◉ Policies and Procedures
- ◉ Central Reporting
- ◉ Anonymous reporting
- ◉ See something/Say something School Climate
- ◉ School Resource Officers (SRO's)