

School Violence: Lessons from the front lines for prevention and intervention

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Opening Thoughts

Everyone has many emotions after the Uvalde school shooting but what can we do?

Opening Thoughts

I first testified before the U.S. Congress about school violence in 1999 and emphasized reducing gun access to children and increasing mental health services in schools.

We Can

***Get training on psychological first
aide from the National Child
Traumatic Stress Network*** [The National
Child Traumatic Stress Network | \(nctsn.org\)](https://www.nctsn.org)

We Can

***Get more training on crisis
intervention in schools PREPARE
www.nasponline.org***

We Can

***Request that a task force be created
on school safety in your local
school system. Have your voice
heard!***

Opening Thoughts: Based on 4 decades of studying school violence and responding to 17 school shootings

The primary motive of a school shooter is glory or justice and sometimes it is both.

School safety is a multi-billion-dollar business.

Opening Thoughts

School shootings are up for this school year. A school shooting rocks the psyche of America.

Opening Thoughts

One school shooting is unacceptable, but we must work on prevention of shootings everywhere!

Opening Thoughts

Everyone must alert for warning signs of someone planning a shooting and many times the perpetrator posted clues online.

Opening Thoughts

Every parent must talk with their children to let them know they cannot even about joke about a school shooting as the consequences may be severe.

School safety is primarily an inside job that starts with a commitment from all students!

Opening Thoughts

Holding parents accountable when their gun was used by their child to commit a school shooting might be something both sides of the gun debate could agree on.

Opening Thoughts

***There are many definition problems
as to what constitutes a school
shooting.***

Opening Thoughts

There is evidence that mass shootings are contagious.

Opening Thoughts

A study from the University of Michigan reported more kids died a gun death last year than were killed in car accidents!

Recent Response

This spring an adult opened fire on the Burke school in Washington, D.C. on April 22, 2022. I consulted with the leadership team and provided sessions for staff and parents.

Recent Response

Two key questions were asked of Burke staff, students and parents.

What would help you feel safer?

Who or what has helped you when you have had to deal with sad things before?

Opening Thoughts

All schools need multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams.

Opening Thoughts

Please place your ideas to prevent school shootings in the Chat Box.

School Shootings

- There are many **definition problems** as to what is a school shooting but sources of data are the following:
- www.everytownusa.org
- <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>
- <https://www.edweek.org>
- Most school shootings are an accidental discharge of a gun or a suicide at school
- Homicides at school are infrequent
- Education Week reported since the school shooting in Parkland that in the last four years there have been 118 K-12 school shootings and 26 occurred in the 2021-22 school year
- Total K-12 schools in U.S 130,000+

After a School Shooting

- Overwhelming grief and emotions
- Need to identify immediate sources of support and to restore a sense of safety
- There are no magic words
- It is important to tell children the truth in developmentally appropriate language
- Everyone wants to see something that is different
- There is often a strong desire to make changes to prevent further tragedies

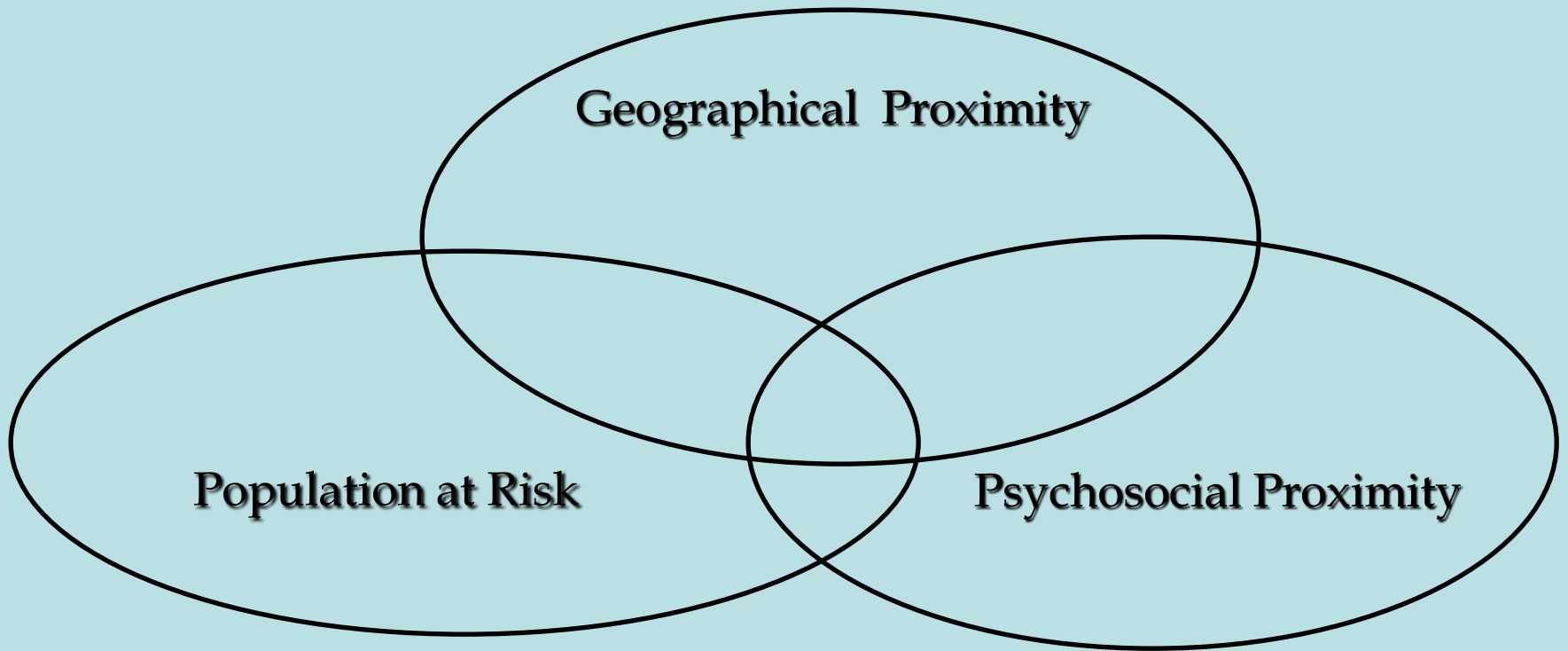
After a School Shooting

- Recognize the **long-term impact** and the possible political twists and turns
- Partner with community services and do not turn down assistance
- Help the school staff first
- Hold a meeting for parents
- Help all adults understand the typical reactions that children have to a tragedy
- Resume/reopen school as soon as possible

More Recommendations

- Utilize the Circles of Vulnerability Model to identify those most likely to be at risk
- Apply for USDOE Project SERV Grant Funds
- Use those funds to move trailers on to campus for counseling in a confidential setting
- Name a staff member as the Recovery Coordinator and make that their sole job
- Don't treat everyone the same and avoid changing the counselors for affected students and staff
- Be alert for triggering events (birthdays of victims, anniversary of tragedy, trial, sentencing, graduation)
- Recognize increased suicides often follow school shootings
- Remodel the building don't tear it down

Circles of Vulnerability



Parents Of School Shooting Victims Call For

- More religion
- Explanation of what school officials knew
- Reduce gun access to children
- No notoriety for perpetrators
- Better parenting and supervision
- Improved mental health services
- Reduced violence in media
- School safety audits
- Increase connections with all students

Well Known Foundations Started by Parents

- Safe and Sound Schools
www.safeandsoundschools.org
- Sandy Hook Promise www.sandyhookpromise.org
- No Notoriety www.nonotoriety.com
- I Love U Guys www.iloveuguids.org
- Rachel's Challenge www.rachelschallenge.org
- Many foundations started after Parkland including:
- Change the Ref www.changetheref.org
- Make Our Schools Safe
www.makeourschoolssafe.org

U. S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center: Enhancing School Safety Model

- Importance of shared commitment to school safety with school and community
- Importance of well-trained threat assessment teams in schools that meet regularly with designated leader, good leadership, varied disciplines represented and established protocols
- Include reviewing online media posts for student in question and build a positive relationship with them and their parents

NTAC Enhancing School Safety

- All students need a trusted relationship with an adult at school and an emotional connection to other students
- Schools need increased resources to help troubled students and a culture of connection
- Schools need a means for anonymous reporting
- Florida for example has Fortify Florida for reporting
- [FortifyFL \(getfortifyfl.com\)](https://getfortifyfl.com)

NTAC Recommendations

- Promote information sharing between schools and community stakeholders
- Liaison with law enforcement and require constant training with stakeholders
- Recognize removing a student from school does not eliminate risk
- What is missing from these recommendations that is being done?

NTAC Did Not Recommend Arming School Staff

- No professional school association or law enforcement association has endorsed arming teachers
- Many states have some provision to allow arming teachers
- Florida for example in 2019 voted to expand the Guardian program to include arming teachers on the same day that an SRO's gun accidentally discharged at a school

NTAC Report

- Studied 41 violent attacks mostly with guns at K-12 schools from 2008 to 2017 (19 killed and 79 injured) this was less than 2% of the homicides for youth during that period
- Perpetrators ranged from 7th to 12th graders, who attacked their own school, primarily were white males and the weapons used in the attacks came from their homes
- They exhibited concerning behaviors that were not reported to authorities
- Common denominators were feeling mistreated, being bullied, being suicidal, a history of discipline problems and interest in previous school shooters

Parent Quotes

- Mark Barden of Sandy Hook Promise who lost his son Daniel at Sandy Hook, “A deranged socio-path going to school with planned outcome of suicide does not care if school staff are armed or not”!
- Nicole Hockley of Sandy Hook Promise who lost her son Dylan, “School safety focus is too much on the moment of school violence as opposed to stopping it in the first place”!

National Association of School Psychologists

- Supports gun background checks and extreme risk protection orders
- Supports a ban on fully assault weapons
- Supports evidenced based threat assessment policy and practice
- Supports the elimination of the Dickey amendment that resulted in the federal government not studying gun violence
- Opposes arming teachers and permitting open or concealed carry at school

Santana H.S. Search for Answers Many Years Later

(I led a national team there after the shooting)

- School shooter Andy Williams interviewed by WSJ who killed 2 and wounded 13
- “All I know is that I was hurting and wanted the bullying to stop”
- “ I wanted one person to tell me bringing a gun from my home to school was a bad idea”
- “It was the first time in my life that I felt powerful and in control ”
- Andy went to prison at age 16 and has the possibility of parole after serving 50 years

Books by Dr. Peter Langman: Warning Signs
(2021), School Shooters: (2015)
Why Kids Kill: (2009)

- Based on his extensive study of school shooters their rampage acts are best understood as a result of their personalities and life history
- Hypothesized there are three types of shooters
- Interview with Dr. Langman is at www.nova.edu/suicideprevention in SVP Newsletter
- His website [About Dr. Langman | School Shooters .info](http://About.Dr.Langman|SchoolShooters.info)

Types of Shooters

- Psychopathic—narcissistic without a conscience— aspiring to be godlike—paranoid, sadistic with antisocial personality traits (Example E. Harris Columbine H.S.)
- Psychotic—avoidant, schizotypal and dependent personality traits—paranoid delusions, auditory hallucinations—depressed and full of rage(Example M. Carneal Heath H.S.)
- Traumatized Shooters—suffered emotional and physical abuse at home—were sexually abused—lived with ongoing stress and losses—parents had substance abuse problems--frequent moves—lost parent to separation, jail and death—trauma history resulted in suicidal thoughts (Example J. Weise Red Lake H.S.)

Why don't students tell adults about violent threats?



JV H.S. example

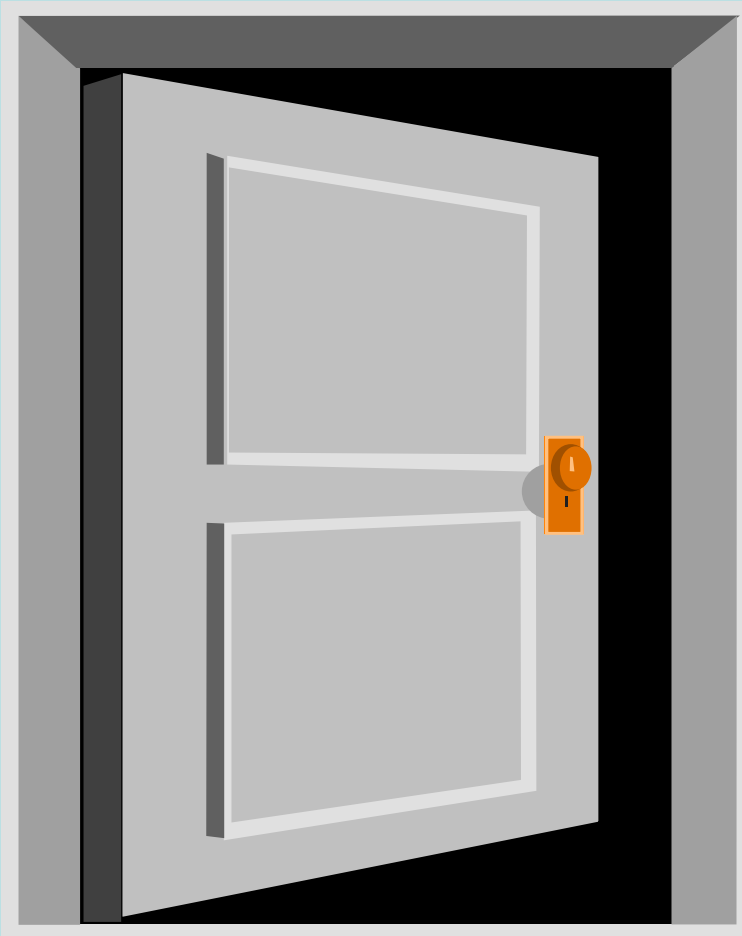
Warning Signs Actions on Pathway to Violence

- Sudden purchase of weapons or plans to locate them or stockpiling weapons
- Creating a hit list
- Making a plan/rehearsal with school diagram
- Posting plans or videos with themes of violence online
- Praising school shooters (pilgrimage to the scene of a school shooting)
- Leakage of violent plan to others including violent themes in school projects and essays
- Asking others to join the plan

Suggestions to Prevent School Shootings

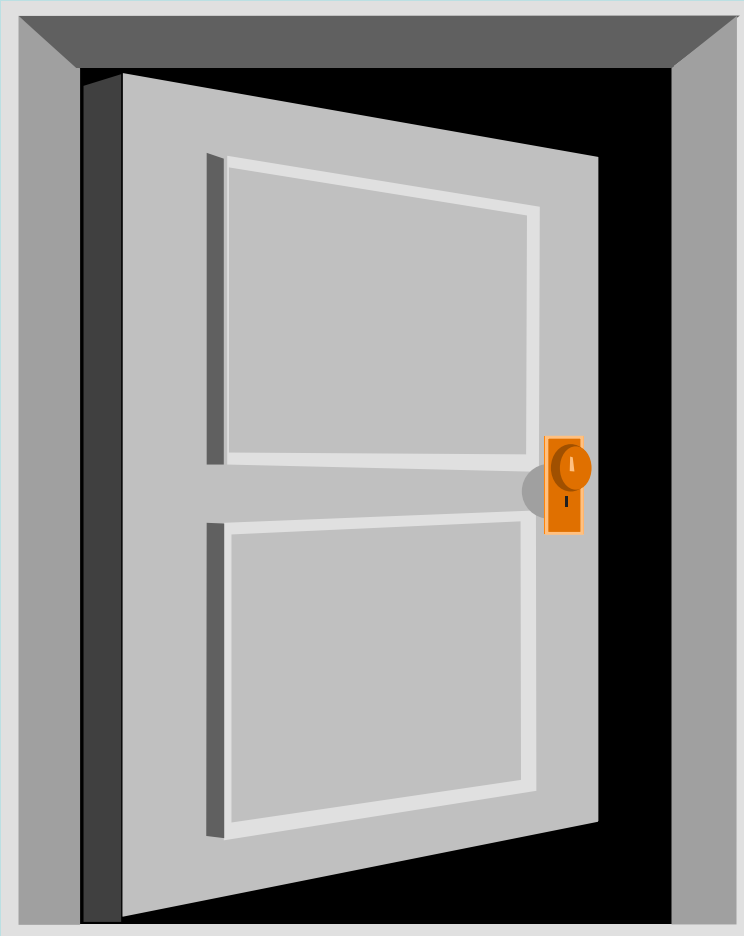
- Parents should limit adolescent privacy
- Parents should not lie to protect their child and should follow through with due process and consequences
- Parents should pay attention to what the schools says and seek help
- Parents should eliminate easy access to guns
- Parents should monitor social media
- Schools should take all threats seriously
- Schools should implement comprehensive suicide and bullying prevention programs

School Safety Examples



- Create safety task force and include students
- Survey staff and students
- Utilize student safety and anti-bullying pledges
- Floor plan exercise
- Sidney, NY example
- CFISD The Force

School Safety Examples



- Lock all but the front door
- Have a double set of front doors and meet and greet each visitor
- Ensure teachers can lock classroom doors
- Identify hard corners in every classroom away from doors and windows
- Have law enforcement conduct a safety audit of the building
- Have a panic button to contact local police

Questions

- Does your school have a threat assessment team?
- How often is school safety discussed in faculty meetings?
- Is information provided to parents about school safety and is their input welcome?
- How are your students involved in school safety planning?
- Does your school have mental health professionals in the ratio to students recommended by the various professional associations?

The Violence Project Recommendations

- Make potential sites where a shooting might occur safer with visible safety measures
- Improve control of weapons with age restrictions and safe storage
- Increase suicide prevention and mental health services
- Address childhood trauma
- Reduce the notoriety that mass shooters receive
- Americans need to change how we consume, produce and share violent content
- <https://www.theviolenceproject.org/>

In Conclusion

A student's threat of violence should be viewed as a "red flag" that they need help.

Craig Scott's quote, "In our schools we must reach the unreachable"!

Schools must be a place that all kids like and where they feel connected and would never think of hurting anyone.

Student school shooters need to be studied separately from other mass shooters.

Please make your voice heard as thoughts and prayers are not enough.

Letter to Congress Calling for Meaningful Gun Reform Now

- American Federation for Teachers, American Psychological Association, American School Psychology Association, Clinical Social Work Association, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers, National Education Association, National Parent Teacher Association, and the School Social Work Association of America

How To Be Heard

- Support Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence www.teachersunify.org
- Support Call to Action to Prevent Gun Violence [Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America | School of Education and Human Development | University of Virginia](#)
- Contact your Congress Representatives via text [Resistbot](#)

How To Help Uvalde

- The school district has opened an account at the First State Bank of Uvalde for families affected by the shooting. Mail checks payable to:
- Robb School Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 1908, Uvalde, TX. 78802
- Donations may also be mailed through Zelle, to robbschoolmemorialfund@gmail.com or by calling 830-356-2773