Holistic Violence Prevention for Schools

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Association of Metropolitan School Districts BOD
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Practice vs Prevention
Figure 1. Number of school shootings with casualties at public and private elementary and secondary schools: 2000–01 through 2020–21

NOTE: “School shootings” include all incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims (including zero), time, day of the week, or reason (e.g., planned attack, accidental, domestic violence, gang-related). All data are reported for the school year, defined as July 1 through June 30. Data in this figure were generated using a database that aims to compile information on school shootings from publicly available sources into a single comprehensive resource. For information on database methodology, see K–12 School Shooting Database: Research Methodology (https://www.chds.us/ssdb/resources/uploads/2020/09/CHDS-K12-SSDB-Research-Methods-Sept-2020.pdf). Due to school closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, caution should be used when comparing 2019–20 and 2020–21 data with data from earlier years. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.

"A quiet phenomenon": The rise of gun violence at school sports

"It is just the classic idea that when more guns are around the more likely it is that they are going to be used," said James Densley, cofounder of the Violence Project, a research center aimed at reducing gun violence.

Overall, only about one in six shootings on school property over the past five years occurred in connection with an athletic event, according to the database. Still, advocates say, national policymakers who have responded strongly after in-school shootings should pay more attention to violence happening outside the classroom.

"This is a quiet phenomenon that people were not even aware of until recently," Densley said.
19 killed, 2 injured
Oxford, MI
4 killed, 7 injured
Redlake, MN
4 killed, 7 injured
Oxford, MI
4 killed, 7 injured
Newtown, CT
27 killed, 1 injured
Bart Township, PA
5 killed, 5 injured
Stockton, CA
5 killed, 30 injured
Marysville, WA
4 killed, 1 injured
Springfield, OR
4 killed, 25 injured
Olivehurst, CA
4 killed, 10 injured
Columbine, CO
13 killed, 23 injured
Johnsboro, AR
5 killed, 10 injured
Uvalde, TX
19 killed, 2 injured
Sante Fe, TX
10 killed, 13 injured
Parkland, FL
17 killed, 17 injured
Shootings since 1966, from The Violence Project Database
The First Modern School Shooter Feels Responsible for the Rest

“So, why did you commit this crime?” the head parole commissioner asked.

“Because I wanted to die,” she said. “I was trying to commit suicide.”

“Why pick the school across the street?” the commissioner asked.

“Because I knew that if I fired on the school the police would show up, and they would shoot me and kill me,” she said. “And every time I had tried suicide in the previous year I had screwed it up.”

The Grover Cleveland Elementary School shooting,
San Diego, CA
January 29, 1979
The principal and a custodian were killed
8 children and a police officer were injured
I heard about some of these shooters either in movies or news articles and I wanted to know what they had done. ... I was curious. After researching the Columbine massacre, I found a link to other school shootings and decided to read on them. A few I had already heard about when they happened. And I wanted to be better informed. I related a lot to [the Columbine shooter] and [the Thurston High School shooter]. [The Columbine shooter] was about my age and suffered from depression like I was. He committed suicide and I also longed for suicide at times.

(Peterson & Densley, 2021, p. 101)
"Social processes are driven by our thresholds ... the number of people who need to be doing some activity before we agree to join them ... each new participant’s action makes sense in reaction to and in combination with those who came before"
CURRENT OR FORMER STUDENT AT SCHOOL
91%

IN CRISIS PRIOR TO SHOOTING
87%

SUICIDAL PRIOR TO SHOOTING
80%

LEAKED PLANS AHEAD OF TIME
78%
Assessing Shooting Threats Is a Matter of Life or Death. Why Aren’t Experts Better at It?

Los Angeles Times
The alarming rise in school shooting threats

Opinion: School shootings are increasing — and changing. Easily accessible guns are to blame.
Communication of Intent to Do Harm Preceding Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1966 to 2019

Jillian Peterson, PhD; Gina Erickson, PhD; Kyle Knapp, BA; James Densley, PhD

Abstract

**IMPORANCE** Understanding the motivation of a mass shooter’s intent to do harm can help practitioners and policy makers develop more effective intervention strategies.

**OBJECTIVE** To examine the prevalence of communication of intent to do harm, known as leakage, in a sample of 170 mass public shooters from 1966 to 2019; the characteristics of perpetrators who do and do not leak their plans; and whether leakage is a form of fame-seeking behavior or a cry for help among individuals who are in crisis or suicidal.

**DESIGN, SETTING, AND PARTICIPANTS** This cross-sectional study included perpetrators who killed 4 or more people in a public space from 1996 to 2019 and were included in a comprehensive database of US mass shootings. That database was built from August 2017 to December 2019, and analysis took place from January to May 2021.

**MAIN OUTCOMES AND MEASURES** Leakage was identified and coded using publicly available records. Any communication to a third party of an intent to do harm prior to the shooting was coded as leakage. Logistic regression models were used to examine the risk factors associated with leakage. Models estimating leakage were examined to assess the 2 hypothesized pathways to leakage (the cry-for-help model and the fame-seeking model).

**RESULTS** The 170 participants in this sample included 166 (97.7%) male perpetrators and 3 (2.3%) female perpetrators, with a mean (SD) age of 34 (12) years. Overall, 161 participants had known race and ethnicity: 116 (6.8%) Asian individuals, 35 (21.7%) Black individuals, 14 (8.7%) Latinx individuals, 7 (4.4%) Middle Eastern individuals, 3 (1.9%) Native American individuals, 89 (55.3%) White individuals, and 2 (1.2%) individuals with other race and ethnicity. Overall, 79 mass shooters (46.5%) leaked their plans. Of perpetrators who leaked their plans, 35 (44.3%) leaked specific plans about a mass shooting, and 44 (55.1%) leaked nonspecific plans about generalized violence. The study findings indicate that leakage was associated with receiving counseling (odds ratio, 7.0; 95% CI, 2.5-20.8) and having a history of violence (odds ratio, 2.7; 95% CI, 2.5-1.1). A deeper understanding of leakage will aid in developing more effective intervention strategies.

**Key Points**

**Question** What factors are associated with a mass shooting perpetrator’s decision to communicate their intent to do harm?

**Findings** This cross-sectional study of 170 perpetrators found that nearly half leaked their plans, with 44.3% of them leaking specific plans about a mass shooting. Leakage was associated with receiving counseling and suicidality, which suggests it may be best characterized as a cry for help from perpetrators prior to their act.

**Meaning** These findings suggest that leakage is a critical moment for mental health intervention to prevent gun violence.

Author affiliations and article information are listed at the end of this article.
What this means for prevention

**Insiders:** Most likely perpetrator is in the building

**In crisis:** Crisis intervention & crisis response teams

**Suicidal:** Suicide prevention, not punishment

**Leakage:** Reporting systems, relationships
Diffusion of Benefits
The Off-Ramp Project

The road to violence is long – let’s build more exits.

A hub of information, training, and resources for anyone who has been impacted by a mass shooting or is interested in preventing the next one.
Crisis Intervention

1. **MANAGE YOURSELF**
   - Emotional contagion
   - Don’t panic
   - Don’t take it personally
   - Recognizing your limits

2. **MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENT**
   - Get rid of any audience
   - Reduce distractions
   - De-escalate the space
   - Create time and space

3. **NON-VERBAL DE-ESCALATION**
   - Body Position
   - Eye Contact
   - Tone of Voice
   - Mirroring

4. **VERBAL DE-ESCALATION**
   - Open-ended, simple questions
   - Active listening - empathy
   - Focus on feelings
   - Give 2 simple options

(Off-ramp logo)
Crisis Response Teams

The R-Model
Ready • Respond • Refer • Revisit
K-12 School Crisis Response Teams

Fillable Forms

Form 1: Making a Report
Form 2: Establishing a Crisis Response Team
Form 3: Resource List
Form 4: Crisis Response
Form 5: Interview Form
Form 6: Individualized Plan of Support
Form 7: Revisit
DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THREATS TO A SCHOOL OR PLACE OF WORSHIP?

Send tips to the Minnesota BCA and help solve a crime.

TIPS CAN BE ANONYMOUS.
Say Something Anonymous Reporting System allows you to submit secure & anonymous safety concerns to help identify and intervene upon at-risk individuals BEFORE they hurt themselves or others.

SUBMIT A TIP  CALL THE HOTLINE  GET THE APP
1-844-5-SAYNOW
I WAS _ALMOST A SCHOOL SHOOTER_

“When you literally have nothing to lose you can do anything and that thought is absolutely terrifying.”

Aaron
Thank you