

THREAT ASSESSMENT

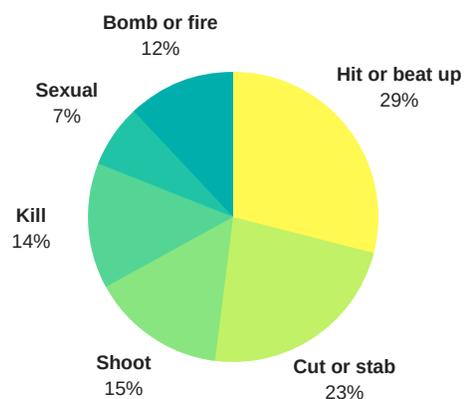
Threat assessment is an evidence-based methodology involving intense collaboration between mental health professionals, law enforcement agencies, and educational administrators to identify students exhibiting behavioral warning signs of distress that could lead to violence and taking steps to prevent such incidents by providing appropriate help to the distressed student.

DO THEY WORK?

Threat Assessment Programs have been shown to:

- Prevent incidents of violence such as school shootings and suicides
- Significantly reduce school suspensions and other disciplinary events
- Connect at-risk, struggling youth with mental health services and resources

THREATS AVERTED



In 2017, a 12-month study on Virginia's K-12 school threat assessment teams found they had conducted 9,238 threat assessments, with none of the threats resulting in death or serious injury.

20 years of data and research at college campuses and 9 years at the K-12 level show significant positive results for threat assessments.



- Lower short-term and long-term suspension rates
- Fairer perceived discipline
- Lower levels of student aggressive behaviors
- Teachers who reported they felt safer at school

Sources

- Cornell, D. and Maeng, J., (2018) Contemp School Psychol 22: 116–124. Retrieved from: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs40688-017-0146-x.pdf>
- Nekvasil, E. K., & Cornell, D. G. (2015). Student threat assessment associated with safety in middle schools. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2(2), 98-113.

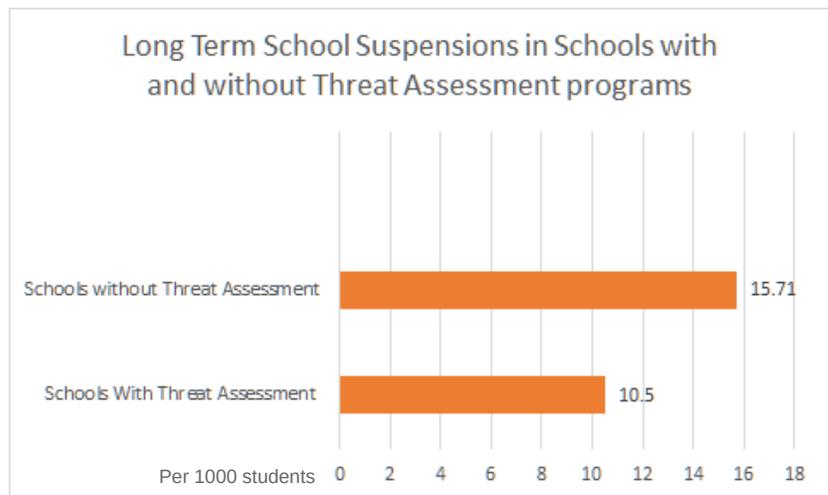
WHAT DO THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS DO?

Threat assessment is concerned with whether a student poses a threat, not whether he or she has made a threat. Any student can make a threat, but relatively few will engage in the planning and preparation necessary to carry out a threat. Multidisciplinary threat assessment teams determine whether a student has the intent and means to carry out a threat to themselves or to others and to prevent the threat from being carried out.

POSITIVE RESULTS

- Data shows significant positive results for threat assessments, including a dramatic reduction in school suspensions

SOURCE: Cornell, D. G., Allen, K., & Fan, X. (2012). A randomized controlled study of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines in kindergarten through grade 12. *School Psychology Review*, 41(1), 100-115.



Alternatives

Lack of data and harmful impacts

Unfortunately, many school safety policy proposals do not have data to support their use. In fact, many studies have shown that some school security measures, such as increased use of security cameras and metal detectors and excessive "hardening" of school buildings and facilities, can produce detrimental psychological effects on student body well-being, detract from the school's learning environment, and increase the number of student disciplinary events on campus.

Anti-bullying

Positive impacts reported by students in schools using threat assessments

- Less bullying and teasing in the school, a more favorable learning environment, and greater willingness to seek help from adults in the school than students in the comparison schools.
- Lower levels of student victimization and bullying victimization than students in the comparison schools.

- Cornell D., Sheras P., Gregory A., and Fan, X. (2009) A Retrospective Study of School Safety Conditions in High Schools Using the Virginia Threat Assessment Guidelines Versus Alternative Approaches, *School Psychology Quarterly American Psychological Association*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 119-129. <https://habita.org/documents/ThreatAssmtarticleSchPsyQuarterly.pdf>
- Hankin A., Hertz M., Simon T. (2011) Impacts of metal detector use in schools: Insights from 15 years of research, *Journal of School Health*. Vol 81: No. 2 p. 100-106. Retrieved from: <https://secure.edweek.org/media/hankin-02security.pdf>
- American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. *American Psychologist*, 63(9), 852-862. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19086747>

For more information,
contact: Rep. Ray Ward
rayward@le.utah.gov