



School Safety Newsletter

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This is Not a Drill: School Districts Now Required to Create Threat Assessment Teams and Implement Threat Assessment Procedures

September 13, 2019, Franczek

Governor Pritzker signed into law Public Act 101-0455 amending the School Safety Drill Act (105 ILCS 128/1) to require threat assessment procedures and the creation of threat assessment teams in school districts across Illinois. The required threat assessment procedures may be part of a school board policy on targeted school violence prevention and must include the creation of a threat assessment team, but the law does not otherwise specify what must be included in the procedure.

The threat assessment team must include the following members, each of whom must be employed by the school district or special education cooperative that serves the school district and be available to serve on the team: an administrator, a teacher, a school counselor, a school psychologist, and a school social worker. In addition to the team members above, at least one law enforcement official must also be included on the team.

If a school district is unable to establish a threat assessment team with school district staff and resources, the Act permits a district to utilize a regional behavioral threat assessment and intervention team that includes mental health professionals and representatives from the State, county, and local law enforcement. The Act states that any sharing of student information by the threat assessment team must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA). The law also includes an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for any records concerning the work of the threat assessment team.

School districts must implement an initial threat assessment procedure by December 21, 2019, and must establish the required threat assessment team no later than February 19, 2020.

To read the full article, visit: <https://www.franczek.com/blog/this-is-not-a-drill-school-districts-now-required-to-create-threat-assessment-teams-and-implement-threat-assessment-procedures/>

K12 Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) Resources

Illinois School and Campus Safety Resource Center (Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board Executive Institute)

- Resources: <http://ilschoolsafety.org/index.php/k-12-resources/behavioral-threat-assessment/behavioral-threat-assessment-k-12>
- Upcoming Training: http://ilschoolsafety.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=108
- To request training, email: schoolsafety@iletsbei.com

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA)

- Resources: https://rems.ed.gov/Resource_Plan_Basic_Assessment.aspx
- To request training, fill out this form: https://rems.ed.gov/Docs/TBR-Application_508C.pdf
- Send request and questions to: info@remstacenter.org

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Nearly All Mass Shooters Since 1966 Have Had 4 Things in Common

November 19, 2019, Vice

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/a35mya/nearly-all-mass-shooters-since-1966-have-had-four-things-in-common

The stereotype of a mass shooter is a white male with a history of mental illness or domestic violence. While that may be anecdotally true, the largest single study of mass shooters ever funded by the U.S. government has found that nearly all mass shooters have four specific things in common.

A new Department of Justice-funded study of all mass shootings — killings of four or more people in a public place — since 1966 found that the shooters typically have an experience with childhood trauma, a personal crisis or specific grievance, and a “script” or examples that validate their feelings or provide a roadmap. And then there’s the fourth thing: access to a firearm.

The root cause of mass shootings is an intensely partisan debate, with one side blaming mental health and the others blaming guns. Researchers hope that the findings in the study could usher in a more holistic and evidence-based approach to the issue — and provide opportunities for policy action.

“Data is data,” said Jillian Peterson, a psychologist at Hamline University and co-author of the study. “Data isn’t political. Our hope is that it pushes these conversations further.”

The study, compiled by the Violence Project, a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to reducing violence in society, was published Tuesday and is the most comprehensive and detailed database of mass shooters to date, coded to 100 different variables. Its release comes less than a week after a teenage boy killed two students at his high school in Santa Clarita, California, before fatally shooting himself in the head.

The researchers used the FBI’s definition of a “mass murder” — four or more people killed, excluding the perpetrator — and applied it to shootings in one public place. The dataset stretches back to August 1, 1966, when a former Marine opened fire from an observation deck at the University of Texas, killing 15 people. It wasn’t the first mass shooting in the U.S., but researchers chose it as a starting point because it was the first to be substantively covered on radio and TV.

The database delivers a number of arresting findings. Mass shootings are becoming much more frequent and deadly: Of the 167 incidents the researchers logged in that 53-year period, 20% have occurred in the last five years, and half since 2000.

They’re also increasingly motivated by racial, religious, or misogynist hatred, particularly the ones that occurred in the past five years.

And in an era when tightening gun laws, including background checks, is a national political issue, the study found that more than half of all mass shooters in the database obtained their guns legally.

But researchers said they were particularly struck by how many mass shooters displayed symptoms of being in some sort of crisis prior to the shooting. “Those are opportunities for prevention,” said Peterson.

5 profiles of mass shooters

Experts have long cautioned that there is no single profile for a mass shooter. But the Violence Project researchers found some personal characteristics often align with certain types of locations targeted by shooters, and created five general categories:

- K-12 shooters: White males, typically students or former students of the school, with a history of trauma. Most are suicidal, plan their crime extensively, and make others aware of their plans at some point before the shooting. They use multiple guns that they typically steal from a family member.
- College and university shooters: Non-white males who are current students of the university, are suicidal, and have a history of violence and childhood trauma. They typically use legally obtained handguns and leave behind some sort of manifesto.
- Workplace shooters: Fortysomething males without a specific racial profile. Most are employees of their targeted location, often a blue-collar job site, and have some grievance against the workplace. They use legally purchased handguns and assault rifles.

Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday of Every Month

at 10 am

(Except January, July, and August).

Next Webinars

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Each webinar has a round table discussion at the end. Questions are always welcome!

To participate, you must be a vetted member. For more information please email

isp.schoolsafety@illinois.edu

Nearly All Mass Shooters Since 1966 Have Had 4 Things in Common (Continued)

- Place of worship shooters: White males in their 40s, typically motivated by hate or domestic violence that spills out into public. Their crimes typically involve little planning.
- Shooters at a commercial location (such as a store or restaurant): White men in their 30s with a violent history and criminal record. They typically have no connection to the targeted location and use a single, legally obtained firearm. About a third show evidence of a “thought disorder,” a term for a mental health condition, like schizophrenia, that results in disorganized thinking, paranoia, or delusions.

Hate on the rise

The study shows that the number of shooters who are motivated by racism, religious hate, and misogyny have increased since the 1960s — most dramatically in the last five years.

Since 2015, hate-fueled shootings targeting black churchgoers in Charleston, Jews at synagogues in Pittsburgh and Poway, women at a yoga studio in Tallahassee, and Latinos at a Walmart in El Paso, have dominated national headlines and added another layer of complexity to the problem of mass violence in America.

Between 1966 and 2000, there were 75 mass shootings. Of those, 9% were motivated by racism, 1% by religious hatred, and 7% by misogyny. Of the 32 mass shootings that have occurred in the U.S. just since 2015, 18% were motivated by racism, 15% by religious hatred, and 21% by misogyny.

The increase in ideologically motivated mass shootings has coincided with the emergence of a newly emboldened far right, who've forged national and even international alliances of hate online. The sharp rise in misogyny-inspired shootings also squares with the rise of the “Incels,” short for “involuntarily celibate,” an online subculture comprised of angry young men who deeply resent and blame women for their isolation.

Mental health is a factor — but rarely the cause

Two-thirds of the mass shooters in the database had a documented history of mental health problems. While this seems high, researchers point out that roughly 50% of Americans have experienced some kind of mental health problem at some point in their lives.

Moreover, the percentage of shooters whose crimes were directly motivated by the symptoms of a mental disorder (such as delusions or hallucinations caused by psychosis) is much smaller: roughly 16%. That is a smaller percentage than shooters motivated by hate, a workplace grievance, or an interpersonal conflict.

“If someone has a mental health history, I think we’ve gotten in the habit of blaming that for their actions,” said Peterson. “But someone can have, say, depression, and it’s not like everything they do is driven by that.”

That said, the study found strong links between suicidal motivations and mass shootings. Nearly 70% of shooters were suicidal before or during the shooting, and the numbers are even higher for school shooters.

These findings could have powerful implications for public policy, according to the researchers. “This shows us that there are opportunities for intervention — this doesn’t just happen out of the blue,” Peterson said.

“We know a lot more about suicide prevention than we do about this issue, and we know what works — things like limiting access to weapons, directly asking the question, connecting people with outside resources, not talking about it in the news.”

Seeking out fame

The percentage of shooters driven by a desire for fame has risen substantially in the last five years, the study found. In the first 15 years of the 21st century, some 3% of perpetrators were motivated by the desire to go down in history as a mass shooter.

Between 2015 and 2019, that number jumped to 12%.

One specific motivator for fame-seekers remains strangely persistent through the years: the Columbine High School massacre.

There had been many mass shootings and even school shootings before, but Columbine, which took place in 1999 at a public high school in Littleton, Colorado, redefined the school shooting as a media spectacle. The chaotic scene outside the school was broadcast live for several hours before the perpetrators were found to have died by suicide, the shooters left an extensive record of their plans and motives.

Columbine’s influence is so great that the study even found that fame-seeking as a motive for mass shootings was largely confined to the American West: 70% of fame-seeking shootings took place in the region. (By comparison, the researchers found no mass shootings in the Northeast directly motivated by fame-seeking.)

Nearly All Mass Shooters Since 1966 Have Had 4 Things in Common (Continued)

How they got their guns

Nearly half the mass shooters in the database purchased their gun legally. Thirteen percent obtained their gun via "theft," which includes borrowing from friends or family members. School shooters — overwhelmingly young — were most likely to acquire their guns in this manner. Researchers said that this particular data point could bolster arguments for legislation requiring safe storage of firearms.

Handguns were by far the most common firearm used in mass shootings, and were used three times the rate of shotguns, rifles, or assault rifles.

Assault rifles were banned in 1994 during the Clinton Administration, but the federal ban expired a decade later and gun manufacturers pounced on the opportunity to re-market military-style firearms to civilians.

Researchers said that there had been a statistically significant increase of assault rifle use in mass shootings in the last five years, which has also coincided with shootings becoming more deadly.

16-Year-Old Girl Allegedly Plotted to Attack Black Church in Georgia

November 19, 2019, NBC News

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/16-year-old-girl-allegedly-plotted-attack-black-church-georgia-n1086196>

A 16-year-old white girl has been arrested after police said classmates reported she had a plot to attack a black church in Gainesville, Georgia.

The unidentified student allegedly had a notebook with plans to murder parishioners at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which has a predominantly black congregation, according to a release from the Gainesville Police Department.

Police were contacted Nov. 15 after the girl's classmates at the Gainesville High School alerted counselors about the alleged plot. She was charged with criminal attempt to commit murder and is being held at a youth detention center, police said.

Bishop Reginald Jackson, presiding prelate of the Sixth Episcopal District of the AME Church, told reporters Tuesday that the girl was inspired by Dylan Roof, the man who was convicted of killing nine black worshipers at the Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, four years ago in an effort to start a race war.

"Idealizing him and sharing the same ideology, she plotted to accomplish the same at Bethel church in Gainesville," Jackson said. "This incident raises very serious issues and also raises questions that need to be answered."

The bishop posed the question whether AME churches were being targeted in particular for their history of supporting social justice issues. Jackson said that he's spoken with church leaders across the state about safety and planned to address the topic with congregations.

Representatives for the AME church are asking authorities to charge the girl as an adult. "We call upon the district attorney to try her as an adult," Jackson said. "To plan this kind of event is not that of a childish mind. This took some planning."

Jackson urged state and national leaders to do more to address the growing threat of domestic terror, citing an FBI field office's reported concerns on the matter. He also said it was "absolutely awful" that the state of Georgia has failed to pass a hate crimes legislation.

"It ought to bother us that in the state of Georgia, this young girl, this young woman, cannot be charged with a hate crime," Jackson said. "She cannot be charged with a hate crime because Georgia does not have a hate crimes law."

The alleged plot comes amid the backdrop of the South's long history of black churches being bombed, burned and attacked — incidents that continue well into the modern era, including the 2015 shooting in Charleston.

More recently, the white son of a sheriff's deputy was arrested in April and accused of setting fires that destroyed three black churches in rural Louisiana. Holden Matthews is awaiting trial on arson and hate crimes charges in the Louisiana church burnings.

Undercover FBI Agents Say Chicago College Student Tried to Write Code for ISIS

November 19, 2019, USA Today

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/11/19/chicago-college-student-arrested-trying-support-isis-terrorists/4243954002/>

CHICAGO — A 20-year-old U.S. college student was arrested November 18, 2019 for allegedly writing computer code to help the Islamic State spread propaganda online, according to the FBI.

Undercover FBI Agents Say Chicago College Student Tried to Write Code for ISIS (Continued)

Thomas Osadzinski, a student at DePaul University who lives in the city's northside neighborhood of Buena Park, was charged in a federal criminal complaint with one count of attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization — a charge punishable by up to 20 years. Osadzinski appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeffrey Cole in Chicago Tuesday and was ordered held without bond.

According to the complaint, Osadzinski designed a process that uses a computer script to make ISIS propaganda easier to access and disseminate on a social media platform, bypassing preventive code which routinely removes ISIS content due to the violent nature of the materials. The complaint, however, did not identify the social media platform, saying only that it was a mobile and desktop messaging application.

Osadzinski earlier this year shared his script — and instructions for how to use it — with individuals whom he believed to be ISIS supporters and members of pro-ISIS media organizations, the complaint says. Those individuals were actually covert FBI employees and a person working with them.

Printing an ISIS poster in the DePaul library

Osadzinski was born in Park Ridge, Illinois. Agents began tracking him in June of 2018, when Osadzinski posted in a pro-ISIS chatroom, according to the complaint. Osadzinski, unsolicited, began reaching out to pro-ISIS media platforms and offering to help translate videos from Arabic to English. "I know English well. If you need help tell me..." he wrote to an agent in Arabic on the social media platform.

Osadzinski later told an agent that he had done the English voice-over for a pro-ISIS video, as well as translations for others. The agent who reviewed the video voice-over concluded that the narrator spoke English with an American accent.

Osadzinski continued to communicate with at least four undercover agents over the months-long investigation, despite telling them that he knew the FBI was monitoring him. "Once I get my gun and explosive belt, the mukhabarat will never get me," Osadzinski wrote to an agent, using the Arabic word for state security and intelligence services.

Osadzinski told one agent that learning computer skills was "very useful for jihad," according to the complaint. At one point, Osadzinski sent an agent a screenshot of a social media channel that he had created, which appeared to contain thousands of photos, videos, files, audio clips, and links.

Osadzinski slowly revealed that he kept pro-ISIS materials in his 13th-floor apartment. Osadzinski sent one agent a photo of a large poster with Quranic verses written on it, telling the agent that he had printed it out at the university library. Osadzinski later sent another photo, of an ISIS flag lying on his desktop computer.

According to the complaint, Osadzinski appeared to be inspired by the 2009 attack at Fort Hood, Texas, when an Army psychiatrist fatally shot 13 people in the deadliest mass shooting on an American military base. The shooter had shouted "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest" in Arabic) during the attack, later calling it retaliation for U.S. wars in the Muslim world.

Following the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi last month, Osadzinski, unprompted, sent a message to one agent announcing his allegiance to the new leader of ISIS.

A source working for the FBI

In February, an information technology professional who had met Osadzinski through his computer science studies called the student under the guise of discussing computer science programs. The source befriended Osadzinski and falsely told him that he, too, was an ISIS supporter. The source met with Osadzinski in person five times.

The two became close. Osadzinski told the source about his plans to meet up with his prospective spouse in Indonesia. He detailed his research into the FBI agent that he suspected was tailing him, revealing that he knew details about the agent's father. Osadzinski also showed the source screenshots of messages he had sent to individuals in Chechnya, instructing them on how to use the code.

The confidential source has been involved with multiple FBI investigations since 2013 and has been paid approximately \$350,000, according to the complaint.

DePaul University confirmed that Osadzinski is a currently enrolled student. "We recognize the seriousness of the charges and would cooperate with authorities if contacted," the university told USA TODAY. According to Osadzinski's LinkedIn profile, he currently works in IT at DePaul and previously worked as an Electronic Sales Associate at Target. He lists skills in Java and Python programming languages.

While his profile also lists past employment as a software tester at software developer Cylance Inc., the company said it had no record of Osadzinski ever having worked there.

Naperville Central High School Punishes Students Over Racial Post, Police Investigating as Hate Crime

November 19, 2019, WGN TV

<https://wgntv.com/2019/11/19/naperville-central-high-school-punishes-students-over-racial-post/>

NAPERVILLE, Ill. — A suburban Chicago high school said it has disciplined a group of students for a racially insensitive ad posted on Craigslist, and local authorities said they are investigating the incident as a hate crime.

Naperville Central High School Principal Bill Wiebrook sent an email to parents on November 18, 2019, saying administrators became “aware of a racially insensitive electronic post and worked as quickly as possible to investigate and address this with the students involved.”

The ad showed a photo of an African American student under the words “Slave for sale (Naperville).”

Taneisha Shields, said her nephew is a student at the school. She said after seeing the ad, it did not surprise her based on her nephew's experience. Shields said he has been saying there are a lot of racial issues happening at the school. She said she moved to the area for the better schools, but said it came with an unfortunate tradeoff.

"I'm just mad," she said. "We send our kids to school. It's supposed to be a safe environment and they still have to deal with this. It's crazy."

Naperville Central said the students involved with the ad post are being disciplined, but wouldn't go into details.

The ad follows an Oct. 26 incident at a Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant in Naperville in which some customers said they were asked by restaurant employees to change tables because a regular customer nearby didn't want to sit next to black people. The restaurant fired two employees involved.

A 10-year-old Boy Who Was Shot at a High School Football Game in New Jersey Has Died

November 24, 2019

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/a-10-year-old-boy-who-was-shot-at-a-high-school-football-game-in-new-jersey-has-died/ar-BBX3KGp?ocid=spartandhp>

A 10-year-old boy who was injured when gunfire interrupted a New Jersey high school football game last week has died, prosecutors said Wednesday.

Micah Tennant was one of three people injured in the shooting Friday night in Pleasantville, about an hour outside of Philadelphia, at the end of the third quarter of the game between Camden and Pleasantville high schools, authorities said. A 27-year-old man and a 15-year-old boy were also hurt.

Micah died Wednesday, Atlantic County Prosecutor Damon G. Tyner said in a news release.

Charges against 31-year-old Alvin Wyatt, one of five men charged in connection with the shooting, have been upgraded to murder, Tyner said. CNN is trying to determine whether he has an attorney.

"Words at this time seem so insufficient to portray the anger and outrage that our community feels regarding his loss," Tyner said. "However, his spirit will live on in so many people that he inspired."

Wyatt also faces two counts of attempted murder and weapons charges, prosecutors said. Four other men who attended the game were charged with unlawful possession of a weapon and another weapons charge, Tyner said in an earlier statement.

Video from CNN affiliate WPVI showed football players and attendees scrambling after the shots were fired. People were seen hopping fences, diving under bleachers and lying down on the field as the chaos unfolded.

The last 17 minutes of the game were scheduled to be made up Wednesday afternoon at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, thanks to the Philadelphia Eagles. The team offered to host the suspended playoff game.

School Safety Newsletter

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