The Indiana State Police Intervention or Student Assistance Process

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Due to the information gathered, stored and communicated, each corporation's legal counsel must be involved in the initial development and formation of the "Student Intervention or Student Assistance Team" process. Prior to the utilization, each corporation's legal counsel must review all policies and practices relating to the use of the information contained in this document.

Educators know their schools and students better than anyone. With that in mind, they may elect to utilize or modify the information below to better meet the specific needs of their school community.

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The Student Assistance or Student Intervention Process

While traveling around Indiana and listening to educators, it became apparent that many schools have not developed a program for assisting students that are displaying behaviors that may indicate they are in need of assistance.

The Indiana State Police Department believes that "active attackers" do not just snap but develop overtime. As "active attackers" develop they typically display behaviors that may foreshadow their intent to do harm.

The Indiana State Police believe that prevention is always preferable to response. With that in in mind, it is critical to develop a process that will promote early identification of students that are exhibiting concerning behaviors and provide them with the necessary support to prevent the development of a threat to themselves and or others. The Indiana State Police, refer to this procedure as the "**Student Intervention or Student Assistance**" process.

The process begins with educating all members of the school community on the "**Early Warning Indicators**." "**Early Warning Indicators**" are characteristics that may be displayed by individuals that are in need of assistance. In order to make the most of the school community as a resource in the "**Student Assistance**" process, school community members must be educated on the "**Early Warning Indicators**."

As "Active Shooters or Active Attacker Events" are studied, the question often arises, "If people witnessed individuals displaying several of the behaviors associated with the developing "Active Attacker," "**Why didn't they tell someone?**"

Most often, individuals respond:

1. I did not know to whom I should report the information.
2. I did not know how to report the information.
3. I did not want to stigmatize the individual displaying the behaviors.
4. I was concerned that the individual displaying the concerning behavior would seek retribution on me.
5. I did not want to be viewed as someone that would tell on my fellow students.
   a. This may be associated with the "**Code of Silence**" found in most schools.

The best "**Student Assistance**" program will only gather dust on the shelf if all school community members are not educated on how to access and utilize the assistance program. <u>The communication method between the community and "**Assistance Team**" must be easily accessed, confidential and anonymous</u>. School community members must understand that any confidential information will be "**channeled in confidence to the appropriate resource**."

The school community must know that the "**Student Intervention or Student Assistance**" program seeks to prevent attacks by providing assistance to individuals that may be exhibiting the "**Early Warning Indicators**." With this in mind, the ISP assistance program strives to provide support rather than punitive measures.

Early Warning Indicators or Behaviors

While no foolproof profile of an active shooter exists, most exhibit some common indicators or behaviors as they develop. These "**Early Warning Behaviors**" are extremely helpful in identifying individuals that may be in need of support from the "**Student Assistance or Intervention Team**." The Indiana State Police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and many other organizations have identified common behaviors that have been exhibited by previous active shooters. These behaviors may provide some assistance in the early identification process. (Please see the **Early Warning Indicators posted on the Indiana State Police Website in the "Unarmed Response to an Active Shooter Event" program** and the **"FBI Pre-Attack Behaviors Information"** located on the FBI webpage).

Because so many early warning behaviors have been developed over the past few years, ISP suggests paying special attention to the individuals that exhibit "**combination of characters or behaviors**" (as guiding principle when attempting to monitor the school community for developing threats).

It is important to underscore that school shooters do not develop overnight. Their horrific actions do not happen impulsively (as often reported). These individuals typically develop over a period of time. **They plan extensively and more importantly they often plan in plain sight.**

Parents, students, educators, support staff and community members all too often witness individuals exhibiting the early warning indicators prior to an "Active Shooter or Active Attacker" event. But, all too often, they do not report their observations.

The developing shooters, often share their intent with others. They frequently make charts, diagram and written plans. They study earlier "active shooter" attacks. They often hold a fascination for previous "Active Shooter Events." Because they are so enamored or captivated with the actions of previous shooters, they often talk freely about their exploits. They frequently hold previous shooters in high esteem and begin to develop a desire to copy the actions of these individuals.

One of our best opportunities to prevent an "active shooter" attack is to identify the developing shooter" while they are still in the planning stages. If we educate our school community on the "Early Warning Behaviors and Indicators" we may be able to prevent an "active shooter event."

Potential shooters may suffer from serious emotional issues. These individuals frequently become withdrawn and seek recognition or validation via extreme conduct. Individuals that are

hazed, bullied and or mistreated may seek an avenue to strike back at those they perceived to have wronged them.

Unfortunately, being "out of step", "odd", etc. may often produce the "lightning rod" effect that generates more hazing or mistreatment of individuals that "don't fit in." As the mistreatment increases the alienation of these individuals intensifies. The need to be recognized and or accepted deepens. As a result the desire to strike back may begin to develop.

Underscore: Perception is often the shooter's reality:

It is not unusual for developing shooters to struggle with emotional and or mental health issues. **This is not to suggest that all individuals struggling with mental illness become "active shooters or active attackers."** We simply wish to underscore that we are looking for combinations of "Early Warning Indicators". When emotional/mental health issues are combined with other indicators, the need for an intervention and support becomes more critical.

School shooters often accumulate a large cache of weapons and ammunition. They frequently practice and become proficient in the use of these weapons. They often have an **extreme fascination** for weapons of all types.

It has been suggested that the obsessive emersion into video gaming may have some antisocial underpinnings. When video game emersion develops to the "pathological" level, some researchers have postulated that this behavior may manifest in the development of aggressive thoughts and behaviors. It has also been suggested that extreme or "pathological" emersion into violent gaming may result in a lowering of the moral response to violent or repugnant actions or events. Thus the normal "controls" that prevent extreme behavior are muted.

The characteristics set out below are simply behaviors that may signal the need for an early intervention.

Issues Relating to Early Warning Indicators

Communication of Intent to Others:

    a. All too often, developing shooters/attackers share their dark intent with others.

Communication Issues:

    a. The individuals displaying the threatening behavior are not taken seriously.
    b. The individuals gaining the knowledge do not know what to do with the information.
    c. The individuals gaining the knowledge do not know how to access the "Intervention or Assistance Team."
    d. The individuals gaining the knowledge have reservations about "getting involved."

Simply, the reporting tool should be anonymous and easily <u>accessible to all members of the school community</u>. Procedures for directing the information to the appropriate resource (administration, law enforcement, counseling professionals, health care professionals, mental health professionals, etc.) should be established. The resources must be vetted and established ahead of time.

Depression, Emotional and Mental Health Issues:

a. Often these individuals have worsening emotional and mental health concerns.
b. Unfortunately, individuals that exhibit emotional and mental health issues fail to obtain the assistance that may have prevented the unthinkable.

Mental health issues may be a catch all for categorizing "Active Shooters." We want to underscore that individuals suffering from mental health issues and depression <u>do not always become active shooters.</u>

Fascination with Previous Active Shooter Events and the Need to Belong:

a. It is not uncommon for adolescents to possess an overwhelming desire to belong. Often we fail to understand the extent to which individuals will go to be accepted and belong to the group.
b. They view the notoriety, attention, recognition, etc. heaped on previous shooters and want the same.
c. They may also see an active shooter event as a means to even the score with those that have shunned them.
d. The odd or unusual behavior of developing shooters is all too often viewed as these individuals as "just being themselves."

Understanding the Consequences of their Actions:

Note: The adolescent brain may not grasp the consequences of their actions. After committing one of these horrific acts, an adolescent was heard to utter, "Will I go to jail?" It seems difficult to fathom but the consequences of their actions may not be considered and/or totally understood. The consequences resulting from committing one of these horrific acts may not be considered, calculated or reasoned.

The View of "Self":

It has been suggested that these individuals will go to extremes to receive any type of recognition to bolster their diminished view of "self." In an attempt to elevate the perception of "self" these individuals may go to the extreme of conducting an "active shooter event." An "active shooter event" may be a desperate act but these individuals are in a very distressed state.

Extensive Planning and Planning in Plain Sight:

 a. Active Shooters all too often plan extensively and in plain sight and share their intent with others.

 b. Parents, students and educators miss the "Early Warning Indicators" that seem so obvious after an "Active Shooter" event.

Individuals May Exhibit Antisocial Behavior:

 a. This behavior may be as extreme as exhibiting behavior totally devoid of emotion.

 b. This behavior may manifest in extreme cruelty to animals and no empathy for the suffering of others.

Key to Identification (Combination of Early Warning Indicators):

 a. When individuals exhibit combinations of "Early Warning Indicators" the urgency for an intervention increases.

The Final Stage Issues:

The "final stage" often results when the "attacker" decides to initiate his plan. He has formulated a plan that he feels will rectify his alienation, resolve his issues with those he deems to have wronged him and bring the self-actualization that he covets. He has accumulated large quantities of weapons and an attack may be imminent.

The intense desire for attention may manifest in disturbing social media postings, violent drawings and writings, threatening comments, bizarre dress, threat-related bragging, etc. It is not uncommon for fellow students to be aware of this disturbing behavior. These individuals often share the details of the event they are planning. They have viewed the attention received by previous shooters and they want the same. Simply, they seek that attention, popularity, notoriety, and recognition they believe they will garner by committing or duplicating a horrific event.

Raising the awareness of this process in the student population is critical to improving the security of our schools. **"Breaking the Code of Silence"** by opening channels of communication between the student population and adults may be an often overlooked key to securing our schools.

Multidisciplinary Intervention or Assessment Team Composition:

Selecting a multidisciplinary team is critical. ISP suggests that schools initiate the process by selecting a broad range of individuals from the school community. This process will provide the opportunity to draw on all the resources found in the school community and should greatly enrich the expertise of the "Intervention/Assistance Team."

It is critical to have an "Intervention or Assistance Team" at each building. **As students transition, a process must be implemented to promote information sharing among the buildings as students transition through the Pre-K to 12 grade process.**

Training Members of the Intervention or Assistance Team:

The Indiana State Police believe that the development of an "Intervention Team" is critical to establishing a comprehensive "**Active Shooter Prevention Program**." Again, the Department believes that prevention is always preferable to response.

Expanding the Scope of the Team:

By selecting a broad range of individuals from the "School Community" to serve on the team the skill set of the "Assistance Team" will be dramatically increased. If the individual members of the team possess a wide range of skills and expertise, the ability of the team to deal with the myriad problems facing the team will be greatly enhanced.

Examples of Populations to Consider in Selecting the Intervention/Assistance Team:

Students

District Legal Counsel

Parents

Administration Staff

Instructional Staff

Human Resources Professionals

Support Staff

Transportation, Clerical, Custodial, etc.

School Resource

Local Law Enforcement

Extracurricular Program

Guidance Staff

Community Mental Health Professionals

       a. It is suggested that the County Commission establish a "List of Qualified Crisis Counselors" (Counselors qualified in Suicide, Grief, Trauma, etc. Counseling).

Community Medical Professionals

    a. A mental health cadre of professionals must be establish to serve as a resource to support all members of the school community in a crisis event.

        a. This predetermined "**Cadre of Community Health Care Professionals**" may serve as a standing committee:

            i. The "**Cadre**" may be defined and be set out in the:

                1. "**Comprehensive Safety Plan**"
                2. "I**ntervention Team Program"**
                3. The "**Evacuation and Reunification Plan"**, etc.

        b. The Job Description for the "**Crisis Management Counseling Cadre"** must be written and developed as part of the **"Comprehensive Safety Plan."**

        c. The Job Description for the "**Cadre**" must be review by local counsel and adopted by the "**Governing Body**."

        d. School Guidance Professionals, School Nursing Staff, Local Mental Health Agencies, etc. will be helpful in developing and vetting the individuals that may serve as members in the "**Crisis Management Health Cadre**."

Code of Silence:

Finally, most educators will confirm that a "**Code of Silence**" exists in our schools. Students are often hesitate to share information with adults. Key to breaking the "**Code of Silence**" is building trust between students and adults in the school community.

School Climate:

A starting point to improve communication between adults and students is to create a positive "**school climate**." If a positive "**school climate**" exists, students are far more likely to share concerns with adults in the school community.

ISP feels strongly that educators know their schools better than anyone. With that in mind, ISP suggests that schools build and conduct their own climate survey. Examples of some basic queries relating to "**school climate**" may be found on the ISP website. These **queries should only be viewed as a starting point** for discussion on the "**school climate**" question.

Communication Reporting Examples and Basics:

Several commercial systems for enhancing student to adult communication are available. However, don't forget the basic and cost effective methods.

1. Tip Lines
2. Tip or "Hot Lines"
3. Commercial Systems
4. Student Forums
5. New State Resources

6. Adopt-a-Teacher Programs
7. Student Centered Mentoring Programs

Basic Operational Components:

While all threats must be taken seriously, basic operational guidelines and definitions must be established to govern the "**threat reporting process**."

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Sample Template and Tools

Prevention and Functionality of the

"Assessment or Intervention Team"

Understanding the Scope of Threats Facing Schools

All too often the process of identifying threats in our schools focuses only on students. A truly comprehensive assessment team should include a monitoring process that extends to various members of the school community.

Examples to Consider in Developing the Scope of the Population to be monitored:

1. School Resource
2. Current Students
3. Former Students
4. Parents
5. Guardians/Foster Parents
6. Certified Employees
7. Noncertified Employees
8. Family Members
9. Service Personnel, Salespersons
10. Building Contractors

As the scope of threats facing our schools is understood, it quickly becomes apparent why the "Assessment/Intervention Team" must include a variety of members from the school community. It would be unreasonable for educators to attempt to monitor such a broad based group of individuals without assistance from the school community.

Considerations for the Governing Body

All guidelines, information actions relating the Assessment/Intervention Team must be reviewed by the district's local counsel prior in implementation! The Indiana State Police believe that schools know their school community better than anyone. With that in mind, the Department recommends that schools develop their own policies and procedures.

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Suggested Considerations

The "Governing Body" should set out the mandate for establishment of an "Assessment/Intervention Team" for each school in the district. The team has multiple functions and purposes:

Governing Body Basics:

1. Provide a clear mission state to assist in defining the function of the team.
2. Provide clear statement of purpose.
3. Provide a clear definition of a viable threat.
4. Provide clear guidelines for confidential reporting.
5. Provide clear procedures for handling reports.
6. Provide clear procedures for maintaining confidentiality.
7. Provide ongoing staff development to educate the members of the school community relative to the behaviors typically exhibited by individuals that may be in need of assistance. (See the Early Warning Indicators and the FBI Pre-Attack Behaviors)
8. The "Assessment/Intervention Team" may make a bimonthly report at "Governing Body" public "Board Meetings."

Purpose Considerations for Developing "Board Policy":

1. Provide a resource for monitoring members of the school community.
2. Provide a confidential "**point of contact**" to serve as a resource for individuals in the school community to utilize with concerns.
3. Provide resources for evaluating the degree to which an individual may be a developing threat.
4. In the event the individual is deemed in need of an intervention, provide the necessary professional resources to support the needs of the person.
5. Provide ongoing support to monitor the progress of the individual.

Assessment/Intervention Team Structure:

1. Each school and the supporting school community should have an assessment team.
2. Team composition of the team should include individuals from the school community that have a variety of skill sets. (Please see the examples above for suggestions relative to the team selection process).
3. Each semester a staff development activity should be conducted to educate the school community on the mission, purpose, function and resources of the team.

Note:

The reporting of a threat to the established "Assessment/Intervention Team" does not replace or stand in conflict with any individuals' legal responsibility to report: CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT REPORTING IC 31-33-5 and IC 31-34-1 or any other mandatory reporting required by Indiana Code.

Local Legal Counsel should provide a staff development active to all certified and noncertified staff on the legal reporting responsibilities of staff. In addition to the staff development activity, all statutorily mandated reporting requirements (relating to requirements to report to law enforcement, legal guardians, etc.) must be provided annually by local counsel and <u>include in the employee handbook</u>.