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Threat Assessment and Targeted Violence at Institutions of Higher Education: Implications for Policy and Practice Including Unique Considerations for Community Colleges

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the research on targeted violence, including campus violence, and the implications for policy and practice at institutions of higher education. Unique challenges of threat assessment in the community college setting are explored, and an overview of an effective threat assessment policy and team at William Rainey Harper College is provided as an example.

Keywords: threat assessment, campus violence, behavioral intervention, targeted violence, community college

Research & History of Threat Assessment and Targeted Violence on College Campuses

While murder and homicide are rare crimes on college campuses (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010, p. 7), school shootings have received extensive attention in the media as well as in institutional resources in recent years. Targeted violence (acts of violence where the attacker and the target(s) are identifiable prior to an attack) has been a subject of research and analysis for the U.S. Secret Service and FBI (Fein, Vossekuil, & Holden, 1995). In 1997, the Secret Service Exceptional Case Study Project revealed patterns of behavior that were commonly exhibited by individuals who attacked or approached to attack prominent public officials. In 80% of these cases, there was evidence of the attack being planned. These attacks rarely included threats made directly *to* the targeted individual, but often included threats made *about* the target. Based on this

research, the National Institute of Justice published a guide on protective intelligence and threat assessment for law enforcement. In his introduction to the guide, U.S. Secret Service Director Brian Stafford indicated that the information may also be "useful to other persons and agencies working to prevent other forms of targeted violence, such as stalking, domestic violence, workplace violence, and school-based violence" (Fein & Vossekuil, 2000, p. iv). The guide includes several key areas to explore in a threat assessment investigation including: evidence of menacing or stalking behaviors, development of an attack plan, capability of executing a plan, factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood of an attack, and indication of experiencing loss or despair (Fein & Vossekuil, 2000, pp. 50-51).

In 1999, following the shooting at Columbine High School, the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of Education launched a study of shootings that occurred at schools in the United States. The study sought to review what information was *knowable* about an attack prior to one occurring, with the hopes that schools could learn to identify possible warning signs and ultimately prevent future attacks. This study analyzed 37 incidents of targeted violence that occurred at schools between 1974 and 2000. The resulting recommendation for educators and law enforcement is to develop the capacity to learn about and evaluate information that may indicate a risk of a targeted attack, also known as conducting threat assessments. The recommendation is based on the ten key findings from the study:

- Incidents of targeted violence at school rarely were sudden, impulsive acts.
- Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack.
- Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack.
- There is no accurate or useful "profile" of students who engaged in targeted school violence.
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.
- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Moreover, many had considered or attempted suicide.
- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
- Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.
- In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.
- Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002, pp.11-12)

An investigation and threat assessment can only occur once a behavior of concern is reported to campus officials. Similar to the earlier research on attacks of public

figures, in 81% of the school shooting incidents, at least one other person had knowledge of the attacker's plan (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). In addition, 93% of the individuals who had advanced knowledge of an attacker's plan were students.

The U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education initiated a second study to review what students who had this prior knowledge did with that knowledge. This study is limited in that only 15 individuals were interviewed, but the findings are still useful to institutions with regards to understanding how or why students decide to report a possible threat or not. First, students often misjudged either the likelihood or the immediacy of the attack. They felt they either had more time to consider what to do, or they felt that the person wasn't actually going to carry it out. Second, the students were influenced by their relationships with persons in authority, and what they thought would happen if they reported something. Students who had positive relationships with parents or teachers and thought the information would be taken seriously were more likely to report it than those who anticipated that they would be interrogated by a teacher or who were told to mind their own business by a parent (Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney, 2008).

In 2007, the *Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy* called upon the Department of Education, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Department of Justice to research targeted violence occurring at institutions of higher education, which then resulted in the report *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education.* This report reviewed 272 incidents affiliated with institutions of higher education that occurred at locations based on the Clery Act definitions of campus geography and where the attacker was capable of causing death. 45% of the perpetrators were current students. Of the 30% who did not have a direct affiliation with the institution, ¾ of these were current or former spouses or intimate partners of a person with a direct affiliation to the institution. 29% of the perpetrators exhibited 'pre-attack behaviors' such as stalking, making verbal or written threats, or physical aggression. 31% of the perpetrators exhibited 'concerning' behaviors such as changes in personality, depression, increased isolation, or bizarre behaviors. (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010)

In the findings, the report acknowledges the reliance on open-source information and the broad spectrum of incidents reviewed. However, the conclusion describes the use of campus threat assessment teams as a means to thwart possible attacks. The three step threat assessment process includes:

- Identify individuals, whose behavior causes concern or disruption on or off campus, affecting IHE members such as students, faculty, or other staff.

- Assess whether the identified individual possesses the intent and ability to carry out an attack against the IHE or members of the IHE community, and if the individual has taken any steps to prepare for the attack.
- Manage the threat posed by the individual, to include disrupting potential plans of attack, mitigating the risk, and implementing strategies to facilitate long-term resolution.

In 2014, the FBI released *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013*, which reviewed 160 incidents involving an individual who attempted to kill people in a confined/populated area. Only twelve incidents, or 7.5%, occurred at institutions of higher education; however, nearly one quarter of the incidents studied occurred at educational settings and these accounted for some of the highest casualty counts. The individuals who engaged in violence included students, former students, employees, and a visitor (Blair & Schweit, 2014). The report also contains information regarding incidents occurring at commerce and employment settings, which may have relevant findings for institutions of higher education, especially for commuter campuses or those with satellite campuses located in shopping centers or other non-traditional educational settings.

One challenge that institutions of higher education face is that there are many students who exhibit behaviors that may or may not be warning signs of future violence. Within the past year, 47.7% of college students felt things were hopeless, 85.6% felt overwhelmed by all they had to do, and 38.1% felt overwhelming anger (American College Health Association, 2015). Prediction is only one element of violence prevention, and effective prevention is not dependent on prediction (Department of Defense, 2012). This highlights the importance of investigating and evaluating patterns of behavior, and not just isolated incidents.

One recent study compared the pre-incident behaviors of nine students who had carried out a school shooting with the behaviors of students who were identified as "students of concern" (students who came to the attention of others because of a threatening or concerning communication, but who authorities determined there was no serious intention to commit a school shooting). The study found that 100% of the school shooters and 90% of the students of concern exhibited the warning behavior of "leakage" (defined as communication to a third party about intent to attack), but the other warning signs varied. Evidence of three other types of warning signs were present in all of the school shooters' pre-incident behaviors: pathway (research, planning or preparing for an attack), fixation (pathological preoccupation with a person or a cause), and identification (associating with weapons/military paraphernalia or previous attackers). Communication of a direct threat to the target or to law enforcement was observed in only one of the shooting incidents, while direct threats were exhibited by 39% of the students of concern (Meloy, Hoffmann, Roshdi, & Guidimann, 2014). This study highlights the need for

campuses to have threat assessments in place to determine not just if a student made a threat, but if a student actually *poses* a threat based on an evaluation of the patterns of warning behaviors and other factors.

Implications for Campus Policy & Procedures

Given the intersection of the available research in the field of threat assessment and the unique nature of the campus environment, there are six main areas where campus policy has an integral role in campus violence prevention.

Ensure Authority through Legislation or other Means

Only three states mandate that schools have threat assessment teams: Virginia, Illinois, and Connecticut. Each state passed legislation following the incidents that occurred at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University, and Sandy Hook Elementary School. While it is unfortunate that state mandates were initiated after incidents, they provide a useful form of formal authority to campus teams. For example, The Illinois Campus Security Enhancement Act of 2008 requires each institution of higher education to have a campus threat assessment team as part of its overall violence prevention efforts. The implementing regulations provide an adequate framework for all institutions but are also broad enough to serve the diversity of institutions of higher education institutions across the state. Some of the legislative requirements include designated core membership of the team, functions of the team, and privacy protections for both persons referred to the team and those persons making referrals. Such legislation also establishes the team's authority in that "all areas of the campus community should be required to cooperate with requests from the threat assessment team relative to successfully monitoring any threatening behavior" (29 Illinois Administrative Code 305.80, 2008). Institutions in states without such legislation define their role and purpose through campus policy and other means, and are dependent upon campus leadership to provide authority to the team.

Use of a Multidisciplinary Team

Incidents at both Pima Community College and Virginia Tech illustrated the "silo effect" that commonly occurs on college campuses, where multiple offices at the same institution may each have information indicating that a student is exhibiting concerning or even threatening behaviors, but no one has a complete understanding of the behaviors of concern or individual exhibiting them. A multidisciplinary campus threat assessment team can "connect the dots" and work together to evaluate the full context of a concerning behavior. "[A] comprehensive review conducted by a U.S. Department of Defense (2010) task force following the

Fort Hood shooting concluded that threat assessment teams or threat management units (i.e., teams trained in behavioral threat assessment and management procedures) are the most effective tool currently available to prevent workplace violence or insider threats like the attack at Fort Hood" (American Psychological Association, 2013, p.19). These teams have existed informally at many campuses, especially residential institutions, where members of campus police/public safety, student affairs, counseling, and housing staffs meet to discuss incidents and develop plans to respond or intervene. Institutions have seen value in adding other offices that interface with the campus community and have authority to intervene and manage threats, such as human resources, access and disability services and, most recently, Title IX coordinators. As both threat assessment investigations and investigations of stalking, dating violence, and domestic violence involve evaluating courses of conduct (not just isolated incidents), institutions may find value in ensuring their Title IX coordinator also serves on or collaborates closely with the campus threat assessment team.

Develop Procedures that Include Use of a Threat Assessment Rubric

The U.S. Secret Service and other governmental agencies employ a behavioral threat assessment model to identify, evaluate, and prevent violence to public officials, it is also "recommended in two American national standards: one for higher education institutions (which recommends that all colleges and universities operate behavioral threat assessment teams (see ASME-Innovative Technologies Institute, 2010) and one for workplaces (which recommends similar teams to prevent workplace violence (see ASIS International and Society for Human Resource Management, 2011))" (American Psychological Association, 2013, p. 19). The threat assessment process requires professional judgment where behaviors are evaluated based on an agreed upon set of criteria. The research from the U.S. Secret Service, the FBI, and other governmental agencies serves as a basis for a variety of rubrics that exist for evaluating possible threats. Institutions must then determine appropriate and effective interventions that reasonably reflect each level of threat and the individual situation. Documentation of the team's assessment, rationale, intervention(s) imposed, and the effectiveness should all be retained by the team. Campuses are advised to consider state recordkeeping laws when developing procedures surrounding the privacy of threat assessment records, which should be retained independent of other records. Most importantly, the team's practices should follow any written policy or procedure.

Create a Culture of Reporting by Addressing both Threats and Low-Level Concerns

Given the findings by Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney (2008) regarding the reasons students did not report warning behaviors they observed, it is critical that

institutions create a culture of reporting where students, faculty and staff can identify behaviors of concern and believe that their reports will be taken seriously once made to the institution. As many people may not be able to tell the difference between a warning sign that someone may become violent and a behavior by a student of concern, it is important all of these get reported to the team for review and evaluation. This often means that the team needs to have procedures in place to evaluate potential threats, but the team will likely (and hopefully) spend more of its time getting assistance and intervention to students of concern. Some institutions refer to their team as a behavioral intervention team (BIT) to ensure that the campus community has a lower threshold of understanding for what kinds of things should be reported.

Campuses need to determine ways they can still educate the campus community about how to address low-level concerns once the likelihood of a threat has been eliminated or identified as very low. Teams should provide a variety of educational outreach catered to campus constituents. For example, students may be more open to training centered on how to get help for a friend exhibiting concerning behaviors, whereas staff may benefit from customer service training that includes how to de-escalate situations and when to report something to the team. With regards to faculty development specifically, Bergquist and Phillips (1975) proposed a relevant model that focuses on instruction, the individual, and the institution. Increased emphasis on institutional faculty and staff development (learning about the campus and its resources) requires faculty and staff development centers to work in concert with the aforementioned campus resources. When done effectively, employees are best prepared to identify, report, and manage potentially threatening scenarios. As most campus threat assessment or behavioral intervention teams have only a few members to ensure the team can act in a timely fashion; it is critical that the rest of the campus become involved in the intervention process, especially when behaviors are at a concerning level rather than a threatening level.

Ensure Team has Sustainable Training & Resources

Team members should receive initial training about threat assessment and behavioral intervention, as well as the unique aspects of the campus itself. While some funding is often required, there are ways to obtain training at low to no cost. Law enforcement and state agencies sometimes provide training about investigations and the threat assessment process, often funded through grants from the Department of Justice. Professional associations, to which many campus team members already belong, often offer training through annual conferences, state meetings, and webinars. Independent consultants can provide training catered to a campus, and professionals employed at campuses may also provide training on a contractual basis. Teams also need to be resourced outside of

finances. Ensuring that team members have release time and autonomy to prioritize threat assessment investigations, providing an online database system for reporting of incidents and case management, ensuring access to technological tools for investigations, prioritizing recognition of the team's work by senior leadership, and accurately reflecting the team members' work in job descriptions are ways that institutions can provide support outside of specific budgets.

Develop Community and Campus Partnerships through Policies & Procedures

Threat assessment teams recognize that just because a person who poses a threat has been separated from an institution (whether suspended/expelled through the student conduct process, termination of employment, or a no trespass order issued by law enforcement), it does not mean the threat is necessarily mitigated. In fact, such a separation can serve as a trigger for action, which requires institutions to develop policies and procedures that may go beyond the institution's boundaries. For example, institutions (including K-12 schools) should consider revision of FERPA policies to ensure that they are using the exception allowing for sharing information with other institutions where the student seeks to enroll without written permission from the student regarding behavioral records, using transcript notations when students are separated from an institution as recommended by the Association for Student Conduct Administration, using admissions review procedures in evaluating applicants' history of violence, and developing relationships with local law enforcement in case additional monitoring of an individual is warranted after the individual leaves the community. Institutions may also collaborate to provide training, supportive services, or identifying promising practices or policies based on state laws.

Factors Unique to Community Colleges

Community colleges face unique challenges when developing policies and procedures for effective threat assessment and management. These challenges arise from the institution's mission and role in the completion agenda, the diversity of the student body, the nature of the faculty, and the availability of student services on campus.

Open Access & Open Campus

As open enrollment institutions, community colleges admit students with diverse academic and cognitive backgrounds. For instance, 45% of all undergraduates with some form of disability attend public community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). One study reports that 8% of all community college students report having a disability (Barnett & Li, 1997, p. 3). Behaviors resulting

from disabilities, especially psychiatric conditions, may manifest as concerning behaviors that can be mistaken as warning signs of escalation of violence.

Community colleges also often serve as re-entry points for students, including convicted felons and sex offenders, seeking a second-chance at education or other opportunities. While four-year institutions may choose not to admit a prospective student who has a criminal history, community colleges often have open enrollment policies and, to date, few of these institutions have implemented felony review committees to vet applications for admission (Bennett, Vasquez-Barrios, Perkins, & Baligad, 2015, p. 7). This also means that if a student is suspended or expelled from a four-year institution, whether for violence or another behavior, the student may enroll at a community college without anyone knowing about the individual's prior pattern of conduct.

The community college mission extends beyond academics for students seeking a degree, certificate, workplace training, or transfer to a four-year institution. Funded by local tax dollars, two-year institutions often provide robust programming and resources for the members of surrounding municipal communities. These may include summer camp programs for children, library access, computer access, and theater performances to name a few. The physical campus facilities reflect the open access mission and are often open to the public and easily accessed by any person. Consequently, in addition to the diverse student body accessing the campus, there may be homeless members of the community, former students or employees, or other individuals who are unaffiliated with the institution on campus at any given time, and it is nearly impossible to discern these individuals from current students. As a result, threat assessment policies and procedures at non-residential campuses may be similar to those employed at retail and employment settings, not just educational settings.

General Student Body Characteristics

Work, family or other personal obligations limit the amount of time that many students spend on campus. Nationally, the majority of community college students hold some type of employment while enrolled (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005, p. 50). Of the students enrolled at community colleges, two-thirds attend college on a part-time basis (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015, para. 2). While co-curricular opportunities such as clubs and student government exist to engage students outside of the classroom and integrate them into the fabric of the institution, the vast majority of students do not participate. Unlike four-year institutions, most community colleges do not have residence halls or other arrangements for students to live on campus. All of these factors create a student commuter culture that may limit efforts to triangulate information about a student

who poses a potential threat. A student may take courses entirely online or may attend only one class on campus, limiting the number of opportunities for warning signs to be observed.

Community colleges are often more affordable and accessible options for students who are homeless, students who return home after being separated from four-year institutions for academic or disciplinary reasons, or adult learners who seek to create a new career for themselves. In addition, given the flexibility in programs and the nature of open enrollment, students may choose to attend multiple institutions within a year, or even at the same time.

Limited Campus Student Services Resources

Student support offices and resources are found at nearly every community college; however, two factors may negatively impact their efficacy. First, shrinking financial resources may inhibit institutions' abilities to proliferate these resources and serve all of the students who need access. Second, awareness of resources may be limited among internal college stakeholders.

While community colleges typically have robust counseling programs, dedicated psychiatric services are scarcer. The American College Counseling Association (ACCA) reports that only 13% of community colleges provide psychiatric services for their students (Chamberlin, 2012, p. 11). Still, some resources exist to support students with mental health issues. In fact, an ACCA (2014) survey of community colleges across 39 states found that 81% of counselors provide mental health counseling (para. 2). Access and disability centers are also integral service providers on community college campuses, ensuring that students have reasonable accommodations in and out of the classroom, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, only half of community college students who these services are intended for report actually using these services (Barnett & Li, 1997, p. 3). This leaves many students exhibiting behaviors that may manifest from cognitive disabilities or mental health conditions, which can result in faculty and staff experiencing or witnessing these students' behaviors and ultimately making the presumption that the behavior is a potential indicator of a future act of violence.

Role of Faculty and Adjunct Faculty

Historically, faculty members have served an integrated role in supporting students beyond classroom instruction. They provided academic advising and career counseling which enabled them to learn more about individual students and potentially identify and address personal issues facing students. Teachers still do this today, but often informally. More intentional and sophisticated services exist such as offices that support students with disabilities and psychological issues;

however, with a focus on classroom instruction, there may exist a sense of sense of disconnect among faculty. Lack of awareness of resources may ultimately lead to feelings of inefficacy among faculty (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005, p. 173). Ultimately, feelings of inefficacy may prevent faculty from feeling empowered or responsible for reporting potentially threatening scenarios for fear of reprisal or judgment from administration.

Lack of awareness of resources may be especially true among adjunct faculty at community colleges. Nationally, adjunct faculty are employed in large numbers for efficiency in cost and scheduling and also workforce development (Levin, 2007, p. 19). In fact, adjunct faculty constitute almost 70% of all community college faculty according to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2010, p. 3) and teach nearly half of all courses as reported by the National Education Association (NEA, 2007, p. 1). Unlike full-time faculty, adjunct faculty have myriad employment characteristics that may result in a lack of social capital and reduced awareness of campus resources. For instance, approximately 25% of adjunct faculty at two-year and four-year institutions hold primary employment outside the college (AFT, 2010, p. 4). Twenty-eight percent of adjunct faculty at two-year and four-year institutions hold assignments at multiple schools (AFT, 2010, p. 8). The transient nature of adjunct faculty on community college campuses may result in even less awareness of campus resources and lower social capital than their full-time faculty counterparts. Consequently, adjunct faculty may be especially prone to feelings of inefficacy that may prevent them from feeling empowered and supported by the institution in reporting potentially threatening scenarios.

Completion Agenda

Removing barriers towards completion has become the focus of community colleges nationwide as the equity agenda of these institutions promises to see increased completion rates for first-generation and low-income students. This means that there may be a gap between faculty expectations for behavior in the classroom and the lived experiences and understanding of such a diverse student body. Faculty may feel increased pressure to keep students enrolled in courses, which also requires a higher skill set in classroom management, including the need to manage challenging classroom scenarios before they escalate to potential threats of violence.

The first step towards completion is access. Community colleges continue to look for ways to make it easy for students to enroll, register, and attend classes. Mandated orientation, education about how to report concerning behaviors, or even asking questions on admissions applications about prior criminal history may not be prioritized by campus leadership given the focus on making education accessible.

The tolerance for disruptive or other student misconduct may be greater given the desire to see students complete their academic goals.

Effective Policy in Action: HEAT at William Rainey Harper College

The Harper Early Alert Team (HEAT) provides an example of effective policy and practice for a threat assessment team within a non-residential, open enrollment, community college setting. Through a mandate in The Campus Security Enhancement Act of 2008 (Public Act 095-0881, §110 ILCS 12 - 20), every institution of higher education in the state of Illinois must have a threat assessment team. William Rainey Harper College, located in the northwest suburbs of Illinois, has employed a threat assessment and behavioral intervention team named the Harper Early Alert Team (HEAT) since 2008. As detailed on the publicly-accessible HEAT website http://goforward.harpercollege.edu/about/directory/heat/index.php , the roles of HEAT include:

- Assessing the likelihood of violence or harmful behaviors towards members of the campus community or the campus itself (i.e. conduct threat assessments).
- Providing recommendations to appropriate campus constituents in order to manage concerning situations and behaviors, preferably before they escalate to become threats or acts of violence.
- Supporting and advising individuals who experience concerning or potentially threatening behaviors.
- Educating and empowering the campus community to recognize, report, and effectively address aberrant, dangerous, threatening and concerning behaviors.
- Providing methods for collecting, assessing, and tracking information such as patterns of behavior, individual likelihood of targeted violence, and longitudinal trends related to concerning and threatening behaviors affecting the campus.
- Providing guidance and best practices for preventing violence and providing supportive services in response to acts of violence.

HEAT is a multidisciplinary team that includes representation from student conduct, health and psychological services, academic advising and counseling, human resources, the police department, and faculty or faculty development. The team's current policies and procedures were developed after researching threat assessment affecting college campuses, relevant state laws, and conducting benchmarking research. The procedures manual is updated annually by the chair and reviewed by the team. When a referral is made, HEAT conducts an initial threat assessment to determine if immediate action is needed such as contacting the campus police department. In a majority of cases, there does not appear to be an immediate threat, and the case is actually a low-level classroom management issue. In these cases, a member of the team will reach out to the reporting party

and share the initial assessment (i.e. that no threat appears to be present) and offer strategies or resources to address the situation. If there is the potential for a threat, or if it is unknown whether a threat is posed, the team conducts a more in-depth investigation and evaluation. The team's threat assessment rubric is based on the findings of the U.S. Secret Service, FBI, and other agencies, with a pre-determined range of common interventions that can be either imposed by the team or recommended to the appropriate college authority. HEAT has seen a rise in referrals that also warrant a response and investigation under Title IX, so the team also has representation of the Title IX coordinators on the team to ensure a seamless and comprehensive response occurs in those situations.

HEAT is intentional about creating a culture of reporting at the institution. For instance, regular outreach is done through new faculty orientation for both full-time and adjunct faculty. The team conducts presentations including "The Odd Things Students Do and What to Do About Them," "Balancing the Rights of Students and the Roles of Faculty," and "Addressing Disruptive and Dangerous Behaviors," all of which communicate information about potential warning signs/concerns and how to report them. Additionally, an Online Training Module titled *Recognize, React, Respond* provides additional training at any time and may be of particular value to adjunct faculty who may not be able to attend professional development events on campus. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to submit an online referral to HEAT when they perceive a threat to the campus or any member of the campus community. The HEAT website provides several example warning signs that may warrant a referral and also encourages the campus community to always err on the side of reporting information.

Team members have been trained annually through state and national organizations, and the team chair receives additional and on-going training through organizations such as the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association, and the Association of Student Conduct Administration. New team members receive an initial training by the chair and then participate in the team for up to a semester before serving as a lead investigator for cases. The initial training includes: history of threat assessment research, conducting effective investigations, how to evaluate information and determine threat level, conducting outreach and advising reporting parties, documenting case information, team procedures, campus and community resources, student conduct procedures, campus FERPA policy, and other relevant campus information.

HEAT has invested extensive time in collaborating with campus offices as well as with off-campus entities. HEAT maintains close relationships with a variety of campus offices to 1) provide training on warning signs and how to report them, and

2) expand the network of people who can intervene and monitor a person of concern. Training was provided to the North Suburban Chiefs of Police so that municipal police could learn about the role of campus threat assessment teams. HEAT members have participated in state meetings through the Association for Student Conduct Administration, where institutions can benchmark and compare practices, including updating FERPA policies to allow for open communication when students of concern transfer between institutions and information is useful to a threat assessment investigation.

Conclusion

The challenge that all threat assessment teams face is in evaluating their effectiveness. At Harper College, referrals to HEAT have increased each year, while cases of student conduct policy violations have declined. These trends reflect the change in campus culture, with a focus on prevention through reporting of warning signs, evaluation of possible threats, and early intervention. As Andre Simons, leader of the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit 2, states "Our success will always be hard to quantify, since success is defined as the lack of an event" (Junod, 2014). This does not bode well for institutions of higher education, who are often asked to demonstrate increased accountability through measurable persistence and completion rates, especially amidst decreases in funding from federal, state, and local governments. However, the costs of a mass shooting or other act of targeted violence exceed any monetary or even mortality rates and leave a lasting effect on the campus community. Given the research on threat assessment and management, the identified implications for policy and procedure, as well as the promising practices that have emerged to fill the gaps that exist beyond the boundaries of a specific institution, campus leadership need not wait for an incident to occur on their campus before putting prevention efforts in place.

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