

This is what prevention looks like.



## STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT<sup>1</sup>

**Ordinary school days don't make the news. But that doesn't mean ordinary is easy.**

Washington's students face countless challenges and pressures every day—at school, at home, at work and at play.

Most are able to cope with the stress. But others turn to self-destructive behavior—social isolation, cutting, substance use and suicide; and some focus their frustration on external targets—hurting people and property around them. On rare occasions, they become violent at school.

*When incidents of school violence occur, they leave a profound and lasting impact on the school, the community, and our nation as a whole. Ensuring safe environments for elementary and secondary school students, educators, administrators, and others is essential.<sup>2</sup>*

**A threat assessment system** uses early interventions to keep students safe and engaged in school. Using an evidence-based, multidisciplinary approach, it is used to identify, evaluate and support students who present a significant concern or threat to themselves and others.

At each level, teams work directly with students, families and the community to provide wraparound supports designed to break negative patterns and steer youth in a positive direction.

**How the Salem-Keizer Threat Assessment system works:**

When a student or students are identified as a potential risk to others, they are assessed using a two-level approach:

### **Level 1**

A trained school-based team, including a school administrator, school counselor and law enforcement or SRO officer. This team works to understand the threat, the risk and resources the school has to address it.

### **Level 2**

If the school team determines the situation is high risk, in need of more help with the investigation, or it lacks necessary resources, the Level 2 community-based multi-disciplinary team is called. This team is comprised of Educational Service District and education district leaders, local mental health and law enforcement professionals. In addition, Juvenile Justice, Child Protective Services and other agencies may be called in as needed.

1. Special thanks to the Oregon Task Force on School Safety (2016) for providing material for this flyer.

2. United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (2018) Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model an Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence

## THE HARDFACTS:

- More than 16% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 10% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and nearly 12% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders report not attending school at least once in the previous 30 days because they did not feel safe either on their way to school or school itself due to safety concerns.<sup>1</sup>
- In the previous 30 days, 3% of 6th graders, 4% of 8th graders, 6% of 10th graders and 8% of 12th graders reported bringing to school a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or club.<sup>1</sup>
- Active shooting incidents are increasing: Between 2000 and 2017 an average of 13.8 incidents occurred each year. Between 2013 and 2017, an average of 21.4 incidents occurred each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Research has found nearly all mass shooting attacks and many other shootings were carried out by individuals who made threats or engaged in threatening behavior that friends or family members observed.<sup>3</sup>
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24 in Washington.<sup>4</sup>
- Suicide has been increasing among Washington youths ages 5 to 19.<sup>4</sup>

## Expanding threat assessment in Washington State

A joint effort is underway between the **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction** and the **Association of Educational Service Districts** to support a common, standardized approach across the state to train and assist local school districts in the implementation of the Salem-Keizer Threat Assessment system.

The School Safety Advisory Committee and the Preventing Mass Shootings Workgroup support establishing a statewide threat assessment system that offers trained, dedicated student supports to protect and provide wraparound services to our state's most vulnerable population: our children.

*My agency will continue our efforts to increase mental health supports for students. We are seeking additional resources for school counselors, threat assessments for students believed to be at risk of suicide or other violence, and professional development for educators to better recognize students who are in need mental health support<sup>5</sup>.*

--Chris Reykdal, State Superintendent  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

### About Threat Assessment:

- Threat assessment is a structured multidisciplinary group process used to evaluate the risk posed by a student or another person, typically as a response to an actual or perceived threat or concerning behavior<sup>6</sup>.
- The primary purpose of threat assessment is to prevent targeted violence. The threat assessment process is centered upon an analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in each situation.<sup>6</sup>
- Protocols are designed with recommendations of experts and focus on situational variables (not demographic characteristics).

### The main objectives<sup>7</sup>

- Identify and assess threats of potentially harmful or lethal behavior and determine the level of concern and action required.
- Organize resources and strategies to manage situations involving students that pose threats to other students and/or staff.
- Maintain a sense of psychological safety among our students, staff, and families.



**AESD** ASSOCIATION OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICE DISTRICT  
Nine ESDs. One Network.  
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1. Washington State 2016 Healthy Youth Survey

2. U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation: [www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents-graphics](http://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents-graphics)

3. Sandy Hook Promise: Safety Assessment & Intervention; An Evidence-based Prevention Program to Evaluate and Resolve Threatening Behaviors before they Escalate into Violence.

4. Washington State Department of Health, Injury and Prevention Data: 2018

5. OSPI News Release & Statements, August 23, 2018; Reykdal: Washington State will not Arm its Teachers

6. J. Van Dreal, Assessing Student Threats Implementing the Salem-Keizer System (2017) Roman & Littlefield, Lanham Maryland p. 5

7. United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (2018) Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model an Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence