



Intervention Analysis Teams



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The National School Safety Center reports nearly 500 deaths have occurred since 1992, which are related to school violence.

It is an alarming, horrific statistic.

The U.S. Fire Administration documented no fatalities (within K thru 12 schools) in its published reports of 2002, 2004 and 2007. These reports covered periods of time extending back to 1996.

An impressive success statistic.

There are factors that contribute to the success in reducing fire-related fatalities. Among them are environmental design; mandatory training; mandatory prevention specifications; learned attitude; continuity of rationale and a consensus of purpose by stakeholders. These factors lead to a strategy which has kept people alive. People in and around schools have been kept alive.

There are factors which can reduce the likelihood of losing lives due to lethal acts in schools. Some states have enacted legislative standards to compel the implementation of such factors. Individual school districts have demonstrated a commitment and interest by doing the same. It has not been enough. We, as a Nation, still lack the compulsory standards that could save more lives when incidents of lethal violence strike our schools.

One of the most comprehensive studies to date on lethal violence has been conducted by the U.S. Secret Service in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. This 2001 study has drawn several conclusions. Among topics discussed, their report describes the offender's pattern of behavior; comments on the preparedness of stakeholders; enlightens us on the realities of "who knew" and victim dynamics. The U.S. Secret Service revisited this study in 2007 finding many similarities in all areas still exist. Patterns of offender behavior have also been articulated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Their offender behavioral traits mirror many of their sister agencies' findings.

The studies were not short-sighted in their purpose. Numerous recommendations were afforded to the reader to help identify and mitigate the lethal threat in a school. Space does not allow for

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the full articulation of each recommendation but, it is imperative to recognize “early identification and intervention” is the most desired strategy.

A successful tool that can aid in our efforts to identify and intervene in hazardous behavior is a multi-disciplinary review and analysis team. The team has two direct purposes. The first is to “recognize and evaluate available or known information that might indicate at-risk behavior through an analysis of facts and behavior.” The second purpose is “through consensus, develop strategies to prevent and to apply intervention strategies to eliminate at-risk behavior.” This is the foundation upon which the *Intervention Analysis Team* operates.

This multi-disciplinary assembly is not a “violence prevention team”. Rather, it is composed of representatives that can contribute articulable facts about the student as viewed through the varied components of the student’s life. They take a holistic view and approach to the factors that are influencing the undesirable or hazardous behavior affecting the student. Frequently, issues associated with self-esteem are underlying causes for students perpetrating lethal violence in schools. In order to achieve maximum input, recognize the variable influences and apply the most successful strategy, the *Intervention Analysis Team* has diverse disciplines. These disciplines represent the environments of which the student is a part.

The *Team* may uncover one or more potential areas which impact the student. Those areas include, but are not limited to any of the following.

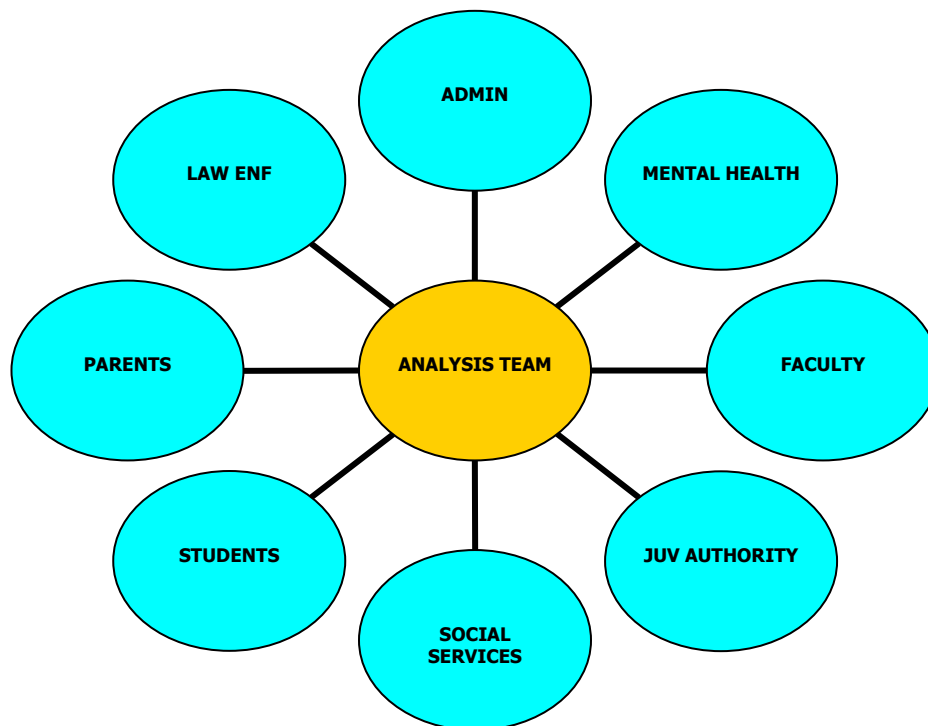
1. Identify academic needs
2. Identify family setting deficiencies
3. Identify self-esteem issues
4. Identify institutional issues
5. Identify social structure issues
6. Identify violence prone behavior

There needs to be an important clarification made pertaining to the last outcome. The *Team* will apply strategies based on their consensus of opinion. The one exception is when a student “poses a threat of violence”. If the individual is “making a threat” the *Team* may be able to successfully address the cause. We need to differentiate these points by definition. “Making a Threat” is a communication of intending to do harm. For example: “I could just kill him!” The mere statement alone may not validate a threat of lethal violence. “Posing a Threat” is when the offender engages in behavior that indicates an intent and has planned or made preparations to implement that harmful intent. For example: “The offender has a declining interest in group/team activities, has a fixation on military tactics, has had extreme difficulty dealing with a significant loss in his life; has made an internet query about a particular person and has a photograph from a news article that had been used as a firearms target and is partially burned.” Understanding where “Posing a Threat” behavior is likely to lead, one represented discipline on the *Team* should be tasked with intervention. That discipline would be Law Enforcement.

Consideration must be given to the dynamics of a student’s life and the venues through which aid can be accessed to improve his or her life. The components which may contribute most effectively to the *Team* include the following.

1. Administration – focuses on the influence and direction that is afforded the student within the academic environment. The Administration also acts as the *Team* chair-person driving the recommendations to full implementation.
2. Faculty – a representative to monitor the consistency of performance in both classroom behavior and academic achievement.
3. Student Body – a representative which has a “pulse” on the overall student activities beyond their academic achievement. This group may be represented by a Guidance Counselor, a Coach or perhaps a representative from maintenance.

4. Social Services – a representative which would have a perspective on the family structure inside the household. Has knowledge of the functional and dysfunctional aspects therein.
5. Juvenile Authorities – a representative who has affiliation with the juvenile justice system and knowledge of alternate corrective resources.
6. Mental Health – a representative which has access to pending therapeutic protocols and insight into the students receiving this discipline's services.
7. Parents – a representative who gives insight into the concerns of the district's parents as well as a conduit who can deliver appropriate information back to that group.
8. Law Enforcement – a representative who will assimilate the beneficial interests of the district and the law enforcement community as it best relates to overall safety and improvement.



Team members are unique in their realistic understanding of their individual discipline's capabilities and limitations. They also have an appreciation and recognition of systems' (disciplines') relationships. Some of the desired traits for the members would also include an ability to keep confidences; skeptical-investigative mindset; one who is capable of reaching consensus; a willingness to "follow through"; a willingness to see another's point of view; honest and respected; reliable; a team player and a sincere interest in the betterment of the student's life with opportunities for improvement.

The *Team* must have a written set of guidelines in which to operate. That operation needs to include information sharing, appropriate information dissemination, authority to conduct inquiries and the authority to apply intervention strategies. Many states imposed restrictions on sharing

information outside of a particular discipline. Others complicate information sharing by prohibiting information sharing without expressed written permission from the parent/guardian or the student in some instances. Such barriers may seem monumental in scope but they are not insurmountable. Ultimately we are speaking of saving the life of persons in our schools. Each represented component of the *Team* plays an essential, vital part of recognition and intervention. Where necessary, advocacy and legislative initiatives must be brought forth in order to insure appropriate information reaches this *Team*. If you never put the drain-pipes under your sink, what would you have? A mess, that's what. If you keep information from those attempting to stop the loss of life, what would you likely have? Carnage.

Communication among the *Team* is critical. Regularly scheduled meetings will be attended. However, networks will need to be established where *Team* members can access the input of other *Team* members between meetings. Frequently school districts have an accessible network that can be password protected and utilized for this purpose. There also needs to be a conduit for non-team members to contribute tips or other information pertaining to at risk or hazardous behavior. These options range from simple drop-boxes to statewide computer networks. Others have utilized compensated (monetary or gift-card) tip-lines. The *Team* should actively seek to have at least one truly anonymous method for persons desiring to provide information.

The *Team* usually has the option to apply one of two intervention strategies. Pre-emptive intervention would involve any action taken to address the cause of behavior before it manifests in students. Examples may include physical design changes; parking location adjustments, additional electronic surveillance or personnel. It may also include changes to a curriculum, enhancing group activities for the non-athletic students, a work-study program or cultural diversity programs. The least desirable but, at times, the most appropriate other option would be legal intervention. That option may be necessary because of the nature of criminal activity or because it is the only assurance for therapeutic treatment by the affected student. The consensus of the *Team* will prevail.

Unfortunately, there are no guarantees pertaining to outcome. If nothing is done, however, than it is unlikely the best outcome will be realized. Trying and learning from both successes and failures is essential. Keep in mind that many people and groups want to hear about any effort that is being made to improve the opportunities for students. Advertise your *Team* at PTA Meetings, to the School Board, to government representatives, to the student body and to professional first responders. Let everyone know you are making every effort you can to curb the negative impacts on a student's life. You are making every effort to improve their quality of life and self-esteem. You are making every effort to make the environment safe for all users.

No one can guarantee that a school will never experience an act of lethal violence. But every school can take steps to reduce the risk. Don't think you are alone and remember, *"It is amazing what we can accomplish when we don't care who gets the credit."*

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