About Threat Assessment

Following the tragedy in Florida, there have been increased threats of violence to schools and increased vigilance on students of concern. So once again we are receiving requests such as this one:

> Do you have any recommendations for homicide risk assessments to use in public school districts?

Over many years we have discussed the issues and processes related to threat assessment in schools and compiled a Quick Find on the topic. See

> *Threat Assessment:* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/threatassessment.html

One of the items included in the Quick Find is:

> *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (prepared by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Dept of Education).
> Pages 48-58 provide an outline of recommended steps to take including what information should be sought in an inquiry and what are sources of information for the inquiry.
> https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf

With respect to when a threat assessment inquiry is indicated, the guidelines state:

> *When information about a student's behavior and communications passes an agreed-upon threshold of concern, school officials should initiate a threat assessment inquiry. Upon receiving information concerning a potentially threatening situation, the threat assessment team must first consider: "How much time do we have?" An inquiry should be initiated immediately (within hours of notification) in any situation of concern.*

As is widely known, our Center at UCLA promotes thinking about problems experienced at school (such as violence prevention) within the context of a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. Within that framework, threat assessment belongs in the arena of crisis response and prevention (and along an intervention continuum that responds to, minimizes the impact of, and prevents school and personal crises). This requires school-wide and classroom-based approaches for (a) promotion and prevention of crises (e.g., enhancing a supportive, caring school environment and assessing whether students feel supported, facilitating social-emotional learning), (b) intervening as soon as problems arise (e.g., dealing with bullying, verbal threats, etc.), and (c) ensuring severe and chronic problems are continuously addressed (especially those involving students who are disconnected from peers and adults at school). See *Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom and Schoolwide – a*vailable at this time as a free resource at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf

We are interested in how schools in your locale are assessing risk and increasing safety in your schools. Send what you can share to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

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*Center resources are free and sent to over 100,000 school and community stakeholders across the country who are concerned about (1) daily matters confronting schools, (2) promoting whole child development and positive school climate, and (3) the transformation of student and learning supports. The Center at UCLA is co-directed by Howard Adelman & Linda Taylor.