



Use of Social Media in School Behavioral Threat Assessments



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Safe and Healthy Students

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Agenda

1. *Threat Assessments in Schools*

2. Social Media and Threat Assessments

3. Integrating Social Media into Threat Assessment Planning

4. Q&A Session

Purpose of Threat Assessment

The primary purpose of a threat assessment is to prevent targeted violence in schools by students

Threat Assessment Definition

A fact-based investigative and analytical approach that:

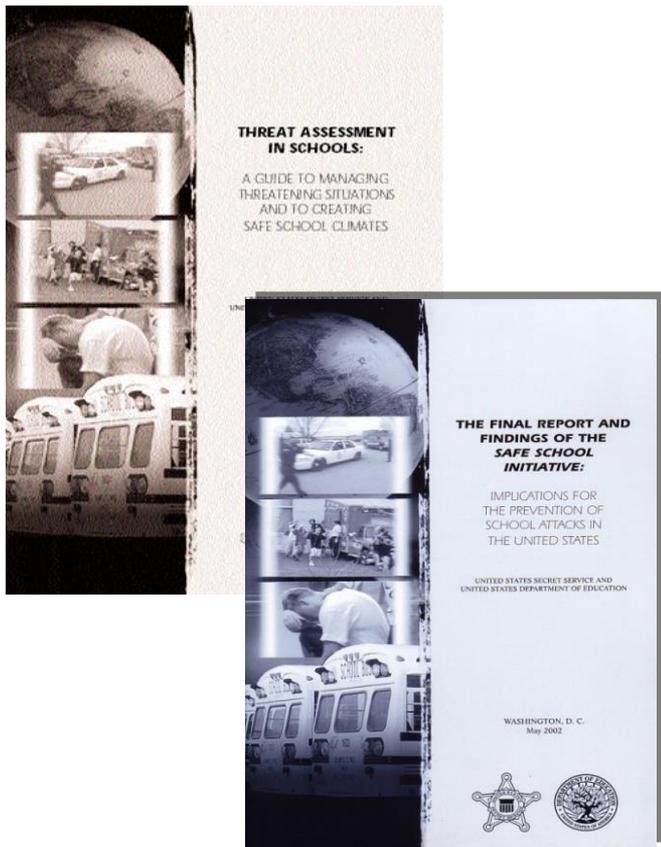
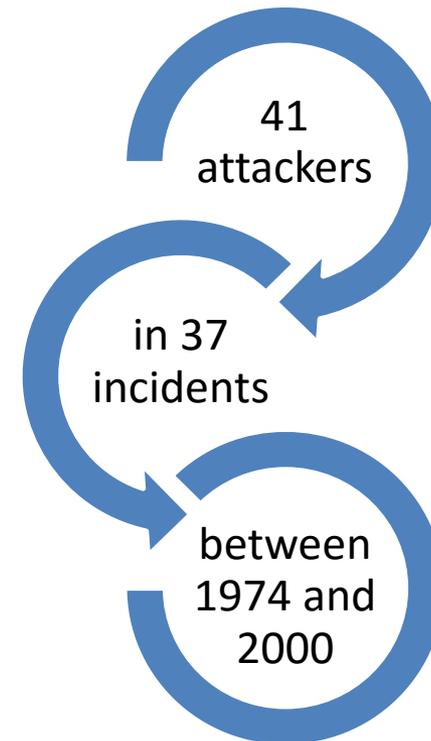
- *focuses on **what a particular student is doing and saying**, and;*
- ***not on whether the student "looks like" those who have attacked schools in the past.***

*Threat assessment emphasizes the importance of such behavior and communications for identifying, evaluating and reducing the risk **posed** by a student who may be thinking about or planning for a school-based attack.*

The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative
U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, p. 41

The Safe School Initiative (SSI)

Examined targeted
violence from



Leakage

“Leakage” occurs when a student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. These clues can take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums.

*The School Shooter:
A Threat Assessment Perspective, FBI, p. 16*

Agenda

1. Threat Assessments in Schools

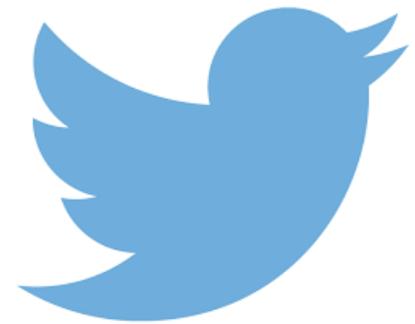
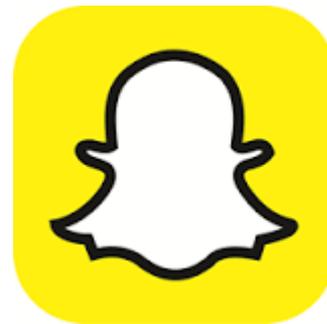
2. *Social Media and Threat Assessments*

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Social Media Definition

Online and other electronic tools used to share and create content



Categories of Social Media

Social Networking



Forums for online communities, including posting and viewing of content. **E.g., Facebook, Bebo, Orkut, BlackPlanet, MiGente, AsianAve**

Blogging



Online form of journaling allowing for interaction. **E.g., Blogger, WordPress, Reddit**

Microblogging



Send messages using a limited number of characters and follow others. **E.g., Twitter**

Instant Messaging (IM) and Texting



Send and receive messages in real-time. **E.g., Skype, Google Chat, Yahoo Messenger**

Photo Sharing



Post, view, and share photos & videos, and comment. **E.g., Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa, Snapchat, Instagram**

Video Sharing



Post, view, and share videos, post comments. **E.g., YouTube, Vine**

Wikis



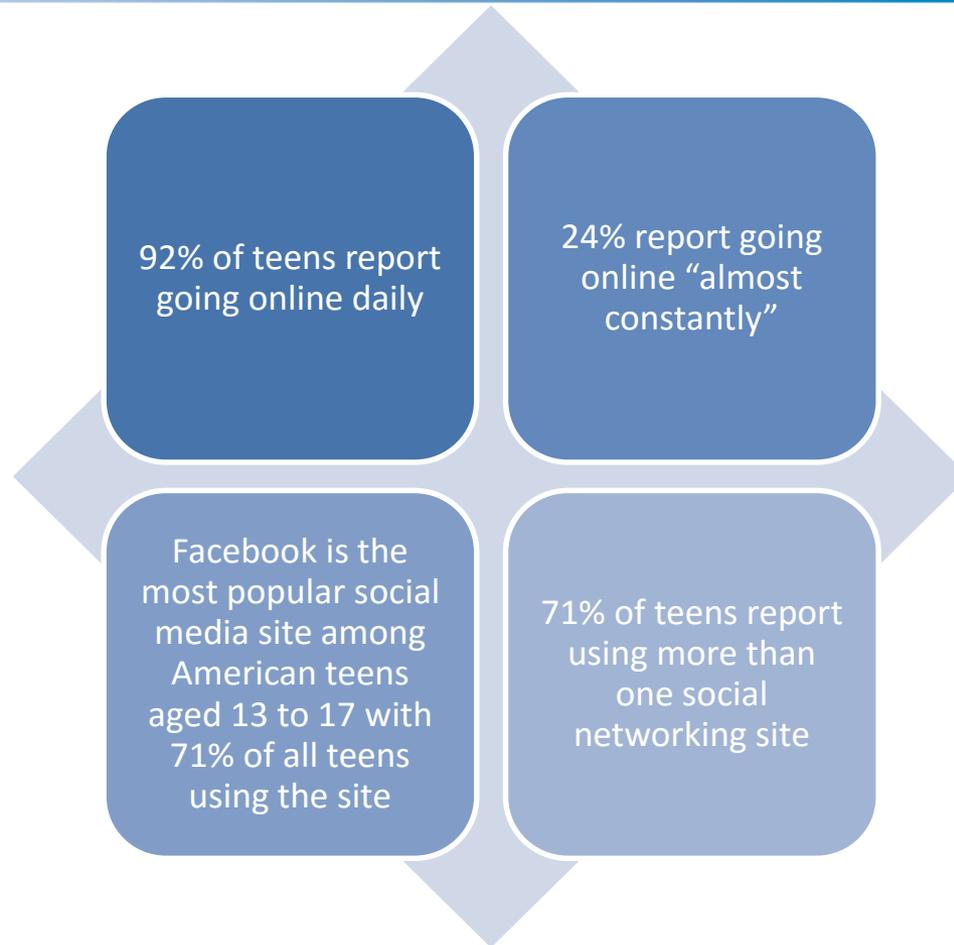
Create and edit web pages that provide information. **E.g., Wikipedia, Wikinews**

Online Multiplayer Games/Virtual Worlds



Online games with players in various locations. **E.g., World of Warcraft, Second Life**

Social Media Use by Youth



Pew Research Center, 2015

Positive Aspects of Social Media

Social media can be used by schools as a tool to:

Promote a positive school climate

Communicate with students, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians about daily activities

Inform the school community during emergencies

Challenges of Social Media in Schools

Privacy and legality of monitoring students' online activity

Students can use social media to pose or make:

- An actual threat
- A hoax threat

Prevalence of Cyber Aggression

Between 9% and 35% of young people are victims of cyber aggression

Between 4% and 21% are perpetrators

14.8% of students have reported being electronically bullied via email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting during the previous 12 months

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance,
CDC, 2014

Social Media and Threats



Agenda

1. Threat Assessments in Schools

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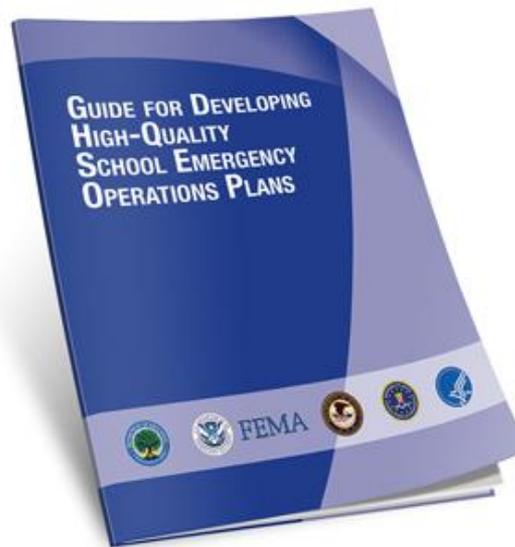
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Federal Agency Partners



FEMA



Common Threats & Hazards

Threat and Hazard Type	Examples
Natural Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthquakes • Tornadoes • Lightning • Severe wind • Hurricanes • Floods • Wildfires • Extreme temperatures • Landslides or mudslides • Tsunamis • Volcanic eruptions • Winter precipitation
Technological Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explosions or accidental release of toxins from industrial plants • Accidents or lab incidents • Hazardous materials • Radioactive materials • Damaged infrastructure • Power outages • Water contamination • Fire • Active shooters • Criminal threats or actions • Gang violence • Bullying • Bomb threats • Domestic violence and abuse • Cyber attacks • Suicide
Biological Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infectious diseases (e.g., tuberculosis) • Contaminated food or water (e.g., salmonella, botulism, and E. coli) • Toxic materials from school laboratories
Adversarial, Incidental, and Human-caused Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire • Active shooters • Criminal threats or actions • Gang violence • Bullying • Bomb threats • Domestic violence and abuse • Cyber attacks • Suicide

Planning Principles

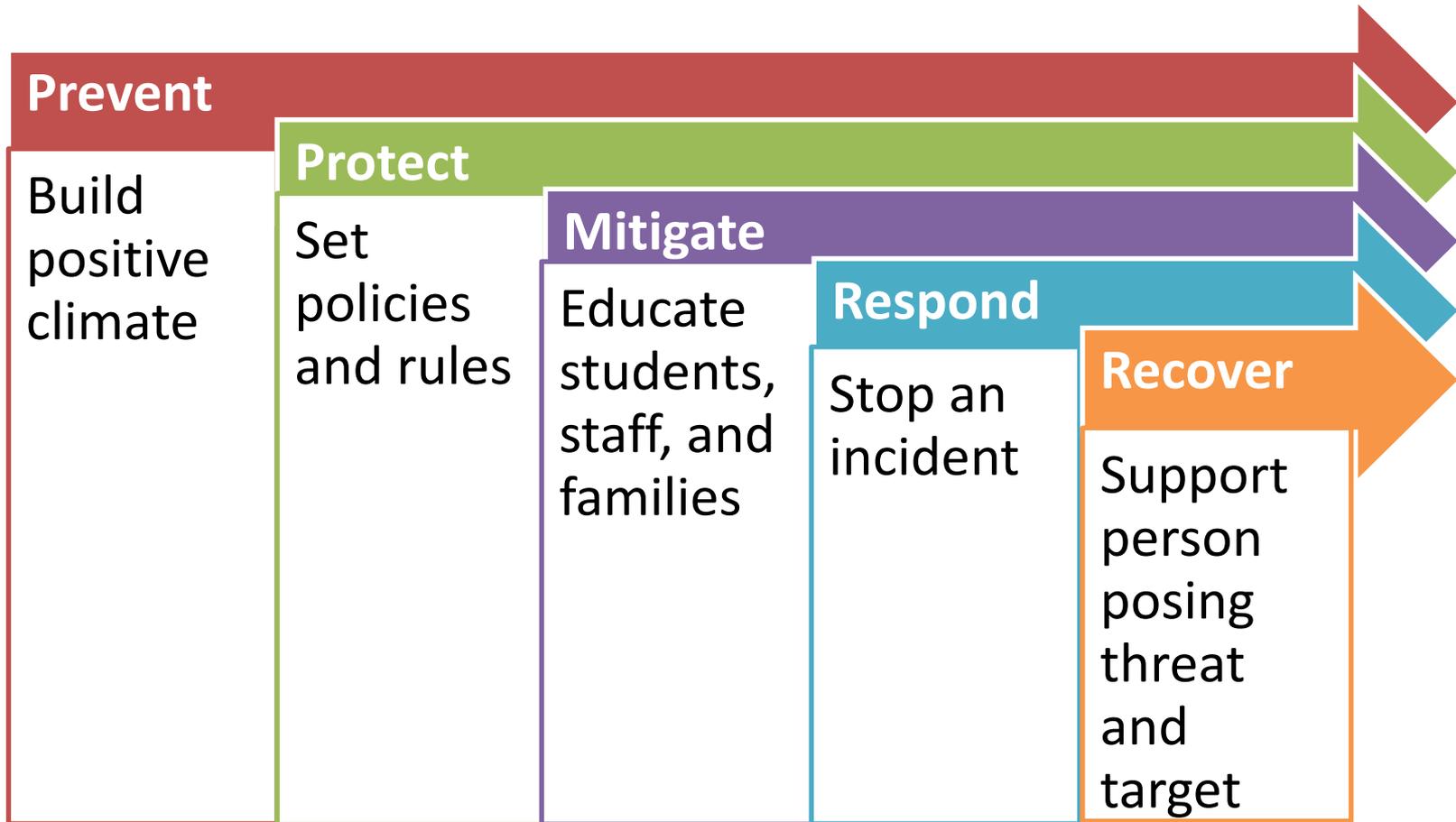


Five Preparedness Missions

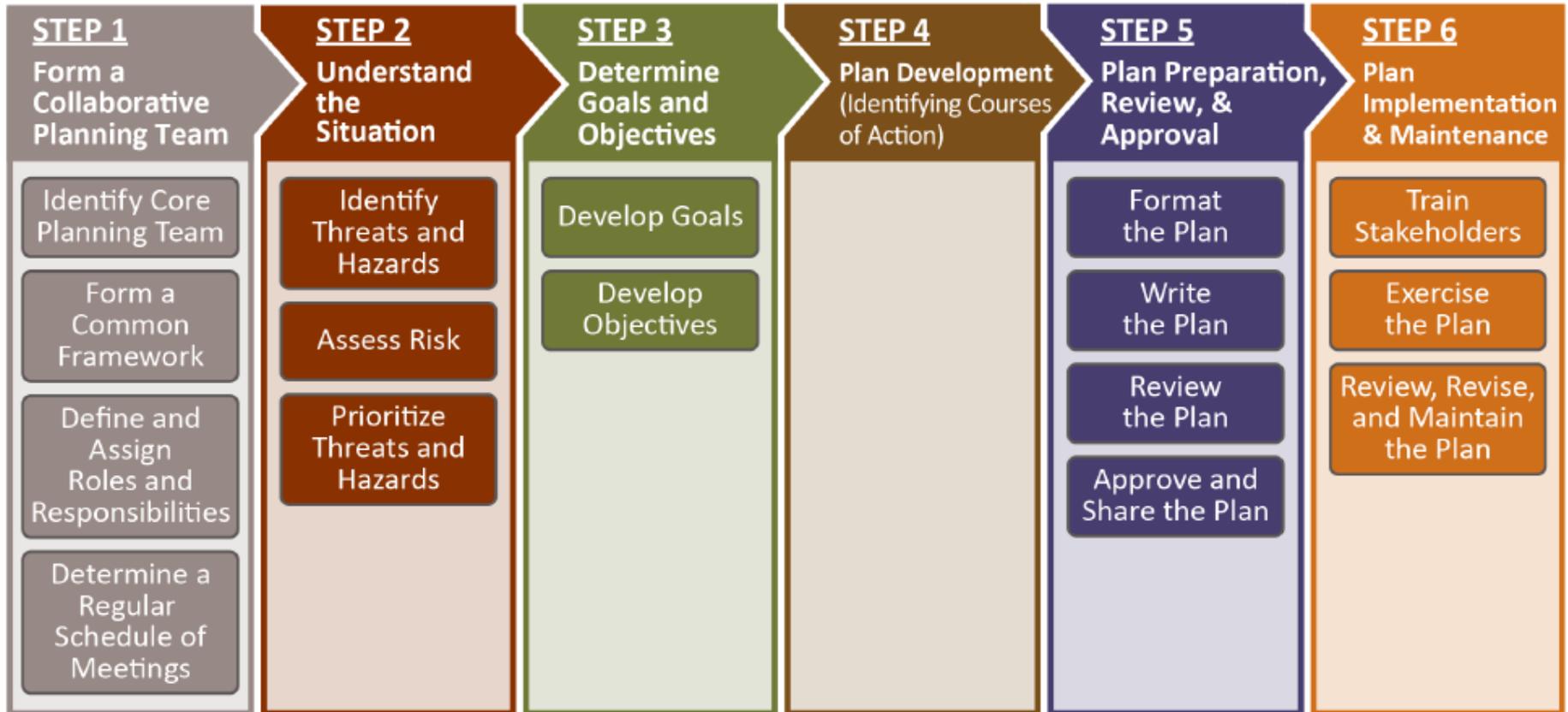


an incident or emergency

Preparedness and Targeted Violence



Steps in the Planning Process



STEP 1

Form a Collaborative Planning Team

STEP 2

Understand the Situation

STEP 3

Determine Goals and Objectives

STEP 4

Plan Development (Identifying Courses of Action)

STEP 5

Plan Preparation, Review, & Approval

STEP 6

Plan Implementation & Maintenance

Step 1: Form a Collaborative Planning Team

Members of the collaborative planning team could include:

- Representatives of families and students
- Administrators and teachers
- Bullying Prevention Coordinator
- IT department
- Transportation staff
- Emergency managers
- State and local public health practitioners
- Local healthcare practitioners
- Local/state law enforcement
- Fire department and Search & Rescue
- Representatives from LEA and SEA



Step 2: Understand the Situation

- Identify threats and hazards
- Conduct Assessments, including:
 - Site Assessment
 - Culture and Climate Assessment
 - Behavioral Threat Assessment
 - Capacity Assessment



*School Safety
Information Sharing*

Statewide Terrorism & Intelligence Center

The State of Illinois' Designated Fusion Center



Contents

- **PART I:**

- What is a Fusion Center
- Statewide Terrorism & Intelligence Center (STIC) Overview and Handling Information
- School Safety Information Sharing Program

- **PART II:**

- Suspicious Activity through Social Media

Part I: Statewide Terrorism & Intelligence Center (STIC) – State of Illinois Fusion Center

A Fusion Center is...

A center established by state and local governments designed to coordinate the gathering, analysis and dissemination of law enforcement, public safety, and terrorism information.

Fusion Center Guidelines: Developing and Sharing Information and Intelligence in a New Era



STIC's Main Objective: Look at all crimes and hazards to protect the public

Statewide Terrorism &
Intelligence Center



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Outreach Programs

- Infrastructure Security Awareness
- Fire Service
- Traffic Intelligence
- **School Safety**
- Emergency Management
- Public Health
- Cyber Security
- Disaster Intelligence





School Safety Information Sharing Program

Target Members

- **Administrators** or those in charge of making safety decisions in schools and campuses
- Sworn **Police Officers** involved in school and campus safety

Goal: aid in school safety efforts through **sharing** information from local, state and federal agencies



School Safety Information Sharing Flow of Information

Statewide Terrorism & Intelligence Center
A Collaboration of Organizations



Open Source
(Google/News)

If applies to
schools/campuses

School Safety Information Sharing
Program Members

Other Program Members

Statewide Terrorism &
Intelligence Center



Part II: Suspicious Activity through Social Media

- Cyber Crime/Hacking
- Suicide
- Bullying
- Violence/Targeted Attacks
- Radicalization
- Gangs
- Shooting and Bomb Threats
- Other

Goal: Identify students who may be a risk to self or others

An Independent Bomb Study...



Six Month Study

August 2013 – January 2014

315 documented school bomb threats

- **109 (35%) Electronic - social media, email, text message**
- Bathroom graffiti 48 (15%)
- Note found in school 27 (9%)
- Phone threats 36 (11%)
- Verbal threats 31 (10%)
- Police refused to say how threat was delivered 56 (18%)

<http://www.schoolsecurity.org/2014/02/schools-face-new-wave-violent-threats-sent-social-media-electronic-means-study-says/>

Five Month Study:

August 2014 – December 2014

812 documented school shooting and bomb threats

- Threats were evenly spread across all five school days (70% targeted high schools) and were **up 158%** since the prior study.
 - **299 (37%) Electronic - social media, email, text message (231 from social media)**
- The vast majority were hoaxes resulting in a negative impact on students, staff, and law enforcement

<http://www.schoolsecurity.org/2015/02/study-finds-rapid-escalation-violent-school-threats/>

Statewide Terrorism &
Intelligence Center



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Social Media Rumor Warning

SENT BY [REDACTED] (Chatter) | [REDACTED] at 09:49 AM CDT

@ [REDACTED] big rumors of school shooting today.

[REDACTED] · 1h

even if the rumors are total bs, i wish good luck to everyone going to school today. if anything happens please stay safe.

← ↻ 8 ★ 8 ⋮

Suicide Concern



[Redacted Name] · Aug 6

My life may also be cut short considering I walk around everywhere with this (picture of knife)



[Redacted Name] · Jan 18

Things are slowly starting to spiral downhill again

← ↻ ★ 1 ...



[Redacted Name] Feb 6

So today I found out my friend's friend killed himself the other day

← ↻ ★ ...



[Redacted Name] Feb 8

At this point I don't care whether I kill myself or not

← ↻ ★ ...



[Redacted Name] · Feb 15

I don't think it's good that all I've been listening to are songs that have suicide as their main topic

← ↻ ★ ...



[Redacted Name] · Feb 15

It's okay I'm used to getting lied to and abandoned

← ↻ ★ 1 ...



[Redacted Name] · 12m

He's lucky I don't bring my knife to school

← ↻ ★ ...

Identifying Online Threats

- Applications using geographic areas vs. search terms and key words
- Encourage communication between students, parents, and staff regarding social media suspicious activity
- Become aware of current threat trends to help identify suspicious activity
- Familiarize yourself with social media apps (Good example: Yik Yak)

School Safety Information Sharing Program

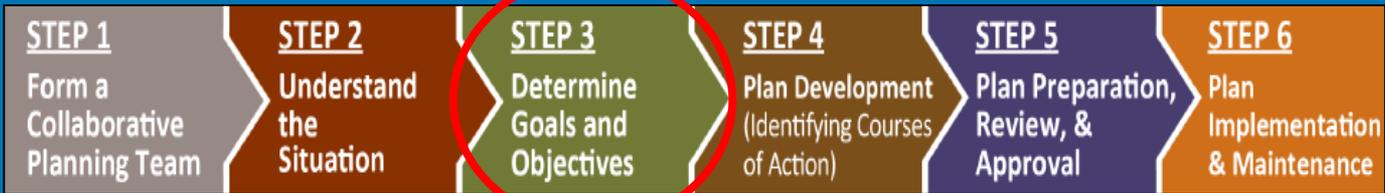
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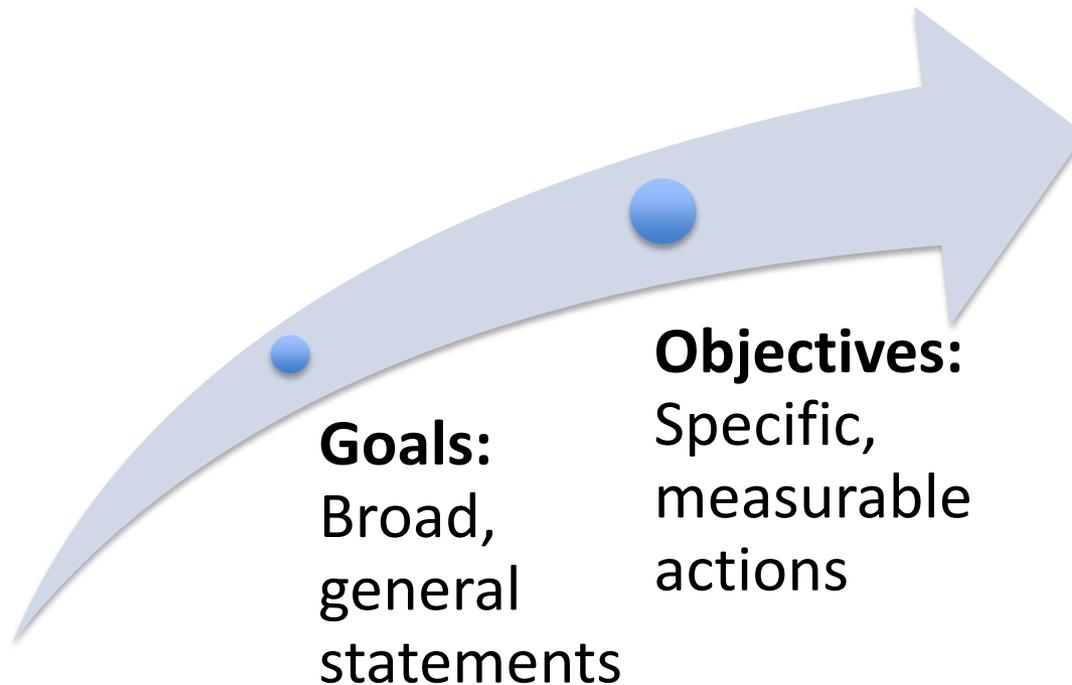


"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

<http://tinyurl.com/ILSchoolSafety2016>



Step 3: Determine Goals and Objectives





Step 4: Plan Development

The planning team identifies

COURSES OF ACTION

for each objective.

Step 1: Describe possible scenarios.

Step 2: Determine the amount of time available to respond.

Step 3: Identify decision points.

Step 4: Develop *Courses of Action*.



Step 5: Plan Preparation, Review, and Approval





Inclusion in EOP

Behavioral Threat Assessment Annex

- Identify team representatives
- Comply with applicable laws

Public Health, Medical, and Mental/Behavioral Health Annex

- Support the needs of identified students

Security Annex

- Respond to threats



Step 6: Plan Implementation & Maintenance

Train, exercise, review, and revise the plan.

- Train stakeholders
- Conduct exercises
- Identify lessons learned and implement corrective actions
- Review the plan at least annually

Cyberbullying



Legal Considerations

General Counsel can help contribute to district and school procedures and policies as they relate to:

- Information sharing
- Student conduct and use of technology, such as computers and telephones
- Surveillance and monitoring

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Q&A Session



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Further Information



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Email: info@remstacenter.org

<http://remstacenter.org>

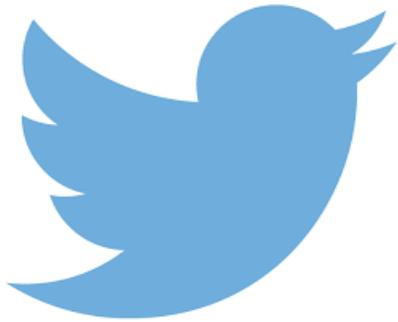
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