

A Statewide Threat Assessment System for Oregon Public Schools

A Proposal Submitted to the
Oregon Task Force on School Safety

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South Coast Education Service District

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I. Summary

Threat assessment is a proven method of early intervention that can help prevent acts of violence in school environments. It is recommended by the FBI, US Department of Education and the US Secret Service.

A collaborative partnership comprised of Willamette Education Service District, Salem Police Department, Salem-Keizer Public Schools and the South Coast Education Service District is proposing a statewide threat assessment system for Oregon public schools to provide best practice standards for a consistent, structured approach to identify and support students who present a potential risk of violence/aggression, self-harm or other self-destructive behaviors.

A statewide threat assessment system will:

- Support all school districts in Oregon.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students with on-going incidents of reactive violence/aggression toward others.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students who present a potential risk for targeted violence/aggression toward others.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students who present a potential risk for non-normative or predatory sexual behavior within the school or extended school community.
- Assist school personnel in identifying students who present a potential risk for suicidal or self-injurious behavior and fire-setting behavior.
- Provide training and standardized screening protocols for school personnel.
- Provide supervision strategies for students who are in at-risk situations and help connect students and families with community-based services and related support.
- Mitigate education community risk and liability.

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

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

II. Introduction

Representatives from an education – public safety partnership have collaborated to propose a statewide system of student threat assessment that would produce a consistent and structured response to indicators of school violence. The collaborative approach the following participating agencies:

- Willamette Education Service District
- Salem-Keizer Public Schools
- Salem Police Department
- South Coast Education Service District

The proposal is based on tenets implemented in the Salem-Keizer Public Schools and neighboring school districts in the Mid-Willamette Valley. This program, in partnership with public mental health, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies, provides student threat assessment services to all participating school districts in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties. Services provided include the following:

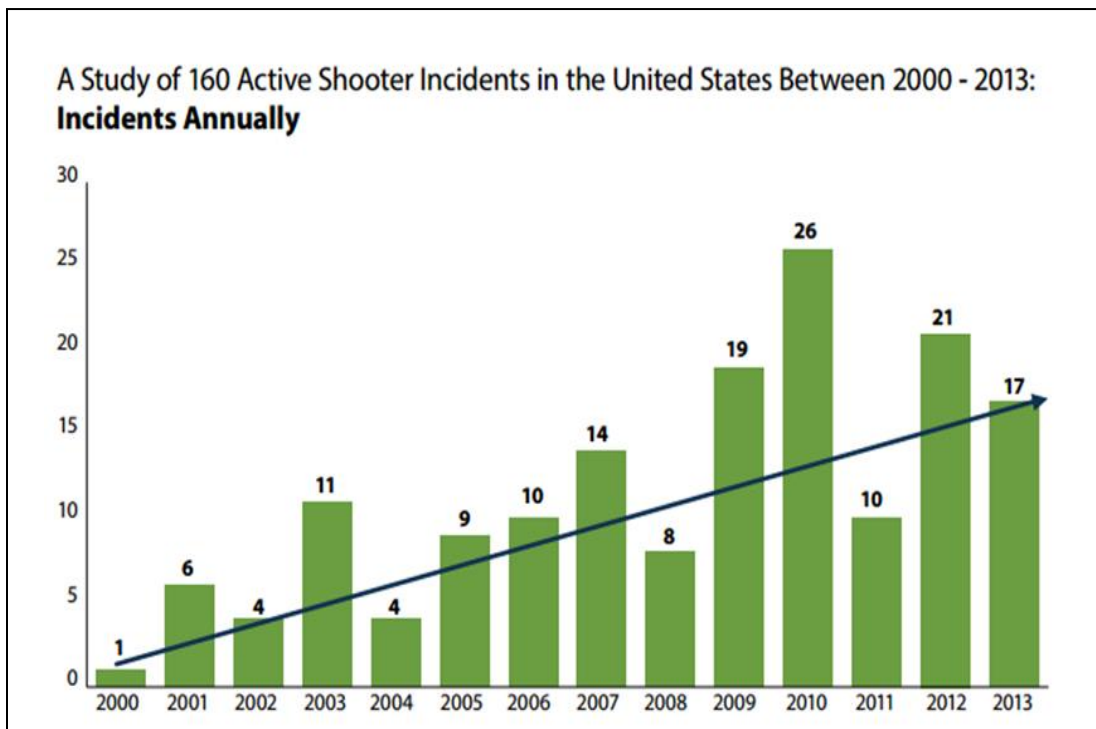
- Initial and annual update training to key staff in schools regarding the Level 1 school-based threat screening process of students or situations of concern.
- Assistance in site-based Level 1 assessments in the school when necessary.
- Consultation with school-based and community-based threat assessment teams.
- Coordination of Level 2 threat assessments in which a trained multi-disciplinary team deploys to a school site, assesses risk, and assists in management and intervention planning. Then continues the assessment with consultation from a community Level 2 support team to formalize the assessment and supervision strategies and resources.
- Preparation of timely written threat assessment summaries following the Level 2 assessment process.
- Provide education representatives on two regional multi-agency student threat assessment teams that review Level 2 assessments.
- Provide ongoing support for difficult cases.
- Help connect students, who are in at-risk situations, and their families, with community-based services and related support.

III. Problem to be Addressed

The majority of Oregon students will complete their education without being touched by peer violence. However, school related violence has become an all too common issue faced by our education community. The Oregon Health Authority reports that:

In a statewide survey of Oregon students, over 7% of 8th grade students reported not going to school at least one day in the previous 30 due to safety concerns. (OHA, 2015)

Nationally, the FBI reports that 160 active shooter incidents occurred across the nation between 2000 and 2013. The following graph shows the significant increase in active shooting incidents during this 14 year period. (FBI, 2013).



Federal Bureau of Investigations. (2013). A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013. US Department of Justice.

In addition, the FBI reports that 39 active shooter incidents occurred in education environments between 2000 and 2013 which resulted in 117 individuals killed and 120 wounded. The FBI also reports that school-based attacks are occurring with more frequency and account for some of the highest death tolls among all active shooter incidents during this time period. (FBI, 2013).

Although these incidents are rare compared to the other types of violence students face in and outside of school, recent school attacks (across the nation and in Oregon) have created uncertainty about the safety and security of our schools. Increased national attention to the problem of school violence has prompted educators, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, legislators, parents and many others to “press for answers to two central questions: Could we have known that these attacks were being planned? And, if so, what could we have done to prevent these

attacks from occurring?" (United States Secret Services and United States Department of Education/Fein et al., 2002)

Comprehensive and systematic threat assessment programs provide communities with an effective, evidence-based program to address these difficult questions and to identify and support students who present a potential risk of violence. In September of 2014 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported:

Threat assessment is at the forefront of national attention as part of President Obama's plan to reduce gun violence, which includes ensuring every school has a comprehensive emergency management plan, creating a safer climate in schools nationwide, and increasing access to mental health services. (OJJDP, 2014)

The FBI identified "a number of potential school shootings that were prevented because students reported a threat to authorities that was investigated and determined to be serious. Based on these observations, the FBI and Secret Service both recommended that schools adopt a threat assessment approach to prevent targeted acts of violence." (O'Toole, 2000; Vossekuil, 2002)

Many schools have developed a variety of systems and strategies for dealing with students at risk for violence. Unfortunately, these systems are often not consistent with best practices and may vary greatly in application. Schools also may lack the ability to partner with community agencies such as mental health, law enforcement or other agencies that may be able to provide valuable information and support. A lack of best practices or consistency may result in missed opportunities to avert a potential tragedy, or at the very least, opportunity lost to help a youth in crisis. It can also create a false sense of security in our schools.

The research in this area is clear. While no one can predict future human behavior, the application of multi-agency, multi-discipline threat assessment teams, provides the greatest opportunity for intervening in situations indicative of potential acts of violence.

Oregon needs a statewide threat assessment system to provide a consistent, structured approach to identify, differentiate and support students who present a potential risk for violence/aggression.

A statewide student threat assessment system would also assist with the early identification, assessment, early intervention and support for students at risk of engaging in suicidal behavior. In Oregon, suicide is the second leading cause of death for students and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24. The Oregon Health Authority reports that 344 youth suicides (ages 10-24) occurred in Oregon between 2009 and 2013. The following graph shows the alarming trend in our state.



Additionally, research is clear that non-normative sexual behavior, predatory sexual behavior and fire-setting behavior are destructive to the education environment because the behaviors have such significant impacts on teachers and students. These behaviors interfere with the positive social, emotional and behavioral growth of students as well as the overall learning process.

Implementing a statewide system that assesses and offers intervention and supervision strategies for threats, suicidal behavior, non-normative/predatory sexual behavior, and fire-setting behavior would address four of the most concerning issues facing Oregon schools today.

IV. Goals

The primary goal of this proposal is to establish a statewide threat assessment system. This system would support regions across the state in the development of regional capacity to train and support school districts in their administration of student threat assessments.

The proposed statewide student threat assessment system will require ongoing monitoring and support to ensure consistent implementation and adherence to standards. Conceptually, this monitoring and support role would be assigned to the Oregon Department of Education. The Department would then contract with Oregon Education Service Districts to hire and supervise regional threat assessment specialists so that every school district in Oregon is supported by the program.

V. Scope of Work

Threat Assessment Protocols

The proposed statewide student threat assessment system is based on a two tiered approach for assessing youth risk.

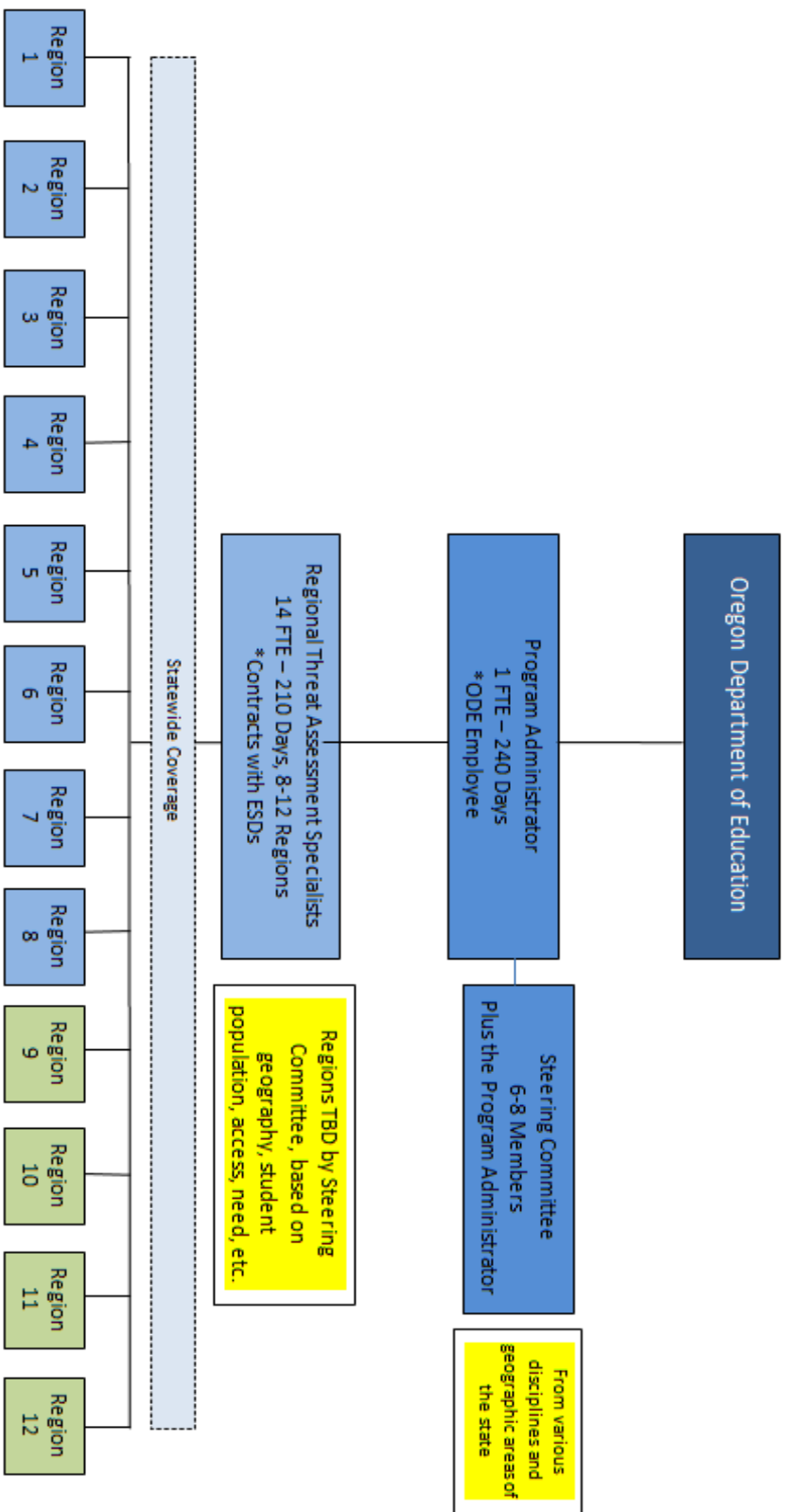
- The Level 1 Protocol employs a school-based assessment completed by a trained site team comprised of at least a school administrator, counselor or mental health representative and a law enforcement officer (either in person or by phone consultation).
- The Level 2 Protocol typically employs a community based assessment completed through a collaborative effort by a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team comprised of at least public education, public mental health and law enforcement. Additional members may be represented such as Oregon Youth Authority, Department of Human Resources, Local Juvenile Justice, Community Colleges and other public agencies serving youth.

The Level 1 Protocol would address situations that contain a threat of harm from one or more students directed toward other people (students, staff, parents, relatives and/or community members). The protocol would provide supervision strategies that directly address the established risk factors identified in the assessed student(s). When a school-based team is in need of assistance, either due to a perceived high risk, a need for further investigation or a lack of resources, a case may be referred to the Level 2 team for further assessment and consultation. Communities that are short of personnel for Level 2 support could tighten the referral criteria to address only situations that contain either the potential for targeted violence (not aggressive bullying) or reactive aggression that has the potential to cause severe or lethal injury. If this is done, then referrals that do not meet those criteria would still be provided with a best-practice information and support packet for assisting with the concern.

Statewide Threat Assessment System

A regional model is envisioned to support the expansion and implementation of this program. The model would establish multiple regions across the state (to be determined at a later date) with one or more Regional Threat Assessment Specialists designated to support each region. Fourteen Regional Threat Assessment Specialists (14 FTE) would be needed to provide adequate coverage across the state. One Program Administrator position (1.0 FTE) would also be established at the Oregon Department of Education and would provide oversight of the system.

A Statewide Student Threat Assessment System



The proposed statewide threat assessment team will assist education communities in establishing the capacity to provide the following services:

- Initial and annual update training to key staff in schools regarding the Level 1 Protocol that utilizes a school-based threat screening process of students or situations of concern.
- Consultation with school and community-based threat assessment teams.
- Coordination of Level 2 Protocols in which a trained multi-disciplinary team deploys to a school site, assesses risk, and assists in management and intervention planning and reports back to the Level 2 team for further consultation and resources.
- Preparation of timely written threat assessment summaries following the Level 2 assessment process.
- Provide education representatives to regional multi-agency student threat assessment teams that review Level 2 assessments, provide ongoing support for difficult cases and assist in providing a direct pathway to community services, especially for students deemed at high risk.

In addition to these paid positions, additional funds would be needed to support regional trainings, professional development, supplies, travel and mileage reimbursement, consultants and other costs associated with maintaining a statewide threat assessment system.

Oversight of the program would be needed to monitor the implementation of the program, provide support and ensure accountability. This monitoring and support role would be assigned to the Oregon Department of Education.

Furthermore, a steering committee would be established. This body would be comprised of experienced practitioners in the areas of: public mental health, law enforcement, education and juvenile justice. Additional areas of representation may be added, as needed.

Threat Assessment Training for School Districts and Local Partners

Implementation of this system will require training with school personnel and partner agencies participating in threat assessment teams. Training elements would include:

- A comprehensive threat assessment training that examines risk factors, research and intervention strategies for all populations (student and adult). For example, the Mid-Valley student and adult threat assessment teams currently conduct an annual three day comprehensive training that includes participation on two actual threat assessment teams and several lab studies. As currently written, the training is designed for professionals from all public agencies that serve students and are in need of developing threat assessment skills. It should be noted, however, that training intended for a K-12 population should be adapted to better support the education, mental health and law enforcement professionals who work within that education community.

- Additional training would be required to specifically address the application of threat assessment process, protocol and team development. These elements should be tailored to apply specifically to a particular team's group dynamics and the availability of time and resources. This training will require 1-2 days to deliver.
- Each school-based team will require Level 1 Protocol training as they prepare to implement threat assessment in their school. This training is normally 2-4 hours and should be provided in conjunction with threat assessment system implementation. Initial training would be supported by the statewide system personnel, but capacity will be developed in each regional team to train additional school-based teams in their region.

VI. Budget

Estimated costs to support a statewide threat assessment system in its first year are:

	Anticipated Costs
Salaries, including APC and Benefits (15 FTE)	\$1,502,005
Training	\$125,561
Technology	\$24,000
Professional Development	\$81,171
Mileage	\$91,000
Purchased Services	\$50,000
Dues	\$8,000
Supplies	\$30,000
Indirect	\$132,917
Total	\$2,044,654

VII. Evaluation

The statewide threat assessment team would be tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the necessary data to determine the overall effectiveness of the program. An external evaluation could be conducted by a third-party evaluator, however, this would likely increase the overall cost of the program by approximately 10%.

VIII. Endorsements

Members of the Oregon Task Force on School Safety believe we could secure endorsements from multiple organizations and professional associations such as:

Federal Agencies:

Federal Bureau of Investigation
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Secret Service

Oregon Law Enforcement Agencies/Associations:

Oregon State Police
Oregon Department of Justice
Oregon Association Chiefs of Police
Oregon State Sheriffs Association
Oregon Peace Officers Association

Education Agencies/Associations:

Oregon Department of Education
Oregon School Boards Association
Confederation of Oregon School Administrators
Oregon Association of Education Service Districts

Labor Unions:

Oregon Education Association
Oregon School Employees Association

Additional State Agencies/Associations:

Oregon District Attorneys Association
Oregon Judicial Department
Oregon Youth Authority
Oregon Department of Human Services – Child Welfare

Mental Health Agencies:

Marion County Children's Mental Health
Polk County Mental Health
Yamhill County Family and Youth

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X. Acknowledgements

This proposal is a collaborative effort among the following professionals:

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