Threat assessments can help prevent violent incidents on campuses. Are your procedures effective? And once a threat assessment is completed, then what?
3 MISTAKES THAT CAN DERAIL YOUR THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

If we don’t ask ourselves hard questions about our processes, someone’s plaintiff attorney will. By Michael Munger

You’re the professional. Is this kid a threat or not?” That’s the question my director asked, fingers drumming on the athletic calendar drafts stacked on his desk. My waffling response had not provided him with the level of confidence he wanted. As with most K-12 threat assessments, clear answers are few, and predictions are reckless. Threat assessments start and often end with questions. They run against the grain of comfort for many of us. If the child is a threat, then we take disciplinary action, perhaps put together a safety plan and coordinate with law enforcement. If the student is not a threat, we mop our collective brow and return to finish whatever work was sidelined during the investigation. As school safety professionals, if we allow our process to end with a toggle switch conclusion and a binary type of answer, we run the risk of
exposing our organizations to excessive liability, as well as our students and staff to ongoing but unmanaged threats.

Several elements of the assessment process itself deserve a deeper level of scrutiny. A well-considered, commonly applied and faithfully-executed process not only makes the initial assessment work better but also helps to protect students, staff and the organization itself from future unmanaged threats. As investigators, we work to solve the, “Is he a threat?” question; as professional assessors, we owe it to our students and to our organization to ask a few other questions as well. We can rest assured that if we don’t ask ourselves hard questions about our processes, someone’s plaintiff attorney will.

Here are some areas that can be vulnerable in a review.

1. Your Process Isn’t Fair and Equitable

Is your assessment process uniform and uniformly applied for all students? Are there different thresholds for the application of interventions? Is it possible that similar behaviors would result in widely varying levels of discipline or support actions? If multiple assessment teams are used, is it possible that behavior interpreted as dangerous by one assessment team would be viewed as negligible by another?

One of two approaches lend themselves to reliable, replicable assessment results. First and best is using a single, multidisciplinary team for all assessments. A good assessment team will represent a variety of professional disciplines, including education, administration, mental health services, security, law enforcement and others as needed. As students are assessed, a body of institutional knowledge begins to develop within this single team. The team learns what works and what doesn’t work as a process of conducting the assessments and crafting safety plans.

A second approach is that of a tiered assessment. In other words, a school-level team conducts an initial assessment with a second level assessment team taking those that meet defined extraordinary criteria. Criteria for a level-2 team evaluation could include the complexity of the case, specialized resources needed, level of seriousness of the threat or a variety of other factors. At its most basic level, a school-level team conducts an initial assessment and acts as a filter to manage the least serious threats, while more serious cases are handed off to a district-level team.

This bifurcated system has several pinch points of which to be mindful. Training and exercises need to be disseminated to a much larger group than is needed for a single team. Even if a tool is used to aid in the initial assessment, continual training on the correct application of the tool is necessary for all assessors. Depending on the number of initial assessment teams, the time and
expense can be prohibitive. Without thorough and uniform training, there is always the risk of a type-2 error, or the initial assessment team missing important indicators and failing to pass on the case.

Transfer of information needs to also be tightly choreographed. Valuable information can be lost as the case is moved from the initial assessment team to the second level team. As the assessment moves further away from the original assessment team, investigative facts can be clouded with layers of unintentional supposition and conjecture.

2. You Don’t Document Your Process Change
Is your assessment process followed in each case? Have you changed or modified your process as a result of lessons learned? Why were process changes needed?

Normally we think of documentation in terms of an investigative file on a specific student or incident. Our process demands similar documentation as well.

Many threat assessment protocols are organic processes that grow and change with an organization. However, a due process hearing or post incident audit will quickly bring to light any inconsistencies over time. We should remember that mental illnesses and the civil legal system often proceed slowly. It’s not uncommon to have records subpoenaed many years after a student has left our care. Procedural changes that are clear now will be very murky memories when called to the stand five or 10 years from now.

That is not to say that we shouldn’t update our processes, but maintaining an accurate change log of the process allows for an easy answer to questions of perceived unfairness or accused deficiencies.

3. You Create a Safety Plan You Can’t or Don’t Execute
After determining that this student was a medium level threat, what did you do?

In K-12 public education, we understand that students who begin to exhibit threatening or dangerous behavior never really go away. While expulsion may be an option in extreme cases, more often than not our responsibility to provide education to all still remains. Especially with young students who are hopefully caught early in the downward slide, expulsion may actually make them and your schools more vulnerable.

The creation of an individual safety plan is often needed to allow for education to continue in the least restrictive safe environment. A student may need additional supports to modify his or her behavior. Behavior contracts, scheduled check-in with a designated staff member, class changes, intake searches, supervised free time, no-backpack rules and a variety of other measures can be crafted together to help diminish negative behavior and stabilize the student.

Safety plans must be balanced against a school’s ability to execute them.
Great harm can be done by creating a safety plan that is impossible to execute. More damaging still is a safety plan that is ignored. Therefore, campuses must thoughtfully consider what options are available as well as what options are achievable in the specific terms of the safety plan.

A reassessment schedule is a critical component of all safety plans. Scheduling follow-up assessments allows your team to monitor student behavior and evaluate if intervention supports are working. It also provides a means to reduce extraordinary measures if the student seems to have no need for them. A scheduled reassessment provides a rationale for reducing burdensome restrictions over time as student behaviors are documented to stabilize.

“Who knew what and when?” will continue to dog the threat assessment process long after students graduate from our sphere of control and move out into the wider world. In some cases our interventions and student supports will work, but we realize that in a small number of our cases, the student will go on to commit crime or self-destructive behavior. When that terrible event happens, we need to be assured and be able to demonstrably assure others that our threat assessment process was accurate, fair, thorough and effective. It’s always best to know your answers before the question is asked.

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ARAPAHOE SHOOTING REPORT HIGHLIGHTS FLAWS IN DISTRICT’S THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Report concludes there were missed opportunities that might have prevented the death of Claire Davis. By Robin Hattersley-Gray

On Dec. 13, 2013, a student shot and killed 17-year-old Claire Davis.

Investigators released their review of how Arapahoe High School (AHS) and Littleton Public Schools (LPS) officials responded to threats by a student who shot and killed her. Their report concludes there were missed opportunities that might have prevented the death of Davis, although prior to the shooting, the district had expended considerable time and effort in emergency preparedness.

The report, produced by Safe Havens International, says that LPS and its public safety partners had many preventive security measures in place before the AHS incident, including the deployment of School Resource Officers (SROs), an emergency planning committee, partnerships with city, local mental health professionals and other organizations to support the positive development of youth; an integrated security system and 32 Automated External Defibrillators (AED). The district’s elementary and middle schools were equipped with visitor management systems, and campus supervisors were trained in CPR and first aid. Additionally, the district had lighting sensors, staff dedicated to physical security and student supervision, as well as an anonymous tip line.

LPS employees and community members had received mental health pre-
vention and intervention training, and there was a Redirection Center for expelled and at-risk students. There was a truancy review board, mental health support for middle school and high school students with disabilities; positive behavior intervention support; Crisis Prevention Intervention training; intervention programs for students; as well as a structured and formalized threat assessment process that is better than most.

“Despite the many preventive measures that were in place to help prevent school violence, the shooting incident at AHS still occurred,” the report says. “This demonstrates that extreme violence does sometimes happen at schools and school systems that have many sound preventive measures in place.”

The report did find, however, several opportunities for improvement in the district’s threat assessment process. At the time of the incident, there was no “integrated systems approach” to guide the process between LPS and its public safety partners. Additionally, the district and law enforcement did not use a systematic approach to guide the process at the schools.

The sharing of information posed another challenge. The Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office (ACSO) was not provided access to disciplinary records of AHS students of concern, and AHS was not able to gain access to ACSO’s reports and records regarding incidents involving students at AHS. There was no memorandum of understanding (MOU) or intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between LPS and the ACSO regarding sharing information related to behavioral, criminal or disciplinary records of SLP students. Additionally, SROs were not provided with a copy of a completed threat assessment form.

Other challenges with the process at the time of the incident included:

◆ The threat assessment process before the shooting focused more on establishing evidence that the student of concern “made” a threat rather than on assessing if he or she posed a threat.
◆ The “Building Team” that was responsible for initiating the threat assessment might not have had the professional knowledge and training to qualify them to make the decision on whether or not to conduct a threat evaluation of a student of concern.
◆ Limited options for police response were listed on the assessment form.
◆ The assessment form did not provide the threat assessment team with a prompt for any follow-up checks for the “additional measures to ensure safety.”
◆ There was no defined multidisciplinary threat assessment team at AHS at the time of the incident. All three assessments were conducted by the school psychologist and assistant principal, and it appeared they didn’t receive appropriate training on the threat assessment process.
◆ The threat assessors didn’t follow some of the procedures on the assessment and action plan form.

“This demonstrates that extreme violence does sometimes happen at schools and school systems that have many sound preventive measures in place.”
Often there was no explanation of the rationale for the decisions made in the assessment.

LPS didn’t provide schools with adequate resources to train staff on “how to recognize warning signs and what to do,” nor did it communicate some of its expectations to school-level staff.

Additionally, the report expresses concerns about the way the attacker was (or wasn’t) disciplined after he made his threats. School administrators had the option to suspend or expel him, but they did neither.

“We were concerned to see from the case file that AHS administrators did not impose any formal disciplinary consequences for the aggressor after he made a threat to kill the school’s head librarian,” the report says. “While there is a pronounced trend in the field of K-12 education to reduce out of school suspensions and expulsions and request that police reduce arrests for behaviors like those exhibited by the aggressor in this case prior to December 13, 2013, it is important to note that at least thus far, multiple courts and juries have rejected these approaches as defenses for incidents where students carry out an act of violence after not being arrested, suspended and/or expelled for aggressive behaviors prior to the attack.”

Additionally, despite the district having many student mental health resources, the investigators couldn’t find any indications that the shooter had been referred to any of the programs.

Other areas of concern involving the investigation of the shooter before the attack include:

- The deputy appears to not have taken the attacker’s threats seriously. He could have investigated further and interviewed the attacker about his threats and followed up by gathering information from his parents.
- The attacker’s mother might not have reported her son’s threats to kill a female student to AHS administrators, the ASCO deputy or her son’s mental health providers.
- Although LPS had promoted its Safe2Tell hotline, no student or staff reported the shooter’s threats to it despite three students being concerned about his behavior.

Other general areas of concern outlined in the report include:

- School safety and security personnel shouldn’t have been eating lunch together at the same time. This left the campus unsupervised.
- The attacker entered campus via an unsecured door that should have been locked. The door was propped open about once a week despite teachers and staff being instructed to always keep it closed.
- School administrators were responsible for safety and security despite not...
having expertise in these areas, and the security director’s authority was limited.
◆ LPS probably didn’t have a security assessment conducted by an outside team.
◆ Many LPS policies, guidelines and procedures regarding school safety and security may have overwhelmed administrators in relation to other important responsibilities they have and the number of staff development sessions they are able to attend.
◆ The security camera system was outdated.
◆ AHS administrators may sometimes search students for drugs and knives without an armed security or law enforcement officer present.
◆ The district’s lockdown planning approach at the time of the incident was reliant upon a flawed approach that resulted in confusion in areas of the school where staff could not hear gunfire during the incident. The report claims this resulted in a number of classroom doors not being locked. Had the aggressor decided to move to other areas of the school instead of proceeding to the library, this event could have easily turned into a mass casualty incident.

Despite the challenges highlighted in the report, the study’s authors praise the quick reactions of AHS custodian Fabian Vldrio Llerenas, head librarian Tracy Murphy, other AHS staff and students, as well as ACSO Deputy James Englert, who thwarted most of the aggressor’s overall attack plan. The report also praises the responding police officers for rapidly and effectively clearing AHS’ individual rooms, despite the fact that the campus is large.

Further, the study’s authors highlight some of the improvements implemented by the district since the tragedy, including the formation of safety and mental health advisory committee; more SROs for middle its schools and high schools; more than $800,000 for mental health staffing; a district-level multi-disciplinary threat assessment team for improved oversight of all threat assessments; and $365,000 in lock upgrades.

The report warns, however, that there are no absolute or simple solutions to planned K-12 campus shootings.

“The prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from shooting incidents can be very complex and challenging,” the authors say. “There is no technology schools can purchase, no training program they can implement, no strategy they can employ, and no law we can pass that can end all school shootings.”

Read the full report.

Additional reports on this topic from the superintendent, University of Denver and University of Colorado can be found here.
YOU’VE SUSPENDED A POTENTIAL AGGRESSOR. NOW WHAT?

Threat assessment teams, information sharing, community partnerships and automated tools help colleges manage at-risk individuals both on- and off-campus. By Katie Johnson

Jared Loughner had five run-ins with Pima Community College (PCC) campus police and was placed on suspension for violating the student code of conduct, which later led to his withdrawal from the school. During his time at Pima, a teacher and a classmate both said they thought he might commit a school shooting. The last contact PCC had with Loughner was a letter sent telling him that if he intended to return to school, he would have to provide a letter from a mental health official indicating “his presence at the College does not present a danger to himself or others.”

Three months after his suspension from PCC, Loughner went on a shooting rampage in Tucson, Ariz., killing six people and injuring 14 others.

The active shooter at a University of Pittsburgh clinic in February 2012 had been a graduate student in biology at Duquesne University until he was barred from its campus for sending harassing text and E-mail messages to female students. Was the University of Pittsburgh made aware of these incidents and the reason for the student’s departure from Duquesne? Did the application process identify this information?

Once a student (or staff member) is identified as a threat to your campus, there are many important questions that need to be addressed. What steps should be taken? Should the student be suspended? If the student is asked
to leave campus temporarily or indefinitely, what are your responsibilities for continuing to monitor that individual? Should institutions partner with mental health resources to monitor the behaviors of the former student? Can institutions partner with local police to identify related police reports and track activities? Should campus officials keep in contact with the individual’s family? Should student records be shared with local law enforcement or neighboring campuses? Can student records be legally shared according to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations?

These questions can be difficult to answer, but it is clear from the lessons learned above and other tragic incidents that the risks do not go away when individuals are suspended, expelled or pushed away and then allowed to fall through the cracks.

What can mental health professionals or student services personnel do to ensure all the right dots are connected, both within their organization and across local and regional campuses and communities?

**Campuses Must ID, Assess At-Risk Individuals**

Let’s start at the beginning. All college campuses should verify that their policies for addressing unacceptable student behavior are clear, objective and unambiguous. The entire campus community should be made aware of both these policies and the procedures for reporting incidents, suspicious actions and concerning behaviors. If students or staff/faculty believe a person may be a risk to themselves or to others, this information must be reported immediately.

All incident reports should then be investigated thoroughly by the campus threat assessment team (TAT/BIT) to determine the overall level of risk and the appropriate course of action.

It is important for staff and faculty to understand that students cannot be removed from class or barred from campus just because their behavior is “weird,” “concerning” or “alarming.” However, if the student poses a direct threat to others, the college should and can take immediate action.

**Always Follow Due Process Procedures**

Many colleges have some form of interim suspension policy in place that enables them to review the situation and behavior of the student in question before making a final decision. The policy should designate under what circumstances the institution can impose an interim suspension, who has the authority to impose suspensions, and how/when a suspension may be lifted or modified.

If a student is deemed a potential threat, he or she may be suspended while the best course of action is determined, but due process must be in place and...
followed – both immediately (notifying the student and providing an initial opportunity to respond) and as additional steps are taken, such as providing an opportunity for a hearing and appeal, plus steps for monitoring behaviors, threats and escalations.

If a student will not agree to a voluntary leave of absence, many colleges have developed involuntary withdrawal procedures that may be used to remove the student from campus. Prior to imposing an involuntary withdrawal, institutions should secure a professional opinion from a mental health provider stating the student poses an imminent risk of serious harm to self or others. New laws prohibit a university from withdrawing a student if he is a danger to himself, as that is seen as a mental illness under ADA. If the student is a danger to others, the campus may proceed with involuntary withdrawal. Protocols spelling out the specific procedures and conditions for voluntary and involuntary leaves of absence (as well as conditions for re-entry) should be clearly outlined, acknowledged, followed and documented by all parties involved.

It is important to consider that suspension and termination from campus may discourage not only the at-risk student involved, but all students, from seeking help in the future. Because of this concern, it is generally preferable to utilize interim suspension or other internal intervention and disciplinary procedures if possible. However, a college can remove a student from all classes/activities and cease enrollment if it finds that the student constitutes a direct threat to the safety of others.

If the threat assessment team determines the at-risk student can no longer function safely on campus, the student may be suspended for a period of up to two years. If the student wishes to re-enroll after the suspension, they must provide documentation stating they are physically and/or psychologically stable and not a threat to themselves or others before they are allowed to return. Campuses should play a supportive role in this process to ensure safety for everyone.

‘Out of Sight’ Doesn’t Mean ‘Out of Mind’
If a student is asked to leave campus, the situation has not been resolved. Remember, just because the individual is no longer a student, does not mean they aren’t a threat to campus or the community-at-large. In fact, suspending an at-risk student can potentially push them over the edge by adding to their personal losses, and isolating them from both their support system, as well as the people and resources that can monitor them.

Who Should Provide Mental Health Support?
Partnerships are a more common approach on college campuses, but not all institutions will possess equal financial or other adequate resources to pro-
vide mental health and support services. Some may require the student to pay for this evaluation on their own or some campuses will pay for this out of the student affairs budget. Institutions should work closely with their local communities to not only determine how their students will fare in the mental healthcare system, but whether partnerships between the institutions and communities can be leveraged to create better services for all. In any case, college counseling centers should report all students receiving mandated mental health treatment (on- or off-campus) to the threat assessment team so they can connect the dots and follow up as needed.

Individual threat assessment team members should be assigned the task of continually following up with the former student and keeping tabs on their current location, activities and behaviors.

Parents can be an extremely valuable resource when dealing with at-risk students. Contact with the student’s parents is often made during initial counseling sessions and assessments to help determine the best strategies for response. Not only are they generally a part of the student’s support system, they can also provide critical information regarding prior incidents, and continued counseling and treatment. If a student has been removed from campus, an ongoing relationship with the parents is recommended to help monitor the situation. Contacting parents once a month or more often if needed can be extremely beneficial and informative. If parents express concerns or communicate behaviors that may be threatening, your campus threat assessment team should be made aware and take necessary precautions. The college may also be able to assist parents in finding additional help for the former student.

Institutions should also work closely with their legal counsel and student affairs office to develop updated parental notification and communication policies that are both legally permissible under FERPA and allow flexibility to address situations on a case-by-case basis.

**Share Info With Appropriate Community Stakeholders**

Campus leaders must make sure threat assessment team members understand their responsibilities for investigating and sharing sensitive information with all appropriate entities and resources on campus and in their community. For example, campuses may choose to include local or county law enforcement or mental health professionals on their threat assessment or behavioral intervention teams. Law enforcement may be notified immediately or added in on only specific incidents based on the situation and their necessary involvement. It can be invaluable to involve local law enforcement and mental health as they may have more information on the at-risk individual that was not available through on-campus resources. For example, the local police department may be able to share information regarding a recent drunk driving arrest or
other indicators that the student is struggling. Or, a violation due to a physical altercation off-campus can show the potential for violence.

Once made aware that the student has been barred from campus, local law enforcement and mental health resources can help monitor the individual’s behaviors off-campus and be vigilant of a potential threat escalation.

Evidence from post-event reports reveals critical information is often not shared due to concerns with privacy regulations. Disconnects like this are generally due to a lack of awareness of the regulations and organizational policies. It is important to understand that FERPA permits the disclosure of information from student education records “to appropriate parties in connection with an emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.”

Collaboration among local and/or regional campuses can also be helpful as threat assessment team members can discuss recent incidents and lessons learned. For instance, if a student who was suspended or barred from one college tries to enroll at a neighboring college, potential flags may be raised. For the purposes of health and safety, FERPA expressly permits the disclosure of information from a student’s education records to officials of other institutions at which the student seeks to enroll.

**Automation Can Help Bridge the Gaps**

Cross-coordination between agencies and institutions can be difficult. Too many times, due to the overwhelming obligations and requirements campus personnel face, it can be difficult to remember to follow up with a student once he or she is no longer on campus. Sticky notes and E-mail reminders are not working. Campuses need automated solutions to help them proactively communicate with all team members (and appropriate outside parties) and ensure follow-ups are taking place to prevent further tragedy or risk. Automated tools can also help improve reporting, investigations and documentation to ensure all team members and external resources are on the same page with objective and measurable processes.

Leading colleges have implemented automated tools to help ensure their campus threat assessment and behavioral intervention teams are equipped with the tools necessary to not only receive anonymous incident reports from the campus community regarding concerning behaviors and at-risk individuals, but also document all actions taken during investigations, objectively perform behavioral assessments, securely share information with third-party resources and monitor ongoing situations.

For example, Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) has been using Awareity’s TIPS (Threat Assessment, Incident Management and Prevention Services) prevention platform for more than three years and has established clearly defined IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT FERPA PERMITS THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FROM STUDENT EDUCATION RECORDS “TO APPROPRIATE PARTIES IN CONNECTION WITH AN EMERGENCY IF KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFORMATION IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OR SAFETY OF THE STUDENT OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS.”
procedures for investigating, assessing and monitoring potential aggressors and at-risk individuals on campus.

With TIPS, all incident reports are gathered in one central online location. The student assistance and intervention team (SAIT – EKU’s version of a Behavior Intervention Team) can easily access all incident report details, document all actions taken, review related incident reports, and more effectively determine the best course of action to intervene and prevent escalations, headlines and tragedies.

At EKU, when a student is deemed a potential threat, the student is required to complete a mental health evaluation to determine if they can fully function on campus. The EKU counseling department has formed a partnership with University of Kentucky personnel certified to perform these assessments. Once they have completed the assessment, a student may be recommended for further counseling or treatment.

After the mental health evaluation, if an EKU student is determined not appropriate for campus due to personality issues, lack of coping mechanisms, threatening behaviors, etc., they are removed from campus. The student assistance and intervention team then utilizes the TIPS platform to document and track the actions and next steps on a case-by-case basis. The team will leave a case “open” if they believe they need to continue to monitor a student’s behavior. EKU’s automated system allows the team to easily set reminders so appropriate personnel will be automatically notified to schedule follow-up meetings, reviews and other tasks. At EKU they also make good use of the partnerships they have developed with local police to make sure an at-risk individual is on their radar and work together to share information as it becomes available.

Keep a Watchful (and Proactive) Eye
In one particular case at EKU, a student who was previously removed from campus completed their assessments and requirements and came back to campus a year later to re-apply. This student had been flagged, so the EKU SAIT team was immediately notified, and was able to re-open the student’s case, monitor the student and make an appropriate determination.

“We were able to review the history of the situation, review all actions that had been taken previously and document what steps would be taken going forward,” says Claire Good, associate vice president of student affairs and dean of students at EKU. “It is so important to have all of the information in one central location, so we can see a comprehensive picture of behavior and assess the level of threat accurately.”

As with the assessment of whether or not a direct threat exists, a college may determine the conditions a returning student must satisfy on an individual basis. The Office of Civil Rights has explicitly suggested that an institution

AN INSTITUTION MAY REQUIRE A RETURNING STUDENT TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OF STEPS THEY HAVE TAKEN TO REDUCE THE PREVIOUS THREAT, INCLUDING THAT THE STUDENT: FOLLOWED A TREATMENT PLAN; SUBMITTED REGULAR REPORTS OF PROGRESS; AND GRANTED PERMISSION FOR THE INSTITUTION TO TALK TO THE TREATING PROFESSIONAL.
may require a returning student to provide documentation of steps they have taken to reduce the previous threat, including that the student: followed a treatment plan; submitted regular reports of progress; and granted permission for the institution to talk to the treating professional.

Campus threat assessment or behavior intervention teams may also wish to develop a plan to verify that the student adheres to any behavioral conditions recommended by the institution. Using an automated system, team members can continuously monitor and follow-up to ensure the student is meeting all requirements. If any reports of new information are submitted regarding the student, it can be automatically linked and documented in the existing student case file, and any necessary responses can be immediately taken and logged to ensure audit-ready, compliance-ready and legal-ready documentation is available.

Another important aspect of tracking the team’s actions is the ability to record important trends in incidents across campuses/locations. Automated systems provide colleges with access to longitudinal data that can help its threat assessment team identify ongoing trends and adjust the team’s practices and procedures accordingly.

**Avoid Silos to Improve Flow of Information**

A truly multi-disciplinary approach can help college threat assessment teams monitor at-risk individuals to make sure all potential crises are addressed and future ones prevented. Fragmented communication among different divisions of a university can and have hindered putting individual incidents of aberrant student behavior into a coherent whole. Centralizing the process of evaluating threatening and/or concerning behavior of students, providing inputs from all possible sources, and facilitating communication with internal and external resources allows institutions to devise the most effective actions to help troubled students, rather than letting them fall through the gaps that have been exposed over and over again in post-event reports.

Better strategies and better tools for collecting the dots, assessing the dots and connecting the dots can help colleges realize the true potential of their campus threat assessment teams – not just removing or resolving a problem, but preventing potential escalation of risk both on-campus and off, and ensuring the entire campus community is as safe as possible.

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