

Student Risk Assessment for Mass Violence

Risk for students acting out violently appears to be a function of one or more primary factors:

- access to weapons
- history of bringing weapons to school
- gang membership
- history of violent or antisocial behavior
- alienation and disengagement
- history of being bullied, taunted, persecuted
- publicly stated plans for revenge, retaliation
- mental disorder, such as mood disorder and paranoia
- debilitating psychological traits, such as hopelessness, rage, lack of empathy, low frustration tolerance

Assuming the presence of one or more of the above, then the following secondary factors can escalate the risk potential:

- substance abuse or dependence
- fascination with weapons and/or violence in video games and other media
- presence of other life stresses, such as death, divorce, abandonment, eviction, arrest (of self or family member), loss of job
- depression, suicidal ideation
- poor school performance
- withdrawal, lack of personal connections (friends, siblings, pets)
- poor impulse control
- pattern of risky behavior
- sleep disturbance
- frequent truancy
- fantasy as main preoccupation
- destructive heroes
- lack of family involvement/supervision
- estrangement from primary family member
- obvious physical, behavioral, or social anomaly, uniqueness, disability (appearance, identity, limitation, stigma)

Risk assessment consists of determining the presence of one or more primary factors (the more primary factors, the more serious the risk potential), and then determining the presence and scope of escalating contributors (secondary factors). Even one primary factor can be serious, and with each additional primary factor the estimated risk escalates significantly. Without any primary factors present, the presence of one or more secondary factors may warrant intervention (the more factors, the more need for intervention) but may not indicate significant violence potential.