

This is what prevention looks like.



# STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT

**Ordinary school days don't make the news.  
But that doesn't mean ordinary is easy.**

Oregon's students face countless challenges and pressures every day—at school, at home, at work and at play.

Most are able to cope with the stress. But others turn to self-destructive behavior—cutting, substance abuse and suicide.

Sometimes, they focus their frustration on external targets—hurting people and property around them. On rare but devastating occasions, they become violent at school.

*The goal of threat assessment is to make every day an ordinary school day.*

- John Van Dreal

Director, Safety and Risk Management Services  
Salem-Keizer Public Schools

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

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

**How the threat assessment system works:**

When a student or students are identified as a potential risk to themselves or others, they are assessed using a two-tier approach:

#### **Level 1**

A trained school-based team, including a school administrator, a counselor/mental health representative and a law enforcement officer, works together to understand the threat, the risk and resources the school has to address it.

#### **Level 2**

If the school team determines the situation is high risk, that it needs help with the investigation or it lacks necessary resources, it calls in a community-based multidisciplinary team of education, mental health and law enforcement professionals.

## THE HARD FACTS:

- Some students don't feel safe at school: Over 7 percent of Oregon 8th grade students reported not going to school at least one day in the previous 30 due to safety concerns.<sup>1</sup>
- Active shooting incidents are increasing: Between 2000 and 2006 an average of 6.4 incidents occurred each year. Between 2007 and 2013, an average of 16.4 incidents occurred each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24 in Oregon.<sup>3</sup>
- 344 Oregon youths ages 10-24 committed suicide between 2009 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>
- Suicide has been increasing among Oregon youths ages 10 to 17 since 2011.<sup>5</sup>

***"The earlier students are evaluated and receive support, the easier it is to turn a developing tragedy into a positive outcome."***

- Lt. Dave Okada  
Salem Police Department

<sup>1</sup> Oregon Health Authority, "Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2015"

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013"

<sup>3</sup> Oregon Health Authority, "Suicide Prevention"

<sup>4</sup> Oregon Health Authority, "Suicide Prevention" & "Violent Deaths in Oregon: 2013"

<sup>5</sup> Shen X., Millet L., "Suicides in Oregon: Trends and Associated Factors: 2003-2012"

***"I have seen students descend into tough places but didn't always know how to help. This system gives me the tools to make a difference."***

- Craig Swanson  
Principal, Sprague High School

## Expanding threat assessment statewide

The Oregon Task Force on School Safety proposes establishing a statewide threat assessment system that would provide a highly trained dedicated support system to protect and provide wraparound services to our state's most vulnerable population: our children.

***"Providing this wraparound support system—like arms around our kids—would be an investment in our students, an investment in the future of our state."***

- Sheriff Craig Roberts  
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office  
Chair, Oregon Task Force on School Safety

The system would divide the state into eight regions, each overseen by a threat assessment coordinator (1.0 FTE). One of these eight coordinators would serve as Lead Coordinator, overseeing the system and other coordinators in addition to a region.

### The role of the coordinators would be to:

- Train key school staff to use Level 1 protocols in school-based threat screenings.
- Consult with school and community-based threat assessment teams.
- Coordinate Level 2 protocols, deploying multi-disciplinary teams to schools to assess risk and assist in supports and interventions.
- Prepare threat assessment summaries.
- Serve as a representative on regional multi-agency threat assessment teams that review Level 2 assessments and help provide a pathway to community services.

The statewide system would be administered by a state agency, an ESD or a school district and would support regional trainings and develop connections with specialists and consultants.