



# Safety Assessment & Intervention

## An Evidence-based Prevention Program to Evaluate and Resolve Threatening Behaviors before They Escalate into Violence

<p><b>WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?</b></p>	<p>Every day in the United States there are more than 300 shootings resulting in injury or death.<sup>1</sup> SHP believes that gun violence can be prevented by identifying and helping individuals who display at-risk behaviors.</p> <p>Research has found that nearly all mass shooting attacks and many other shootings were carried out by individuals who made threats or engaged in threatening behavior that friends or family members observed.<sup>2</sup> We can prevent violence if we recognize threatening behavior and intervene to provide assistance before a personal crisis escalates into a shooting. Prevention should begin early, before guns are involved.</p> <p>SHP believes schools and community organizations should be trained to identify and assess individual threats, signs and signals and stop (gun) violence before it starts.</p>
<p><b>WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?</b></p>	<p><i>Safety Assessment &amp; Intervention (SAI)</i> establishes and trains multidisciplinary teams within schools and community organizations to identify, assess, and respond to threats of violence, including: (a) identifying threats, signs, and behaviors leading to a violent act, (b) determining the seriousness of the threat, and (c) developing intervention plans that protect potential victims and <i>address the underlying problem or conflict</i> that initiated the behavior.</p> <p>SAI was developed by Dr. Dewey Cornell, a forensic clinical psychologist and Professor of Education at the University of Virginia. SAI is based on the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines that have been evaluated in more than a decade of rigorous, controlled studies demonstrating their effectiveness. Recent studies show that SAI multidisciplinary teams have responded to thousands of student threats, distinguishing serious threats from minor misbehavior and taking appropriate steps to prevent violence.<sup>3</sup> As a result, <i>SAI's Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines</i> have been recognized by the federal government's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Dr. Cornell and his colleagues have trained thousands of school and community-based multidisciplinary teams in this method. SHP is partnering with Dr. Cornell to establish and scale this program nationwide.</p>
<p><b>WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?</b></p>	<p>Training is available for K-12 schools and community organizations. A school or community organization selects and sends its proposed team to this 6-hour training session. Typical multidisciplinary teams are made up of educators, school administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, community organization leaders, and resource officers.</p>

<p><b>WHO WILL BENEFIT?</b></p>	<p>At-risk youth will benefit from early intervention to identify problems and concerns, and most importantly, helping them access help. Threatening behavior is often a symptom of frustration, anger, or conflict that needs attention. Additionally, school and community-organization staff will benefit from increased safety and improved climate as well as legally defensible practices and procedures.</p> <p>Published research and reported findings show the following benefits:<sup>3</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence reduction</li> <li>• Decreased bullying and aggression</li> <li>• Fewer out-of-school suspensions and school transfers</li> <li>• Reduced racial disparities in school suspensions</li> <li>• Increased willingness of students to seek help for threats of violence</li> <li>• Decreased staff anxiety about violence</li> <li>• Increased use of school counseling</li> <li>• Increased parental involvement</li> <li>• Students reported greater willingness to seek help for threats of violence</li> </ul>
<p><b>TRAINING CORE LEARNING</b></p>	<p>Schools and community organizations will be able to establish multidisciplinary safety and support teams to identify, assess, and respond to threats of violence. Teams learn to use a decision tree to resolve most threats with only 1-2 team members, and to engage the full team for more serious threats.</p> <p>Research has shown that multidisciplinary teams can be trained with a one-day intensive workshop followed by adherence to a detailed threat assessment and intervention manual.<sup>3</sup></p>
<p><b>HOW TO GET STARTED AND COST</b></p>	<p>Contact us at <a href="mailto:programs@sandyhookpromise.org">programs@sandyhookpromise.org</a></p> <p>Sandy Hook Promise will work with schools and community-based organizations to offset up to 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.</p>

Footnotes:

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics for nonfatal injuries are available at <<http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/nfirates2001.html>> and statistics for deaths are available at <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/injury.htm>>
- 2 The FBI and Secret Service studies (see below)
- 3 Studies listed below
- 4 Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines is listed in the National Registry of Evidenced-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).  
<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=263>

Footnote 2:

- Drysdale, D. A., Modzeleski, W., Simons, A. B. (2010). *Campus attacks: Targeted violence affecting institutions of higher education*. Washington DC: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. Available at <https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/campus-attacks>
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- O'Toole, M. E. (2000). *The school shooter: A threat assessment perspective*. Quantico, VA: National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Vossekuil, B., Fein, R., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *The final report and findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education.

Footnote 3:

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- Lovegrove, P., & Cornell, D. (2013). Large-scale implementation of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines: A quasi-experimental examination of effects on school suspensions. Chapter prepared for Race and Gender Disparities in School Discipline. Center for Civil Rights Remedies, University of California, Los Angeles.
- JustChildren and Cornell, D. (2013). Prevention v. punishment: Threat assessment, school suspensions, and racial disparities. Retrieved from [http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/UVA\\_and\\_JustChildren\\_Report\\_-\\_Prevention\\_v.\\_Punishment.pdf](http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/UVA_and_JustChildren_Report_-_Prevention_v._Punishment.pdf)
- Cornell, D., Maeng, J., Huang, F., Burnette, A., Datta, P., & Heilbrun, A. (2015). *Threat Assessment in Virginia Schools: Technical Report of the Threat Assessment Survey for 2013-2014*. Charlottesville, VA: Curry School of Education, University of Virginia.
- Nekvasil, E., Cornell, D. (in press). Student threat assessment associated with positive school climate in middle schools. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*.