

# BEING SAFE IN YOUR CLASSROOM OR OFFICE

## Prevention Strategies

1. Watch for signs of persons in crisis. At Student Development Services, you can obtain a brochure *“Students in Distress”*, which identifies some warning signs of persons in crisis and what to do if you see those signs, signs of violence potential, and resource numbers if you have concerns about behavior. Many of these behaviors apply to office and co-worker situations as well. For employees, the C-SEAP program is available for workplace issues at 1-800-821-8154 or 303-866-4314.

2. If you notice the signs and become concerned, don't be afraid to ask the student or co-worker about behavior affecting the classroom or office. If you have concerns, and you are uncomfortable confronting them or your talking to them hasn't worked, please don't remain silent, TALK to someone else. You have the well-being of everyone in mind. Go to your supervisor, department chair, advisor or student leader. If you need advice:

- contact Student Development and Academic Services if it's a student,
- contact Human Resources if it's an employee,
- or call the police non-emergency line.

We want to get help for those who may need it.

3. If the situation becomes threatening, report it immediately. A report to the Dean of Students for a student, Human Resources for an employee, or the Police will get the information to a multi-disciplinary team who can help assess the threat.

There is no profile of persons who perpetrate violence or mass casualty attacks. However, violence is a serious possibility if a number of these behaviors are noted:

- Repeated loss of temper
- Physical disruption or fighting
- Vandalism or property damage
- Substance abuse and risk-taking behaviors
- Talking or writing about committing acts of violence
- Exhibiting a fascination with weapons, especially guns
- Isolating behavior, withdrawal from friends or activities
- A drop in work or school performance
- Failure to acknowledge the feelings or rights of others

4. As always, if the situation becomes physical or violent: Call 9-1-1!

## **Physical/Building Safety**

1. Study your surroundings. Walk through the areas containing your office and/or classroom. Ask yourself some questions: Where are the nearest exits? Can your door be locked? What could you use for a barricade to keep someone out? Do the windows open? Could you break them out?
2. Have a plan to use that information. Where would you run? How would you hold a barricade? Would you live if you jumped out a window? Is there a nearby door which can be locked? Research shows that people who have prepared and thought about emergency situations have a much better chance of survival if an incident occurs.
3. Talk with colleagues about your plans.

## **Know the Realities - Ten Myths about School Violence**

1. ***“They didn’t fit the profile.”*** There are no demographic or socioeconomic commonalities that form a “profile” for identifying those who engage in avenger violence, rather there are *behaviors* that may indicate a potential for violence.
2. ***“They just snapped.”*** Avenger violence is part of a continuum, a recognizable and discernable process. Rarely is school violence an impulsive act.
3. ***“No one knew.”*** Someone always knows something. Avengers always tell someone about their idea, or send out “red flags” before the attack.
4. ***“They hadn’t threatened anyone.”*** There is too much emphasis placed on threats. Many attackers do not “threaten”, but less explicit words or acts can reveal an intention.
5. ***“He/she was a loner.”*** Many attackers were considered part of the mainstream of school activities, while one quarter were in what could be considered “fringe groups”; seldom were they “loners”.
6. ***“They were crazy.”*** Only one third of school attackers since 1966 had ever seen a mental health professional; only one fifth had ever been diagnosed with a mental disorder.

7. ***“If only we’d had a SWAT team or metal detectors.”*** Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were over before a SWAT team could have arrived. Metal detectors seldom deter those committed to killing themselves and others.

8. ***They’d never touched a gun.”*** Most attackers had access to weapons and had used them prior to the attack. Most acquired their guns from home.

9. ***“We did everything we could to help them.”*** Most attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others. Those who sought help either didn’t get, or didn’t ***feel*** they got the help they needed.

10. ***“School violence is rampant.”*** While it may seem that way, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education, the Census Bureau and the FBI, “the murder rate on college campuses was 0.28 per 100,000, compared with 5.5 per 100,000 nationally”. There are 12-20 homicides on 4,200 college campuses annually.\*

***\*Source: “Safe School Initiative” conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service.***