

# OREGON TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY



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SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE NEWSLETTER

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## Task Force Hears from Local Officials about Online System

In order to better understand the needs of local schools in developing a statewide, online database for emergency planning and response, Captain Tom Worthy of the Oregon State Police (OSP) and Mitch Kruska, director of the Education Programs and Assessment program at the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), visited with local officials from seven cities around the state to gather insights in January 2015.

The pair reported back to the Oregon Task Force on School Safety (OTFSS) at its February 5 meeting at the Public Safety Academy in Salem. They heard from school superintendents and public safety officials from Portland, Salem, Seaside, Astoria, Pendleton, Bend and Roseburg in a series of five two-hour sessions.

Based on those discussions, they have identified 31 non-redundant features that the finished system should include. These features support the four basic responses that schools can take in response to an emergency:

- Seal everyone inside the school;
- Seal everyone outside the school;
- Evacuate the school and grounds; and,
- Provide emergency shelter.

The largest list of features came from the most populous school districts, with Portland-Salem identifying a total of 20, and Roseburg identifying 18, while Astoria-Seaside cited 11, Bend cited 10 and Pendleton cited nine. Among all of the different groups, the six most commonly cited features were:

- Standard and easily understood naming conventions to define the data, enabling information to be searched and retrieved using tags and key words;
- Standard training is available right out of the box with additional options available, such

that little or no formal training is required so that local schools do not incur additional training costs;

- A database containing all of the options for approved school safety plans, allowing schools that do not have their own plans to select from a menu of pre-approved plans and move forward with confidence;
- A role-based approach to security — in other words, only people with a specific need to know have access to the information;
- The ability to manage updates to the online system, scheduling when they will occur and planning for them well in advance to avoid any disruptions to system availability during anticipated use; and,
- The ability for local officials to update data regarding their facilities in the system — such as new construction, remodeling or other changes.

Worthy and Kruska's full report, including a listing of all 31 features requested by local officials, is available online, in the minutes of the task force's February 5 meeting. The minutes are available at: <http://www.oregon.gov/osp/Pages/Task-Force-on-School-Safety.aspx>

This information will be used by the OTFSS in order to develop a Request For Information (RFI), which will be posted on the Oregon Procurement Information Network (ORPIN). This will begin the selection process to identify a vendor to develop the system.

The goal is to develop a statewide database of school building maps and emergency response plans, accessible via the Internet by first responders responding to critical incidents. The current plan calls for a vendor to be selected next year, and for the system to be fully operational by the end of 2019.

# Task Force Examines Salem-Keizer Model

At its February 5 meeting in Salem, the Oregon Task Force on School Safety heard from Salem-Keizer School District Psychologist John Van Dreal and Lt. Dave Okada of the Salem Police Department. They described the district's comprehensive system for threat assessment, which has emerged as a national model described in Van Dreal's book "Assessing Student Threats."

According to Van Dreal and Okada, the advantages of a formal threat assessment system are:

- Shared ownership and responsibility, leading to decreased liability;
- A multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach;
- Expeditious but methodical;
- Community collaboration and ownership;
- Identification of risk in clear terms;
- Interventions and supervision strategies that fit the situation and accurately address risks;
- Promotes observation and supervision; and,
- It increases both the physical safety of the school community as well as its psychological sense of safety.

The pair asserted that, "The question is: 'Does the student *pose* a threat?' not, 'Did the student *make* a threat?'"

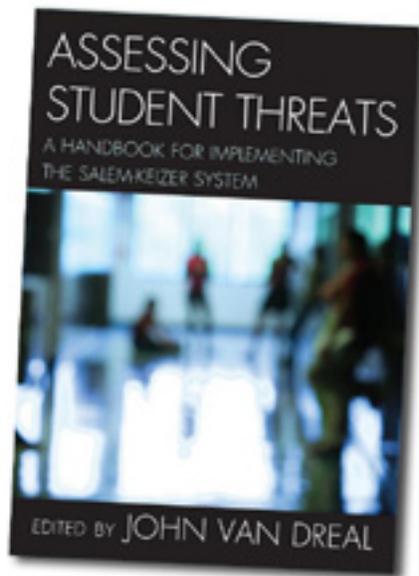
In teaching schools to set up threat assessment systems, the starting point they identify is an examination of the school's emotional climate. This involves first encouraging all members of the school community to listen and pay attention, and working to create a safe and respectful culture.

Next, administrators, teachers and others must adopt a strong but caring position against the "code of silence" and ensure that each student has a trusting relationship with at least one adult at the school.

Systems must be put in place to prevent and intervene in bullying, as well as to sustain a safe environment through ongoing assessment and management of potential violence.

Van Dreal and Okada identified a four-stage process that leads up to targeted violence, beginning with ideation: wherein the would-be perpetrator imagines physically harming their intended target. The next step is planning, and involves identifying specific steps that will have to be taken in order to fulfill the idea.

The third step is preparation, which can involve acquiring weapons or other resources necessary to carry out the attack, and the fourth step is implementation: actively carrying out an assault. An effective threat assessment system can intervene at any stage in this process, with the best outcomes emerging from early intervention.



John Van Dreal is the editor and principal author of the book "Assessing Student Threats," which details the Salem-Keizer model. It is available from Rowman-Littlefield in both paper and electronic editions.

## Threat Assessment Training Opportunity

Comprehensive training in the Salem-Keizer Threat Assessment Model will be offered at Willamette University, October 13-15, 2015.

It will be taught by a multidisciplinary team representing education, law-enforcement, mental health, campus security, court staff and community corrections. Subjects to be covered include:

- Youth and adult threat assessment;
- Campus security;
- Domestic violence;
- Protocols, templates and process guides; as well as,
- Implementation of the system.

For additional information or to register for the training, visit:

[www.willamette.edu/events/tat](http://www.willamette.edu/events/tat)

