

Being Safe in Your Classroom or Office

Prevention Strategies

1. Watch for signs of persons in crisis. On the UWPD website, you will find “***Dealing with Troubled People***”, a brochure in PDF format 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.

2. If you have concerns about a student or co-worker, TALK to someone else. You don't know if the person needs counseling and you don't want to make the situation worse. Go to your supervisor, department chair, advisor or house fellow.

If you need advice, contact the Dean of Students if it's a student, the Employee Assistance Office if it's an employee, or the police non-emergency line. We want to get help for those who may need it.

3. If the situation becomes threatening, report it. A report to the Dean of Students for a student, the Employee Assistance Office for an employee, or the Police will get the information to a multi-disciplinary team that's trained in threat assessment.

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 usual 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. Talk with colleagues about your plans.
3. Read and be familiar with your building's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP). Your building manager should have a copy of that plan developed specifically for your building.
4. Go to the UW Police Department website, www.uwupd.wisc.edu. There you will find:
 - ***“Survival Strategies in the Event of an Active Shooter”***, which presents what we call the “Out” strategy, in both power point and PDF format. It briefly identifies and explains your options in emergency situations.
 - ***“Emergency Procedures Guide”***, located under “Forms and Pamphlets”. Research indicates that people are most effective in an emergency when they are prepared.

Know the Realities - Ten Myths about School Violence

1. ***“He 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. ***“He 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. “He 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 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. “He was 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. “He’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 him.” 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.

For more information at www.uwpd.wisc.edu, click on:

- **“Campus Safety Report & Information”**, is a link to more campus safety information, including such publications as “Am I Safe on Campus?” and “Talking to Students about Virginia Tech”.