Assessment of Youth at Risk for Violence

Shawn S. Sidhu, F.A.P.A.

Disclosures

I write CME questions for the American Psychiatric Association's journal *FOCUS*

All statistics and graphs taken from the FBI's *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents 2000-2013,* U.S Dept. of Justice, 2014.

QUESTION 1

➢ Is violent crime on the rise in the United States?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Its About the Same

QUESTION 2

➢ Is gun crime on the rise in the United States?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Its About the Same

QUESTION 3

➤ Are school shootings on the rise in the United States?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Its About the Same

QUESTION 4

➢ On average how many individuals are shot during active shooter events?
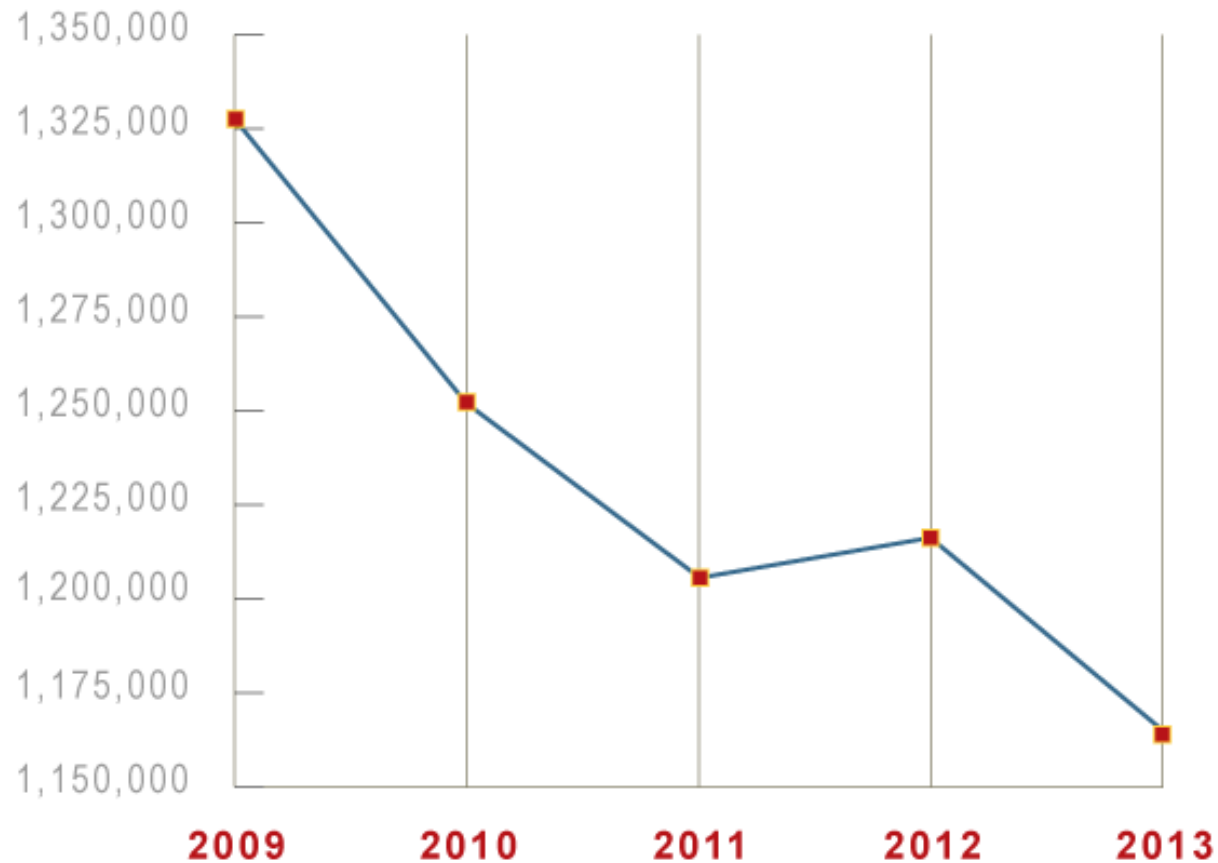
a) 1

b) 2-3

c) 6-7

d) 8-9

e) >10

QUESTION 5

➢ On average, how long does it take for police to arrive at the scene of an active shooter event?

a) 1 minute

b) 3 minutes

c) 5 minutes

d) 10 minutes

e) 15 minutes

Violent Crime Offense Figure

Five-Year Trend, 2009-2013
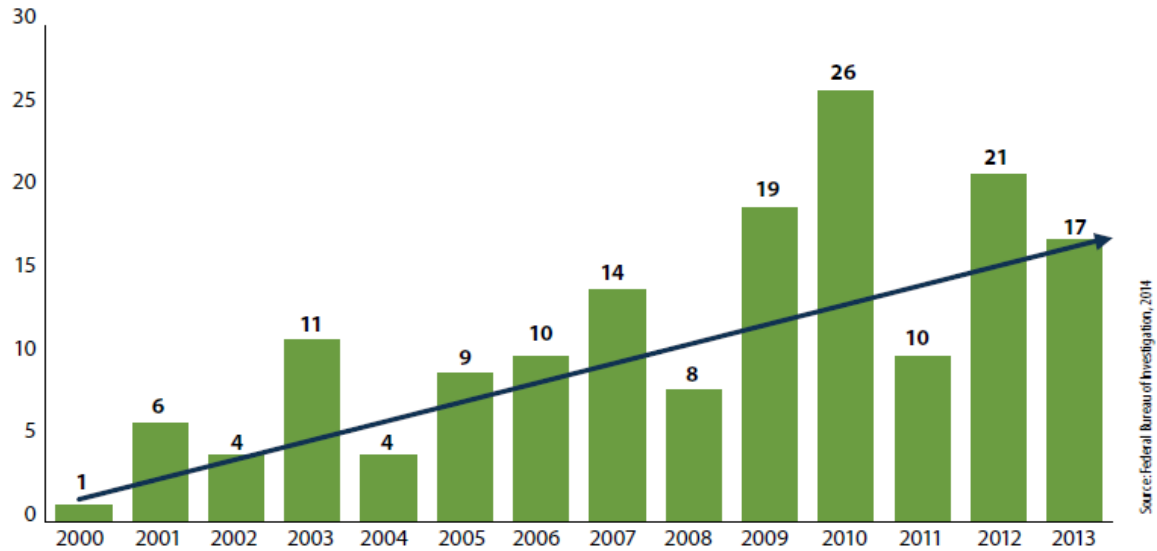
Definition

Active Shooter Event:

One or more persons engaged in killing or attempting to kill multiple individuals in an area occupied by multiple unrelated individuals

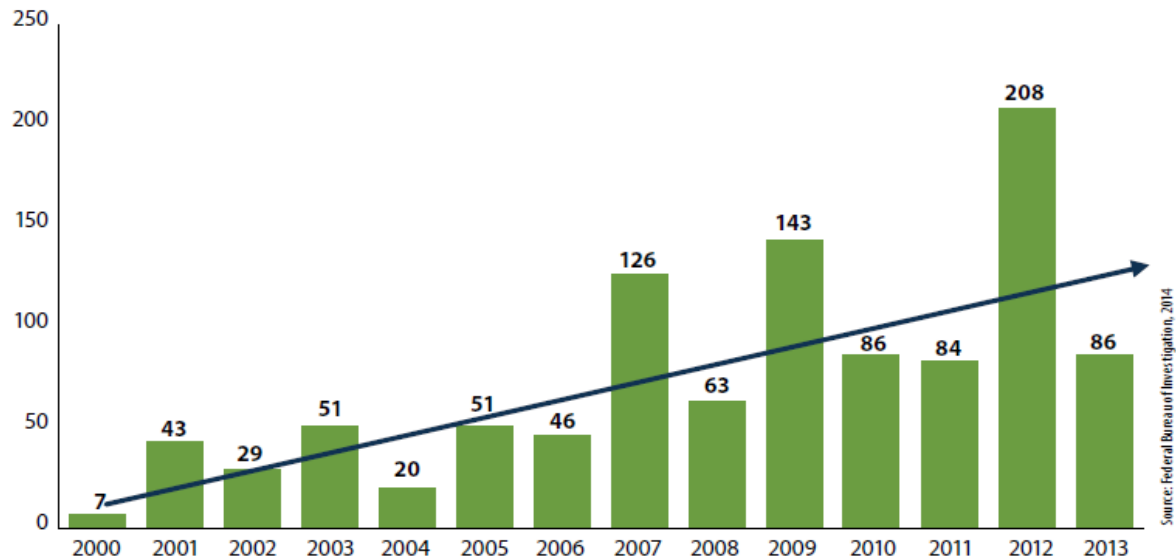At least one victim must be unrelated to the shooter

The primary motive appears to be mass murder and shooting is not a by-product of an attempt to commit another crime (burglary, theft, etc.)

Gang-related shootings are excluded from this category by law enforcement as they are often targeting very specific individuals
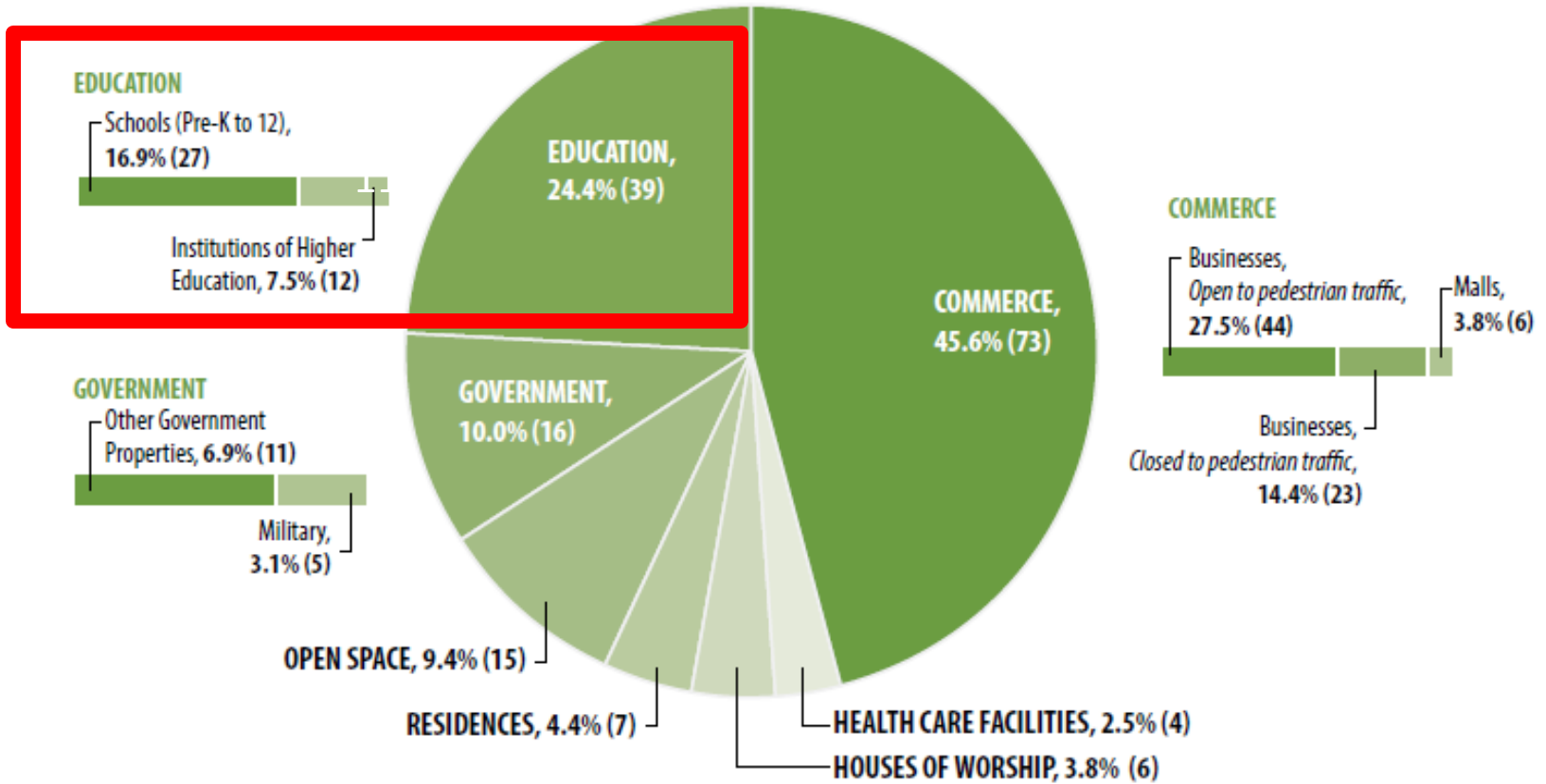
A Study of 160 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 - 2013:
Incidents Annually

Incidents by year:
- 2000: 1
- 2001: 6
- 2002: 4
- 2003: 11
- 2004: 4
- 2005: 9
- 2006: 10
- 2007: 14
- 2008: 8
- 2009: 19
- 2010: 26
- 2011: 10
- 2012: 21
- 2013: 17
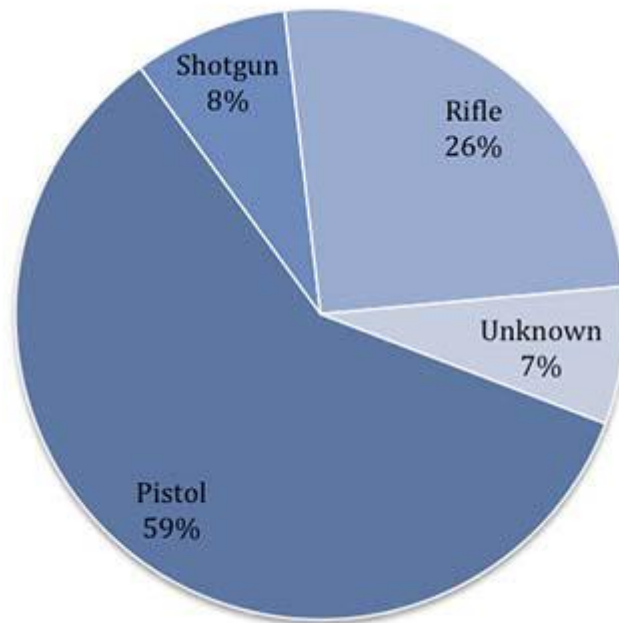
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014

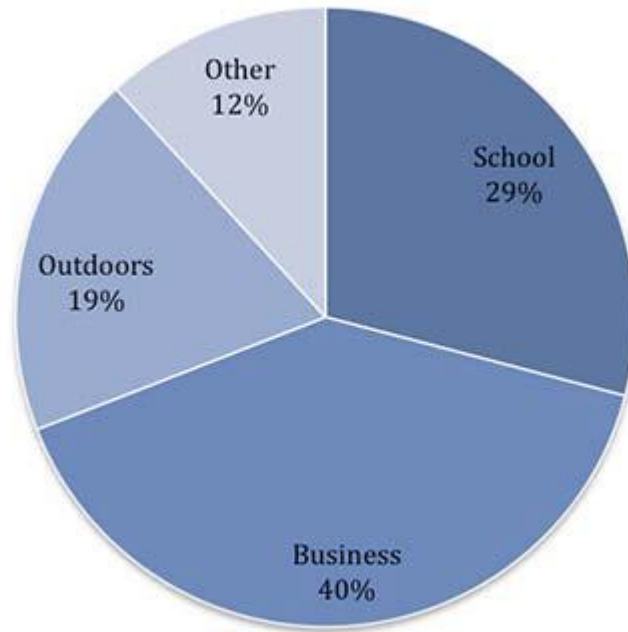## A Study of 160 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 - 2013:
Annual Totals of 1,043 Casualties

Casualties by year:
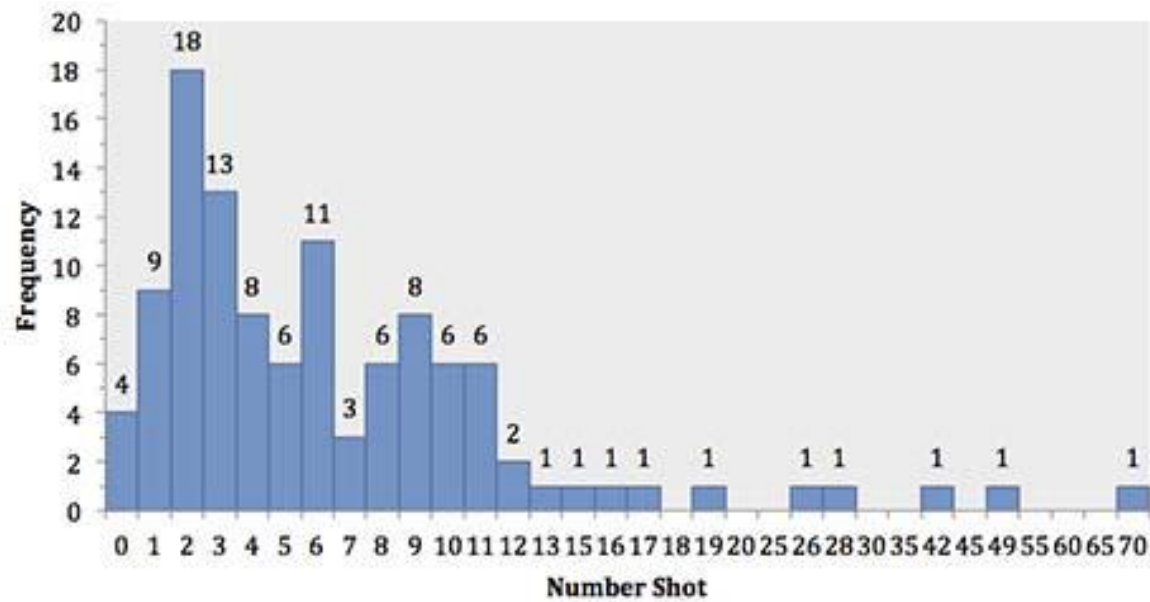- 2000: 7
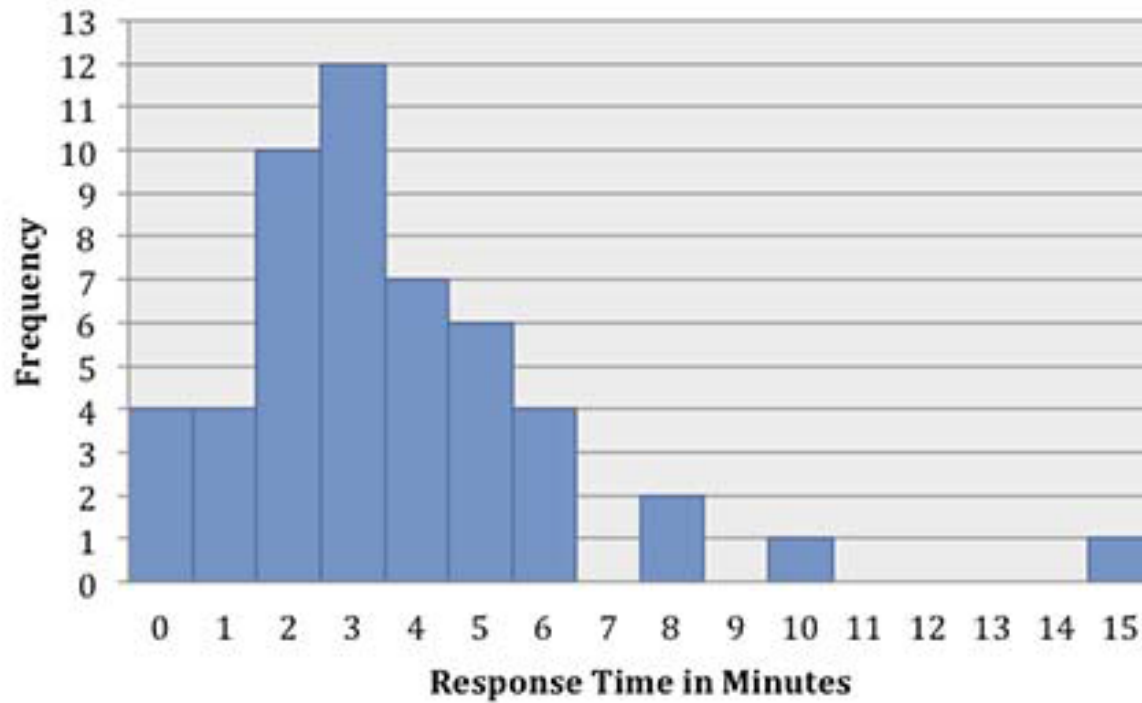- 2001: 43
- 2002: 29
- 2003: 51
- 2004: 20
- 2005: 51
- 2006: 46
- 2007: 126
- 2008: 63
- 2009: 143
- 2010: 86
- 2011: 84
- 2012: 208
- 2013: 86

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014

A Study of 160 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 - 2013:
Location Categories

EDUCATION
Schools (Pre-K to 12), 16.9% (27)
Institutions of Higher Education, 7.5% (12)

EDUCATION, 24.4% (39)

COMMERCE
Businesses, Open to pedestrian traffic, 27.5% (44)
Malls, 3.8% (6)
Businesses, Closed to pedestrian traffic, 14.4% (23)

COMMERCE, 45.6% (73)

GOVERNMENT
Other Government Properties, 6.9% (11)
Military, 3.1% (5)

GOVERNMENT, 10.0% (16)

OPEN SPACE, 9.4% (15)

RESIDENCES, 4.4% (7)

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES, 2.5% (4)

HOUSES OF WORSHIP, 3.8% (6)

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014

Risk Assessment

The _**FIRST**_ rule of thumb is to avoid stereotypes

Highlights the importance of risk factors (two students with the same number of risk factors may appear completely different otherwise)

FBI's Four-Pronged Assessment

O'Toole ME. "The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective." FBI Critical Incident Response Group and National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. 1999.

CDC Risk Factors for the Perpetration of Youth Violence

Updated 2012.
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html

FBI and CDC Risk Assessments

1) Individual Risk Factors

2) Family Dynamics

3) School Dynamics and the Student's Role in Those Dynamics

4) Social Dynamics

5) Community Risk Factors

Psychological Personality Traits and Behavior (FBI)

"Leakage" of intentions

Easily frustrated

Signs of depression

Narcissism

Failed romantic relationship

Alienation/Isolation/Estrangement

Epidemiological Individual Risk Factors (CDC)

History of Violent Victimization (bullying/abuse)

ID, ADHD, Learning Disorders, Processing Difficulties

History of Early Aggression

Substance Abuse

Social Skills Difficulties

High Emotional Distress with Poor Frustration Tolerance

Antisocial Beliefs and Attitudes (Callous/Unemotional)

Exposure to Family Community Violence/Conflict Trauma

Family Dynamics

Turbulent/Conflictual Parent-Child Relationship

Acceptance of Pathological Behavior ("Kids Being Kids" or blaming authorities)

Harsh/Lax/Inconsistent Discipline (oscillating between no limit setting and then over-corrective harshness)

Low Parental Involvement/Supervision

Lack of Intimacy/Emotional Attachment

Parental Substance Abuse/Criminal Activity

Decreased Overall Family Functioning/Family Overwhelmed by Psychosocial Stressors

Access to Weapons

School Dynamics

Student's Attachment to School

Tolerance of Disrespectful Behavior/Bullying

Inequitable/Inconsistent Discipline

Inflexible Culture

"Pecking Order" Among Students

Code of Silence/Lack of Trust

Ability to Identify and Involve At-Risk Youth

Unsupervised Computer Access/Communication

Social Dynamics

Media Access to Graphic Violence

Delinquent Peer Groups/Gangs (Shared Interests)

Social Rejection by Many Peers

Lack of Involvement in Other School/Social Activities

Restricted Interests

Copycat Effect

Community Risk Factors

Diminished economic opportunities

High concentrations of poor/underserved residents

High levels of transiency

High levels of family disruption

Low levels of community participation

Socially disorganized neighborhoods

Community relationship with local police departments

Access to weapons/substances for youth, gang involvement, community violence

CDC Risk Factors for the Perpetration of Youth Violence 2012 (Individual)

History of Violent Victimization (bullying/abuse)

ID, ADHD, Learning Disorders, Processing Difficulties

History of Early Aggression

Substance Abuse

Social Skills Difficulties

High Emotional Distress with Poor Frustration Tolerance

Antisocial Beliefs and Attitudes (Callous/Unemotional)
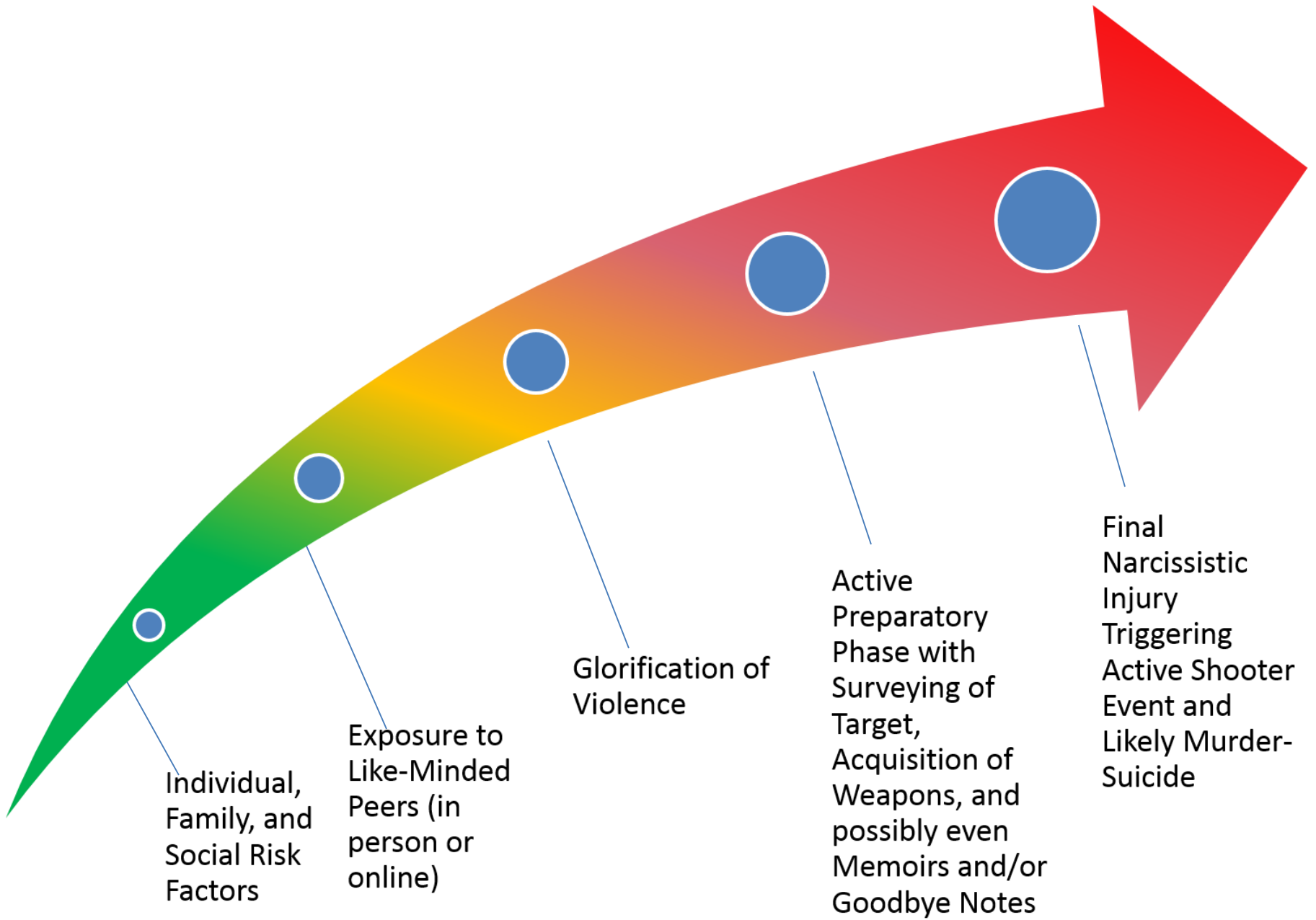
Exposure to Family Community Violence/Conflict Trauma

Change in FBI Philosophy

Large numbers of students in every community have many of the aforementioned risk factors

Degree of Risk

Risk: Static Facers vs. Continuum?

Individual, Family, and Social Risk Factors

Exposure to Like-Minded Peers (in person or online)

Glorification of Violence

Active Preparatory Phase with Surveying of Target, Acquisition of Weapons, and possibly even Memoirs and/or Goodbye Notes

Final Narcissistic Injury Triggering Active Shooter Event and Likely Murder-Suicide

Ten Key Questions in Threat Assessment Investigations

Borum R, Fein RA, Vossekuil B, et al. "Threat Assessment: Defining an Approach for Evaluating Risk of Targeted Violence." *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*. 1999;17(3):323-37.

Fein RA, Vossekuil B, Pollack WS, et al. (2002) "Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates." United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education. Washington, D.C.

Case Illustration

A 17 year old male in a high school is brought to the staff's attention by other students in the school after he is seen making a threatening post on social media, suggesting that the following day would be "the apocalypse" for everyone at school.

Question 1

What ***motivated*** the potential perpetrator to make the statements or take the action that caused him or her to come to attention?

The student is brought into the guidance counselor's office. He states that he was motivated by "just being fed up by all the phonies in this school and wanting to give them a wake up call"

Question 2

What has the potential perpetrator communicated to anyone concerning his/her intentions (i.e. "***leakage***")?

Question 3

Has the potential perpetrator **_shown_** a perseverative interest in targeted violence, previous/current other perpetrators of targeted violence, weapons, extremist groups, or murder? If so, how?

The student reports that his favorite movies are "anything directed by Quentin Tarantino." He also spends a lot of time in his room alone playing Call of Duty.

Question 4

Has the potential perpetrator **_engaged_** in attack-related behavior, including any menacing, harassing, and/or stalking-type behavior?

There have been some minor reports of bullying from this student towards others, but nothing severe has been noted by school officials

Question 5

Does the potential perpetrator have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, etc. with indications that he/she ***has acted on those beliefs***?

Question 6

How organized is the potential perpetrator? ***Is he/she capable*** of developing and carrying out a plan?

Despite having poor grades, this patient is highly articulate and intelligent in his ability to explain his thinking and reasoning.

Question 7

Has the potential perpetrator experienced a recent loss/or loss of status, and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair (***<u>narcissistic injury, or "the last straw"</u>***)?

The patient denies any recent losses or feeling of humiliation, but does site a constant progressive feeling of not belonging to any particular group and feeling like a "lone wolf"

Question 8

Corroboration: What is the potential perpetrator saying and is it consistent with his/her own actions (again "leakage")?

In this event, the guidance counselor does involve law enforcement who indicates it is reasonable to interview friends and parents. The student does not appear to have any close friends at school, but his parents are not aware of any planning to carry out an act of violence.
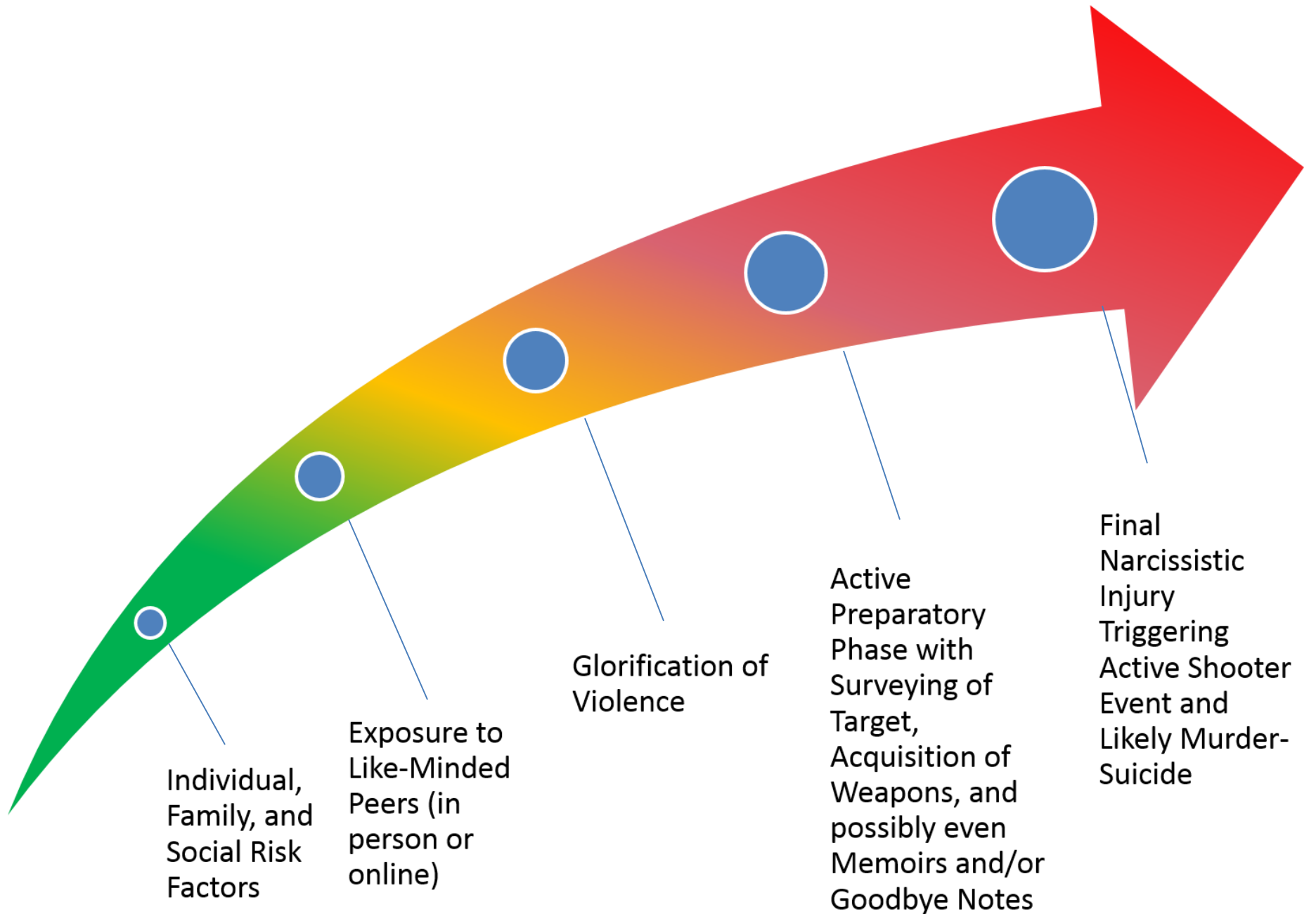
Question 9

Is there ***concern*** among those that know the potential perpetrator that he/she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?

Question 10

What *__factors__* in the potential perpetrator's life and/or environment might increase/decrease the likelihood of this individual attempting to attack a target?

A great deal of time is spent talking with the student and parents about the concern that the school has regarding the patient's current mental and emotional health. The family is strongly encouraged to enroll in individual and family counseling, and the student begins school counseling as well. The school also continues to look out for signs of "leakage."

Individual, Family, and Social Risk Factors

Exposure to Like-Minded Peers (in person or online)

Glorification of Violence

Active Preparatory Phase with Surveying of Target, Acquisition of Weapons, and possibly even Memoirs and/or Goodbye Notes

Final Narcissistic Injury Triggering Active Shooter Event and Likely Murder-Suicide

Threat Assessment in the Campus Setting

Sokolow BA, Lewis WS, Wolf CR, et al. (2009). The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) White Paper.

https://www.brookhavencollege.edu/pdf/studentsvcs/care/Rubric.pdf

LAUSD Threat Assessment and Management Quick Reference Guide
(last updated 2011)

http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_ORGANIZATIONS/FLDR_COO/CHIEF_OPERATIONS_OFFICER/COO_CRISIS_COUNSELING/COO_CRISIS_COUNSELING_DISASTER_RECOVERY/COO_CRISIS_COUNS_SERVICES_ASSES_MGT/COO_CRISIS_COUNS_SERVS_THREAT_ASSESSMENT_QUICK_REFERENCE/QUICK%20REFERENCE%20GUIDE-THREAT%202011%20FINAL.PDF