



# Understanding and Preventing School Shootings in the United States

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**Congressional Briefing  
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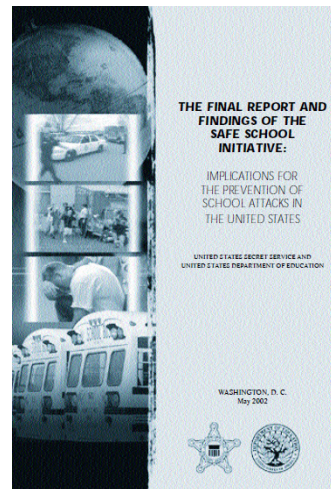
# SESSION AGENDA

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- Understanding School Shootings
- Implications for Prevention
- Operating a School Threat Assessment Program
- Other Things We Can Do
- Summary / Q&A



# Understanding School Shootings



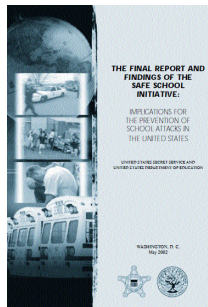
*Safe School Initiative* Final Report  
[http://www.sigmatma.com/  
resources.html](http://www.sigmatma.com/resources.html)



# SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE FINDINGS

- 1. School-based attacks are rarely sudden, impulsive acts.**
- 2. Prior to the attacks, others usually knew of attacker's idea/plan.**
- 3. Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.**

Source: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002).

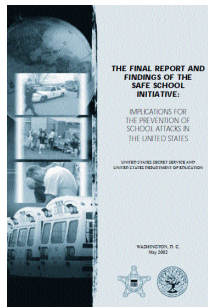




# SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE FINDINGS

4. There is no accurate or useful profile of the “school shooter.”
5. Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack.
6. Most attackers had significant difficulties with losses or failures. Many were suicidal.

Source: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002).

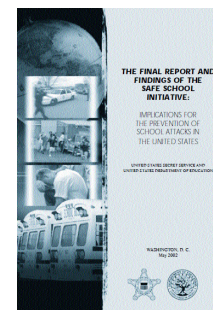




# SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE FINDINGS

7. Many felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
8. Most attackers had access to weapons – and has used weapons -- prior to the attack.
9. In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.
10. Despite prompt law enforcement response, most incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention.  
**Most were very brief in duration.**

Source: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of Targeted School Violence in the U.S.* (2002).





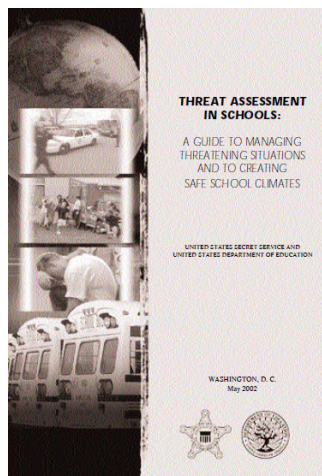
# IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION

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- **Many school attacks can be prevented.**
- **Information about a student's ideas and plans for violence can be observed or discovered before harm can occur.**
- **But information available is likely to be scattered and fragmented.**
- **Key is to act quickly upon an initial report of concern, gather other pieces of the puzzle, then assemble to see what picture emerges.**
- **Assessment involves asking: Is this student on a pathway toward violence?**



# Operating a School Threat Assessment Program



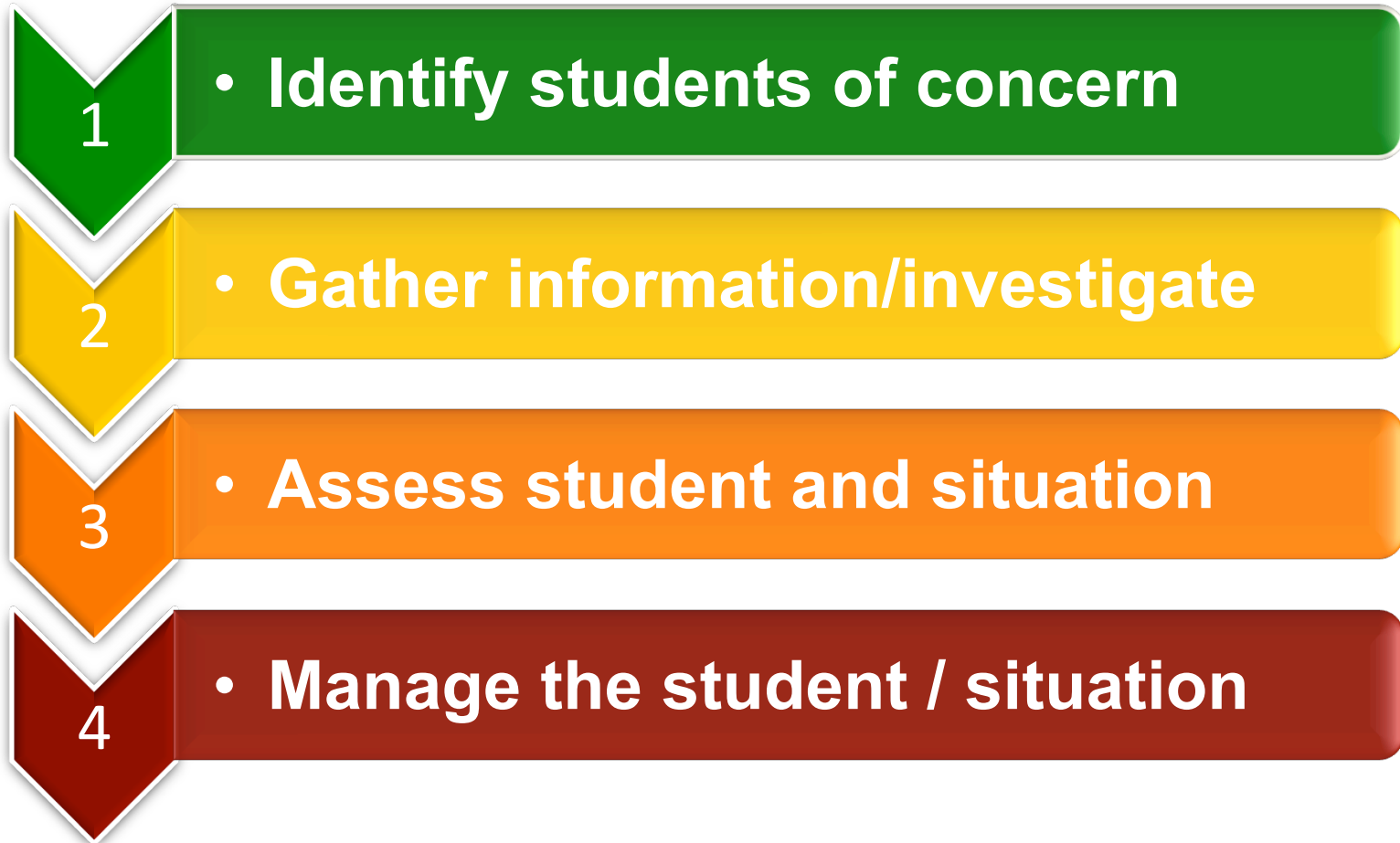
*USSS/ED School Threat Assessment Guide*  
<http://www.sigmatma.com/resources.html>





# SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT

**A systematic process that is designed to:**





# SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

## Essential elements of a school threat assessment program:

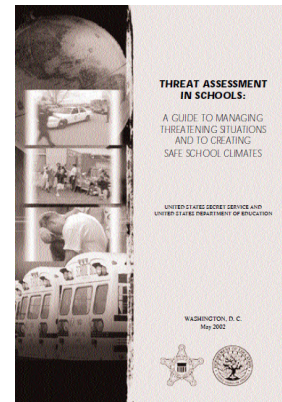
### 1. Authority to conduct an assessment

### 2. Capacity to conduct inquiries and investigations

- Multidisciplinary team based in school OR district
- Threat assessment training for team
- Process for information gathering and sharing

### 3. Integrated systems relationships

- Within and external to school
- Between people, not institutions





# Other Things We Can Do



# ENCOURAGE REPORTING

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- **Bystanders can play a critical role in prevention**
- **Role of threat assessment team is not punitive**
- **Goals are to maintain safety and connect person with necessary help**
- **Earlier reporting allows greater range of options**
- **Reporting allows something to be done**

***“If you see something, say something.”***

**Source: NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority**



# ENHANCE SCHOOL CLIMATE

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## **Assess and enhance school climate:**

- Surveys for faculty, staff, students, parents, others
- Data-driven enhancements
- Student input for solutions and implementation

## **Connection with all students:**

- Powerful protective factor
- Low-cost or no-cost options



# Summary / Q&A



# SUMMARY

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- **Prevention of school violence is possible.**
- **School threat assessment programs can identify and help address a broad array of problematic behavior.**
- **A multi-disciplinary team, with a process, liaison relationships, and a positive climate can facilitate the overall process.**
- **Periodic training and/or process review are critical to effective threat assessment.**



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Report and Guide available for download at: [www.SigmaTMA.com/resources.html](http://www.SigmaTMA.com/resources.html)