

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE KERN COUNTY SCHOOL THREAT  
ASSESSMENT TASKFORCE: MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF THE ACTIVE  
SHOOTER THREAT IN KERN COUNTY

By

Bobby Ray Woolard jr

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**By**

**Bobby Ray Woolard jr**

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**A Program Evaluation of the Kern County School Threat Assessment Taskforce:**

**Mitigating the Effects of the Active-Shooter Threat in Kern County**

**By Bobby Ray Woolard jr**

**This thesis has been accepted on behalf of the Department of Public Policy and Administration by their supervisory committee:**

*Chandra Commuri*  
Chandra Commuri, PhD *Feb. 18. 2014*  
Date

*Jason Townsend*  
Jason Townsend, MPA *2/24/14*  
Date

## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	i
<b>Executive Summary</b>	ii
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	
Threat Defined	4
Suspect Pre-Attack Behavior Patterns	5
Profile vs. Indicators	6
Pre-Attack Characteristics	9
Case Review #1	11
Case Review #2	13
Case Review #3	18
Case Review #4	21
<b>Chapter Three: Policy &amp; Procedure</b>	
Policy & Practices	26
Collaboration	27
Educator Role	28
Mental Health Role	29
Law Enforcement Role	30
Outreach Programs	32
Preparedness Training	33
<b>Chapter Four: KCSTAT</b>	
Active-Shooter Intervention	38
School Site Threat Assessment	39
Incident Command Structure	39
Training and Low-Tech Solutions	41
Program Training Methods	43
First Responders & Field Based Exercises	44
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusions</b>	
Conclusions	49
<b>References</b>	51
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A: KSTAT Logic Model	56
Appendix B: IRB Letter of Approval	57

## **Executive Summary**

The Kern County School Threat Assessment Taskforce (KCSTAT) was formed to establish partnerships, review current policies, procedures, for site security and threat assessments to identify resources and introduce key personnel to protect, detour and mitigate death or injury to our children from an active-shooter event, such as “Columbine”, “New Town” or “Virginia Tech”.

School based violence is not a new subject to most of us living in the United States and there are numerous research and macro-policies from government agencies, i.e., Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United States Department of Education (DOE) and the United States Secret Service (USSS), with guidance to schools to prepare for such events.

It is evident that during the era of civil liability and conflicting advice, having educators elect the safest practice to prepare for an active-shooter event is unfamiliar to their discipline. This burden should be shouldered with an “all discipline” collaborative from areas of expertise with capabilities to assist with identifying the best methods to prepare and act to an active-shooter event on their campus.

Active-shooter incidents are extremely rare with high consequences and there must be a universal decision to provide a standardized policy and practice throughout our region to give a basis to train and prepare educators and students to provide a foundation for improving their chances of survival in a school-based violent attack.

KCSTAT’s unique blend of personnel from a variety of professions have developed an unified and focused approach on problem solving the risk specific event of an active-shooter on one of our community’s school grounds, and providing suggestions to mitigate, train and prepare for such an event if it occurs.

## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

At a moment's notice, a police officer could be dispatched to a call of an active-shooter event at one of our local schools. Officers prepare and train for such events, but limited inter-agency training focusing on specific risks, tactics and rehearsals have not been coordinated by a collaborative of first responders, education administrators, mental health professionals and transitional assistance programs, to the prepare for this cultural phenomenon of a school based violent attack.

A collaborative using the national model of the "Safe School Initiative" was created, to address issues with school campus security, mental health awareness and first responders preparedness plans to mitigate the loss of innocent lives at our educational settings. The recent national headlines of active-shooter incidents have instilled a new awareness of reviewing my department's (Bakersfield Police Department, Bakersfield, Ca.) policy and procedures, as well as all first responders and education personnel to review their protocols they were currently implementing to adhere to the national model of the U.S. Department of Education/U.S. Secret Service Safe School Initiative (SSI).

I have examined peer review articles, media sources, governmental and non-governmental sources on identifying a systematic practice for all stakeholders involved in our local schools, law enforcement, fire personnel, acute, transitional and mental health providers, to bring attention to specific goals and agendas to limit the risks of such horrific events from occurring in our community and, at minimum, limit the number of casualties and victims if an event occurs.

During the inception of the Kern County Safe School Initiative, we recognized the need for a standard response to a school-based violent attack. There was a responsibility to collaborate with several government entities, such as, The Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Kern County Mental Health, local law enforcement agencies, local fire agencies, emergency management personnel, local hospitals and the American Red Cross, to establish an overlapping policy that addresses the threat of school-based violent attacks and what shall be done to mitigate a deadly situation to protect the human life entrusted to all of us. This collaboration was formed as the Kern County School Threat Assessment Taskforce (KCSTAT).

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The critical aspects of the creation of KCSTAT were to prepare and implement a process where collaboration, training and equipping officers, fire fighters, emergency response personnel (ambulance), school administrators, mental health officials and local hospitals to assist with developing overlapping policies and procedures to prepare for school-based violent attacks. A standardized approach would direct policy that leads to successful planning for reducing violence from occurring in a school setting.

The remainder of my paper will be a program evaluation of the Kern County School Threat Assessment Taskforce (KCSTAT) and the Safe School Initiative's commitment to unilaterally study past school shooting incidents, current industry practices and policy and procedures for responding to school-based violent attacks. The KCSTAT has built partnerships with law enforcement, education and mental health professionals to base an asymmetrical approach to solve an unknown and dangerous

situation on a school campus and creating a unified preparedness plan to keep our schools safe.

School life and school-based violent attacks have raised questions of cultural and social issues in our nation's schools and the reoccurring trend of violence perpetrated by attackers in our schools and their systematic targeting of children. More so, why are school based violent attacks occurring and what measures is the KCSTAT providing to the community for improving our methods to respond and prevent, in a unified approach, to such events? This research leads to essential emphasis on preparedness and creating a knowledge base for stakeholders to have a plan when mayhem strikes at an education setting, mitigating their role as a victim and transition their thought process to survivor mode.

## Chapter 2

### *Threat Defined*

The KCSTAT began with identifying the threat and the definitions of a school-based violent attack, with a long term strategy of working the problem outwards and create solutions accordingly. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a school-based violent attack (including an active-shooter) is someone armed with a gun, knife or any other destructive device that can injure or kill. The working definition within the law enforcement community; is one or more people actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, attackers use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selected victims. These attacks are normally unpredictable and progress rather quickly. Typically, law enforcement is dispatched to respond to stop the threat and to limit the harm or death to the victims. Most of the case studies researched by the KCSTAT showed the incident concluded within 10-15 minutes of the first shot being fired. Schools have become the arena for violent conflict, even in tranquil rural regions and well-to-do suburbs. (Braverman, Denenberg, T. & Deneberg, R., 1998). The possibility of an active-shooter can occur at any school and there is no education setting immune.

The KCSTAT Safe School Initiative compiled past school-based violent attacks and incorporated dialogue for planning and identifying pre-attack behaviors engaged by students who carried out school shootings. That process examined four incidents of targeted school-based violence (active-shooter) events that occurred in the United States from January 1979 through December 2012. These finding revealed most attackers did

not threaten their targeted victims directly, but their behavior gave subtle indicators that there was pre-planning conducted before the attack occurred. In an educational setting, attackers were less prone to implement an attack if they had some type of connection with an adult in a position of authority. It is believed if the person is identified as having a high potential of becoming an attacker, the triggering event or episodes could have been mitigated before the problems manifested to the point where in the mind of the attacker, violence is their only recourse (Borum, Fein, Modzelski, Reddy & Vossekuil, 2001). Although mental health professionals are an important factor in the threat assessment and deterrence of an attack, the preliminary efforts of the KCSTAT should be preparing potential victims to react to a threat once it is on the school's campus.

### ***Suspect Pre-Attack Behavior Patterns***

When an individual or group decides to script an attack at a school venue, it stirs into the deepest side of predation only true behavioral experts can completely understand. An average person can only speculate the wrongs of society and its youth from the news images of school-based violent attacks depicted on one of the many 24-hour news networks. Although we are grossly fascinated by the event, as a law enforcement officer and first responder, I often wonder if there were any "pre-attack" indicators telegraphed by the suspect or suspects prior to launching their attack. Short of having an oracle readily available, generating a stereotype of an individual who is apt to commit a school-based violent attack leave many fundamental questions of what "pre-attack" indicators were revealed by the perpetrators, and if anything was done to intervene.

Although the learning institutions vary in their population, age and demographics, the act of an active-shooter strikes a profound nerve in all of us, and more often than not,

it leaves an aftermath of unanswered questions. Although a school-based violent attack is statistically rare, there are many prolonged questions on what led to the attack. Some contributing factors may be our current culture, prevalence of media violence, bullying, family problems, biological predisposition, mental illness, peer relations, demographic change, gun-culture, copycatting or violence-based video games. All seem to be indicators that may lead to violent behavior and childhood aggression, and has long been considered a significant social problem with serious consequences for aggressors and victims (Guerra, Sadek & Williams, 2011). In Eisenbraun's (2007) research, he suggested that bullying is associated with low self-esteem, normative endorsement of bullying, and that negative school climate for all genders during their educational experience may have adverse effects, which may be an associated factor to violent behavior in students.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU) conducted research into perpetrator and pre-conceived violence that focused on individuals, groups, and locations and compared behaviors that preceded and were related to their attacks. The attackers consider, plan and prepare before engaging in acts of violence. These behaviors are often detectable; providing an opportunity for disruption of the intended violence by utilizing a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to assessment and intervention (Fein & Vossekuil, 1999).

### ***Profiling vs. Indicators***

Who are these individuals and what "pre-attack" indicators do they display and who should be identifying these pre-attack behavior patterns to intervene prior to an attack? A significant part of preventing school violence involves establishing and implementing a threat assessment system (Langman, 2009). There is not a "profile" of a

school shooter and students who carry out these assaults and each attacker differ from each other in numerous ways. Researchers who are committed to studying active shooters in a school setting have attempted to analyze the “pre-attack” indicators to root out the person who is at risk to commit such an extreme act of violence. Through their studies, they have found the act of violence of an “active shooter” is a low frequency act with high consequences to the psyche in our society. It is difficult to conceptualize the possibility of a school-based violent attack occurring in my jurisdiction, but if we as a community are aware of school-based violent attacks, we should collectively prepare for an event that could have a lasting and significant negative impact on our community. It is clear that many Americans fear violence in schools, but the precise nature of this fear and its relationship to the actual probability of harm are much less certain (Arnette & Walseben, 1998).

The New York Police Department developed an analysis of active shooter events from 1966 to 2010. Researchers studied 281 active shooter incidents, focusing on the common characteristics of the method of the attack, targeted locations and number of attackers. The statistical analysis found a large variation among attacks across some broad categories, including: sex of the attacker, age of the attacker, number of attackers, planning tactics, selected targets, number of casualties, location of attack, weapons used and attack resolution (NYPD, 2013).

Based on the study conducted by the NYPD, only eight cases involved female attackers (3%). The information gleaned from the median still doesn't reflect the average age of the school-based violent attackers and what appears to be a surge of violent attacks being committed by attackers between the ages of 15-19. Although the data

provided by NYPD reflected over the past four decades is informative as it relates to “active-shooter” events, it still does not truly encapsulate the characteristics of the offender of a “school-based violent attacker”, also referred to as an “on-campus” offender.

On-campus offenders have distinctive characteristics and according to the Federal Bureau of Investigations Behavior Analysis Unit (BAU), have in almost all cases acted alone. The age range of “on-campus” attackers is 16 - 62, with an average age of 28 years, which varied to the offender(s) affiliation with the campus. Lastly, the characteristics of the “on-campus” offender(s), was 94% male (consistent with other active shooter events identified by NYPD). This still doesn’t negate the myth that all attackers involved in school-based violence are male.

Although the frequency of school- based violent attacks is rare, a complete understanding of the pre-attack indicators is vague due to the resolution of the event. Resolution of the event is considered to have occurred when the attacker has stopped shooting people by some direct action, including suicide or intervention by law enforcement or bystander. Blair et al. (2011) separates the resolution of an incident into two broad time frames, whether the event was resolved before or after the police arrived on scene. This is an important fact based on having limited information on the “attacker’s” mind set leading up to the “on-campus” attack. In most cases, knowledge of the disposition of the offender prior to the attack is limited due to a resolution of the offender’s death and the inability to conduct a post-shooting assessment (Blair & Martindale, 2011).

Interestingly, according to the FBI, when examining the school shootings, an important fact is school shooters murder their parent, guardian or caregiver 26% of the time. Based on the 2010 research by Kalish and Kimmel, culturally, hegemonic masculinity available to young American men encourages the use of violence to avenge a perceived challenge to their masculine identity. When these attacks to one's masculine identity affect someone to the point of suicide ideation, committing mass murder can be an instrumental way to achieve a sense of power; framing one's suicide with violence and aggression may serve to make it appear a more potent act (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010).

### ***Pre-Attack Characteristics***

Law enforcement, mental health professionals and scholars have hypothesized on what leads to the behavior of attackers and what causes them to become active shooters. Based on Harding's (2002) qualitative case studies, he proposed a theory regarding school shootings and determined through logic and analysis, there were five distinct characteristics of an attacker who carried out an "Active- Shooter" event. Once he combined the data of process tracing and pattern matching, it was summarized as follows. First, the attacker had easy access to a firearm. Secondly, the attacker must have a venue (school) in which the problem can be solved (scripted in their mind that this will fix the problem).

This notion has been sensationalized by mass media coverage within our culture that gives permission to, and will immortalize the attacker; providing the shooter of a moment of masculinity (Harding, Fox & Mehta, 2002). Third, the attacker will choose a location where there is a large volume of social activity. It is in these settings where the shooters may have experienced a feeling of a low level in a social hierarchy, leaving them

more vulnerable to “bullying” or similar form of social segregation and marginalization, which may have led to low self-esteem. Fourth, if social marginalization is a factor, such as personal trauma, family issues or separation, mental illness, physical or sexual abuse, these factors could make the attacker feel marginal and powerless. The fifth factor is the lack of a social support system to identify and help troubled youths who may be at risk or prone to violent acts, such as school shootings.

An interesting phenomenon is addressed in Hardy’s fifth factor which is the act of “Copycat” effect. Chesbro et al. (2009) expanded on this phenomenon by explaining copycat behavior is very common. Anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that threats increase in schools nationwide after a rampage school shooting has occurred anywhere in the United States (Chesbro & Schuster, 2009). It is an especially critical time for all stakeholders to be vigilant in noting and reporting odd student behavior after a highly publicized school shooting incident. Based on Harding’s characteristics demonstrated by an “active-shooter”, the scope was narrowed and each trait was categorized to matrix their pre-attack behavior patterns into five categories;

- Category 1, Attacker/s had access to firearms.
- Category 2, Attacker/s had a venue to complete attack, copycat school shootings.
- Category 3, Attacker/s had negative social position among peers (bullied).
- Category 4, Attacker/s had a history of family breakdown or mental illness.
- Category 5, Attacker/s had limited social support.

Although previous researchers have identified associated pre-attack indicators in school-based shootings, Harding limited his studies to minimal cases and identified factors at the meso-level, which focused on school’s “on-campus” organization and

community culture. An important meso-level phenomenon in Hardy's research identified an adolescent culture in which "on-campus" offenders commonly conceal themselves from adult authority and create social barriers to prevent intervention before the act is carried out.

Student threat assessments can be distinguished from profiling in part because the investigation is triggered by the students own threatening or concerning behavior rather by some broader combination of student's characteristics (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski & Jimerson, 2010). In the assessment of an attacker, it must be considered that they were aware of potential risk factors when developing their plan and as it evolved to the implementation stages.

Based on the five characteristics identified in Harding's research, four school-based violent attacks will be summarized and categorized based on "pre-attack" indicators within a matrix and explain how these "pre-attack" should be studied and used as a platform for future student threat assessments.

### **Case Review #1**

**January 29, 1979:** From her bedroom window, Brenda Ann Spencer opened fire on several elementary aged school children as they were waiting for the principal to open a locked gate leading onto the school's campus.

<b>Number of attack locations:</b>	1
<b>Location information:</b>	Grover Cleveland Elementary School, San, Diego, California
<b>Attacker Information:</b>	Brenda Ann Spencer (White Female, 16)
<b>Casualties:</b>	9 dead, 2 wounded

<b>Number of weapons:</b>	1
<b>Weapon/s information:</b>	.22 caliber rifle
<b>Relationship to victim/s:</b>	No apparent connection
<b>Duration of attack:</b>	7 hours
<b>Date attack concluded:</b>	Same date
<b>Resolution:</b>	Surrendered to police

*Sources:*

1. *Brenda Spencer School Killer*

At the age of 16, Brenda Ann Spencer carried out a shooting spree at Grover Cleveland Elementary School, killing nine and wounding two, as students were lining up at a gate leading into the school's grounds. Spencer was apprehended after a long standoff with the San Diego Police Department. At the time of the incident neither drugs nor alcohol appeared to be a factor in the shooting. She told the investigating officers she committed the attack because "I just did it for the fun, I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day and shooting the children was just like shooting ducks in the pond. The (children) were just standing around like cattle, it was easy pickings." During a search of the residence, officers located a .22 caliber rifle, a gift from her father, used to commit the attack. Reportedly, Spencer took a liking to guns and also stories that contained violence. She had a minor history of petty theft, drug abuse and truancy. Prior to the attack, students at her school alleged she made the statement that she wanted "to do something big to get on television."

**Spencer's Matrix Findings:**

Category 1: Spencer had access to firearms.

Category 2: Spencer had a venue to complete attack.

Category 3: No evidence if Spencer had negative social position among peers.

Category 4: No evidence if Spencer had a history of family breakdown or mental illness.

Category 5: No evidence if Spencer had limited social support.

### **Case Review #2**

**April 20, 1999**, Richard Klebold and Eric Harris, students at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado, engineered what was supposed to be a mass casualty bombing at the school's cafeteria. When the bombs failed to detonate, the pair were armed with two sawed-off shotguns, pistol and rifle (intended to shoot survivors of the bombing) and initiated their attack sequence by randomly shooting students throughout the school's interior. The planning was so meticulous, that the pair also imbedded a vehicle explosive device (VED) in Klebold's vehicle, specifically targeting first responders. The pair financed their attack by purchasing the firearms, ammunition and bomb components, with part-time jobs at a local pizza parlor. The shooting was resolved by a suicide pact.

<b>Number of attack locations:</b>	1
<b>Location information:</b>	Columbine High School Littleton, Co.
<b>Attacker Information:</b>	Eric Harris (White Male, 18) Dylan Klebold (White Male, 18)
<b>Casualties:</b>	13 dead, 24 wounded
<b>Number of weapons:</b>	4 (firearms) & explosives
<b>Weapon/s information:</b>	(2) sawed-off shotguns, .223 rifle, and 9mm pistol
<b>Relationship to victim/s:</b>	Current Students
<b>Duration of attack:</b>	47 minutes
<b>Date attack concluded:</b>	Same date

**Resolution:**

Suicide

*Source:*

1. State of Colorado Columbine Review Commission (May, 2001)

Several years prior to the pair's "on campus" attack, they created an on-line web site hosting the video game "Doom". The website itself hosted a blog where Harris posted numerous entries on how to fabricate explosive devices, in addition to rants about his distaste with society and death threats to a former classmate. The student who received the death threat notified his parents, who in turn contacted the sheriff's department to investigate the matter. Law enforcement determined there were numerous threats directed towards students and faculty at Columbine High School in a "hit list". The blog also indicated he had access to weapons and explosives. In 1996, the investigator viewed the content and authored an affidavit to search Harris' residence; however, it was never filed or served.

In 1998, the pair was arrested for theft of tools from an unlocked van and were sentenced to a juvenile diversion program. In the program they were mandated to take anger management classes. After the theft incident, Harris began seeing a therapist; however his exact mental condition was never diagnosed. Klebold had a history of consuming alcohol and according to reports; he was never mandated to attend any substance abuse diversion classes through the probation department. At the time of the incident both Klebold and Harris were on active probation.

Months leading to the attack, Harris began to write in his journal of the duo's planned attack and boasted on their collection of firearms and bombs. The pair went as far as memorializing their planning by videotaping the weapons they acquired and

equating their plan to outdo the Oklahoma bombing at the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. According to mental health officials, Harris was obsessed with suicidal thoughts and dealt with bouts of acute depression. At the time of the shooting he was prescribed with the anti-depressant “Zoloft”. According to Psychiatrist Dr. Breggin, Harris had an effective level of the anti-depressant Luvox (fluvoxamine) in his blood during the massacre at Columbine and increased his dose two months prior to his involvement in the shooting at the high school (Breggin, 2001). Dr. Breggin reported Harris was displaying the symptomology of toxicity in the form of a narcotic induced “tremor” prior to the shooting, which side effects could include violent behavior.

At the beginning of the attack, Harris and Klebold entered the school grounds and placed a time initiated improvised explosive device (IED) in the cafeteria, timed for the lunch break and planned to cause a mass casualty event, and returned to their vehicle (parked in the schools parking lot) where the cache of weapons were stored. After heavily arming themselves, they became aware that their explosives failed to trigger. They modified their original plan and began the shooting spree, by murdering the first victim near the parking lot as she sat on a planter.

After the first victim was down, they proceeded to the school’s interior and systematically shot at targets of opportunity. A school resource officer was at the school’s campus and had a brief exchange of gunfire with Harris and Klebold as they were moving from the interior to the exterior of the building. This engagement was within the first five minutes of the attack and no effort was made by the deputy to follow the suspects back inside as the killings continued. The death toll continued as they moved through the high school, until SWAT team members entered the building approximately

47 minutes after the first shots. The incident was resolved by both Harris and Klebold with self-inflicted gunshots to the head.

To rationalize this event there are many factors to consider, including the social climate which Harris and Klebold were exposed to and how it led to the “on-campus” massacre. Although most high schools have a hierarchy class which unofficially places kids in a higher or lower social position, there is no direct evidence suggesting that either Klebold or Harris were victims of bullying or peer victimization. It is reported both Harris and Klebold had a strong fascination with violent video games to the extent Harris ran an internet page blogging about the game “Doom” (a first person shooter (FPS) game with graphic violence).

#### **Harris Matrix Findings:**

- Category 1: Harris had access to firearms or explosives.
- Category 2: Harris had a venue to complete attack.
- Category 3: Harris had negative social position among peers.
- Category 4: Harris had a history of family of mental illness.
- Category 5: No evidence if Harris had limited social support.

#### **Klebold Matrix Findings:**

- Category 1: Klebold had access to firearms or explosives.
- Category 2: Klebold had a venue to complete attack.
- Category 3: Klebold had negative social position among peers.
- Category 4: Klebold had a history of family of mental illness.
- Category 5: No evidence if Klebold had limited social support.

Since the early days of radio and movies, investigators have searched for possible effects, typically negative, that different media may have on audiences, especially children (Sternheimer, 2007). After the shooting at Columbine High School, it was revealed that Harris and Klebold had a fascination with first person shooter (FPS) video games.

It was suggested that the duo used the video games as a platform to conduct pre-attack rehearsals on the attack at Columbine High School. It is factual that the two attackers did have an association with violent video games; however, it is unknown if violent gaming had a direct cause relationship with the attack at Columbine. There are published studies testing the hypothesis that exposure to first person shooter video games will increase violent tendencies.

A study conducted by Bushman and Anderson (2001) has shown that brief exposure to violent video games can automatically prime aggressive thoughts (present internal state). Without a conclusive debrief from Harris and Klebold, it is almost impossible to confirm what, if any role, violent video games, specifically first person shooter games, had on the attack on Columbine High School.

A body of research suggests that violent video games cause short term and/or long term increases in aggression and violent behavior, whereas a substantial set of research studies indicate that violent video games do not cause increases in aggressiveness or may be associated with changes in certain individuals under specific circumstances (Bond, 2011).

Although the FPS game may be an associated factor to Harris and Klebold committing the rampage shooting act at Columbine High School, it should be considered that it is likely most single school shooters have played a violent video game and other causative effects resulted in the attack on a school's campus. A U.S. Secret Service (2004) review of previous school-based attacks found that one-eighth of attackers exhibited an interest in violent video games, which is less than the rate of interest attackers showed in violent movies, books, and violence in their own writings. The report did not find a relationship between playing violent video games and school shootings.

### **Case Review #3**

**April 16, 2007**, Seung Hui Cho, a student at Virginia Tech, initiated his attack sequence by murdering a female student and dormitory resident advisor. Cho proceeded to his dormitory room and finished emailing messages and preparing his manifesto to be mailed to media sources. He discarded several electronic items in a pond near his dormitory and continued to the main entrance of Norris Hall. While inside of Norris Hall, Cho repeatedly entered several filled classrooms and began systematically shooting.

<b>Number of attack locations:</b>	2
<b>Location information:</b>	Virginia Polytechnic-West Amber Hall Virginia Polytechnic-Norris Hall Blacksburg, Va.
<b>Attacker Information:</b>	Seung Hui Cho (Asian Male,23)
<b>Casualties:</b>	32 dead, 17 wounded
<b>Number of weapons:</b>	2
<b>Weapon/s information:</b>	9mm pistol, .22 caliber semi-auto pistol
<b>Relationship to victim/s:</b>	Current Student

<b>Duration of attack:</b>	West Amber Hall (unknown) Norris Hall, 11 minutes (approximate) (Combined attacks approx. 2 hrs.)
<b>Date attack concluded:</b>	Same date
<b>Resolution:</b>	Suicide

*Source:*

1. Archangel, (2008) “After Action Review of the Virginia Tech University Shooting.”

In 1992 at the age of 23, Cho migrated with his family to the United States and was identified by family members as being “withdrawn and having isolated mannerisms” (Ergenbright and Hubbard, 2012). According to Ergenbright et al., during Cho’s early development, he was characterized by his physical illness and inordinate bout of shyness and as time moved forward, the family sought out help from mental health professionals. The mental health professionals diagnosed Cho with having acute “anxiety disorder” and “social phobia”, which was provoked by specific social or performance situations, leading him to become a social introvert. In high school, Cho progressed through his studies and was classified as a “shy and diligent” student (Ergenberg & Hubbard, 2012). Although the mental health officials and educators identified Cho’s issues, he declined to continue with therapy once he reached the age of 18. Cho graduated from high school with honors and elected to attend Virginia Polytechnic, Blacksburg, Virginia. Additionally, due to patient confidentiality, none of Cho’s preceding mental health history was transferred to Virginia Tech or was included in any of his documents as an incoming student (Ergenberg & Hubbard, 2012).

In 2005 Cho was urged by a staff member at Virginia Tech to seek counseling for his mental condition. Based on the request from the staff member, Cho sought

counseling, however, no diagnoses, referral or follow-up was completed. There were several incidents where Cho reportedly stalked several female students and was contacted by campus police officers. The only action performed by campus police was “verbal” warnings to him to stop his behavior. After the campus police conducted their investigation regarding his harassing behavior, his roommate reported to campus police that Cho was suicidal. Based on Cho’s suicidal tendencies, the Virginia Tech police officers transported Cho to be evaluated to determine if he was a danger to himself or to others. A licensed social worker conducted a psychological screening on Cho and found him to be mentally ill and involuntarily committed him for a 24 hour psychological hold. Cho was released the following day and no long term mental health follow up was arranged.

After Cho was released from the mental health professionals, his behavior became more aggressive. Approximately one year prior to the mass shooting incident, he wrote a disturbing paper in one of his college classes of a fictional character who went on a shooting rampage (Ergenbright & Hubbard, 2012). He was confronted by his professor about the content of his paper and became verbally violent; however the incident was never reported to the police or mental health officials.

Approximately one year later, Cho planned and implemented two separate attacks on the school’s campus, killing 32 people and wounding 17 others. Cho used two firearms in the attack, a .22 caliber Walther P22 pistol and a 9mm Glock semi-auto pistol. Cho murdered his first two victims at West Ambler Hall. He left that dormitory and returned to his dormitory, where he changed clothing and logged on to his computer to delete several files and emails. He proceeded to Norris Hall, where classes were in session, with

his weapons and chains and locks to barricade the interior doors. Once staged, he entered several classes and randomly began shooting the students and professors. When law enforcement entered the building, Cho ended the event by a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. After the mass killing incident, Virginia Polytechnic Institute created a review panel to review the incident. The review panel pointed out gaps in current gun laws and shortcomings in the mental health care field, as well as privacy laws which left Cho's deteriorating mental health condition in college untreated (Virginia Tech Review Panel).

**Cho's Matrix Findings:**

Category 1: Cho had access to firearms.

Category 2: Cho had a venue to complete attack.

Category 3: Cho had negative social position among peers.

Category 4: Cho had a history of family breakdown or mental illness.

Category 5: Cho had limited social support.

**Case Review #4**

**December 14, 2012:** Adam Lanza breached the administration's office security door at an elementary school, opened fired on staff, and systematically searched for targets to engage in several rooms. As he located victims, he shot them indiscriminately. Before driving to the school, he shot and killed his mother in their home.

<b>Number of attack locations:</b>	2
<b>Location information:</b>	Sandy Hook Elementary School New Town, Ct. Lanza's Residence New Town, Ct
<b>Attacker Information:</b>	Adam Lanza (White Male,20)

<b>Casualties:</b>	27 dead, 2 wounded
<b>Number of weapons:</b>	4
<b>Weapon/s information:</b>	.223 rifle, 12 gage shotgun, 10mm. pistol, 9mm pistol (not used)
<b>Relationship to victim/s:</b>	Prior student
<b>Duration of attack:</b>	17 minutes (approximate)
<b>Date attack concluded:</b>	Same date
<b>Resolution:</b>	Suicide

*Source:*

1. Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection: Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting Reports.

Adam Lanza, while acting alone, murdered his mother in their home and drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School. While dressed in black tactical-style clothing, he made entry into the schools administration's building by shooting out a security glass next to a secured door leading into the administration office. After entering, he continued his assault by shooting several students and faculty members, who were randomly located in the interior of the school. Lanza had access to several weapons systems; however he selected to use a .223, carbine-rifle and 10mm pistol, which were reloaded several times during the attack. Once law enforcement entered the building, it is believed Lanza committed suicide by a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. The Connecticut State Police final report indicated Lanza had significant mental health issues which limited his ability to live a normal life or interact with others. The report also indicated Lanza had been seen by mental health professionals but his exact diagnosis was never determined, although investigators located several books related to "Asperger's Syndrome" in the

Lanza's home during their investigation. The findings in his coroner's post-mortem report revealed neither drugs nor alcohol were in his system prior to the "on-campus" attack. It was noted in the report Lanza had an obsession with violent video games and was infatuated with the Columbine High School Massacre and Northern Illinois University shootings. The report indicated that during a search of Lanza's room, law enforcement located evidence that clearly proves Lanza had access to firearms and had an obsession with mass murders and murderers.

**Lanza Matrix Findings:**

Category 1: Lanza had access to firearms.

Category 2: Lanza had a venue to complete attack.

Category 3: Lanza had negative social position among peers.

Category 4: Lanza had a history of family breakdown or mental illness.

Category 5: Lanza had limited social support.

The research has focused on the above matrix findings of the similar characteristics demonstrated by active-shooters. Surprisingly, the FBI's Behavior Analysis Unit (BAU) agreed that profiling was not an appropriate method for preventing school shootings and there was an unequivocal agreement that no single set of characteristic defined would-be student attackers with adequate specificity to be of practical value. (Cornell, Modzeleski & Jimmerson, 2010).

***Further Research Needed***

When we talk about an active-shooter, it is important to comprehend each individual's characteristics, but understanding the pre-attack factors behind the incident is as equally important. Further research is needed in the shooter's personal history, clinical

diagnosis and contextual outliers to fully evaluate what provoked them to plan, equip and execute their school-based violent attack.

According to Langman (2009), it is also probably safe to say that students are picked on every day in virtually every school in the country. Thus, peer harassment is common, but school shootings are rare. Similarly, millions of adolescents play violent video games and watch violent movies without becoming murders. Trying to explain aberrant events by commonplace behaviors is not a productive approach (Langman, 2009). It is among the five categories school shooters have demonstrated and it is an important step to understanding them. Although it does not truly identify their attacks on school campuses, it does require the KCSTAT to continue with the preparedness curriculum for the schools and ongoing training to educate first responders in the event they react to and encounter an active-shooter.

Based on information retrieved from the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), studies are currently being assessed dating back to 1974. These studies are focusing on police records, school records, court documents and other source material with a goal to identify information or noticeable suspect behavior patterns before an attack occurs. A study is necessary to ensure lack of funding or resources is not directly hindering the readiness of stakeholders from implementing an informational system to identify those kids who are most likely at risk to become an active-shooter and have a mental health protocol to subject them to intense counseling for those at risk. It is commonly known that such "Active Shooter" incidents often are classified as impulsive (NTAC, 2012). This may allow an opportunity to prevent such incident from occurring. Although there is minimal information correlating the readiness of each city on how to

respond to an active shooter and what challenges they will encounter, but there is numerous research material on the post active-shooter incidents, which my community can learn from and implement a deterrence policy through the KCSTAT.

There is a needed emphasis from school administrators, mental health officials and law enforcement to have a collaborative effort to work as together to identify potential targets and plans to react to such events. As we evolve to actively prepare our schools to train and respond to school-based violent attacks, there must be a standardized model to conduct threat assessments to point out vulnerabilities to these institutions, whether this is in a structural or individual sense. Conceptually, there has been a shift from the violence prediction model, where dangerousness was viewed as dispositional (residing within the individual), static (not subject to change) and dichotomous (either present or not present) to the current risk assessment model where dangerous or “risk” as a construct is now predominantly viewed as contextual (highly dependent on the situations or circumstances), dynamic (subject to change) and continuous (varying along a continuum of probability) (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski & Jimerson, 2010).

## Chapter 3

### *Policy & Practices*

Until recently there was a minimal unified effort in our county where all of the stakeholders, i.e., law enforcement, educators and mental health professionals who potentially may be involved with a school- based violent attack have had a universal plan for an active-shooter event. Also, there was a lack of a plan to cover an appropriate level of response by method of a coordinated action plan. The inception of the Kern County School Threat Assessment Task Force (KCSTAT) was formed to address and identify the best practices and provide reasonable and effective solutions and coordinate resources and design a plan to mitigate and prepare unilaterally to respond to an active-shooter incident.

I have had the unique opportunity to participate in the KCSTAT task force as a law enforcement representative and have brought information and suggestions from the point of view of a first responder. Although previous chapters revealed the probability of an active-shooter attack is low, there is an inherent responsibility to incorporate a baseline and standardized practice for all to prepare in the event it occurs in our jurisdiction.

Since the tragic events at Columbine High School in April 1999, the term “active-shooter on campus” has become part of the language of law enforcement, public and private school systems, and news media. Following the mass shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in April 2007, the term “active- shooter” quickly became part of dialogue on safety and security of our nation’s colleges and universities. The broader discussion of campus security began in the wake of

the terrorist attacks on September 2001, when the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation referred to schools, colleges and universities as soft and vulnerable targets to acts of terror. (Greenberg, S, 2007).

It is the goal of the KCSTAT to form protocols and recommend strategies to strengthen school site prevention, security practices, and incident command structured response models, based on analytical research of past school-based violent attacks, peer review articles and industry standards recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

### ***Collaboration***

There are several key elements formed by the KCSTAT during the critical incident planning process. The group was determined to create a partnership among first responders, educators, medical facilities, acute mental health providers and transitional help professionals to deter, prevent, react and train for an active-shooter event in our area of responsibility. Typically, the school community has the responsibility of the safety, accountability and reunification of the students and faculty at their learning institution; however, it is the role of first responders (law enforcement), to the best of their ability, to provide guidance to the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS), whose role is to formulate new curricula and assist with staff development through training. The KCSOS does not govern each of the 47 school districts in our county, but rather assists and supports individual district administrators with creating and implementing site-specific plans which address the unique dynamic of each district and the 273 school sites (Kern County Superintendent of Schools, at a glance). As the task force continued, the

Bakersfield Police Department's stance was to provide a suggestive outline or standard operating procedure (SOP) for the Kern County Superintendent of Schools to review their current policy and modify by each individual learning facility.

### ***Educators Role***

Prior to forming the STAT task force, it was determined that all of the 273 sites in our district had emergency procedures in place in the event of natural disaster, i.e., earth quake, flood or fire; however the risk-specific protocol on how to prepare for an active-shooter incident was not planned in most learning institutions. The California Education Code details and legislatively mandates all public schools from grades K-12, which are operated by school districts, work with the cooperation of local law enforcement, community leaders, parents, pupils, teachers, administrators, and other parties interested to develop a comprehensive school safety plan that addresses the safety concerns identified by the systematic planning process. This section includes developing strategies aimed at the mitigating incidents involving violence on a school campus (Education Code: 32280-32289, 2013). The Education Code also requires the Emergency Action Plan to be updated at each school site the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July each year.

Although the Education Code addresses the law to have a plan to contend with a violent act on a school campus, I learned from my KCSTAT meetings that each school administrator (usually a Principal) had an "unofficial" response on how to react to an active-shooter event at their school site for which they were accountable. Universally, the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) differed from school to school and their method of the emergency procedures never focused on risk-specific events, i.e. active shooter.

It was also identified that each of the 273 school locations have unique building designs and terrain that hindered a realistic “one-plan-fits-all” policy to address each school facility and vulnerability to prevent an active-shooter attack on their campus. With limited budgets, it is unrealistic and financially irresponsible to deplete the district’s coffers by adding immediate security measures, such as fences, gates, upgraded door hardware, bullet resistant glass and video surveillance systems to harden their school campuses. It became apparent that educators will most likely have to take a leading role to protect their life and the lives of every student involved in these circumstances and mitigate the destruction caused by the attackers until (most likely) law enforcement is able to render the location safe for fire and additional emergency personnel to operate. The KCSTAT was able to determine a key aspect of assessing potential threats should not be limited by the location itself, but in addition to the potential target location, further information bridging between educators, law enforcement and mental health professional to address relationships to identify warning signs to possibly interrupt a pending attack at one of our schools campus.

### ***Mental Health Role***

Given the dramatic aspects of an active-shooter event, a key component to mitigating an attack on a school’s campus is to identify the warning signs and reporting potential risk behaviors to the proper administrators and mental health professionals. Although there are no guarantees, one of the best practices and truly an effort of mitigating an attack is a well-developed behavioral intervention plan, having the capacity and design for early detection and engagement. Currently the Kern County Superintendent of Schools follows state mandated Individual Education Plan (IEP) to

identify students who are at risk for mental or psychological behaviors. This requirement is mandated per Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of disability. These statutes and their implementing regulations provide that qualified students with disabilities may not, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a school district. They also prohibits a school district from providing a student with a disability with an aid, benefit, or service that is not as effective in affording the same opportunity to obtain the same result, gain the same benefit, or reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others (Retrieved : California Department of Education).

This mandate requires school officials to provide immediate mental health care when a student is identified as having a mental disorder and disability, however the KCSTAT identified there was no protocol in place that conducted a true threat assessment of identifying a student as being prone to be an active-shooter, nor any protocol to inform entities from Kern County Mental Health to assist with the long term mental health for a troubled youth. With a proactive intervention planning, serious concerns about the potential for violence among friends, family, peers and other community members could identify warning signs prior to an attack.

### **Law Enforcement Role**

Based on the Federal Bureau of Investigations Behavior Analysis Unit (BAU), perpetrators of a school-based violent attack have engaged in research on acquiring weapons or components on improvised explosive devices prior to movement from thought to action. In addition to planning an attack, investigators learned that in 80% of

school shootings, at least one person had information that a shooter was thinking about committing a school-based violent attack before it occurred and almost all cases it was a peer who had this information. Currently, the Bakersfield Police Department's Terrorism Liaison Officers and Crime Prevention Unit are work in conjunction with the KCSOS to provide school officials with training in the anatomy of an active-shooter and what measures are recommended, "Alert", "Run", "Hide" and "Fight", if an active shooter event occurs at their campus. The re-implementation of the Bakersfield Police Departments School Resource Officer (SRO) program, will give a stronger impact on preventing a school attack from occurring in our community.

In early January of 2014 the Bakersfield Police Department re-implemented the School Resource Officer (SRO) program, funded by the 2013 JAG/Byrne local grant, which allocated \$154,000 to address issues in school safety, including student behavior concerns such as bullying and school-based violent attacks. It is also the role of a SRO to be responsible for traffic issues, school related calls for service, truancy issues, attending School Attendance Review Board meetings, being highly visible on and around school campuses and foster a positive culture and partner with allied agencies, both governmental community based to identify and prevent school violence through threat assessment partnerships.

While the SRO program is designed to bridge partnerships, until the recent grant funding, there was no dedicated law enforcement personnel to fulfill the police department's responsibility solely at the schools to deliver the unified message on preventing and active-shooter attack on the campus and, more importantly to act as a prevention mechanism to detour a troubled youth from carrying out an active-shooter

event. This was a common denominator the KCSTAT identified was a troubled individual, whether they suffered from personality disorders, social positioning or from school bullying, perceived themselves as justified in their actions. According to the National Institute for Justice (NIJ), 71% of active-shooters reported feeling bullied, threatened or attacked by others prior to the school incident. According to Lt. Dan Marcou (2014), of the basic formula of an “active-shooter” could be summarized in five stages of the attacker’s behavior;

- Fantasy Stage
- Planning Stage
- Preparation Stage
- Approach Stage
- Implementation Stage

More than likely, if an active-shooter’s plan is to be foiled, it will have to be intervened in the first four stages and progressive intervention programs provided by the SRO program will be needed to prevent future attacks (Marcou, 2014).

### ***Outreach Programs***

Currently the schools and law enforcement have partnered with public and private organizations to keep students and school sites as safe as possible. This program falls under the brand of the Truancy Reduction and Attendance Coalition of Kern County (TRACK). Although the main focus is reducing the truancy and attendance issues associated with students, there is a strong concentration altering student behavior. The existing TRACK partnership consists of representatives from the Kern County Probation, District Attorney, Kern County Sheriffs, Kern County Mental Health, Child Protective

Services and the Kern County Juvenile Court Division. It is the goal of the Bakersfield Police Department's SRO program to partner with the TRACK collaborative to bring forward issues concerning at-risk youth by identifying risk factors and establish a proactive anti-bullying and anti-violence program to change the culture of learning institutions and connecting at-risk youth. When necessary, the SRO will have established resources in place to intervene within the evolution of the stages of an active-shooter.

### ***Preparedness Training***

It will be the responsibility for the school district to work in cooperation with law enforcement and the TRACK program to assist with improving their current with the clear options of "Alert", "Run", "Hide" and "Fight" into their Emergency Action Plan, as well as current school sites maps and staying current with individual school's threat assessment training provided by the Bakersfield Police Departments TLO's and Crime Prevention unit, thus giving law enforcement officials a clearly defined and realistic objective to train its officers how to respond to and what to expect the schools role will be when units begin to arrive on scene to an active-shooter event.

The role of the Bakersfield Police Department is defined by our department's policy. The Bakersfield Police Department's Active-Shooter Policy (Policy 424) states, "Officers are to protect life by any legal means possible". Officers responding to an active shooter incident shall accomplish this duty by immediately using any legal means at their disposal to make contact with the active shooter to stop him/her. This may include containment, arrest, or use of force". The goal of this policy gives the officers the guidance to render the area safe by;

- Stopping the active shooter

- Rescuing the victims
- Providing medical assistance
- Preserving of the crime scene
- Investigating the incident

The Bakersfield Police Department risk-specific protocols give the first officers on scene a direct role on what their expectations are when they arrive on the scene of an active shooter event. But what it doesn't prepare for is the scene in itself. Clearly, a reasonable officer has a preconceived idea of what their role will be based on real-world events leaving them with memories of past school-based violent attacks. According to Federal Bureau of Investigation's Special Agent Schweit (2013), responding officers must recognize that in more than half (57%) of mass-shootings incidents where a solo officer arrived on scene, the shooting was on-going and did not cease until the shooter was confronted by an armed officer, who engaged the suspect. During two-thirds of these confrontations, the officer will be shot at during contact with the suspect (Federal Bureau of Investigation Bulletin, Active Shooter, 2013).

An officer employed at my agency should consider the following "Active-Shooter" statistics as they respond to a similar event;

- Active-shooter incidents often occur in small to medium sized communities where police departments are limited by budget constraints and small workforces.
- The average active-shooter incident last approximately 12 minutes, with thirty-seven (37%) lasting less than five minutes.

- Overwhelmingly, the offender is a single shooter 98% of the time and the shooter is male 97% of the time, and in 40% of the shootings, the incident concluded with the perpetrator's death by a self-inflicted gunshot wound.
- Two percent of the shootings the attackers brought Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) as an additional weapon.
- Forty-three percent of the time, the crime was over before police arrived. In 57% of the shootings, an officer arrived on-scene while the shooting was in progress.
- The shooter often stops as soon as he hears or sees law enforcement, sometimes turning his anger or aggression on the police.
- Patrol officers are most likely responding alone or with a partner. When responding alone, 75% had to take action.
- Two-third of those officers entering the incident alone is shot at by the offender.

With the phenomenon of an active-shooter event, the KCSTAT findings were overwhelming compelled to address the need for a rapid and controlled dynamic response during these situations when the innocent loss of life hinges on minutes. An officer responding to an active-shooter event must be mentally prepared as well as properly equipped to confront the threat. Their energy must be channeled to pushing toward the aggressor to end the threat to minimize the loss of innocent lives during active-shooter incidents.

Beside the law enforcement component and their expected role during an active-shooter event, it was also determined that there may not be one demographic of an active-shooter. Active shooters have proven to display pre-attack behaviors, which if recognized, can lead to a disruption of a planned attack. Often the attacker will vent the

grievance by violent resolution and through education institutions participating and adopting proactive measure. Those measures include threat assessments; holistic review of students and identifying pre-attack behavioral patterns will create an environment to balance actionable intelligence to implement a behavioral intervention plan to students before an attack occurs. And, although exceedingly rare, if an attack occurs it will be law enforcement's main objective to coordinate response plans with school administrators and implement a specific plan into the school's Emergency Action Plan (EAP).

With the compliment of different units within my department, it is until recently through the KCSTAT, the Bakersfield Police Departments TLO program, Crime Prevention Unit and the re-implementation of the SRO program, where we as a department have developed an on-going prevention plan to collaborate. My department has tasked these specialized units to collaborate with educators, governmental and non-governmental partners, to expand on current practices and policies and develop progressive ideas, such as, "Alert", "Run", "Hide" and "Fight", school site threat assessments and individual threat assessments to protect the school campus in a school-based violent attack. It is also the responsibility of every first responder in our area to be unified and plan, train and coordinate the response efforts to mitigate the loss of life if an active shooter event occurs on our watch.

## Chapter 4

### *KCSTAT Collaborative*

Kern County has an opportunity to design a governing board to add an objective and expert collaboration to prepare for school-based violent attacks in our community. Since our county has many school districts and every school is unique by design, the mindset to have a flexible policy must be conformable to all schools. In addition, schools daily operations require they work in an isolated environment requiring educators to be trained in a self-reliant manner to prepare and react to an active-shooter event on their campus.

It is also necessary to incorporate a threat and site assessment to their current emergency action plan to assist with drills and rehearsals to strengthen the safety and security of each facility. This is the general process spearheaded by the KCSTAT and purpose to use this information collaborative as a conveyance to bring all critical stakeholders together to identify the best practices, provide reasonable and effective solutions, and provide a clearly defined matrix to coordinate resources to reduce the potential loss of life in a school-based violent attack.

Several government entities are needed to provide objective issues to implement a best practice for schools within our prospective response area. The Kern County School District Superintendent Office and the Kern County Office of Emergency Services have been the anchor point to act as the liaison for all concerned parties, i.e., Kern County Sheriff's Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation (Bakersfield Field Office), Kern County Fire Department, Bakersfield Fire Department, Bakersfield Police Department,

Emergency Management Services (Hospitals), Hall's Ambulance and Kern County Mental Health and the American Red Cross, to coordinate among the agencies who have capabilities and resources to respond to a school-based violent attack. While the collaborative was formed, the basis of our planning utilized the Federal Emergency Management Administrations (FEMA) guide for developing a high quality school emergency operation plan in our community. This model was based on the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) to provide the KCSTAT with the technical assistance of addressing the active-shooter threats and hazards.

### ***Active Shooter Intervention***

The emphasis of prevention weighed heavily on the KCSTAT and what current practices were being utilized which would possibly mitigate an event from occurring. The representative from Kern County Mental Health deemed early mental health intervention is the best solution to a potential active-shooter who plans to target a school, faculty and students. As Hardy's categorized the school shooters, it is an important process the members of the KCSTAT agreed on and would allow school and mental health officials the first step in identifying possible students who were prone to commit a violent act on a school campus. Identifying the most at-risk student would afford mental health and school professionals an opportunity for long term mental health programs to correct the student's violent tendencies. As part of this county-wide student mental health initiative, the KCSOS will provide a collection of grade appropriate, culturally relevant, evidenced based resources and information that presents prevention and early detection programs and strategies that have been shown to be effective in promoting student mental health and wellness in a variety of educational settings (Thompson, 2013). Along with early

mental health intervention, it was determined the school culture had to be influenced and the hostile environment at educational settings should have a “zero tolerance” to reduce to devastating effects of social positioning and bullying.

### ***School Site Threat Assessment***

There are currently over 273 schools in our jurisdiction, most have never completed an overall site security assessment, inherently leaving the school site vulnerable to manmade and natural hazards. The Bakersfield Police Department’s Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) program and School Resource Officer (SRO) program, in partnership with KCSOS and KCOES, have developed the Educational Site Survey Security Assessment Program. This model was developed after the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) site security assessments to critical infrastructures locations in our community. We developed a similar model to provide training to school officials and local law enforcement that provides school site security assessments to administrators of potential security vulnerabilities on their campus, and “recommend options for consideration” to strengthen their school site overall security protocol.

### ***Incident Command Structure***

After gaining valued input from all of the stakeholders, the KCSTAT was able to standardize a response protocol for law enforcement, fire and medical aid to prepare for if they are dispatched to a school for an active-shooter emergency. When first responders arrive, there should be a person, in a role of authority, who has a basic understanding of how emergency services respond to and set up for an active-shooter incident. The school’s role has morphed to create an important role and responsibility to have an

appointed “Point of Contact” who is trained in the methods of how first responders will treat an active-shooter situation so they know what our mission will be when we arrive at the scene of the incident. There will also be a line of succession so the individual school can produce a best-practice model, catered for their school setting and dispatch and coordinate the first responders efficiently.

Depending on the specific incident (active-shooter, mass causality incident, explosive device, fire or chemical attack, etc.) there are several agencies who will be involved in the incident and the need to have a unified incident command function will be needed to prioritize responsibilities to the first responders. Each agency responsibilities have priorities based on the perspective of the problem of their professions discipline. KCSTAT has made it a priority to incorporate school district administrators in the incident command structure to ensure accurate and timely information to be disseminated to associates of the students and faculty affected by the event. This was deemed as a crucial component to ensure and maintain the support from the parents who will need to be patient with law enforcement and school officials during the reunification process.

Once the first responders arrive on scene, the “Point of Contact” will relinquish the incident command to emergency personnel and assist with the incident by providing the on-scene commander a “flash” drive with the school’s Emergency Action Plan, which will have site assessment forms, school rosters (both student and faculty), infrastructure information and floor plans. The KCSTAT task force has recommended the electronic “flash” drives should be carried by no less than five faculty directly associated at the school site to allow expedient planning by the on-scene incident commander. This “Flash” information is currently in the planning stage and efforts, through the KCSTAT

taskforce, KCSOS will implement this program at junior high schools and high school sites by the 2014-15 school year.

### ***Training and Low Tech Solutions***

It has been clear from the inception of the KCSTAT that the “Safe School Initiative” is collaboration from many areas of expertise to offer options for consideration. This avoids the “one size fits all” mindset and allows the primary parties in charge of the education setting to plan for an emergency response to an active-shooter and related incidents, based on the intimate knowledge and information they possess at their school site. It has been the responsibility of the KCSTAT to explain to the education community the importance of beginning an education process to condition awareness about active-shooter preparedness, beginning in grade levels K-12 aged students, thus creating a pre-conditioned response in the event there is an active-shooter incident on their school site. The “fire drill” is such a routine practice and done in an orderly fashion that it is difficult to imagine there ever being a real fire. And such organized drills rarely accompany a mad scramble through smoke and heat. But should a fire strike, students are ready for it (Kautzman, 2010). Such as Kautzman describes the importance of rehearsals to react to a fire or natural disasters, the KCSTAT’s belief is similar methods should be implemented to prepare for an active-shooter event and school site drills should have the same intensity and practiced similar to current fire preparedness drills.

While growing up in California and being a product of the public school system, my education of possible dangers began when my kindergarten class at elementary school conditioned students on how to react to a dangerous situation, such as a fire at our

facility. We were instructed that in the event of a fire or the alarm of a fire, we must listen to our teacher and follow a pre-planned evacuation route to a designated location. Once at the location, we would be accounted for and until the structure was deemed safe or the threat was over, all of the students would return to the classroom and the lessons of the day would continue. The same lesson was expanded to us when we were mandated to seek shelter under our desks or solid structure in the event there was an earthquake. This drill was also followed up with evacuating the building and lining up in an orderly fashion, commencing a roll call to confirm accountability.

These personal memories were not designed to instill fear in the students and make us feel vulnerable to bad things that may happen to us at any given moment. What it did accomplish, was the sense of empowerment to react to a natural disaster in a school setting. School-based attacks are mostly new to our culture and once we establish a structured, pre-planned awareness mechanism to react school based violent attacks, the role of the participants can be universal to enhance the probability of survival. As rules and regulations begin in the education system on what is the standard response, the mental conditioning will be forwarded and follow us to our future work places, dining and entertainment establishments, in the event an active-shooter event occurs at those locations.

As part of the planning proposed by the “Kern County Safe School Initiative”, individual schools should set up a practical and reliable system to communicate an emergency incident. Although most schools have an internal intercom system in place, most school based-violent attacks may disrupt a centralized intercom system and may limit the vital information, such as a shooter in a specific location, which would be

problematic when teachers are moving students through a dangerous area. Ideally, the onset of panic may render the best option of providing simplistic communication methods to identify the threat, i.e. “Gunman on campus” and a pre-designate rally point of prominent terrain features, such as the bus loading area, football field or a specific street as a reference to be passed along verbally as children are fleeing and gives them a reliable and low tech method to respond to a rally area to escape the threat on campus.

During the pre-planning stages, options were addressed by the KCSTAT of concerns regarding student accountability and reunification. Educators are accustomed to take attendance each day and possibly numerous times a day at junior high and high schools. If an active-shooter event is occurring at any point of the education setting, the KCSTAT overwhelming agreed moving away from the threat in a slow and orderly fashion would give the shooter easy targets to engage and decrease the chances of surviving the deadly event. It is practical to instill an immediate action drill at the beginning of the school year to keep children moving in a rapid manner and flee from the known danger area, also referred as the “Alert”, “Run”, “Hide” and “Fight” model. This tactic may cause the momentarily loss of accountability; however, it empowers teachers to give student several options of flight to the predestinated rally points, and allows the students to get to those areas until stability and order is reestablished during the post event. Protocol can be implemented for teachers, students and parents to confirm a status on their children after emergency services had stabilized the scene and regained control through the unified command system.

### ***Program training methods***

The KCSTAT has followed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) model on enhancing the first responder role of active-shooter preparedness by a “whole community” approach. With this model, the KCSTAT task force collectively added input to the production of a tutorial DVD which was created and titled “Kern County STAT Active Shooter Response”. This course was designed with the sole purpose to be made available to all schools in our community and educate them on what an active shooter is and what historically they have done during their shooting rampage. After the introduction, the DVD focused on the message of “Alert”, “Run”, “Hide” and “Fight” and emphasis the point that minutes equal lives and specific information of a gunman on campus will immediately set forward a preplanned safety protocol for students and faculty members to respond. During the second tier training, it gave educators training suggestions on how to be proactive with creating individual security methods to protect classrooms, such as barricading doors, breaking out windows for escape routes and using methods for force protection if need be. The final portion of the tutorial is an actual simulation of an active-shooter event, where educators are given the option to participate in an actual live exercise simulating an active shooter event in a school setting. Currently, this training is provided to educators during in-service training workshops with the assistance of the Bakersfield Police Department’s TLO program.

### ***First Responders & Field Based Exercises***

On January 2, 2014, the KCSTAT in conjunction with the Bakersfield Police Departments TLO program designed an active-shooter scenario at a local college to instill the participants with a realistic training opportunity to gage their department’s readiness to respond to an active-shooter event in our jurisdiction. The goal of the exercise was to

test their equipment and personnel capabilities as well as distinguishing key leadership roles of an incident command system and knowledge, skills, abilities and mindset when responding to and organizing additional resources during this specialized event.

The exercise ultimately hosted over 300 personnel from 11 public and private service agencies, in addition to the 80 volunteers from our local explorer posts from law enforcement, fire and ambulance services, to act as victims and role players. This element brought much needed realism to this active-shooter scenario and mass casualty event. Several phases were incorporated and required each of the problems were to be resolved by first responders, including patrol officers, bomb squad technicians, SWAT officers, air support units and negotiators. As the scenario escalated the need for fire and ambulance to support law enforcement with the triaging and treating wounded victims and ambulatory patients at the incident in a “mass casualty” setting. In addition to the casualty care at the exercise site, local hospitals ran concurrent drills to prepare in a surge in critically wounded patients and concentrated on medical treatment consistent to gunshot and explosive style injuries they may encounter in a similar event.

This active-shooter exercise was a great example of public and private agencies working together to implement sufficient capabilities, and identifying deficiencies, to respond to any type of public safety threat, be it natural or man-made, in a unified and comprehensive approach. Most of the deficiencies noted in the KCSTAT after action report (AAR), were officers responding to an active-shooter incident must be prepared to operate outdoors and understand what they deploy with, i.e., weapons systems, ammunition, medical supplies and food and water, will have to sustain them during the duration of the event. During the scenario, patrol officers found themselves out in the

open engaging suspects armed with semi-automatic rifles with their standard issued pistols. The disadvantage prevented officers from placing effective direct and lethal fire on the suspect and eliminating the threat. In addition, the patrol officers lacked proper breaching equipment to defeat barriers and obstacles to outmaneuver the suspect's movement. Lastly, they were not aware of an improvised explosive device (IED) placed by a suspect in a classroom. I equate this to lack of training in the identification and procedures for dealing with IEDs after encountering them.

Although most of the immediate problems with law enforcement identified with remedies that will be corrected through training and equipment, however a more disturbing issue was the time it took for first responder to care for the victims at the exercise. Standing policy restricted fire and EMS personnel from entering the scene that was not declared secured. The first officers on scene created a contact team, found the shooters and acted appropriately to end the threat but an area has to be systematically searched to ensure the scene is safe. This systematic search could take a long and extended period of time to clear an educational setting. The issue was that the scene was not secure, thus preventing fire and EMS from entering and treating wounded students who continued to bleed and may hemorrhage to death from lack of basic treatment.

This deficiency was recognized by fire and emergency management personnel, and they are not opposed to the idea of working in an area that is less than 100% cleared from hazards by law enforcement. The Bakersfield Police Department's SWAT team has been attempting to find suitable alternatives to the situation, as it relates to tactical medicine. Currently operators possess a limited amount of medical supplies and tourniquets that can be applied to themselves, other officers, citizens or suspects, should a

gunshot wound occur during a SWAT callout. Currently protocol is that medical aid is asked to stand by in the vicinity of the command post in the event of an active shooter incident; and should that occur, the injured party would have to be evacuated by officers and transported to medical personnel where they could then be transported to a hospital.

Based on this deficiency in immediate medical treatment, The KCSTAT, working in collaboration with the Bakersfield Police Department's SWAT team is currently proposing a tactical medical position to be added to its compliment to address the issue of providing medical care in an unsecured area. Currently, the Bakersfield Fire Department has two Arson Investigators who are trained as paramedics who will most likely be the first Tactical Emergency Medics (TEMS) assigned to the tactical unit. It is the opinion of KCSTAT that a better option would be to have an element attached to our team that are certified as paramedics, are proficient with firearms training and can function in a tactical environment.

The preferred scenario would be including two firemen from the City of Bakersfield's arson investigation detail. These two firemen are already armed, qualify at the Bakersfield Police Department firearms training facility, and are certified paramedics and have the ability to function in a tactical environment. Their presence would increase the likelihood of survival for any involved parties should a traumatic medical issue arise from an active-shooter event, by providing immediate emergency medical aid. In this scenario, the personnel would be allowed to attend some of our SWAT training dates to provide training for the team and to be activated on all callouts and respond to an active-shooter incident. It is possible that the two would need to be sent to a tactical medicine class, but outside of that, the overall cost to the city would appear to be minimal.

Additional benefits would also be reaped, as their knowledge in breaching equipment and how to deploy that equipment against a variety of obstacles, would be superior to what we currently possess. They could also be used as an additional resource for usage, storage and maintenance of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipment. According to the National Tactical Officer Association (NTOA), the presence of a medic during a SWAT operation may also help to decrease potential civil liability as we would be showing that we are taking additional steps to preserve life. The addition of tactical medics will help to ensure that all of our personnel, as well as the citizens we serve, stand the best chance of survival in the event of a traumatic situation.

## Chapter 5

### *Conclusion*

While diagnosing this problem, I can say definitively the KCSTAT has collaborated to create a working and overlapping policy to react to an active-shooter or public-based violent event at our community's schools. The current Bakersfield Police Department policy requires officers to immediately respond to the event and disseminate as much live intelligence that is available while at the scene. Once the officer has additional units, they are to form a contact team and proceed into the area where the suspect was last observed or heard. Once the suspect or suspects are located, the officers have to react to the threat and eliminate it. The problem with this policy is that it is a reactive decision to an event which is already occurring from our department's perspective and has no specific language on a multi-agency response protocol. This research will review the benefit to train, equip and provide benefits of communications planning to establish a unified command.

The main purpose of KCSTAT is to identify the best practice for educators to provide guidance to teach children on what or how to react to a school-based violent attack on their campus. School districts cannot operate in an isolated environment, and realistic issues such as accessibility, student population, and law enforcement must have a realistic approach to be reactive. Being reactive to a dangerous situation will increase the probability of saving lives and will provide the essential building blocks to provide potential victims potential options if they are involved in an "active-shooter" or "school-based violent attack" situation.

The cascading events of a school-based violent attack are a process as well as an act. In most cases, the violence is a long developed, identifiable trail of problems, conflicts disputes and failures (Fein, Vassekuil & Holden, 1995). Further, most students will attend their education environment without encountering a violent act; however, the predicated incidents on our nation's schools have left a heightened sense of vulnerability while attending school. Incidents of targeted school violence occur in communities across the nation, and although school-based attacks are rare, the mere possibility of an active-shooter attack has gained the urgency to implement a fundamental, district-wide, threat assessment which is currently being implemented by the KCSTAT.

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Appendix "A"

KCSTAT Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement – Safe School Initiative Logic Model

**GOALS**

**To assist with mitigating the loss of life during a school-based violent attack in the community**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Increase the community’s role in active-shooter prevention
2. Educate all stakeholders on school-site preparedness
3. Create a system of information and intelligence sharing
4. Create state, county and local partnerships

**PARTICIPANTS**

**ACTIVITIES**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Law enforcement</li> <li>2. School Administrators</li> <li>3. Fire</li> <li>4. Emergency management personnel</li> <li>5. Acute personnel</li> <li>6. Transitional personnel</li> <li>7. Students</li> <li>8. Local hospitals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish taskforce and participants</li> <li>2. Establish Information sharing protocol</li> <li>3. Training other participants</li> <li>4. Individual school site training</li> <li>5. In-service educator training</li> <li>6. Community preparedness training</li> <li>7. Hold monthly taskforce meetings</li> <li>8. Establish victim mitigation recommendation</li> </ol>
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<b>INPUTS/RESOURCES</b>	<b>OUTPUTS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personnel</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• State, County and Local partnerships</li> <li>• In-Kind contributions</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of hours training</li> <li>2. Number of community awareness training completed</li> <li>3. Number of law enforcement trained</li> <li>4. Number of school officials trained</li> <li>5. Number of students trained</li> <li>6. Number of Field/Table top preparedness training</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the level of skill, professionalization of participants</li> <li>2. Increase preparedness awareness training</li> <li>3. Increase school awareness training</li> <li>4. Increase site survey assessments</li> <li>5. Increase readiness training through field based and table top exercises</li> </ol>

**IMPACT**

**Reduce victimization during an active-shooter event on a school campus**

## Appendix "B"



CSU Bakersfield

Academic Affairs

Office of the Grants, Research, and Sponsored Programs (GRASP)

Mail Stop: 24 DDH Room 108  
9001 Stockdale Highway  
Bakersfield, California 93311-1022  
(661) 654-2231  
(661) 654-3342 FAX  
[www.csu.edu](http://www.csu.edu)

### Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research

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Department of Psychology  
Scientific Concerns

**Roseanna McCleary, Ph.D.**  
Masters of Social Work  
Scientific Concerns

**Steven Gamboa, Ph.D.**  
Department of Phil/Rel Studies  
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**Lily Alvarez, B.A.**  
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**Mike Butler**  
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Scientific Concerns

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Department of Philosophy/  
Religious Studies  
Nonscientific/Humanistic Concerns  
IRB/HSR Chair

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Teacher Education  
Nonscientific/Humanistic Concerns

**Steve Suter, Ph.D.**  
Department of Psychology  
Research Ethics Review Coordinator  
and IRB/HSR Secretary

**Date:** 20 February 2014

**To:** Bobby Woolard, PPA Student

**cc:** Chandrasekhar Commuri, Public Policy and Administration  
Paul Newberry, IRB Chair

**From:** Steve Suter, Research Ethics Review Coordinator

#### **Subject: Protocol 14-12: Not Human Subjects Research**

Thank you for bringing your protocol, "Kern County Safe School Initiative: A Program Evaluation of Preventing and Responding to a School-Based Violent Attack", to the attention of the IRB/HSR. On the form, "Is My Project Human Subjects Research?", received on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB IRB/HSR. Good luck with your project.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the IRB/HSR, please notify me immediately at 654-2373. Thank you.

Steve Suter, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator