

Intruder Alert: School Shootings, Gun Violence, and Mental Illness

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Disclosures

- ◊ I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this program or presentation
- ◊ NOT a political discussion
- ◊ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvycogNtax8>

Objectives

- ◊ Identify behaviors leading up to an act of school violence
- ◊ Appreciate that suicide rates are correlated with access to firearms
- ◊ Understand that mental illness does not make someone dangerous or likely to commit an act of firearm violence

Definitions

- ◊ Mass Murder
 - ◊ Killing of 4 or more people, 1 location, 1 event
 - ◊ Mass Shooting → specific type of mass murder (using guns)
 - ◊ School shooting
- ◊ Active Shooter
 - ◊ individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area (involving firearms)
- ◊ Serious Mental Illness (SMI)
 - ◊ Usually includes mental illnesses with psychotic processes

Gun Violence and Firearm Statistics

- ◇ 1999-2009
 - ◇ Homicides involving firearms 2nd leading cause of death in 14-18 y/o
 - ◇ 1.3% youth homicides occur at school
 - ◇ Majority ARE NOT mass shootings

- ◇ 2011
 - ◇ DECREASE homicide rates
 - ◇ INCREASE suicide rates- NOW 2nd leading cause of death

Suicide and Firearms: Myths

- ◇ People who are serious about suicide will find another lethal way if guns aren't accessible

- ◇ In United States, suicide rates are higher in areas where mental illness are higher

- ◇ Physicians who screen for suicide ask about firearms and firearm safety

FBI study 2000-2013

- ◇ 160 cases of active shooter incidents
- ◇ 11.4 mass shootings annually
- ◇ 70% occur in business or educational environment
- ◇ All but 2 shootings carried out by single individual
- ◇ 40% cases- shooter committed suicide
- ◇ 67% incidents ended before police arrived
- ◇ 40% qualified as mass murders
- ◇ 3.8% female perpetrator

Common Factors of Mass Murderers

- ◇ Extreme feelings of anger/revenge
- ◇ Lack of an accomplice (adult)
- ◇ Feelings of social isolation
- ◇ Planning well in advance
- ◇ Not surviving own attack

- ◇ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8syQcF7BKc>

School Violence in the United States

- ◇ 1974-2000: 37 incidents of targeted school violence (most involving guns)
- ◇ Key Findings:
 - ◇ 68% acquired guns from home/relative homes
 - ◇ Perpetrators often "leaked" their intent to peers
 - ◇ Engaged in concerning behaviors before the incident
 - ◇ Perpetrators have often considered or attempted suicide

School Shootings

- ◊ K-12 school shootings by students
 - ◊ Columbine, Stoneman Douglas
 - ◊ Hard to profile
 - ◊ not inner city
 - ◊ must have no history of violence
 - ◊ 1/3 school shooters received mental health evaluation
 - ◊ 17% diagnosed with mental illness
 - ◊ Bullied or the bully
 - ◊ No Monda/Blonde
 - ◊ MALES → only common factor

Other School Shootings

- ◊ College and University School Shootings:
 - ◊ Virginia Tech, University of Texas
 - ◊ Far less than K-12
 - ◊ Did not communicate threats before shooting
- ◊ School Shootings by Non-students
 - ◊ Sandy Hook

Evaluating Threats

- ◊ Focus on path leading up to the violent act
- ◊ Behaviors:
 - ◊ Interest, research on mass killings
 - ◊ Friends
 - ◊ Planning/covering
 - ◊ Acquiring weapons
 - ◊ Act of violence
- ◊ FBI- 4 domains to assess
 - ◊ Personality changes
 - ◊ Family dynamics
 - ◊ Social dynamics
 - ◊ School dynamics

Mass Shooting and Mental Illness Myths

- ◊ Mass shootings by people with SMI represent the most significant relationship between gun violence and mental illness
 - ◊ FACT → Mass shootings by people with SMI represents less than 1% of all yearly gun-related homicides
- ◊ People with serious mental illness should be considered dangerous
 - ◊ FACT → 3% of all violent crimes are committed by people with SMI

Mental Illness and Mass Murderers

- ◊ Civil commitment, Not guilty by reason of insanity (NGRI) or Incompetency to stand trial
- ◊ Behaviors and motives \neq psychiatric diagnoses
- ◊ No evidence to support overlap or direct causal association

Mental Illness and Violence

- ◊ Minimal relationship between psychiatric disorder and violence in the ABSENCE of substance abuse
- ◊ Meta-analysis from 1999- 1 stranger homicide/year in a 14.3 million population

Interventions

- ◇ Focus on individuals whose behaviors identify themselves as increased risk for committing gun violence- NOT broad category such as mental illness
- ◇ Educating public health and need for reporting intent or concerning behaviors
- ◇ Threat assessment forensic team to evaluate 3rd party reports
- ◇ Enhanced education- coping skills for anger and conflict resolution, mental health and wellness education

Recap

- ◇ 30,000 people a year/ 80 per day- die of gun violence in the US
 - ◇ Most DO NOT die from mass murder rampage committed by people with mental illness
 - ◇ Mass shooting account for less than 1% of deaths and injuries due to gun violence yearly
- ◇ Suicide accounts for 65% of firearm deaths
- ◇ Only 3-5% of all violent acts are committed by people with SMI
 - ◇ 1% use firearms to kill strangers

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