Ethical Challenges of Taking Action to Prevent Violence in Staff, Students and Faculty

UCSD BIOETHICS SEMINAR SERIES

UCSD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Topics for discussion

- Background on behavioral threat assessment and management effort at UC San Diego.

- Psychopaths as employees, colleagues and students.

- Wrongful death lawsuit against the U of Alabama Huntsville re: Amy Bishop.

- Right to privacy and a 'Duty to Inform' regarding behavior of concern, which may lead to violence.
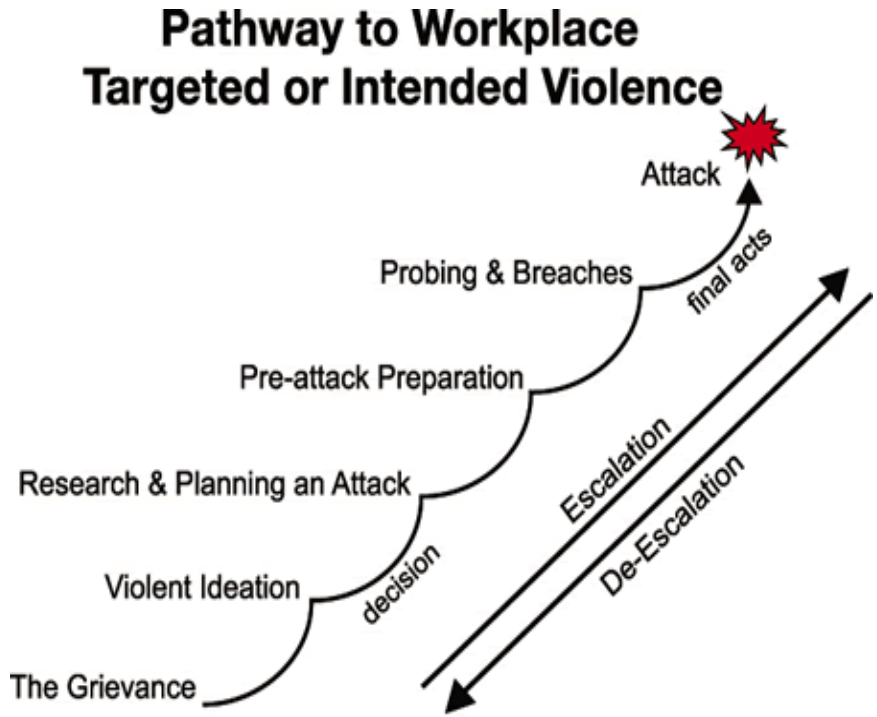
Some Violence & Threat Fundamentals

- Workplace and campus violence, now part of "who we are", but not an "epidemic", not even in the US

- Workplace and campus aggression and violence take varying forms

- A great deal has been learned about the individual "at risk" for homicide and the influence of organizational contexts on violence potential

- Serious violence is rare, but possible anywhere

- Threat-related disruption of the organization

Behavioral threat assessment and management

- The ability to sense and intervene at the lower spectrum of this pathway is predicated on communication and coordination.

- Non-affiliates and former/separated affiliates present a latent threat.

Pathway to Workplace Targeted or Intended Violence

Attack

Probing & Breaches — final acts

Pre-attack Preparation

Research & Planning an Attack

Escalation

De-Escalation

Violent Ideation — decision

The Grievance

Adapted with permission from F.S. Calhoun and S.W. Weston (2003). *Contemporary Threat Management: A Practical Guide for Identifying, Assessing and Managing Individuals of Violent Intent.*
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Threat Assessment / Management:
A thoughtful, deliberate & flexible process

- Multidisciplinary practice within a framework of legal and employment law principles

- Threat assessment is now recommended by various review panels, state task forces, and the US Depts. of Ed, Justice and H&HS

- Assessing (initial and ongoing): The risk, nature and severity of violence to an individual or group

- Intervening: recognized strategies to interrupt escalation, prevent harm,

UC San Diego Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) Team

7/08 VCBA & VCSA charge a workgroup to develop a BTAM structure.

6/09 BTAM team structure developed and team co-chairs selected.

11/09 BTAM members and other key campus staff attend 3 days of training: Assessing and Managing Campus Threats of Violence: An Interactive Workshop with the WAVR-21.

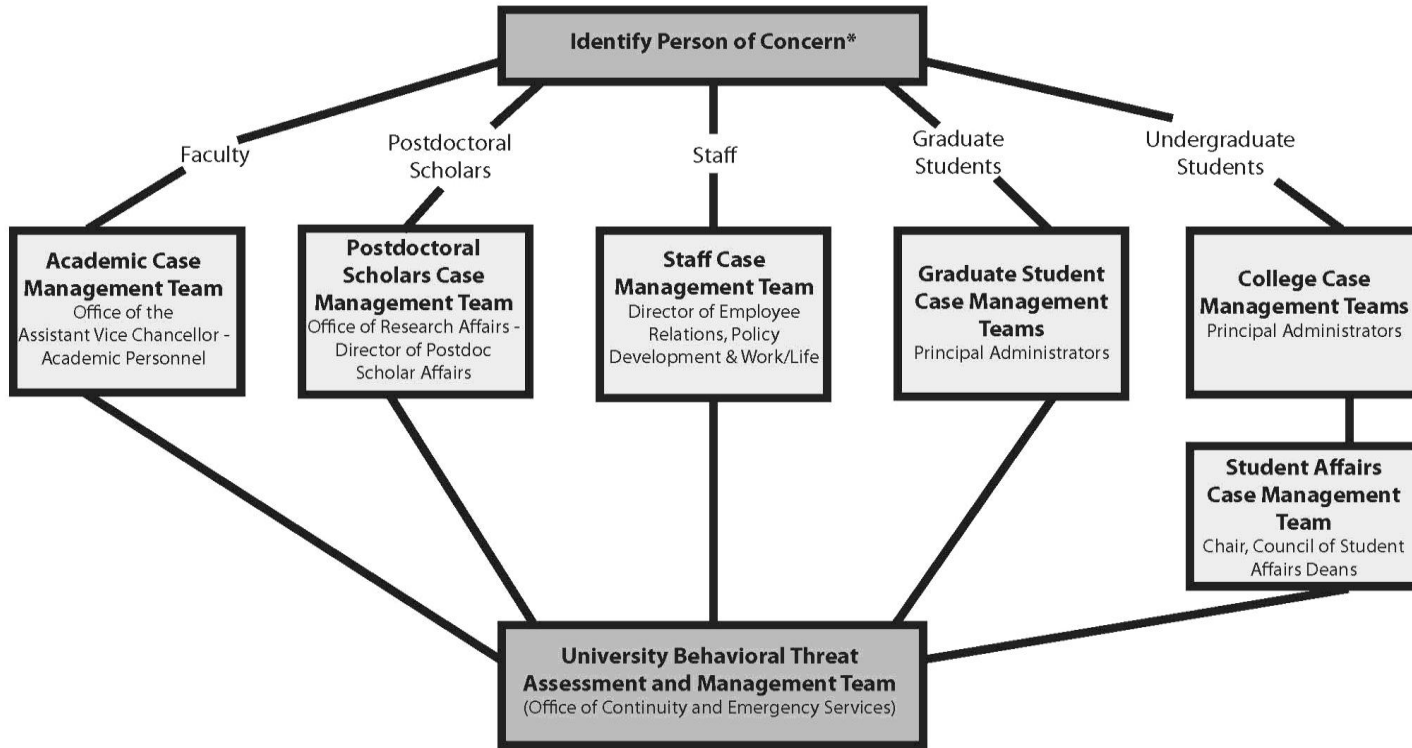12/09 – present. Quarterly BTAM meetings conducted.

Goal

Prevent, respond and recover from incidents that involve threatening behavior by setting into motion a response which leads to a positive outcome.

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Flow Chart

Identify Person of Concern*

Faculty → **Academic Case Management Team**
Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor - Academic Personnel

Postdoctoral Scholars → **Postdoctoral Scholars Case Management Team**
Office of Research Affairs - Director of Postdoc Scholar Affairs

Staff → **Staff Case Management Team**
Director of Employee Relations, Policy Development & Work/Life

Graduate Students → **Graduate Student Case Management Teams**
Principal Administrators

Undergraduate Students → **College Case Management Teams**
Principal Administrators

Student Affairs Case Management Team
Chair, Council of Student Affairs Deans

University Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team
(Office of Continuity and Emergency Services)

*In life-threatening or emergency situations, immediately call UCSD Police 9-1-1 from a campus phone or (858) 534-4357 from a cell phone or off-campus phone.

Designed by Amanda Chavez
May 26, 2009

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Team

Ex Officio (Co-chairs)

AVC, Student Wellness

Director, Continuity & Emergency Services

Appointed Departments

Employee Relations Specialist, Human Resources

Executive Director, University Communications

Assistant Dean/HR Admin, School of Medicine

Director, Psychological & Counseling Services

Case Manager, Student Health Service

Director, Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

Dean/Student Affairs, Muir College

Senior Communications Advisor, Research Affairs

Asst Dean for Student Affairs/Assoc Prof of Psychiatry/Principal Administrator, School of Medicine

Sergeant, Police Department

Director Postdoc Visiting Scholar, Research Affairs

Provost, Sixth College

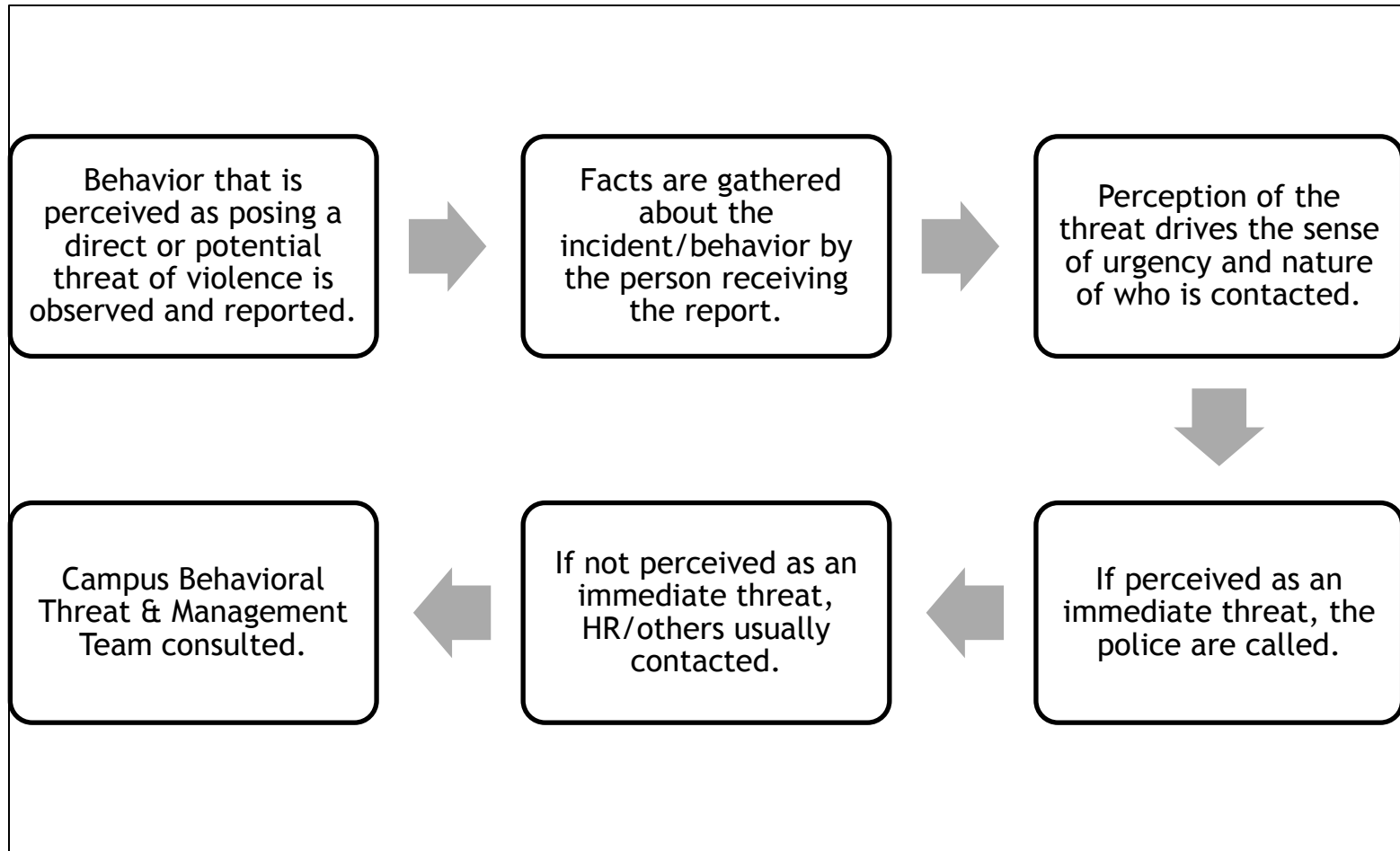Campus Counsel

Faculty Representative/Associate Dean

Director, Academic Employee Relations

AVC, Auxiliary/Plant Services

Director, Student Conduct

Behavioral threat sequence of events

Behavior that is perceived as posing a direct or potential threat of violence is observed and reported. → Facts are gathered about the incident/behavior by the person receiving the report. → Perception of the threat drives the sense of urgency and nature of who is contacted.

↓

If perceived as an immediate threat, the police are called.

If not perceived as an immediate threat, HR/others usually contacted.

Campus Behavioral Threat & Management Team consulted.

Integrative threat assessment model

Making an assessment:

A. Does the person <u>pose a threat</u> of harm, whether to him/herself, to others or both?

B. If the person does not pose a threat of harm, does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention?

Deisinger, G., Randazzo, M., & O'Neill, D., & Savage, J. (2008) & Dunkle (2008)

WAVR-21 coding grid

Case/Name Identification:_____ Date Completed:_____

WAVR-21 Coding Grid

	Risk Factor Items	Absent/ Mild	Present	Prominent	Recent Change (>, o, <)*
1.	Motives for Violence				
2.	Homicidal Ideas, Violent Fantasies or Preoccupation				
3.	Violent Intentions and Expressed Threats				
4.	Weapons Skill and Access				
5.	Pre-Attack Planning and Preparation				
6.	Stalking or Menacing Behavior				
7.	Current Job Problems				
8.	Extreme Job Attachment				
9.	Loss, Personal Stressors and Negative Coping				
10.	Entitlement and Other Negative Traits				
11.	Lack of Conscience and Irresponsibility				
12.	Anger Problems				
13.	Depression and Suicidality				
14.	Paranoia and Other Psychotic Symptoms				
15.	Substance Abuse				
16.	Isolation				
17.	History of Violence, Criminality, and Conflict				
18.	Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence				
19.	Situational and Organizational Contributors to Violence				
20.	Stabilizers and Buffers Against Violence	prominent	present	absnt/mild	
	Additional Item: Organizational Impact				
21.	Organizational Impact of Real or Perceived Threats				

* > worsening or escalation
o no change
< improvement

Notes:
1.) If data are unavailable or notably incomplete for a risk factor, enter "i" for insufficient information.
2.) If "Recent Change" moves two columns in same direction between ratings, enter two checks, i.e., >> or << .

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Core actions

1. Assessment and ongoing monitoring

2. Contact & engagement

3. Behavioral contract

4. Voluntary leave of absence

5. Interim suspension/involuntary withdrawal

6. Stabilization and connect to social support and resources

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Helping the targets of violent words or actions

- Be honest about the nature of violence – can occur anytime, anywhere, to anyone
  - Not a linier process

- Help them take responsibility for their personal safety and security – include the police in the process.

- Guide them toward developing a survival mindset: Awareness, preparation, and rehearsal.

Amy Bishop

Surviving Families Of Massacre File Wrongful Death Lawsuit Against University Of Alabama Huntsville Provost And Others

• Suits seek to hold the UAH Provost responsible for the failure by him and likely other UAH administrators to abide by mandatory life-safety regulations that would have prevented Dr. Bishop from gunning down co-workers at a staff meeting.

•Departmental emails show that Bishop's severe mental instability was known by administrators, some of whom she had threatened, harassed, and hounded following denial of tenure.

•A colleague of Bishop's openly described her as being 'crazy,' and students petitioned to have her removed from the classroom.

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Title of Wired Magazine Story:
What Made This University Scientist Snap?

The Fury

Last year, a University of Alabama scientist gunned down six of her colleagues. Here's what made Amy Bishop snap.
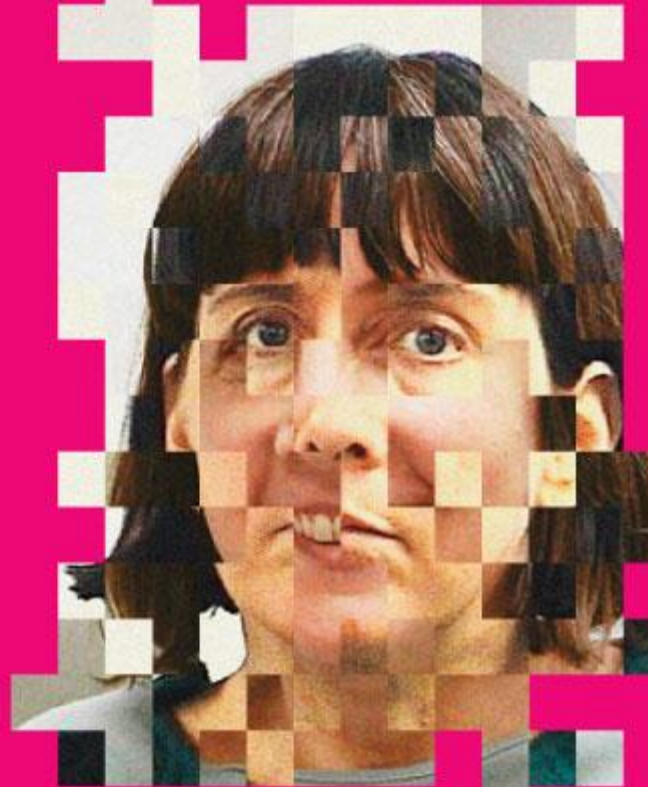
Jared Loughner and Pima Community College

College's Policy on Troubled Students Raises Questions
By A. G. SULZBERGER and TRIP GABRIEL   New York Times
Published: January 13, 2011

"…the focus has turned to whether it (Pima CC) did all it could to prevent his apparent descent into explosive violence.

• Paul Schwalbach, a college spokesman, said of Mr. Loughner, *"His behavior, while clearly disturbing, was not a crime, and we dealt with it in a way that protected our students and our employees."*

• Laura J. Waterman, the clinical director of the Southern Arizona Mental Health Corporation in Tucson, criticized Pima officials for not seeking an involuntary evaluation. ***"Where does it reach a level where you say this person shouldn't be a part of any community and we have a responsibility to do something about that?"*** she said.

Discussion

•   What responsibility, if any, does our institution have to the wider community when staff, students or faculty members are deemed to be deeply disturbed and possibly violent?

 - Does the university have a responsibility to warn others of the potential of violence among their peers?

 - Should the university extend warnings to the external community regarding behavior among an employee or former employee that poses a potential threat of violence?

Close/Questions