Robin Rogers, Cheryl McGaffic, Barbara Monroe. On October 28, 2002, we sadly added these names to the list of academicians who were slain while helping and teaching others. The suspect entered the College of Nursing at the University of Arizona, Tucson, shot and killed the three associate professors, before turning the gun on himself. The suspect was described by the media as a disgruntled student, who was failing his studies. Just a week earlier in Melbourne, Australia, an economics student walked into the Humanities Department shooting, leaving two dead and five wounded (Green, 2002).

In 1996, at San Diego State University, a graduate student was about to defend his master’s thesis in front of three professors. Without comment, he walked to a first-aid kit where he had hidden a handgun earlier. He shot and killed two of the professors, then hunted down and killed the third, who had fled to another office. The suspect believed the professors were conspiring against him to ensure he did not get a job after graduation (People v. Frederick Martin Davidson, 1996).

A college or university campus may seem to be an idyllic setting where such events would not occur, but the harsh reality is that the incidents listed above are not the only tragedies seen in the past couple of decades. First, it is important to understand that workplace violence can occur on campus, just as it does in corporate or other organizational environments. Next, potential violence prevention, education, assessment, and intervention methods must be examined.

Campus administrations must establish, or review, antiviolence policies and procedures (Mohandie, 2000). Organizations should consider a multidisciplinary
approach to threat and violence risk assessment. This article will provide some basic understanding and stimulate examination and review of these issues.

**VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Homicide is the second-leading cause of death at work (Rosner, 2001). For female employees, homicide is the number one cause of death in the workplace (Mattman, 2001). Immediately following cases of workplace homicide, the media, with perfect hindsight, educates the public about the suspect’s (or suspects’) actions and behaviors leading up to the event. My gosh! When presented so neatly, with a graphic timeline, one wonders, “Why didn’t someone see this coming?” and “Why didn’t someone do something?”

Unfortunately, these situations are not always such a neat package, a puzzle with all of the pieces in place. In addition, in most cases, no one person has all the pieces before him or her for analysis. This is the reason we must strive to establish, maintain, and regularly improve violence prevention and education programs. Organizations must establish clear guidelines that prohibit certain behaviors. Intimidation, threats, verbal and physical abuse, and the possession of weapons clearly should not be tolerated.

Does the organization in which you work have such a policy? Gavin De Becker, a pioneer and leader in the field of predicting violent behavior, discusses preemployment interviews, preincident indicators, interventions, and other topics related to workplace violence in his book, *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signs that Protect Us From Violence* (1997).

**Education**

Employees who are educated through violence prevention programs may be more likely to report to their supervisors or administrators if a coworker or student exhibits troubling behaviors. People do not just “snap.” A violent act usually is the result of a process of coping with, or failing to cope with, problems or stressors (Chavez, 2002). Have you been trained what to look for?


- **Verbal behavior** (e.g., direct and indirect threats, suicide threats, hopeless statements).
- **Bizarre thoughts** (e.g., delusions, paranoia, hallucinations, deteriorated thought processes, obsessions).
- **Behaviors and physical clues** (e.g., assaults, possession of weapons, violent attire, substance abuse, mental illness).
- **Signs of victimization** (e.g., speaks of self as victim, holds grudges, has resentments, engages in stalking).

Once recognized and reported, supervisors, managers, and administrators need to know how to proceed with the information. If you serve in a leadership position, how would you proceed when told about someone’s troubling or bizarre behavior?

**Assessment**

Threat or risk assessment is the process of assessing risks to a particular target, individual, or group of individuals, and designing and implementing intervention and management strategies to reduce that risk or threat (Mohandie & Hatcher, 1999). A recommended approach to risk assessment to threat and violence risk assessment. This article will provide some basic understanding and stimulate examination and review of these issues.

**ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH STALKING CASES**

**Crimes**
- Direct threats
- Trespassing
- Threatening or harassing telephone calls or e-mails
- Telephone tapping
- Vandalism
- Arson
- Restraining order violations
- Cruelty to animals
- Wiretapping or eavesdropping
- Thefts
- Physical and/or sexual assault

**Non-Crimes**
- Leaving gifts, letters, and/or notes
- Talking to others about the victim
- Following the victim
- Researching personal information on the victim
- Posting information about the victim on the Internet
- Ordering products in the victim’s name

assessments is the use of a multidisciplinary team. In 1996, the San Diego District Attorney’s Office established the Stalking Case Assessment Team (SCAT), a group of law enforcement officers, prosecutors, mental health professionals, and victim advocates. This group examines cases of threats, stalking, and potential workplace violence. It conducts risk assessments and develops intervention strategies.

A multidisciplinary team can be formed to help create violence prevention policies, develop and conduct training and education programs, and establish reporting processes. The appropriate time to create, train, and deploy such a team is before a troublesome situation arises. Consider the following composition of such a team:

• Team leader.
• Human resources or student affairs representative.
• Mental health professional.
• Law enforcement officer.
• Legal counsel.

The team leader should be an administrator, manager, or supervisor who has decision-making and implementation authority. The human resource or student affairs representative can address the personnel or student issues and offer resource referrals (e.g., employee assistance programs, fitness-for-duty evaluations) and information regarding suspension, termination, and expulsion.

The mental health professional can advise in assessing features of the individual and the case by applying the violence risk assessment methods available. To avoid conflict with therapist-client confidentiality issues, the mental health professional on the team should not be the clinician treating the individual.

Law enforcement officers can evaluate whether the individual’s actions are criminal violations. Sometimes, the intervention plan includes arrest and prosecution. This also includes situations in which the individual clearly exhibits symptoms of a mental illness. It has been my experience that a criminal justice intervention may be the only way to exert positive control on individuals who will not or cannot seek treatment and medication.

Legal counsel is recommended in these situations. This is a litigious society, and civil action may be taken in these situations. The mere label of the assessment team (e.g., Threat Assessment Team) or the action of convening the team to evaluate an individual or situation may form the partial basis of a plaintiff’s action against an organization. Legal counsel can advise on liability, privacy, and other legal issues. Finally, documentation provides proof that issues were considered, safety and privacy were valued, and personnel were reasonable in their efforts (Mohandie, 2000).

**Interventions**

The team can establish procedures to assess the risk of violence and implement intervention strategies. Intervention methods may include:

• Interviewing the individual in an attempt to identify the problem and take corrective action if possible or necessary.
• Mandatory treatment programs.
• Referrals for mental health examinations and treatment.
• Mental health commitments.
• Suspension, expulsion, or job termination.
• Temporary restraining or no contact orders.
• Arrest and prosecution.

Unfortunately, the bureaucratic maze of an organization can exacerbate these situations. Innovative ideas can be developed and processes streamlined or modified for any given situation. Why should we continue to use a procedure or process that causes a particular situation to escalate to violence? Is it because “that’s the way we’ve always done it?” or is it “just the rules?” The author does not advocate bending over backward for every disgruntled person encountered. However, each sit-

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**8 THINGS TO DO IF YOU ARE STALKED**

- Stop all contact with the stalker.
- Tell your family, friends, and coworkers.
- Contact law enforcement officials.
- Keep a diary of the harassing behaviors.
- Keep all items of evidence (e.g., letters, answering machine tapes). Give these items to the police.
- Vary or change your routines (e.g., take a different route to and from work or school).
- Consider screening telephone calls with an answering machine or using caller identification services.
- Develop a safety plan (e.g., identify emergency contact telephone numbers, location of police stations, and various routes to take to and from work and other activities; have police department conduct a home security check)

valuation should be assessed individually, and we should seek solutions that prevent someone from getting hurt.

Violent or potentially violent situations are usually dynamic. Both the assessment and intervention phases need to be reevaluated as situations change and progress. Teams should examine what is working, or what has worked, and what is not working, and make adjustments accordingly.

Interventions may need to be escalated if the individual’s behavior begins to escalate. For example, a student or staff member has been suspended for a certain type of behavior. The individual’s behavior has escalated by his or her coming onto campus and approaching faculty or other personnel and engaging in additional disruptive or directly threatening behavior. In this situation, a law enforcement intervention may be considered or a restraining order may be obtained to clearly delineate the boundaries and set the foundation for a possible criminal justice intervention. It is important to check the laws in that jurisdiction. For example, in California, organizations or employers can seek restraining orders on behalf of their employees. Again, it is recommended that legal counsel is consulted first. In addition, the issue of restraining orders is a controversial one, and restraining orders are not appropriate in every situation. In fact, they may be the action that causes an individual to escalate to violent behavior.

Although many strategies are available, the main point is for organizations to form and train a multidisciplinary group to evaluate violent or potentially violent situations and develop, implement, and evaluate interventions.

STALKING

Stalking is a crime involving threatening and potentially dangerous acts of pursuit of an individual over time. Legal definitions of stalking vary from state to state but, according to Meloy (1998), generally have three elements:

- A pattern (i.e., course of conduct) of unwanted behavioral intrusion on another person.
- An implicit or explicit threat, evidenced in the pattern of behavioral intrusion.
- The person who is threatened experiences reasonable fear as a result of these behavioral intrusions.

Although workplace murders capture the media headlines, stalking or unwanted pursuit is more prevalent in everyday life. In addition, contrary to what is portrayed in the media, celebrity stalking cases are in the minority. The most common type of stalking situation involves a stalker and a victim that have had some type of relationship, usually romantic. In evaluating, investigating, and managing stalking cases for the past few years as a criminal investigator, a few features of stalking stand out for me:

- Anyone can be a victim of stalking. For example, several cases of a professor being stalked by a student have been investigated and managed.
- Anyone can be a stalker. Just because someone is an educated professional does not mean he or she cannot engage in stalking behaviors.
- Stalking is unlike any other crime. It is usually long term (i.e., a series of crimes, rather than a one-time event), and it usually turns the victim’s life upside down.
- The methods of coping with stalking are usually counter intuitive. For example, take the case of a stalker who has been telephoning the victim at work 15 or 16 times a day. A common strategy stalkers
may employ is suggesting the victim meet with him or her for just 5 minutes, so the stalker can put “closure” on the relationship. In turn, the stalker promises to stop calling. A reasonable person may think, “OK, I’ll agree to the meeting, it is better than the persistent calls.” However, law enforcement recommends the victim cut off all contact with the stalker. If the victim agrees to a meeting, it sends the message that negotiation is still possible. The stalker most likely will assume that if he or she can persuade the victim to meet for 5 minutes one day, he or she will be able to convince the victim to agree to a longer meeting next week and a longer one after that. The stalker may believe that if given these opportunities to plead his or her case, eventually the two will be reunited.

How Often Does Stalking Occur?

In April 1998, the National Institute of Justice and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control published the first national survey on stalking. The researchers estimated that 1 of every 12 women in the United States has been stalked at some point in her life, and 1 of every 45 men in the United States has been stalked at some time in his life (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998).

What Does Stalking Look Like?

One of the challenges in addressing stalking situations is there are various activities that occur, rather than the traditional, one-time event. Stalkers may engage in tactics that qualify as criminal acts, or they may act out in ways that are definitely harassing, but do not rise to the level of criminal activity. The Sidebar on page 28 lists some activities associated with stalking cases.

REFERENCES

People v. Frederic Martin Davidson, Sup. Ct. #CD 122878 (San Diego Superior Court).

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