



**BEST PRACTICES
IN
CAMPUS THREAT ASSESSMENT:**

Training, Consultation, Evaluation, and Support





Table of Contents

OVERVIEW.....	3
TRAINING	4
Basic Threat Assessment Training	4
Advanced Threat Assessment Training.....	5
General Awareness Training.....	5
CASE CONSULTATION SERVICES	5
Individual Case Consultation.....	5
Case Outsourcing	6
Case Investigation Review	6
Team Coaching / Subject Matter Expertise	6
TEAM AUDIT & SUPPORT SERVICES.....	6
Existing Team Audit & Evaluation.....	6
New Team Development & Support.....	7
Policy Review	7
Information-Sharing Services.....	7
Climate Surveys.....	7
CONTACT INFORMATION.....	7
ABOUT SIGMA.....	8



OVERVIEW

In the time since the campus shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, dozens of entities have released reports on campus safety and violence prevention, with specific recommendations that campuses create threat assessment teams as a key measure to prevent violence. The threat assessment model is now advocated for use in higher education settings by entities at the federal and state levels, as well as various international and national associations and laws in two states (Virginia and Illinois). Most recently, in 2010 the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approved a new national higher education risk standard that recommends that colleges and universities implement campus threat assessment teams. The new national standard recommends two books as resources for colleges and universities to use to develop and operate effective threat assessment teams.¹ Both books, which we (the managing partners of SIGMA Threat Management Associates) co-authored, form the foundation of our campus threat assessment training, evaluation, and consulting services.

SIGMA Threat Management Associates, PA helps colleges and universities to develop and implement a threat assessment capacity that fits within their unique cultures and that is effective in both preventing violence and helping persons in need. We train higher education institutions on how to create and implement a threat assessment team (or add threat assessment capabilities to an existing team) and how to identify, investigate, evaluate, and intervene with persons and situations that raise concern on campus. We help institutions to evaluate and enhance existing threat assessment procedures and resources to become consistent with the new national standard. We also consult on individual threat cases and provide guidance on crafting or revising institutional policies and procedures to facilitate effective threat assessment and collaborative case management.

Our approach to training and consultation is based on an integration of research and practice that is unmatched in the field. Our threat assessment experts have over 50 years of combined experience investigating individual threat cases and conducting original research on targeted violence and threat assessment in educational institutions. Our training and consulting services

¹ : Deisinger, G., Randazzo, M., O'Neill, D. & Savage, J, (2008). [The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams](#). Boston: Applied Risk Management (www.arm-security.com) and Randazzo, M. & Plummer, E. (2009) [Implementing Behavioral Threat Assessment on Campus: A Virginia Tech Demonstration Project](#). Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (www.sigmatma.com/resources/books.html).

represent the best practices available. Most importantly, our approach is easy to understand and implement, and is designed to maximize an institution's existing capabilities.

We are dedicated to preventing violence and to empowering our clients to do the same. From our empirical research, we know that majority of violent situations on campuses can be prevented, de-escalated and managed. From our practical experience investigating, evaluating, and intervening in hundreds of individual threat cases, we know that threat assessment is complex, but not complicated. There is no need for cumbersome procedures and protocols. But threat assessment does take the right training, identifying the right people to be involved in the process, and having experienced professionals that you can depend upon for advice when needed. We believe that most institutions have many of the critical elements already in place, but can benefit from expert consultation in maximizing threat assessment capabilities and improving collaboration and coordination of case management services.

TRAINING

Our threat assessment training is based on research and best practices in the area of campus threat assessment, including [The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams](#) (co-authored by Dr. Randazzo and Dr. Deisinger) and [Implementing Behavioral Threat Assessment on Campus: A Virginia Tech Demonstration Project](#) (co-authored by Dr. Randazzo), both of which are now included in the ANSI-approved national standard for risk analysis for higher education institutions as resources for developing and implementing campus threat assessment and management programs. The goal of each training session is to provide participants with the information, guidance and materials they need to evaluate, de-escalate, and manage a broad range of threatening or troubling behaviors, and concerning situations. Participants leave our training sessions with information they can use right away. Our costs also include reference materials and sample policies.

Basic Threat Assessment Training

Basic threat assessment training is available in half-day and full-day sessions. Both formats include basic statistics on the prevalence of different types of campus crime, including school shootings; case studies of school shootings, major facts about school shootings, implications for campus safety, basic principles of campus threat assessment, and strategies for enhancing the campus climate. In addition, full-day sessions include key components of effective campus threat assessment; recommended team composition, policies and procedures; steps for investigating and evaluating threats and other concerning behavior; resources and strategies for managing individuals that may pose a threat of harm; establishing key community relationships; sharing information amid FERPA and HIPAA concerns; considerations for public

information officers; and case studies of prevented attacks. Basic threat assessment training is appropriate for administrators, counseling center staff, campus law enforcement or security, human resources, support staff, and other campus personnel who are committed to campus safety. Community organizations with student or staff contact can also be included. For newly-formed threat assessment teams or existing teams that are adding a threat assessment capacity, we recommend one or two days of basic training because of the breadth and depth of information covered.

Advanced Threat Assessment Training

Advanced training is offered for established campus threat assessment teams. The training leads the team through one (half-day) or multiple (full-day) table-top exercises on an array of simulated threats, allowing the team the opportunity to handle a threat case(s) from start to finish, hone their roles and responsibilities, and evaluate their procedures and decision-making, all with trainer feedback. In addition to more table-top exercises, full day advanced training also includes discussion of advanced strategies for effective interviewing, red flags for deception in interviewing, and common problems and solutions in implementing campus threat assessment programs.

General Awareness Training

General awareness sessions are offered to help threat assessment teams alert students, faculty, and staff of the array of resources (e.g., the threat assessment team, anonymous reporting mechanisms, counseling services, etc.) that are available to enhance campus safety and to support students and staff that may be in need of some assistance. The training, crafted in consultation with the threat assessment team, can be used to inform campus personnel and students that violent incidents can be prevented, reinforce the message that threat assessment is about prevention and support; and tell them how and where to relay any concerns they may have.

CASE CONSULTATION SERVICES

Individual Case Consultation

We help threat assessment teams and campus personnel to investigate, evaluate, and manage individual threat cases. Our case consultation services are tailored to the institution's particular needs and can include identifying sources of information, interviewing persons of concern and others, evaluating information gathered, developing and implementing case management

plans, addressing systemic problems with administrators, and identifying key campus and community resources necessary for case management or intervention.

Case Outsourcing

We provide institutions with outsourcing options for some or all of their threat assessment case activities, including case investigation, evaluation, management, and documentation. Institutions may request outsourcing for all or a portion of their caseload. Retainer fees apply for this service.

Case Investigation Review

We review investigations already conducted by threat assessment teams or threat managers to identify additional areas of investigation and/or suggest options for case management and intervention strategies.

Team Coaching / Subject Matter Expertise

We help some institutions by participating in certain team meetings as a subject matter expert or resource. Institutions have used this option to help existing teams with complex cases and help new teams increase confidence in their procedures and decision making.

TEAM AUDIT & SUPPORT SERVICES

Existing Team Audit & Evaluation

We evaluate the current functioning and case work of an existing threat assessment team. In conducting the Team Audit we interview threat assessment team members and key stakeholders, observe team meetings where possible, review cases assessed and managed, and collect other relevant information. Our Team Audit analysis includes an overview of current team functioning, comparisons with current best practices, and recommendations for enhancing the institution's and team's overall threat assessment and management capacity and processes. In addition to Team Audits, we offer Full Process Audits which include everything listed above plus a review of the institution's broader support resources: campus police or security services and counseling and other support resources available for students and employees. Full Process Audits also include one day of basic or advanced threat assessment training (depending on the audit recommendations), following completion of the audit.

New Team Development & Support

We help campuses to create threat assessment teams, establish the authority and capacity to conduct threat assessment investigations, and develop key case management resources. Team development services include a needs assessment of an institution's existing assets and resources and recommendations on team membership, organizational placement, case documentation options, information-sharing strategies, sample case procedures and protocols, and any necessary policy enhancements. New team development services include one day of basic threat assessment training.

Policy Review

We help campuses to enhance their ability to gather and share information about a student, employee, or other person who has raised some concern, through reviews of existing policies and procedures that govern the institution's ability to investigate threats and intervene to reduce risk.

Information-Sharing Services

We help campuses review and select anonymous reporting mechanisms, examine aspects of the campus environment that could enhance information-sharing, and provide consultation on databases for keeping track of reported information.

Climate Surveys

Studies have shown the importance of perceived safety in reducing violence and sabotage in school and workplace settings. In consultation with the client, we construct and implement anonymous surveys of students, faculty, staff, and others to identify areas or situations on campus that feel less safe (such as in certain areas or at certain times of day). Services include helping the client to develop and implement plans to enhance perceived safety.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about threat assessment services, pricing, and schedule availability, please contact us at:

1-888-820-1401 (Toll Free)

1-703-647-7419 (Direct)

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ABOUT SIGMA

SIGMA Threat Management Associates, P.A. is a consortium of leading behavioral, legal, and law enforcement experts who help clients evaluate threats, manage problem behaviors, and prevent violence. A woman-owned small business, SIGMA provides threat assessment training and consulting services to clients worldwide. For more information, please contact us at:

MARISA (REDDY) RANDAZZO, PH.D.

MANAGING PARTNER

Dr. Marisa Randazzo is a Managing Partner of SIGMA Threat Management Associates and an international expert on threat assessment, targeted violence, and violence prevention. Before joining the private sector, Dr. Randazzo served for ten years with the U.S. Secret Service, most recently as the agency's Chief Research Psychologist. Among her various responsibilities, she co-directed the *Safe School Initiative*, the landmark federal study of school shootings that was conducted jointly by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Randazzo is an accomplished presenter and instructor on threat assessment investigations, having trained over 10,000 professionals in law enforcement, management, administration, mental health, and the intelligence community throughout the United States, Canada, and the European Union. Her research is used in the federal, state, and local law enforcement communities and has been credited in the media with preventing planned attacks. She is co-author of *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams* (2008) and lead author of *Implementing Behavioral Threat Assessment on Campus: A Virginia Tech Demonstration Project* (2009). Dr. Randazzo has testified before Congress and has been interviewed by major television, radio, and print news outlets, including *60 Minutes*, the *Today Show*, the *Early Show*, *48 Hours*, *Dateline NBC*, *MSNBC*, the *New York Times*, and *National Public Radio*. She has published numerous articles on threat assessment and violence prevention and has served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Threat Assessment*. She has also published under her maiden name, Marisa Reddy. Dr. Randazzo received her Ph.D. and Master's degree from Princeton University in Social Psychology, and a B.A. in Psychology and Religion from Williams College. In 2005, Dr. Randazzo was awarded the Williams College Bicentennial Medal for her work in preventing violence. She is listed in several *Who's Who* publications for her threat assessment research and training contributions.

GENE DEISINGER, PH.D.

MANAGING PARTNER

Gene Deisinger, Ph.D. is a Managing Partner of SIGMA Threat Management Associates. He also serves as Deputy Chief of Police and Director of Threat Management Services for Virginia Tech. Dr. Deisinger earned his doctorate in counseling psychology from Iowa State University. He

brings a unique perspective as a licensed psychologist, a certified health service provider in psychology, and a certified law enforcement officer.

Dr. Deisinger was a founding member of the Iowa State University Critical Incident Response Team. This multi-disciplinary team served as a pro-active planning group and coordinated institutional responses during crisis situations, including situations involving threats of violence. Dr. Deisinger developed the threat management program and served as the primary threat manager for Iowa State University from the team's inception in 1994, until accepting his current position at Virginia Tech in August, 2009. He has personally managed and supervised threat cases and protective details for a broad range of governmental dignitaries, public figures, and members of the university community.

For over 16 years, Dr. Deisinger has provided consultation and training to schools, colleges and universities, governmental agencies, and corporations, assisting them in developing, implementing, and refining their threat management services. He has provided consultation on a broad range of cases, helping organizations to implement integrated case management strategies. He has also been an invited presenter for numerous national and international professional organizations.

In 2008, Dr. Deisinger co-authored *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams*, a practical resource designed specifically for institutions of higher education. The *Handbook* has been recognized as exemplifying best practices for implementing and operating campus threat assessment and management teams.

Dr. Deisinger currently serves as a subject matter expert and trainer for the Campus Threat Assessment Training initiative for institutions of higher education, a program offered through the US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. In 2009, Dr. Deisinger was appointed as a Fellow of the US Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention. In 2008, Dr. Deisinger was appointed as a subject matter expert for a joint project by the US Department of Education, US Secret Service and Federal Bureau of Investigation. That project resulted in a monograph (published in April, 2010) entitled *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*.

Dr. Deisinger has provided operational support and training for several local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. From 2002-2009, he served as a Special Deputy United States Marshal with the Joint Terrorism Task Force of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. In 2009, in response to the tragedy at Fort Hood, Dr. Deisinger was requested to assist the Department of the Army in enhancing force protection and threat management capabilities.

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