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Understanding and Minimizing School Shootings

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Understanding and Minimizing School Shootings

By

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this paper to and thank my parents for encouraging me to complete my master's degree, especially my father who has walked along beside me throughout this entire program continuously cheering me on. I would also like to thank my husband for providing support throughout this journey.

Abstract

The unfortunate trend of school shootings is on the rise within the United States. The purpose of this paper is to describe a leadership communication plan for a school shooting situation, along with identifying the three phases of a crisis: pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. It also describes the role a probation officer plays within this topic and the importance of this person in a juvenile's life. An unforeseen issue with school shootings is how it relates to social media. Social media can be used to bully, harass, and contact others unsolicited. It can also be used for a student to vent their feelings and potential disturbing behavior. However, there is a way to use social media with juveniles to help recognize, intervene, and therefore prevent school shootings from occurring. By implementing a new policy within schools, school staff can monitor a youth's concerning behavior and prevent any real danger or harm from happening by reporting the behavior to the appropriate authorities. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-known intervention used with clients who are involved in the criminal justice system. CBT is a technique used to help juveniles and adults better understand their negative thoughts and behaviors as well as gain control of their emotions and develop valuable coping skills. The use of CBT is just as beneficial to those who have experienced a traumatic event or can help aid in preparation or when debriefing an event such as a school shooting.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

School shootings have become more common and repetitive in today's world. This is a crisis not only within the United States but all over the world. This paper will focus on the topic of school shootings within the United States. It will touch on various aspects of them such as leadership communication plans, the different phases of a crisis, warning signs of possible violent youth, social media, and the need for schools to implement new policies, as well as cognitive behavioral therapy and how it can positively affect troubled adolescents and the community.

This topic must be explored more due to the rampant increase in school shootings within the last several years. Students, parents, and schools are extremely concerned because of this unfortunate trend. Parents and schools wonder how they can prevent such tragedies and it is critical to help find as many interventions and solutions as possible to help mitigate and hopefully diminish this trend. Having a unique perspective as previously working as a juvenile probation officer, the job entails a lot of communication with the schools in the community. It also focuses on helping some of the most troubled and violent youth who have entered the criminal justice system. This topic has become an important aspect of the job of a juvenile probation officer because as an agent, one has the authority and resources to truly make a difference in an adolescent's life. The main goal of a probation officer is to hold a client accountable and help reduce their risk of recidivism. Being able to get to know clients on a personal level, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and working on those things together, can assist with that goal. Accomplishing that goal, and helping youth lead a better life, is what makes the job worthwhile.

The first documented school shooting in the United States occurred on November 2nd, 1853, in a small schoolhouse in Louisville, Kentucky, where Matt and Robert Ward walked in and shot a schoolteacher by the name of William H.G. Butler (Ricca, 2022, para. 3-5). After witnessing this heinous act, Butler's students carried him to a nearby house where a doctor was summoned, however he died after hours of suffering. The Ward trial began on April 18th, 1854, and after several witnesses had testified, a verdict was found on April 27th, 1854 - not guilty. The town was shocked and outraged; however, this would unfortunately mark the first documented school shooting in the United States. As of June 15th, 2023, there have been 29 school shootings in the United States that have resulted in injury or death(s) (Maxwell et al., 202, n.p.). As the 2023- 2024 school year begins, one can only hope that this number does not increase.

Society has many opinions and proposals on this topic, as they should, due to its sensitivity and devastating effect on the community. However, no real solutions have been finalized regarding this issue. Many citizens want to see more laws regarding gun control and access to guns, while others believe it is the person using the gun, not the gun itself, causing this crisis. Others want to see more security systems in place in schools as well as School Resource Officers (SROs); however, funding is required for those necessities. There may not be one "right" answer or solution at this time, but the hope is that with everyone working together, a resolution will come to fruition, and these tragedies will decrease and even cease within our schools.

Another issue in today's world especially for youth is social media. Every child, some as young as 8 years old, has access to a cell phone with applications for social media on it. How does social media relate to school shootings? With adolescents using social media daily, it is

likely that they post, comment, or leak some type of information if they plan to commit an act of violence. Therefore, the question is, should there be a school policy that allows staff and School Resource Officers the ability to view and monitor a student's phone and social media? Or does this then become unethical and an invasion of privacy?

There are pros and cons to social media and implementing a monitoring policy like this. A few positives to social media are that it can be used for making connections and staying in touch with others. It also helps gather information and provides education through different types of blogs and forums. However, social media also has its downsides. Social media can be easily used to bully others, by commenting on posts or shaming others; it is a way to hide behind a screen and still speak negatively about others. For teenagers, it can also create toxic relationships, whether it be with friends, family, or significant others. The motivation behind implementing a social media policy within schools is to simply be able to monitor a student's actions online without having to ask permission. If staff see concerning behaviors from a student in class or throughout the halls, they can ask for their phone to view. They might find internet searches relating to guns, ammo, the high school's layout, or previous school shooters. This information would be highly concerning and significant to know. The end goal of a policy like this would be to stop a school shooter or violent youth from acting on their thoughts.

Implementing a social media policy in schools is an important topic to consider because probation officers regularly see or hear about juveniles using their cell phones in class or throughout the halls, instead of focusing on learning. In addition, constantly being on one's phone can damage the human brain and for a youth trying to develop theirs, total access to the internet should not be allowed. Monitoring students' social media can be used to regulate cell

phone usage, as well as alert school staff to suspicious and damaging behavior that could save not just one student, but an entire school.

Currently, in research, there have not been any school policies found regarding a student's social media or cell phone use. Depending on the school, staff may be allowed to take possession of a student's phone if it is becoming an issue in class, but it is unlikely they can view its contents. If a new policy is created, the *Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention* policy, it would allow school staff and law enforcement to monitor students' social media accounts while the student is on or off-campus, to ensure that any concerning behavior or "posts" get brought to authorities' attention immediately so that appropriate action(s) can take place.

If this policy were to be implemented, it could result in some pushback from students and parents. Students would likely disagree with this policy due to it being an invasion of privacy, while parents may argue that it violates a student's First Amendment rights. It would be important for schools considering this policy to sit down with all students, staff, and parents and reiterate how this policy could positively affect the school and the students – by helping keep them safe. It would also be worth addressing the issues of invasion of privacy and First Amendment rights, then circling back to how this policy would only take effect if a student were displaying concerning or suspicious behavior. To approach these issues while implementing this policy, the school itself needs to make the appropriate choice after considering feedback from faculty, parents, students, and legal responsibility in mind.

Considering how the use of social media is a growing trend with juveniles in today's world, it is likely that it will continue to increase as time goes on. More applications will be invented, and most youth will want to access them as quickly as they come out. This might not seem so bad at first, however, many of these 'apps' can lead to destructive behavior, and these

same ‘apps’ can also be used to post concerning behavior. If parents are not going to monitor their children’s behavior on social media, then perhaps the next step is for the school to have access to it. Will a social media policy in schools cause controversy? It is very likely. However, everyone wants answers on how to stop or prevent school shootings; and having a policy such as this could truly prevent concerning behavior from turning into harmful action and therefore should be considered.

School shootings are considered a significant crisis for those who experience them. Due to the trauma that may be caused by such a tragedy, follow-up interventions are critical to help those who have endured them deal with the life-long lasting effects. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an intervention that can be used to help youth and adults who may be self-destructive, or who have experienced trauma and can also be a tool to help the community plan, prevent, and debrief traumatic events.

After experiencing a traumatic event, many undergo long-lasting effects from the event and can even experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). An ongoing problem seen after traumatic events is how help or assistance should be provided to those dealing with those thoughts and emotions left behind from their experience. CBT is one option that may be used. CBT has been around since the 1960s and was developed by psychiatrist Aaron Beck. CBT helps break down thoughts, patterns, and beliefs that can contribute to self-destructive behaviors, and helps teach people how to adjust their thinking and improve their coping skills (McLeod, 2023, para. 3).

CBT is one of the main techniques and skills that probation officers use when working with juvenile and adult clients on probation. This type of skill is commonly implemented into a juvenile’s case plan which focuses on the youth’s criminogenic needs or high-risk areas. These

areas can include antisocial personality and behavior, peers, substance abuse, family, employment, education, criminal history, and leisure/recreation (Van Deirse et al., 2021, para. 3). The goal is to identify which areas are high-risk for the client and develop a case plan around those areas, which includes setting goals and steps to meet those goals. CBT can also be intertwined within a case plan to help meet those identified goals and change negative thoughts and behavior, and therefore - reduce recidivism.

Current approaches to the problem of helping juvenile offenders with their negative behavior include two specific programs, the EQUIP program and the Positive Peer Culture model (PCC). EQUIP is designed to teach antisocial youth to think and act responsibly by combining a peer-helping and skills-streaming approach (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, 2010). The PPC model aims to transform a negative peer culture into a positive culture where individuals feel responsible for one another and therefore try to help one another. Other forms of CBT include the use of Carey Guides, which are evidence-based tools used to target criminogenic needs. A third example of CBT is different cognitive thinking programs such as Thinking for a Change (T4C), Moving On (for female offenders), or Decision Points (Thinking for a Change, 2022; Program Profile, 2016; Decision Points, 2012). All three of these programs contain lessons to help juveniles (and adults) recognize and address their antisocial thinking patterns or behaviors and help change those negative thoughts and behaviors through the practice of specific skills.

As mentioned, CBT can help the community as well by planning, preventing, and debriefing traumatic events. The crisis communication team, which may be comprised of school staff, parents, police and sheriff's department personnel, and the medical response team is essential when preparing for a crisis. When planning for a crisis, it is important for at least a few

of these people on the team to be knowledgeable and experienced in cognitive techniques. With knowledge of cognitive therapy skills, this team can spot when a student's behavior is 'out of the norm' and notify the appropriate personnel which in turn can prevent harm to oneself and others. If a crisis occurs at school, the crisis response team will need to help debrief the situation according to their crisis response plan and start the reunification process with families in the community. Having school staff and other personnel on the team trained in CBT will allow them to help students process the event, create open channels to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, as well as reintegrate them back into school. Overall, CBT is beneficial to anyone, anywhere, but especially useful to those involved in the criminal justice system. It is also valuable to those who have experienced a traumatic event, or to be used in preparation or debriefing a crisis event.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Administrative Lens of School Shootings

Crisis Communication Strategy

Unfortunately, society is in an era where school shootings happen more often than we would hope. These incidents are considered a life-threatening crisis and should be responded to as such. Incidents like school shootings require trained personnel to respond. These responders are efficient in communication, and crisis de-escalation, which are key in emergencies.

Personnel in leadership positions within the school and outside of the school (i.e., first responders, police, medical personnel, etc.) must have the proper communication skills to ensure that the students and staff remain safe. It is also necessary for leadership to have a pre-defined communication plan in place for crises, which is what will be discussed below.

Productive Paranoia, "Doesn't mean engaging in the kind of worry that turns to panic or paralysis. It just means anticipating the most challenging scenario you can think of and adding

the thing that happens *next*. The key to making paranoia productive is preparation. The point of worrying isn't just to understand everything that can go wrong; it's to weigh what warrants the bulk of your attention and to plan what to do – and what not to do - when these worries come to pass” (Hulbert & Hulbert, 2020). This is the duty of the personnel in leadership roles mainly within the school, although there should be collaboration with local law enforcement too. The goal is to formulate a plan that considers all scenarios – and then develop the most productive ways to ensure clear and concise communication through these scenarios. Schools should be discussing their communication plan(s) at least once if not more, each year.

Pre-Crisis

The first step is to designate a crisis communication team, comprised of trained and ready personnel to respond to any crisis. This may include the school principal, administrator, assistant principal, teachers/staff, parents on the school board, police, sheriff's department, and the medical response team. As Laurie Twineham (1996) states in her article called *Ready or Not*, this team should be determining an appropriate plan and response to each type of crisis that the school may encounter (i.e. floods, fires, earthquakes, food poisoning, disease outbreaks, personnel issues, school tragedies, and any other violence). “A good plan includes both situational protocols and functional protocols. *Situational protocols* identify specific action steps to be taken in particular crisis events or situations such as a tornado, fire, or an active shooter. *Functional protocols* outline actions to be taken to perform necessary functions or processes during a crisis, regardless of the nature of the crisis event, such as issuing emergency notifications, sheltering in place, or evacuation of campus” (Zdziarski, 2016, p.27). Being prepared for any ‘what ifs’ helps promote quick emergency decision-making, initiates the pre-

determined response, and jolts the entire communication team into action. This is critical as time cannot be lost to confusion, and there is no excuse for a lack of preparation.

Next, the crisis team should develop a strategy for each crisis category. When discussing strategies, some things to consider are; *the audience* – who will be personally affected by the crisis and *messages* – what do those who are directly affected by the crisis need to know? It is also important to consider the *channels of communication* – what is the quickest and most efficient way to get information into the hands of those who need it most; as well as the *frequency of information* – how frequently does one need to communicate with the team/outside sources? Lastly *housekeeping considerations* – does the school or district have the necessary tools or equipment to communicate efficiently during crises (two-way radios, computers, fax machines, phones, etc.) and does the crisis team know how to operate the equipment or is training needed?

Once a strategy is in place for each crisis category, this strategy should be distributed or discussed amongst the entire crisis team so everyone is informed on how to handle the situation, should a crisis occur. After the crisis team feels they are well prepared for each crisis, it should be determined if it is appropriate to have training or ‘drills’ for all students, staff, and team members (i.e., tornado and active shooter drills). In Minnesota, the required safety drills that are enforced in all schools are lockdown, fire, and tornado drills. Schools are not yet required to practice active shooter drills (Ferguson, 2023). These situation-specific drills will help prepare all members involved if a crisis occurs, as they will be able to fall back on what they learned and apply it to real life. As the saying goes, “If you fail to plan, you can plan to fail” – Benjamin Franklin (1790).

“Active shooter drill is an umbrella term that includes three distinct approaches to emergency preparedness: (a) lockdown drills, (b) options-based drills, and (c) full-scale simulation drills” (National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Resource Officers (NASP & NASRO), 2021, p. 2). “As the name implies, lockdown drills involve locking all doors, turning off the lights, and staying silent and out of sight until the all-clear is given. Options-based drills emphasize responsiveness to active shooter scenarios as they evolve and are designed to equip drill participants with options to actively respond to shooters based on the particulars of a given situation. Options might include lockdown, running, fighting, or distracting the armed assailant. Full-scale simulation drills involve sensorial components such as props, simulated gunfire, or announcements indicating the shooter’s movements. These types of drills may involve law enforcement and are intended to closely simulate the actual active shooter situation to evaluate the effectiveness of protocols” (Howard et al., 2022).

There have been both pros and cons discussed regarding active shooter drills. “There is some evidence that when drills are repeated and implemented correctly, students feel more prepared for an active shooter. However, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of drills for preparing students for chaotic and frightening real-life situations involving an active shooter” (Howard et al., 2022, p.672). Critics of active shooter drills note that having such drills may allow the shooter to know exactly when the most appropriate time to strike is, considering that they have practiced the drills. Active shooter drills may also retraumatize students or staff who may have had adverse childhood experiences or live in an environment with gun violence. Active shooter drills should be left to the discretion of local education authorities and the crisis communication team, however, if authorities and the team determine that drills are unnecessary, then perhaps a different approach to planning and preparedness should be taken.

Leadership must also discuss who the person in charge is to dictate or relay any information about the crisis to outside sources. Typically, these personnel have the means and authority to quickly contact any team members or emergency services that would be needed. If this leader is unable to relay the information (such as if they are out of the office or caught amongst the crisis), there should be a hierarchy of who is next in line to take on this role.

All the ideas presented above take time and cost money. In addition, collaboration is needed across many educational and law enforcement officials. The opposing side of a crisis communication team and all that comes with it may say that these costs, along with the time, effort, and resources that must be put into it will be too much. However, can a price be put on the safety of our children and educational personnel? Although it may be difficult at first to organize such a team, it would be well worth it to keep schools safe.

Crisis Response

If a crisis occurs, the school must take immediate steps to minimize the chaos and maximize the safety of the students and staff. This is when all the preparation and planning come into play. If students and staff are well-trained in this type of crisis, for example, an active shooter, it may lead to the best outcome for all. During an actual crisis, the personnel in the leadership role must know their duty as far as communication goes. This person must assess the crisis and organize and initiate the response plan. This person must also contact emergency services and notify the correct personnel to respond to such an event. The staff at the school need to know their options as far as going into lockdown, sweeping the halls and restrooms safely for unaccounted students, and preparing themselves if it comes down to protecting themselves and their students. Students also play a role during the crisis response. If active shooter drills were practiced, then students would know to remain calm, listen to the direction of

staff, and follow the plan as trained. When a crisis incident happens, the news and media will become aware of it sometimes before the situation has even ended. The superintendent/principal or the crisis communication team must gather the facts and put together a statement that would be appropriate for the public. “A school’s ability to intervene in a crisis, and to provide appropriate information to teachers, students, and families both during and after a crisis, is dependent on consistent, accurate, and appropriate communication” (Razi & DeChillo, 2005, p.127).

Post-Crisis

A critical moment following a tragedy such as a school shooting is the reunification process, where students are reunited with their parents. This process typically happens off-site from where the incident occurred since the site of the crisis may be deemed a crime scene by law enforcement. On the site where the crisis occurred, emergency personnel and police tend to the immediate physical needs of the students, staff, and community. As Crepeau-Hobson et al. stated, “Mental health staff should be available to simultaneously attend to the immediate mental health needs of those impacted. The reunification process is an important piece of the crisis response as the re-establishment of natural social support systems is often the only crisis intervention needed for many individuals, and family members are often identified as the greatest source of support following a crisis” (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012).

“Reunification generally takes from 2 to 10 hours depending on the crisis. Having crisis responders available to provide support during the reunification process is critical. Logistics for the reunification site include transportation from the crisis site, a roster of students who come to the reunification site, and logs to document the times that students are released and to whom. It is helpful to have law enforcement on site to ensure a sense of safety and security, as well as an

adequate number of mental health staff members to meet immediate crisis-related needs. This is dependent on the level of impact experienced by students, staff, and the community” (Crepeau-Hobson et. Al., 2012). With reunification being an important step in this process, it is vital that the criteria above are available. “Finally, written material (i.e., an informational flyer) addressing mental health support available, typical crisis reactions and emergency contact numbers should be on hand. These materials should be in the languages of the school and surrounding community” (Crepeau-Hobson et. Al., 2012).

Crepeau-Hobson et al., also discuss using the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Mental Health model in the post-crisis stage. According to the NOVA model, three tasks help re-establish pre-crisis levels of functioning. These tasks include: “Safety and security, ventilation and validation, and prediction and preparation. The first task is establishing safety and security which involves connecting individuals with their loved ones and ensuring a sense of control and safety. The second task entails ventilation and validation. Ventilation involves providing individuals who have experienced a crisis to tell their story while validation normalizes their reactions and feelings. The third task of the NOVA model is prediction and preparation, where crisis responders are charged with anticipating future issues and reactions and helping individuals and the community prepare for these” (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012). Crepeau-Hobson et al., also note that a fourth task has been found important enough to add; empathy and empowerment. “Empathy can also be displayed more broadly by attending to the needs of staff, students, and the community, anticipating what they need to increase their sense of safety and security, and responding to their venting empathically. Empowerment includes the promotion of a sense of self-worth and capability, as well the perception that others are available to provide support” (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012).

A school should also consider handouts after a crisis. These handouts can include information booklets, resources, ways of coping, common reactions to crises, and other information about mental health services available to families. The school must also be prepared to relay information to the public regarding the crisis. These “Communications should include acknowledgment of the tragedy, what is being done to ensure that the school is safe/being repaired (if relevant), and an explanation of the available crisis-related services offered” (Crepeau-Hobson et al., 2012).

Before the school re-opens, it should consider having an ‘open house’ to help students and parents feel more comfortable and safer with classes resuming. Crisis staff and mental health workers can be prepared on-site to answer any questions that families may have. Another option that schools might be interested in having is mental health workers in the classrooms for the first day or two after classes resume. This way they are available for students, and staff will feel supported throughout the transition back into the academic year. It is vital to note that the crisis communication team may also need some self-care after a critical incident. It is imperative for staff and the crisis communication team to debrief and discuss what went well and what can be worked on should another crisis occur. The recovery process for all after a traumatic event takes time; it is important not to rush back into the daily routine and consider that some students and staff may need long-term support.

Long-term planning should also be considered as part of the post-crisis plan. The crisis communication team should meet with all members and the school, to determine if meetings should take place for the next few weeks, months, and years. Memorials and a continuing crisis plan should be the focus during the upcoming weeks, as well as focusing on the students and staff who have been closely affected by the traumatic event.

Follow-up Interventions

Crisis events like school shootings will have a lasting impact on a school and the community. Therefore, it is important to provide follow-up interventions that may serve the needs of both adults and adolescents. “Unfortunately, the effects of traumatic events on adolescents’ psychological well-being and behavior have often been underestimated, especially in the months following the crisis” (Vernberg, 2002, p.68). “Thus, it is imperative that we understand the grieving process for youth who have experienced loss of any type so that we may better address their needs when responding to crises. Grief that youths experience depends on several developmental considerations, including the following: age, developmental level, presence of mental health problems, previous experience of child abuse or other types of trauma, and familial support. In addition, contextual variables such as gender, culture, socioeconomic status, severity of exposure to traumatic event, degree of perceived and actual life threat, severity of loss, and parents’ responses to the traumatic event also impact bereavement. Due to the complexities of adolescent bereavement and individual coping styles, follow-up interventions should be tailored to address a wide range of concerns” (Jimerson et al., 2005, p. 291). Follow-up interventions for youth vary from cognitive behavioral interventions, screenings, or guided parent-child interactions. Two interventions mentioned for crisis events include the Group Crisis Intervention (GCI) and the Multi-Modal Model of Intervention.

Group crisis intervention is a strategy to help both staff and students express their thoughts and feelings, learn coping strategies, and understand the trauma they are experiencing. Typically, GCI is one single session with a group of individuals that lasts one to three hours. The group crisis intervention has six steps: Introduction, Providing the facts and dispelling rumors, sharing stories, sharing reactions, Empowerment, and Closing (Jimerson et al., 2005, p.

289). Post-group crisis intervention services may also be necessary for those who need additional support after the group crisis intervention.

The multi-modal model of intervention also known as the BASIC Ph model was created by Lahad and colleagues which consists of six components that when sorted into groupings, form distinct coping strategies. The six components of BASIC Ph include: Belief and Values, Affect, Social, Imaginative, Cognitive, and Physiological. “By understanding individual coping styles, crisis interventions and therapy may be tailored to best suit the needs of each person. Through this brief assessment technique and the overall composition of the multi-modal approach, the BASIC Ph provides a framework of assessment that enables crisis intervention teams to explore individual coping styles and recommend who may require further support or professional treatment. The BASIC Ph model may also serve as a ‘blueprint’, that a school crisis intervention team can use to plan a multi-modal intervention incorporating activities from all the six modes” (Jimerson et al., 2005, p. 290) (See Table 4 in the Appendix for a summary of the multi-modal model).

Crisis Communication Theory & Strategies

“Communities rely on leaders to effectively communicate before, during, and after a crisis while coordinating resources to prevent or reduce negative impact. To support communication efforts, emergency managers are encouraged to operate in such a way that information collection, organization, and dissemination leads to open, honest, accurate, tailored, two-way, and knowledgeable information. This can be accomplished through identified best practices of promoting effective communication regarding process approaches and policy development; pre-event planning; partnerships with the public; listening to the public’s concerns and understanding the audience; collaboration and coordination with credible sources; meeting

the needs of the media and remaining accessible; communicating with empathy and concern; accepting uncertainty and ambiguity; and promoting self-efficacy. Essentially, the more attention given to crisis communication strategies and adaptations for local community needs, then the better off a community will be” (Haupt, 2021, p. 132). The above relates to the crisis communication team that every school should have. The crisis communication team, and the leader of the team, must prioritize their communication skills in times of crisis. The leader must be able to share important information with the public in an authentic, honest, and empathetic way while accepting that the information may change or be incorrect at the time of sharing.

Haupt describes the most appropriate theory supporting crisis communication as, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). SCCT “provides a prescriptive system to connect response strategies to the crisis with integrated adaptations for local community needs and crisis typology. This is incorporated through instructing (informing stakeholders of response practices), adjusting (integrating information related to the who, what, when, where, why, and how), and sharing (disseminating at the onset of a crisis)” (Haupt, 2021, p. 138). Regarding school shootings, this theory would rely heavily on the crisis communication team leader to inform outside sources of the crisis response plan, relaying information regarding the actual crisis (who, what, when, where, why, and how) to outside sources, and then sharing any important information with the public as it pertains to them (i.e., staff, parents of students, emergency services, and the media). The crisis communication team leader must also be involved in decision-making and policy creation, especially when it comes to creating and implementing crisis communication plans. It is also important to exercise crisis communication strategies regularly with community partners. If a crisis such as a school shooting occurs, all

members of the crisis communication team must be on the same page to keep all involved safe and to distribute information accordingly.

As stated above, school shootings are increasing in today's world. As unfortunate as they are, schools, staff, and the community must be prepared for them if one occurs near home. Developing a crisis communication team is the first step in preparing for such an event. Having a team that is well-informed, prepared, and skilled in communication can be critical if a school shooting were to happen. Preparing a pre- and post-crisis response plan is essential in keeping the school, students, and staff as safe as possible. Not only having that post-crisis response plan prepared but also having interventions at hand that may aid in students and staff returning to school is important. As mentioned, communication is key in the event of a crisis. Using communication strategies and knowing them ahead of time as well as how to disseminate information after the crisis, may end up saving lives, and is imperative on how the public will perceive the school after a traumatic event.

Ethical Lens of School Shootings

“I heard this morning about another school shooting that occurred in Alabama yesterday. I didn't really notice when things like this used to happen, but after going through something like that, we can sympathize with them. You don't know what it is like unless you go through it. The fear of not knowing how many shooters there are, where they are, if your friends are dead – it changes you. Yesterday those students had to run or hide for their lives. This changed us. I was told to run, and then when I got to the back of the softball field, they told us to duck and get some cover. It was as if we were in the middle of a war zone. Texting your parents, your friends, your family how much you love them because you don't know if you will ever see that person again changes you. It

gives you a more positive perspective on life, but it also leaves you extremely traumatized” - Jose Iglesias – 17, Senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (Alter, 2018).

When discussing the topic of ethics, most people tend to agree that ethics are a person’s moral principles, and they help someone determine if something is right or wrong. In reference to this paper, bringing a gun into a school and shooting innocent adults and children is deemed morally wrong. Everyone would agree that this type of behavior is unethical or immoral.

‘Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention’ Policy

This part of the paper will discuss how implementing new policies in schools may help prevent school shootings, the impact of new policies on the community, and ethical dilemmas that may arise due to new policy implementation. Social media in today’s world is something that every youth thrives on. Without access to social media, young people today would not know what to do with themselves. Youth today spend nearly every waking minute on some form of social media, whether it be their phone, computers, tablets, or gaming systems; it can dominate their life 24/7. Social media can be used as a positive, as it is useful for making connections with others, helps gather all kinds of information, and provides forms of education through blogs and forums. However, social media also has many drawbacks. Social media allows people to present the “best version” of themselves, which can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, among other things. It is also a way to bully, criticize and hurt others, and can create toxic relationships. So, what does social media have to do with school shootings? As mentioned, since juveniles are always on social media, and they tend to post about everything they are doing, it might help alert those in an authority role to unhealthy thoughts and damaging behavior. This includes posting about a potential shooting at their local school, threatening or

warning kids to not go to school on a specific day, or even posting pictures of themselves holding weapons as a sign of power and danger.

Many applications are available for parents to download to monitor their child's screen time and social media usage. Examples of these applications include the following: *Bark*, which can alert parents to concerning content their child may be viewing, *Screentime*, which allows social media monitoring and has pause features to control device use, *Qustodio*, which can block applications and filter content as well as read text messages and view call history, and *Norton Family*, which can track their location in real-time. All these applications (plus many more) can track, monitor, and alert parents to concerning behavior, so why not use social media as a surveillance tool to identify warning signs that a youth may harm themselves or others? If parents and/or school staff can monitor students' social media behavior, there is a greater chance of a warning sign being noticed, which in turn can be addressed, and prevent a tragedy from occurring. However, with this idea, there can come resistance from the youth and a possible civil rights violation.

In the case, *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.*, 594 U.S. (2021), a student at Mahanoy Area High School tried out for and failed to make her high school's varsity cheerleading team, and instead only made the junior varsity team. Over the weekend, and with time away from school, she posted a picture of herself on Snapchat with the caption "F*** school f*** softball f*** cheer f*** everything." "The photo was visible to about 250 people, many of whom were MAHS students and some of whom were cheerleaders. Several students who saw the captioned photo approached the coach and expressed concern that the snap was inappropriate. The coaches decided B.L.'s snap violated team and school rules, which B.L. had acknowledged before joining the team,

and she was suspended from the junior varsity team for one year” (Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L., 2021, para. 1-2). B.L. then decided to sue the school alleging that her suspension from the team violated her First Amendment rights. The district court granted summary judgment in B.L.’s favor, ruling that the school had violated her First Amendment rights. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit also affirmed.

This begs the question if public school officials have the right to regulate off-campus student speech, or does the First Amendment prohibit that? The court in this case again concluded that “The First Amendment limits but does not entirely prohibit regulation of off-campus student speech by public school officials, and here the school district’s decision to suspend B.L. violated the First Amendment” (Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L., 2021, para. 32). So, what does that mean for schools attempting to monitor students’ behavior via social media for warning signs, when they are not on school grounds? Or if a student displays threatening behavior via Facebook by posting a picture of guns lying on his or her bed with no caption, does a school have the authority to suspend or expel a student immediately without investigating? Does a school’s actions in protecting the student body and staff, violate the one student who is displaying threatening behavior First Amendment rights, or is it different when it comes to the safety of others? These are all questions to consider and think about when it comes to preventing school shootings and harm to the entire student body, staff, and community.

With the new policy - *Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention* implemented into schools, it would allow school staff and law enforcement to monitor students’ social media accounts while they are on or off-campus, to ensure that any concerning behavior or ‘posts’ get brought to authorities’ attention immediately and violence can be prevented. This may be just

one way to prevent crises like school shootings from happening so that students like Jose Iglesias feel safe in school again.

Policy Implementation into Schools

If this policy were to be implemented, there could be backlash from not only the students but their parents. While many others such as school staff, students, some parents of students, and the community in general would agree with this type of policy, there is no doubt it would face some criticism. Students in disagreement with this policy would make the argument that their right to privacy while off-campus has been violated, along with the argument of their First Amendment rights. Students' parents may also agree with their children in that their child's 'social media life' should be kept private in the sense that it should not be monitored if they are not at school. However, an argument could easily be made that when something is posted on social media, it is then put out into the world, and therefore it is no longer private.

There are both pros and cons of social media monitoring of students. Some pros are that social media monitoring can alert administrators to potential threats:

“Many schools are hiring social media monitoring companies to track what their students are saying on the internet. They can set parameters such as words to look for and areas to monitor. The monitor will not read individual posts but will simply alert administrators to disturbing trends, such as a particular student using the words kill or bomb too many times” (Taylor, para. 4, 2016). Monitoring can also prevent other events such as suicides or drug activity and sales. Social media can also keep families informed, “if parents know where to look, by turning to social media they can stay on top of emerging situations at schools or sporting events. If there is a threat, administrators can quickly update mass amounts of people by posting a quick message to the school’s

Facebook page. Parents can look there and see, if any, the next steps they should take” (Taylor, para. 7, 2016). This can be especially helpful due to the recent increase in shootings at school sporting events such as football games. A new trend that seems to be happening both in and outside of high school stadiums this year.

With new policy changes, there will also be some cons for those changes. Social media can lead to misinformation. If parents turn to social media to stay informed, then they must be using a trusted site such as the school’s official page or even the local Sheriff’s office page. Software is not perfect, and misunderstandings can occur. “As with any new technology, there are still kinks to be worked out when it comes to social media monitoring, and when mistakes can mean false arrests, some may not want to take that risk. This threat became too real for a student from Tucson, AZ in January when their birthday post was misinterpreted as a threat. Because of the “threat,” law enforcement was placed on the campus” (Taylor, para. 10, 2016). Lastly, the biggest con that most would see is the invasion of privacy; however, the legal policies and regulations surrounding this are being evaluated and established to this day. In the end, using social media for safety is a choice administrators must make, and the choice should be made with feedback from faculty, parents, students, and legal responsibility in mind.

Per the *Internet and Public Policy: Privacy and Consumer Protection* brief regarding Minnesota laws and public policies, “Legislation was introduced in Minnesota in 2016 and 2017 prohibiting schools and employers from requesting social media usernames and passwords, but no law has been enacted” (Mullen, 2018, p.13). Due to no law being enacted, it would be possible for a policy to be implemented that allows schools to request consent from parents to monitor their children’s social media.

Also discussed in this brief is the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which encourages both public and school libraries to install software that blocks obscene or pornographic materials so that children are unable to access them.

“The federal law allows libraries and schools that install the blocking software to access reduced rates to Internet services. The law requires blocking software that prevents obscene material and pornography from being accessed on the Internet but allows blocking software to be turned off if needed for an adult to do valid research. The law also requires the library or school library to adopt Internet safety and education policies, which include educating students about online safety and monitoring student Internet activities. CIPA was challenged shortly after it was enacted on First Amendment grounds, but the Supreme Court ruled that CIPA did not violate the First Amendment rights of individuals and students” (Mullen, 2018, p.14-15).

To implement the new policy of *Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention*, the idea should be brought to the school board, superintendent, and commissioner of the district to discuss it further as well as the reasoning and need for it. If the board approves the new policy, it would be beneficial to discuss this policy with the parents of the students to gain their approval as well. The approval of parents would ensure a smooth implementation process of this policy as they could explain the reasoning for it to their children who may disagree with the policy. Once approved, the new policy would need to be authorized into the school’s current policy handbook, and then enforced.

Furthermore, if this new policy were implemented, it would be wise to speak with parents and gain their consent to view and monitor their children’s social media whether it be on or off

school grounds. Having parents on the school's side to ensure the safety of all students will allow for a smoother process if any concerning behavior is found. As mentioned above, CIPA helps encourage schools to install software that blocks students from having access to obscene or harmful material (i.e., searching for guns on the school computer). CIPA was challenged regarding violating students' and individuals' First Amendment rights, and it was determined that it does not. This can be a great law to lean on when implementing a policy such as the one proposed.

Impact of the Policy on the Community

The implementation of this policy would impact the students, parents, school, and the public, as this safety measure could protect the public from a violent situation. This policy could also impact probation officers, as they supervise juveniles who are on probation. Granted the Court could order a probation condition such as, "consent to the search of person and property at the agent's discretion," but that condition is not ordered for every juvenile. Having this new policy in place for juveniles who may be on probation, can allow the school staff to recognize concerning behavior and alert the juveniles' probation officer who can then do their due diligence in investigating the concern and reporting it to law enforcement. Juvenile probation officers in Wright County work very closely with the schools in the county. "Safe Schools" meetings are held throughout the school year at each school to discuss any concerns, trends, and other topics that may be occurring with adolescents. Seeing how closely probation and the schools work together, this policy would only help grow that relationship even more.

This policy would also impact law enforcement. Almost every school now has a School Resources Officer (SRO) assigned to them. It would be these officers who would be the ones carrying out this policy and enacting it. If a student is exhibiting concerning behavior, the SRO

would be one of the individuals taking possession of the student's phone and searching it for any threatening posts or information. If this policy were to take effect, the SRO would also have to be fully aware of the current rights that exist regarding a student's property and social media.

Ethical Expectations and Dilemmas

As mentioned above, ethics are defined as someone's moral principles and help determine what is right and wrong. One ethical expectation regarding this topic is that it is wrong to murder someone. The average human being has the ethical expectation that others will not harm or murder them, especially innocent children while attending school. Another ethical expectation is the right to privacy. We as humans assume to have this right when it comes to our personal lives. However, this expectation creates a dilemma for the new Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention policy.

Schools in general are ethical organizations. School administrators and staff are faced with ethical dilemmas and moral decisions daily. In one study, *Ethical Dilemmas for School Administrators*, two approaches to moral decision-making were considered – the justice approach and the care approach.

“The resolution of these moral quandaries’ rests on the decision-maker's ability to balance utilitarianism and egoism as guiding forces. When the utilitarian method is employed, moral issues are determined based on what is most practical and in the interest of the organization. Utilitarianism places a strong emphasis on human rationality. This method adheres to the ethic of justice in holding that ethical decisions are those that bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Egoism, on the other hand, adheres to the ethic of care in seeking to decide what the interests and needs of the individual may be. The person must not be ignored. Proponents of a justice approach

envision that moral decision-making can be rational, logical, systematic, and enhanced by the application of universal principles to the solution of moral problems. In a justice approach, the moral decision-maker steps back from any personal frame of reference or personal involvement. The purpose is to establish the facts, not know the individual” (Denig & Quinn, p.43, 2001). Whereas in the care approach, one seeks to get to know the individual and “prefers solutions to moral issues that will enable relationships to endure and to prosper” (Denig & Quinn, p. 43, 2001).

How do these two approaches apply to school shootings one may ask? Both approaches could apply to this topic. The justice approach can apply in the sense that it would support the proposition of the new social media policy because the policy itself would bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The *Social Media Monitoring for Violence Prevention* policy would ensure that school administrators and law enforcement can investigate and stop a threat or concerning behavior the moment it is brought to their attention. This policy would be in the best interest of the organization (school) and is a rational decision to help prevent a tragedy such as a school shooting from occurring.

The care approach could also be considered for this topic. Although it may not be the favored approach, this method must also be considered. The care approach applies to school shootings in the sense that one would take the time to get to know the individual, or the student displaying concerning behavior. With this approach, an administrator, school counselor, or SRO, could begin meeting with the student as often as needed to determine what the issue is regarding their behavior and how to best remedy it. This approach also states that the individual cannot be ignored, which many would agree with. If a student is displaying concerning behavior or posting threatening images on social media, they may end up conducting harmful behavior,

and therefore this must be addressed before it occurs. Either approach could be used in our argument, and both should be considered when discussing school shootings and the dilemmas that go along with them.

When schools come across the ethical dilemma regarding the right to privacy for students, it is important to consider the following specific steps in analyzing the dilemma itself. The steps are as such; 1. Identify the facts, 2. Identify relevant values and concepts, 3. Identify all possible dilemmas, 4. Identify the most immediate moral or ethical issue facing the individual, and 5. Resolve the ethical or moral dilemma by using an ethical system or another means of decision-making (Pollock, p. 7, 2022). Ethical analysis must be used when the right thing to do is not clear. Regarding the social media policy and students' right to privacy, these steps can be followed to help determine if it is best to apply this policy and the precise way to go about implementing it.

Ethical Accountability

To promote ethical accountability regarding school shootings, one must follow and apply the Principles of Stewardship. The Principles of Stewardship are as follows; 1. *The principle of ownership* – “we must recognize and understand that stewardship is the fact that God owns everything in our lives;” (Glover, para. 2, n.d.) – we must realize that God made and owns all of us, and we need to understand that hurting anyone is wrong and against Gods will. 2. *The principle of responsibility* – we must fulfill our responsibilities, and it is our responsibility as adults to ensure that the youth and children of America are safe in their schools; 3. *The principle of accountability* – we must take accountability for our actions, and our actions are currently not protecting the children of America in schools, and this issue must be resolved, and lastly 4. *The principle of reward* - “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, accountability of our

ability to follow God’s commandments can generate reward. Moreover, we must switch our focus from the temporary to the eternal. The treasures that are stored up within us will also be rewarded through true sanctification that is in heaven after we depart from this earth” (Glover, para. 5, n.d.). In other words, if a person realizes that all human life is precious, takes responsibility and accountability for their actions, and honestly tries to do what is right, then we will all be rewarded in the end. If people recognize they have made mistakes thus far in keeping our children safe at school and take further action in implementing policies to help ensure their safety, we can be rewarded with fewer tragedies and crises regarding school shootings.

Unfortunately, ethics are not something that everyone lives by, and many fall into the trap of unethical thinking which can lead to harmful behaviors. It is the responsibility of those in America who do live by ethics, to use their morals and values to guide others to enact policies that can and will keep children safe in schools. Implementing policies such as the *Social Media for Violence Prevention* policy can help school administrators and law enforcement act immediately when concerning behavior is noticed. This policy can and will help save innocent lives. It can also allow us to intercede and aid troubled individuals who are seeking a cry for help. Although such a policy can cause ethical dilemmas such as violations of specific privacy rights, we must, as a moral society, determine if our privacy rights are worth losing more innocent children.

Correctional Design in a Changing World Lens of School Shootings

CBT and interventions have been around since the 1960s and were first developed by a psychiatrist by the name of Aaron Beck. Beck “formulated the idea of therapy after noticing that many of his patients had internal dialogues that were almost a form of them talking to themselves. He also observed that his patients’ thoughts often impacted their feelings, and he

called these emotionally loaded thoughts “automatic thoughts” (The Development of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, 2014, para. 2). CBT looks at thoughts, patterns, and beliefs that can contribute to self-destructive behaviors. It helps teach people how to modify their thinking and improve their coping skills. The Mayo Clinic has even constructed a list of the benefits of CBT such as controlling emotions, coping with grief, dealing with physical illness, managing mental health conditions/symptoms, overcoming emotional trauma, preventing relapse, resolving conflicts, teaching coping techniques to deal with stress, and treatment for people who can’t use medications (The Development of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, 2014). CBT can be used for any age and multiple reasons. This section of the paper is going to explore how CBT can affect youth who may be labeled as self-destructive, how it can benefit youth who have endured trauma, as well as how these types of interventions can help those in the community who prevent, plan for or debrief traumatic events, such as school shootings.

Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Youth Offenders

“Juvenile antisocial behavior is a widely acknowledged societal problem. Antisocial behavior is defined as behavior that is harmful to others by breaking important social or moral norms. It includes aggressive and delinquent acts such as assault, shoplifting, and robbery. Antisocial behavior does not only cause harm to its victims but is also very costly to society” (Helmond et al., 2012, para. 1). When people think of youth offenders, the average person may think that the juvenile made a mistake by committing a crime has learned their lesson and will never commit another crime again. Unfortunately, that is far from true. In the criminal justice system, many youths who commit crimes do not learn their lesson and in fact, return with an even longer criminal history. Many of the youth involved in the juvenile system were not raised with the typical social norms that other, prosocial youth were raised with. These youth have antisocial attitudes and behaviors that have been ingrained in them throughout their entire life,

which then results in them thinking that committing crimes is not only ‘okay’ but that it is a societal norm. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, “In 2019 approximately 265,000 youth were placed on probation by juvenile courts nationwide. Of this number, 9% of juveniles placed on probation in 2019 were charged with serious violent crimes, and 21% were charged with serious property crimes, such as burglary or car theft” (Casey Foundation, 2021, para. 4). This begs the question of, why are juveniles committing crimes and how can we prevent this number from increasing.

This brings the topic back to CBT, which is one of the main techniques that probation officers use with juveniles on probation. CBT and programs that use a similar technique are commonly implemented into the youth’s case plan. This is done to help them change or alter their current (negative) ways of thinking, into more positive ways of thinking in the hope of reducing recidivism. For example, “EQUIP is a cognitive–behavioral program that is used at various (juvenile) correctional facilities and institutions in North America, Europe, and Australia. Specifically in the Netherlands, EQUIP is implemented in all juvenile correctional facilities as part of a nationwide basic methodology (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, 2010, p.1722). EQUIP is designed to teach antisocial youth to think and act responsibly by combining a peer-helping and a skills-streaming approach. The peer-helping approach of the EQUIP program is based on a Positive Peer Culture (PPC) model (Vorrath & Brendtro, 1985). The PPC model aims to transform a negative peer culture into a positive culture in which individuals feel responsible for each other and help one another (Gibbs et al., 1995). However, a peer-helping approach alone is not sufficient to counter negative peer pressure, since antisocial youth often lack the skills necessary to adequately help each other (Gibbs et al., 1995). The EQUIP program therefore also targets three specific “limitations” of antisocial youth: cognitive distortions, social skill

deficiencies, and moral developmental delays. The first limitation, cognitive distortions, can be described as “inaccurate or rationalizing attitudes, thoughts or beliefs concerning own or other's behavior” (Gibbs et al., 1995, p. 108). The second limitation, social skill deficiencies, is defined as “imbalanced and unconstructive behavior in difficult interpersonal situations” (Gibbs et al., 1995, p. 165). The third limitation, moral developmental delays, can be defined as “the persistence beyond early childhood of an immature moral judgment and a pronounced “me-centeredness” or “egocentric bias” (Gibbs et al., 1995, p. 43). Many previous studies have shown that cognitive distortions, poor social skills, and immature moral judgments are related to antisocial behavior (Barriga, Hawkins, & Camelia, 2008). Therefore, “these limitations are addressed in the skills-streaming curriculum of EQUIP” (Helmond et al., 2012).

Another example of CBT that is typically used with youth on probation is Carey Guides. Carey Guides are evidence-based tools that were designed by creator Mark Carey. These guides target criminogenic needs, which are risk factors that are most likely to lead youth to commit new crimes (i.e., antisocial attitudes/beliefs, substance abuse, antisocial peers, moral reasoning, problem-solving, etc.) (Van Deinse et al., 2021, para. 3). These tools are homework assignments focused on CBT skills. Probation agents can assign their clients these tasks to work on and then review and discuss their answers during their meetings. Not only do these tools provide an opportunity for some discussion, but they also allow the client and agent to conduct role-playing skills that the client may need some help with. Carey Guides are used for case planning with clients and are also great interventions if a client is struggling (Van Deinse et al., 2021, para. 5).

A third example of using cognitive behavioral therapy is the different cognitive programs, such as Thinking for a Change (T4C), Moving On (for female offenders), or Decision Points. Thinking for a Change is a program comprised of 25 lessons that build upon each other.

Clients typically meet twice per week for 1-2 hours each session (Thinking for a Change, 2022, para. 2). They complete different skills, present those skills, and receive homework. T4C incorporates research from cognitive restructuring theory, social skills development, and the learning and use of problem-solving skills – all of which help the client gain self-confidence and make better judgments. The Moving On program is a gender-responsive intervention (for female offenders only) and is delivered in 26 sessions over the course of 12 weeks (Program Profile, 2016, para.4). The goal of Moving On is to address the different cognitive-behavioral needs of women in the criminal justice system. Throughout the program, the women conduct self-assessments, writing exercises, and role-playing activities. They are also encouraged to set goals for the future and assess their personal strengths and weaknesses. “The environment is supportive and accepting so that women may build and expand their support network and become more competent in decision making, problem-solving, assertiveness skills, and emotional regulation” (Program Profile: Moving On, 2016, para. 7). Lastly, Decision Points is an evidenced-based program that was released in 2015 to address offender risk, needs, and responsibility. It is an open-entry cognitive behavior intervention program for both youth and adults in the criminal justice system and prepares participants with alternative ways to examine their thinking and the related actions that lead them into trouble (Decision Points, 2012, para. 1). These types of cognitive skills programs can be very beneficial in helping juveniles recognize and address any antisocial thinking patterns or behaviors, and then change those thoughts and behaviors through the practice of specific skills.

With the programs, skills, and tools mentioned above, the ultimate goal is to help juvenile offenders change their thoughts and behaviors to more prosocial ones. If this can be accomplished while the juvenile is on probation, then perhaps the recidivism rate can be reduced

in the United States. Another thought is to have these types of skills and programs integrated into schools. Having these tools available at a younger age can help juveniles recognize their thought patterns early on in life and prevent them from ever entering the criminal justice system. It might also give youths a chance to understand themselves better and to learn how to talk with others more positively. Allowing youth access to this knowledge can and will prevent crime in America and avoid tragedies such as assault, robbery, and even school shootings.

Benefits of CBT and Youth Trauma

“Unfortunately, stressful events are not an unusual occurrence in child and adolescent development. Parents divorce, grandparents die, children and others in their lives get injured. These may not be considered extreme trauma, however, according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, text revision* (American Psychiatric Association; APA, 2000, para. 7), an extreme traumatic stressor involves: ‘...direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate.’ Examples include sexual or physical abuse, severe accidents, cancer, or other life-threatening illness, natural or man-made disasters, war, terrorism, or the sudden death of a parent, sibling, or peer” (Little et al., 2011, p. 452).

While many juveniles who are exposed to traumatic events show resiliency and others may improve in functioning via a process called *Post-Traumatic Growth*, many still manifest psychological difficulties such as fear, depression, anger, mood changes, hypervigilance, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Two validated treatment approaches have been shown

to help improve the above symptoms of children who have been exposed to a traumatic event – *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT)* and *Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)* (Little et al., 2011, p. 455).

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) according to Little et al. (2011), is, “a collection of core skills that build on one another. It is not a rigid session-by-session treatment approach but rather is designed to match the needs of the individual child and family. Sessions are individually based and involve activities such as relaxation training, reviewing the traumatic event via cognitive behavior therapeutic techniques, and ending, usually, with some sort of permanent product (e.g., a journal). It is believed that for treatment to be effective it must be consistent with the families’ religious, community, and cultural values as the therapist works closely with the family and not just with the child in isolation. Parents are a key component in treatment, and improving parent-child interactions, communication, and intimacy are a major focus. A key factor in TF-CBT is restoring trust and functioning in the child and to accomplish this the therapist must model trust, empathy, and acceptance. The goal of TF-CBT is an optimally functioning individual and family and to achieve this, the therapist attempts to establish a sense of self-efficacy in the client’s effect, behavior, and cognitions” (Little et al., 2011, p. 459).

Whereas Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) is, “a skills-based group intervention for children aged 10 to 15 exposed to traumatic events. The focus of the intervention is on PTSD symptomatology, depression, and anxiety” (Little et al., 2011, p.459). CBITS requires six components: Education, relaxation training, cognitive therapy, real-

life exposure, stress or trauma exposure, and social problem-solving. This program is specifically designed for use in schools (Little et al., 2011, p. 460).

As mentioned above, not all juveniles exposed to traumatic events will suffer the lasting effects of those events. Many children are resilient and may experience something known as Post Traumatic Growth (PTG). PTG has been defined as “positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Little et al., 2011, p. 460). Five domains have been identified for PTG: personal strength, new possibilities, relating to others, appreciation of life, and spiritual change. Children who experience PGT tend to improve their psychological functioning without medical or psychological assistance, so little intervention is needed (Little et al., 2011, p. 461).

A certain percentage of youth in America may experience some type of trauma before they reach adulthood; however, as stated above, there are cognitive behavioral approaches that have been proven to be effective at treating some of the traumatic stressors that are caused by these events. The best way to provide these interventions to the youth of America is through school, where a large percentage of them go each day. While there is mandated training on crisis intervention in many school programs, there is little training provided specifically addressing the needs of children who have suffered a traumatic event. Teachers, school counselors, and other school personnel are typically not trained in dealing with grieving and traumatized children and youth. Therefore, not only should there be mandated crisis intervention training in schools for traumatic events (i.e., school shootings, bullying, assaults, etc.), but staff should be mandated to receive specialized training in cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT or CBITS) to help deal with the lasting effects on the youth who experienced the event.

How CBT Affects Community Members

It takes many personnel to help prevent, plan for, and debrief traumatic events, such as school shootings. As mentioned early on, a crisis communication team which may be comprised of a school principal, administrator(s), assistant principal, teachers/staff, parents on the school board, police, sheriff's department, and the medical response team, is essential when preparing for a crisis, such as a school shooting. How does CBT apply to or affect this team of personnel? CBT can be very effective for the crisis communication team on several different levels. When planning for a crisis, these individuals need to have a background in cognitive techniques for a few reasons. One reason, which is the main reason for CBT, is the thought-behavior link. The thought-behavior link focuses on a person's thoughts and how those thoughts relate to their behavior (Lannette, 2021, para. 3). For example, if a student decides to conduct a school shooting, the police and sheriff's department (who let us assume have been trained in CBT), will be able to put the pieces of the puzzle together quicker. Meaning, they will be able to understand the student's thoughts (why they acted, how they acted, their motivation, etc.) and link them to the students' actions (i.e., bringing a gun to school to cause harm). Knowing these behavior attributes might help save lives if disaster does happen. Another reason this team needs to know about CBT was explained previously – if the staff at the school are trained in CBT, then they can also spot a student if/when the student's behavior seems out of character. Perhaps the student is disassociating themselves from their usual peers, slacking off in school, or showing symptoms of depression or other mental health issues. School staff can recognize these indicators and plan a meeting with the student and parent(s) to address what may be going on. This, in turn, could prevent the student from causing harm to themselves or others.

If a traumatic event does occur at school, such as a school shooting, there are many steps to be taken to debrief the situation. The crisis communication team will debrief the situation

according to their crisis response plan. Part of this debrief will include the reunification process for the families and community. The reunification process includes establishing a safe off-site location for parents, students, and staff to reunite. Throughout this reunification process, which can take hours to days, mental health staff would also be on site for individuals and family members to consult with. For staff, understanding cognitive behavioral techniques will be crucial in the aftermath of a traumatic event. Staff will not only be able to help themselves after such an event, but they will be able to tend to the students, which brings us to the last reason the crisis response team needs to be knowledgeable in CBT.

As mentioned above, there may be long-lasting effects on everyone involved in a traumatic incident; having staff trained in CBT techniques such as TF-CBT or CBITS may be vital as part of a post-crisis plan. Having staff trained in these cognitive behavioral programs will help students process the event, create open channels to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, and reintegrate them back into school. Overall, having CBT in schools can be beneficial to many, including those in the community who may have direct ties to such initiatives as the crisis communication team.

In conclusion, cognitive behavioral therapy and interventions are essential when looking at an offender's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, patterns, and behaviors. CBT has been around since the 1960s for a reason, and it is clear why it is becoming more prominent in corrections today – it works. The purpose of CBT is to help an offender change or alter their negative ways of thinking, into more positive ways of thinking, which in turn will change their attitudes and beliefs, and result in them not returning to the criminal justice system. As mentioned above there are many cognitive tools and programs, such as Carey Guides, Thinking for a Change, Moving On, and Decision Points. All these tools and programs can be introduced to clients through a

case plan with their agent. Youth may experience a traumatic event before they reach adulthood. However, with the validated treatment approaches of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), there is a chance that the symptoms of the traumatic event can be improved. Traumatic events can happen anywhere at any time, which is why it is important to plan for them as best as one can. Having a crisis communication team in place and staff trained in cognitive behavioral therapy can prove to be vital before, during, and when it comes to post-crisis time. If schools do not already have a crisis communication team and plan in place, they must create one. If schools do not have staff trained in CBT, they need to offer it and train some. CBT is not only reserved for traumatic events, CBT can be very useful knowledge to have when it comes to any person, student, or walk of life. As a historical teacher and spiritual leader once said, “Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, for it becomes your destiny” – Buddha (Fryer, 2015, para. 7).

Chapter 3: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Practical Implications for the Human Services-Criminal Justice Professional

As noted above, school shootings continue to be rampant across the United States and a resolution must be found and implemented. With the help of a crisis communication team and a plan in place, it could help save lives should an actual crisis occur. The crisis communication team needs to discuss the plan and what strategy will be used for each crisis scenario (i.e., flood, fire, tornado, active shooter). The team must also consider the audience and who will be affected by the crisis, as well as the message going out to those who are or have been directly impacted.

The team must also determine the quickest most efficient way to communicate the strategies as well as the necessary tools that are needed to distribute any information.

Should a crisis occur, the team must know its hierarchy. This should be established well in advance, so each member knows their role. Should a team member be implicated or unavailable to conduct their duty, the next member must know how to complete that person's role as well as their own efficiently and calmly. Post-crisis is also an important step for the team as it calls for reunification with students, staff, and their family members. There should be several resources available for all impacted, as well as brochures or handouts for families to take home since the reunification process will be traumatic, and this information could provide a starting point to help heal. Having a mental health team available either on-site or nearby during the days, weeks, and months following a crisis is also imperative. Students and staff may need time after such an event, and limiting resources would be a mistake. Having a mental health practitioner on standby would be very beneficial for the entire school community.

Follow-up interventions such as GCI or the Multi-Modal Model would also be valuable. Allowing students and staff to share their thoughts, and feelings, understand what they experienced, and learn coping strategies is key to helping them move past a traumatic event.

Due to the increase in adolescents obtaining cell phones and using the latest and greatest applications on them, it appears necessary for schools to have social media policies. If the *Social Media for Violence Prevention* policy were implemented in schools, it could truly prevent a violent situation from occurring. Although there would be dilemmas while implementing this type of policy such as First Amendment rights and arguments of invasion of privacy, most parents and staff may also appreciate the school investigating any further concerns that are brought to authorities' attention. Applying this type of policy would affect the students and staff

of schools, and the community. Probation Officers would also be able to inspect any juvenile's phone that they supervised on probation for any suspicious or alerting posts, comments, or internet searches. This type of search alone could help prevent a tragedy from happening. The school should attempt to gain the student's and parents' approval of this policy; however, it would be the school board's final decision in the end, and it would be worth it to keep the community safe.

CBT is a commonly used skill by probation officers and their clients. The goal of cognitive behavioral therapy is to change a person's negative ways of thinking into more positive or prosocial ones. Tools such as Carey Guides or cognitive thinking programs – Decision Points, Thinking for a Change, or Moving On, are all techniques that can be used to achieve this goal. These programs can also help youth at an early age understand their thoughts and feelings and appropriate ways to express those thoughts and feelings. Two interventions, TF-CBT and CBITS, should be considered in schools since they are validated approaches that have been shown to improve the symptoms of young children who have been exposed to traumatic events. Overall, CBT helps prevent violence by re-forming negative thought patterns which in turn can prevent violence in schools and amongst youth in general.

Further Recommendations

After much research and data gathered regarding school shootings, it is recommended that schools consider creating a crisis communication team and plan. With this team and plan, the entire school community could be better prepared in the unfortunate event that a tragedy does occur. It is also recommended that schools consider implementing a policy related to social media violence prevention. With a policy such as this in place, authorities would be able to view a student's phone history and social media whether they are on or off-campus, if concerning or

suspicious behavior is noticed and reported. This would help reduce adolescent violence as a whole, as quick helpful interventions for all types of negative behavior could take place. The last recommendation is for schools to incorporate and train their staff or at minimum the crisis communication team, in cognitive behavioral therapy. These techniques have been proven to help with altering a person's negative thoughts and feelings into more positive ones, which therefore could help prevent school violence and reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although we see school shootings accelerate each school year, some steps can be taken as a community and as a nation, to help prevent and minimize such tragedies. By implementing specific teams, plans, policies, and interventions, society can combat and reduce these horrific events. Communities can no longer stand by and wait for the next school shooting to occur and for more innocent lives to be lost. Proven information, procedures, and techniques are out there, and it is telling those across the nation that there are ways to prevent and repair the damage that has already been done. School shootings must decrease and even cease to exist. Society must take the necessary steps to ensure that happens before more children no longer feel safe at school.

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Appendix

Tables

Table 4 *Summary of the multi-modal model*

<i>Self-value</i>	<i>Emotions</i>	<i>Role-others organisation</i>	<i>Intuition humour</i>	<i>Reality knowledge</i>	<i>Action practical</i>
B	A	S	I	C	Ph
<i>Belief</i>	<i>Affect</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Imagination</i>	<i>Cognition</i>	<i>Physical</i>
Frankl	Freud	Erikson	Jung	Lazarus	Pavlov
Maslow	Rogers	Adler	de Bono	Ellis	Watson
Attitudes	Meaning	Social role	Creativity	Information	Activities
Beliefs	Listening	Structure	Play	Order of	Games
Life-span	skills	Skills	Psychodrama	preference	Exercise
Value- clarification	Emotions	Assertiveness	'as-if'	Problem	Relaxation
	Ventilation	groups	Symbols	solving	Eating
	Acceptance	Role-play	Guided	Self-navigation	Work
	Expression		fantasy	Self-talk	

Source: From Lahad (1997; 2002).

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