

School Threat Assessment in Physician Training

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Background

After the Oxford School Shooting on Nov 30th, 2021, our department saw an increase in school threat assessment (STA) requests from schools.

Letters “clearing” these students were required before they could return to school.

Guidelines from the National Association of School Psychologists¹, the US Secret Service^{2,3}, DHS^{2,3}, Dept. of Education², and national experts^{4,5,6} give consistent, specific recommendations on school threat assessments. These include extensive collection of collateral information from many sources and longitudinal follow-up from a school-based, multidisciplinary team of specifically trained school mental health professionals, administrators, and resource officers. Standardized school threat assessment teams have been shown to reduce lost education time for student and close racial disparities in suspensions and disciplinary actions.

Question

Do psychiatry residents and fellows feel adequately trained and prepared to serve this role?

Methods

To explore this, we are conducting an anonymous, online survey of physicians-in-training regarding their exposure to didactics and training on school threat assessment, as well as their exposure, familiarity, and comfort with performing, documenting, and acting on school threat assessments.

IRB exception: IRB00000246

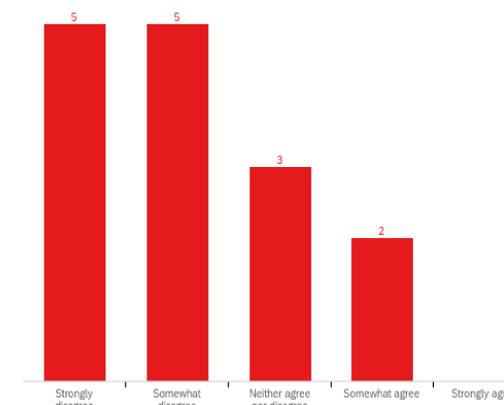
Population

We present preliminary data from the fellows of University of Michigan and Wayne State CAP fellowship programs (n=15)

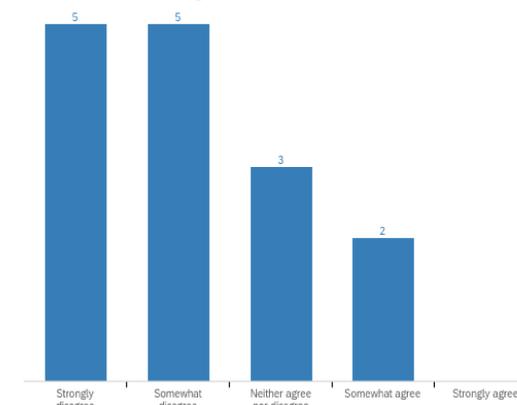
Results

1 Fellow had didactic exposure to STA in residency, in fellowship. 9/15 had done no STAs. 5/15 had done 5 STAs. 1/15 had done 6-10 STAs

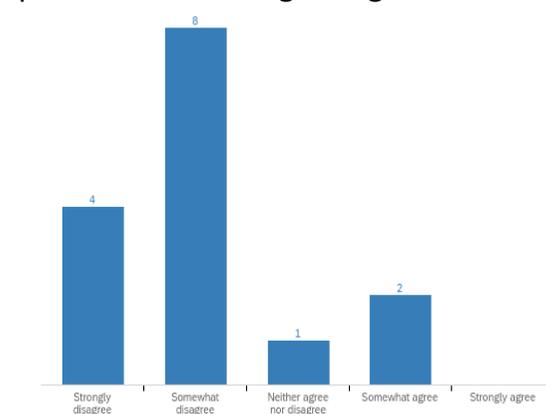
I feel confident in performing the evaluation for a STA



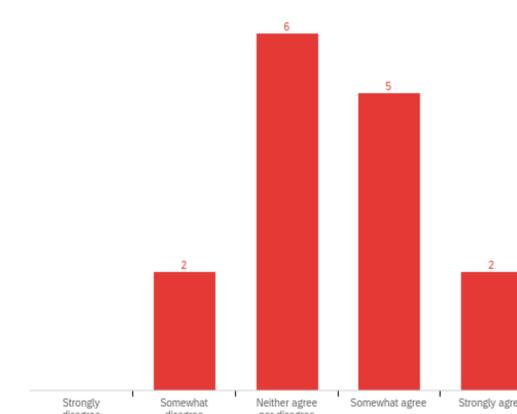
I feel confident in clinically documenting a STA



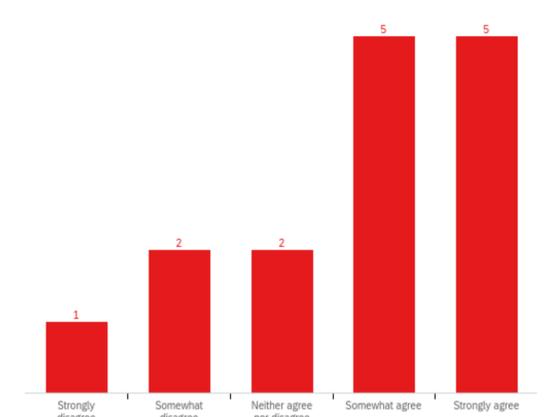
I feel confident writing a letter to the patient’s school regarding a STA



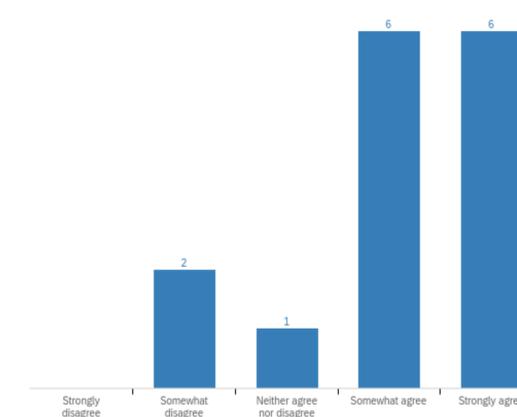
I feel helpless when asked to do a school threat assessment.



I feel frustrated when asked to do a school threat assessment.



I feel helpless when asked to do a school threat assessment.



In what settings have you provided care for patients requiring school threat assessment?

Outpatient Clinic	7 (46.7%)
Emergency Department	6 (40%)
Inpatient Psychiatry Unit	1 (6.7)
Consult Liaison Service	1 (6.7)
0 in PHPs, residential treatment settings, and school-based rotations.	

Further Steps

- National survey via CAP fellowship program directors. We expect 10-20% response rate from ~870 CAP fellows.
- Analysis by factors such as program region and year of training.
- Should didactics on school threat assessment be a GME requirement?
- QI project - School threat assessment letter template including:
 - Limitations of acute assessment
 - Need for a multidisciplinary school-based team
 - Referral to National Guidelines

References

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3. National Threat Assessment Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, & U.S. Secret Service. (2018). *Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence*. https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf
4. *The Concept of Leakage in Threat Assessment - Meloy - 2011 - Behavioral Sciences & the Law - Wiley Online Library*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/bsl.986>
5. Weisbrot, D. M. (2020). “The Need to See and Respond”: The Role of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in School Threat Assessment. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 59(1), 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2019.09.001>
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