

# **School Violence: Evaluation and Early Intervention**

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Kenneth Woog, Psy. D.

Clinical Psychologist

School Mobile Assessment Resource Team (SMART)

Orange County Sheriff's Dept.

[woogkm@ocsd.org](mailto:woogkm@ocsd.org)

(949) 283-0041

Associate Director, Youth Services

Pepperdine University, Irvine GSEP

# Why Integrate Mental Health Evaluation in Violence Assessment?

- **Untreated or under treated mental health issues pose safety risk at schools**
  - Many serious mental illnesses appear during adolescence
    - Schizophrenia, Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, other anxiety disorders
    - Drug Alcohol Dependency
  - Suicide - #1 killer in this age group
    - Suicide + Homicide common
  - Poor parental compliance
    - Stigma of mental health treatment
    - Ignorance of mental health treatment options
    - Lack of available treatment options
    - Confusion regarding school's role (IEP, SST, ED)

# Why MH Intervention at the School?

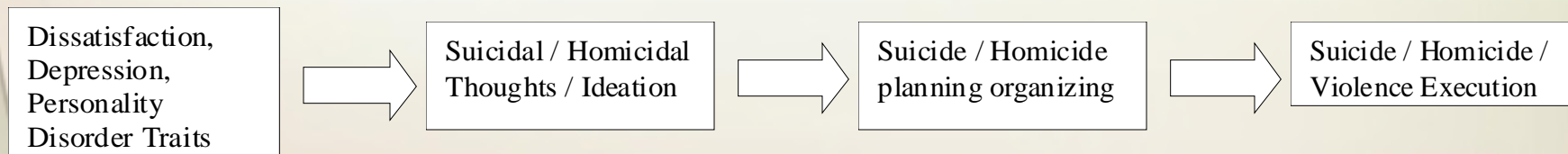
- Earliest intervention possible
  - As soon as reasonably possible
  - Consent and releases obtained on the spot
- Better information available - enhances evaluation
  - Teachers, students, school counselor/psychologist , parents
  - More recent information
- Better access to decision makers
  - School officials
    - Decisions regarding placement or consequences
  - Parents
    - Potential for greater rapport
    - Less denial/minimization
    - Move forward from stuck position
    - Less blaming, more constructive education/treatment planning

# SMART Mental Health Role in Early Intervention

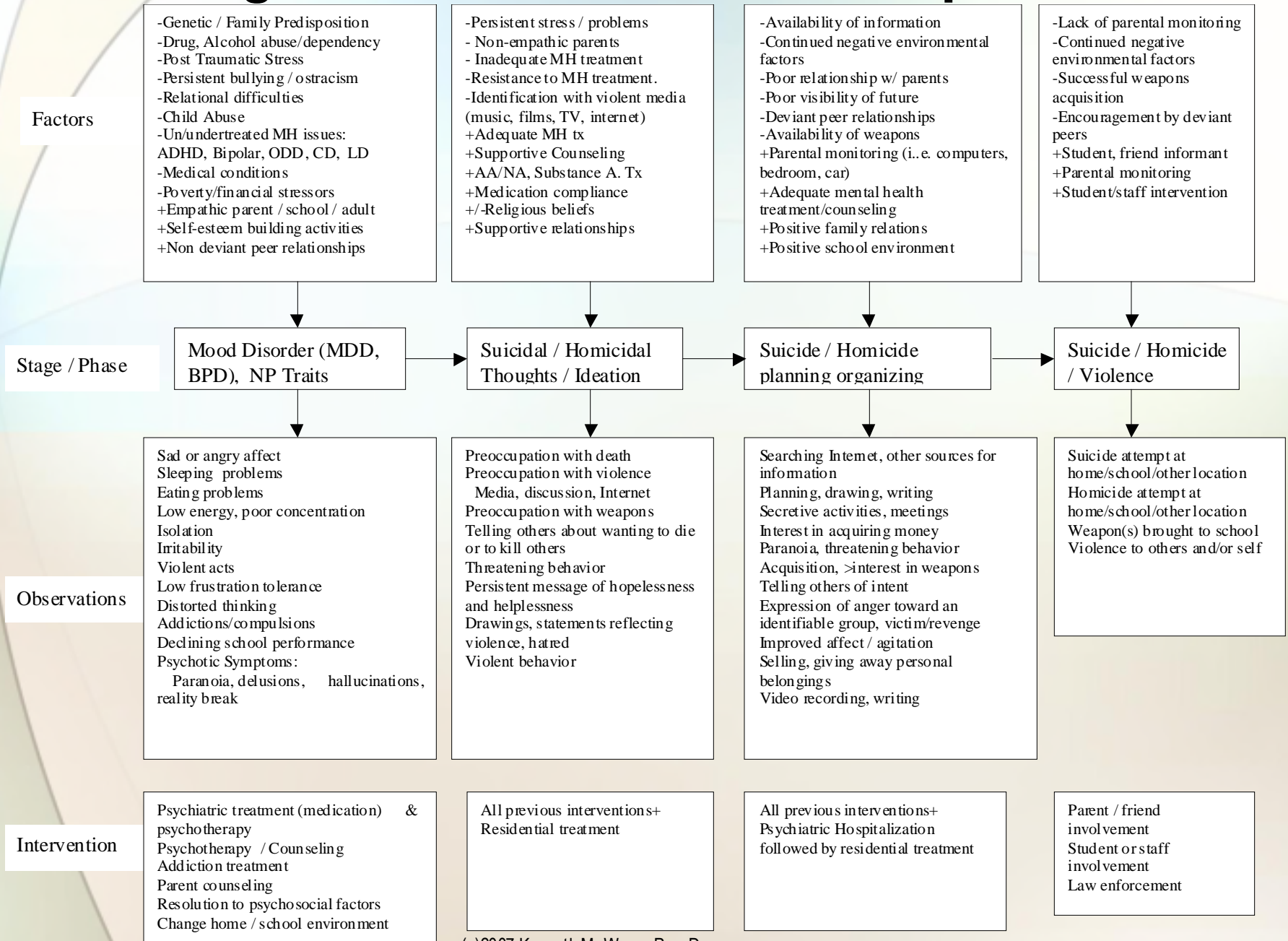
- To aid in evaluating student's risk of violence
  - Can remain in school?
- To aid in evaluating student's need of emergency mental health services
  - Hospitalization (voluntary or involuntary)
- To aid in providing recommendations or referrals to parents and school district
  - School placement, transfer, mental health treatment
- To aid parents and student in understanding and effectively utilizing those services
  - Navigating mental health treatment obstacles

# Progression to Serious School Violence

- No “profile”, but standard progression to violence
- Time between stages vary
- Behaviors suggest need for help
- Other students often aware of intention
- Untreated or under treated mental health issues often at root



# Progression Factors are Complex





# What Parents Can Do to Reduce Risk

- Model respectful and responsible behavior - you are your child's greatest influence
- Be available for your children to listen without panic or judgment
- Talk with your children about being respectful of others and to never bully or abuse others
- Talk with your children about respectful dating relationships
- Talk with your children about the importance of reporting violence or threats of violence
- Talk with your children about drug and alcohol abuse and addiction

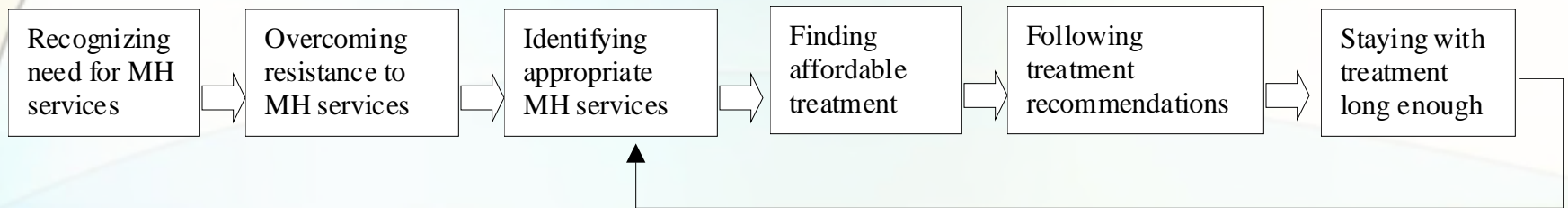
# What Parents Can Do to Reduce Risk

(continued)

- Monitor your child's physical and emotional health
  - Regular physical exams, follow up for ADHD, MDD
- Monitor your child's academic performance
  - Rapid decline should be warning sign
- Monitor your child's activities - weekends, evenings
  - Limit media excesses - Computers, video games
    - Hidden Dangers - MySpace deviant peer influences
  - Test for drugs and alcohol
- Seek appropriate medical and mental health treatment
  - Antidepressants never taken without psychotherapy



# Obstacles to Mental Health Treatment



- Delays in treatment increase risk of violence
  - Danger to self or others
- Delays in treatment increase risk of academic, social, legal problems including drug/alcohol abuse, dependency
- Delay in treatment increase family conflict
- Delays in treatment risk limits to parental authority
  - At 18 can't force into treatment

# Overcome the Fear of Mental Health Care

- It doesn't mean you are a bad parent
- Delaying care can result in more serious problems
- The science of behavioral health has come a long way
  - Proven psychotherapies to treat depression, anxiety
  - Proven medications for ADHD, OCD, depression
  - Medication is not necessarily a lifetime prescription
- Treatment is confidential
- Talk to your health care provider
  - Don't believe everything you read on the Internet
  - Don't be frightened by "horror stories"
- Get referrals from your insurance and those you trust

# Mental Health Treatment Providers

- Psychiatrist / Pediatric Psychiatrist, MD (MD)
  - Diagnose, prescribe & manage medication
- Clinical Psychologist - Psy.D. or Ph.D. (PSY)
  - Diagnose, assessment & psychotherapy
- School Psychologist, MA (PPS)
  - Test and evaluation for learning and achievement
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), MA
  - Psychotherapy with families, case management
- Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT), MA
  - Psychotherapy based on relationship issues
- Counselor (addiction, pastoral, life coach)

# Important Tips

- Find a treatment provider you and your child will feel comfortable with
  - You won't hurt their feelings if you don't feel like a good fit
- Get a second opinion if you are not sure about a diagnosis and/or treatment plan
- Give treatment enough time
  - Don't expect instant results
- Don't rely only on medication for behavioral disorders
  - Psychotherapeutic treatment approaches should be considered
- Be persistent in finding the right treatment
  - Don't rely on school or other institutions to help your child

# Credits / References / Resources

- Mohandie, K. (2000). School Violence Threat Management. Specialized Training Services, San Diego, CA
- US Secret Service, Department of Education (2002) Threat Assessment in Schools. US Secret Service and Department of Education. Copies available at no charge: [www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html)