A REAL PLAN FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

BY TERRY CHOATE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

HOW WE GOT HERE

April 20, 1999! This is the day that 2 male students walked into Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado and gunned down 33 of their classmates and teachers, 13 of whom ultimately died. This infamous act considerably changed our country, and our world, as up to that point, it was one of the most horrific and sickening crimes that had ever been committed on United States soil. But what few realize is that prior to the Columbine incident, there had been numerous, very similar acts, that had claimed the lives of hundreds of our nation's students. This being the case, why did it take the incident at Columbine to "change everything"? What really made Columbine so different was the fact that this incident took place at the time when cable television was really hitting its massive growth stage. The ability for news agencies to touch so many more people, almost instantly, with the news of such an incident significantly changed the numbers of people who would not only become aware of such incidents, but the amount of information and detail that came with the incident. These incidents became far more real as cable and satellite television brought everything "close to home". So, rather than the news of such an event remaining local to the incident itself, such incidents now became more national in scope. Now, local problems became national problems, and Columbine brought not only the news of the incident to a national level, but the follow-up discussion and proposed solutions as well. This event, because of its reach, put local, state, and federal governments, as well as parents, on edge and significantly increased not only the unacceptance of allowing such incidents to happen in the first place, but naturally the demand for solutions to prevent such an incident from ever happening again. This incident scared people! To make matters worse, those that we considered our most precious assets, our children, were not only victims in this incident but also the perpetrators. This changed everything!

Since Columbine there have been many, many incidents, nationwide, that have been similar or even greater in scope. While most have heard of the majority of these incidents, there are others that many have never heard about - even in the age of immediate, and wide-reaching, information. Why? Because these incidents seem to have become so frequent and potentially "normal", relatively speaking, that only those with massive victim counts get national attention.

STATISTICS?

The bottom line is that there is little need for me to go deeply into statistics. Typically, statistics are used to establish and support need. I think it's safe to say that, today, just about everyone understands the unique and dangerous threats that exist and the corresponding need to increase our personal, family and school's safety and security.

In fact, on August 23, 2018 the USA Today published a front-page article and the results of a poll that said that more than 30% of parents polled were fearful for their children's safety as their children prepare to go back to school this fall. The issue of safety and security is significant and clearly at the forefront of national concern.

I truly believe that the "it's not going to happen to me" mentality is finally changing and everyone is starting to clearly understand that it can happen to anyone, in any state, town, or school and at any time. Now, to qualify this, "is it likely to happen?" . "No, it's not". But the question becomes – "is it possible that it could happen?" I think it's clear, without using boring statistics to support this, that it is actually very possible. Just watch the news. It seems you can't go very much longer than a few days without hearing about yet another incident of mass violence. And, again, there are many such acts that most people never even hear about. The concern and corresponding need to do more to protect our precious children and teachers is completely clear and necessary at a much higher level, and more importantly a much different way, than it has to date.

As a result, just about every school district in every state across the nation have moved safety and security to a top priority. The problem, however, is that while this "appears" to clearly be the case, whether it truly is, or not, needs to be analyzed from the proper prospective. Ill discuss this in more detail later in this report however when I hear objections to the effect of "we dont have the time or budget to do the things necessary to truly keep our children and teachers safe", it makes me cringe and wonder if we are truly making this a top priority or are we just talking? In this report we will look at where we came from, where we are, and where we are going in an attempt to expose where we feel strongly that we are falling way short in the areas of true and effective solutions and why we are highly concerned that, in the end, we are "doing things for the sake of doing things" and, as a result, we will end up gaining little ground on either the threat, or the necessary solutions.

WHERE WE ARE

Today, I don't believe that there is a single state in the nation that is not working on plans, processes and procedural issues aimed at enhancing the safety and security within our schools; and rightly so. These same states, as well as the federal government, appear to be doing "whatever is necessary" to fund these efforts. And I firmly believe that these efforts are extremely well-meaning and being taken very seriously. This is clearly evident in the time, financial, and professional resources being allocated to finding appropriate solutions. The question is: "Is it enough?"

There are, however, some serious problems and misconceptions, in our opinion, that are creating for a situation in which the time, financial, and professional resources that are being allocated to devising plans to reach the solutions that we are hoping for, may not get us where we ultimately need to be. This is even the case considering the fact that the highest levels of Law Enforcement professionals are being dispatched to assist in these efforts. The problems with what we are doing, however, are many, and they exist throughout the entire range of what we are trying to do to solve these problems.

The problems start at the very beginning; the first step in what the process should be. They start with a lack of developing real, and meaningful goals, which contributes significantly to a lack of establishing a proper foundation. When we lack in establishing a solid foundation in which to build upon, the overall results will typically be futile.

As an example, since Columbine we have seemed to adopt Run, Hide, and Fight or similar models – or "Acronym-Based" Training. We will address this in more detail and explain why this type of training has little to no real impact on safety and why these programs, and all programs, must be thoroughly vetted to ensure that what we are adopting as solutions will really mean something and accomplish the goals we set out to accomplish. The bottom line is that what we are doing and how we are doing it needs to quickly change.

This Report's purpose is to address not only what we consider to be the problems with the process in our search for solutions, but also lay out a plan that we are confident will create for a much more practical and effective result. We can no longer accept "doing things for the sake of doing things", something that I will explain in far more detail by the conclusion of this report. Our intent is to be as straight forward and direct as possible. Some of the things that we present may be difficult for some to really "get their arms" around and accept. Some of the things may initially be difficult to understand. Many of the proposed solutions require a significant, yet necessary mindset change; a dramatic change in the way we address life. Real solutions require not just a complete program of services, but life-skills that our children can carry with them throughout life. In the end, however, this report, I am confident, will accomplish its goal.

Today's threats are truly dangerous and unique and the solutions for real safety and security must be viewed from a very unique, and practical, perspective. Because the chances of becoming victim to a sudden, unplanned incident of violence seems to rise every day, it is critical that solutions are based in practicality and reality. I am looking forward to exploring this topic with you, as I strongly believe that it is time for real change, real safety, and real security in our new world of increasingly dangerous, and unique, threats.

WHERE WE ARE GOING?

Following the tragic incident at Columbine, there was both an outpour of rage and a corresponding demand for solutions. This, obviously, brought an abundance of professionals to the table to sit down together to begin to think through both the problem and the solutions. Now, when I say that it "brought an abundance of professionals to the table to sit down together and begin to think through both the problem and solutions", I don't mean that literally. The problem is that it brought an abundance of professionals together AT MANY tables across the country. The problem here is that in so doing, we have mass inconsistency. Everyone is coming up with their own solutions, some good, some bad. For real safety and security to be effective we need a common overall solution that is highly consistent in every school throughout each state and throughout the nation. Consistency is the key to success on a large scale.

Unfortunately. the effort to date to find real solutions has been far too broad, fragmented, and inconsistent. There are just too many varied ideas on how to deal with not only acts of violence in our schools, but acts of violence in general. In other words, there has not been any real structure or plan instilled into the effort on a larger, more statewide or national scale. There have not been any "real" solutions or proposed plans pushed down from the top. Now, I realize

that there have been numerous reports, recommendations, best practices, etc. provided by the Department of Homeland Security; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Board of Education, etc. But the key word above is "real". What has been concluded to date are, in our professional opinion, little more than "doing something for the sake of doing something"; and "check the box" types of solutions. The corresponding time, money, and resources that we are allotting (and how we are allotting them) to these proposed solutions may do little-to-nothing to stop the problem from happening and save lives if, and when, it does happen.

And to make it very clear, we know that everyone involved in these efforts are extremely well-meaning people and professionals who want nothing more than to keep our precious children safe and secure. This is also not to say that individual ideas and elements of what has been proposed are not good. In fact, in general, they are excellent. The problems really arise in the details. The problem is really in the "plan to carry out the plan".

In this report, we will clearly establish, by its conclusion, exactly why this is the case and clearly outline what it will take to correct this problem whether it be at the federal, state or local levels.

WHAT REALLY QUALIFIES ONE TO CREATE A PLAN LIKE THIS?

The bottom line is that it shouldn't really matter! In the end, as long as the bottom line equals success, qualifications don't, and shouldn't, matter. If the solutions make complete sense, and are highly effective, what difference does it really make what the plans authors training and experience is? The reason I say this is because there really aren't many "true" experts in this field. In fact, anything that you will be taught about surviving a sudden, unplanned incident of violence is all going to be "theory-based", regardless from whom it comes. If anyone tells you differently or tells you that there are "play books" that will result in success, I would be really cautious about what their true level of expertise is.

A big part of the problem with how we have done things to date, and why they have, and will continue, to fall short comes from assuming that certain professions, and professionals, are solely qualified to provide us with instruction and consultation. In the end, there's really no profession that automatically gives credential in this area. And if you asked me about "law enforcement or military professionals?", my answer would be "No, not automatically at least". This is truly a unique problem that really requires expertise in many different areas or professions. In fact, it should really be a professional field of its own. It's funny how many times we've trained university students and they approach us afterward and ask about how they can gain credential to do what we do - as a career. That should tell us something. In the end, what it takes is professionals who live and breathe this topic, people who are constantly studying, learning, and getting better; people who dedicate their lives to understanding the problem and formulating real solutions. In fact, I will detail, later in this report, how most law enforcement professionals obtain their expertise in active shooter prevention and safety and I'm confident you will quickly see the problem. Again, in many cases, not necessarily all.

So, why not automatically law enforcement or military professionals? Many assume that careers in law enforcement and the military would be natural places to find experts to teach us how to stay safe and how to prevent an act of violence from happening. Think about it however - Law enforcement is a profession of responding to problems. They know very little about what is needed, from a truly practical and effective standpoint, about how to teach you to prevent and respond to an act of violence. In fact, there is really little more that they might know about it than you might know. In fact, if you put in the time and effort, your skills and ability could fairly quickly surpass theirs in the area of teaching prevention and safety. What it depends upon ultimately is the time and effort that you put into learning. I have an unbelievable amount of law enforcement-related training and experience and neither in the police academy, nor anywhere else, did I ever see anything more than very short, basic courses, on conducting security assessments, teaching home safety, violence prevention, etc. And keep in mind that any training courses that did/do exist are just that, they are quick ½ day, 1-day, or 2-day long courses on a particular topic. Does a quick or short course make one an expert? And these same Instructor Certification Courses are available TO ANYONE! No prerequisites whatsoever.

So, the question is: How does one become an Expert in a topic in a one or two day training course? Regardless of whether you are law enforcement, military, or anything else, you absolutely cannot even come close to true expert status, especially in this topic, in 1-2 days. Think about it, police officers don't go to a "1-2 day" long training course in order to become a police officer. They go to a Police Academy that is considerable topic depth, creating understanding and providing solutions and overall it takes very a long time with much testing, to complete and graduate. There is no exception when it comes to understanding a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, or active shooter incident, and how to develop people in what is needed in prevention efforts, and to give them the best chance of survival. I will talk later about what we call "Acronym training" and it's perceived effectiveness.

This, however, is what we are getting for training quality in our schools and assuming that because a company has decided that a 1-2 training course qualifies one as an expert, we are getting the sound advice that we are seeking. I can tell you that this can be extremely dangerous. The problem with companies that make instructor certification so quick and simple, or acronym-based training companies, is that they cannot control content with a business model like this and therefore, if you partner with a company like this for a large-scale project in which we are looking for real results, and the critical consistency that is required, it will not exist. Again, because we tend to rely on and trust that our local, or even state police departments know everything about this topic, we believe that should have to look no further. This can be dangerous. Even in the area of security assessments I see State Plans that require schools to conduct security assessments "using their local law enforcement professionals". Again, most law enforcement officers have zero training and have zero expertise in this area. But, as is apparent, we automatically believe this is our primary resource for services.

I, regardless of everything I just explained, have a significant amount of training and experience in the areas that you likely think I should have them in. I was a law enforcement officer for 15

years, SWAT Team Commander; Drug Enforcement officer; and obtained about every other law enforcement related training that you might like to see in a violence prevention instructor and planner. I also, however, have a 20+ year career in corporate America serving in VP level positions (so I understand business extensively and how security applies to safety and liability, policy and procedure) and I have extensive training in both Corporate and Personal Security; Martial Arts; Stalking; Dangerous Human Behavior; and 0n-and-on. But again, all of this really doesn't mean much in reality.

Ultimately, surviving a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, prevention of such incidents, practical personal defense, understanding human reaction and how it impacts performance, understanding how bad guys become bad guys, how they choose victims, and on-and-on is my life's passion and full-time job – the ability to keep people safe takes constant study, learning, experimenting, thinking, and dedication and passion. It cannot be an assignment or part-time job, company, or responsibility in order to be effective.

Here's what all this means:

Practical and effective safety and security has been my life for almost 40 years and continues to be my life; all day, every day. How do I spend my time when not serving our clients? Learning more and more about criminal behavior, how criminals become criminals; how they choose victims; understanding their intentions when they engage with you; practical and effective ways that we can truly not only avoid becoming victim to a criminal act, but how to prepare ourselves to respond quickly and appropriately if we do; and finally, how to understand not only what we will face, from a mental prospective and how this impacts our ability to act appropriately, but how the mental aspects of an encounter impacts our adversary and how this creates advantages for potential victims. Ultimately, finding effective and creative ways to apply this to our nation's schools and save and change lives is my hoped-for result.

And this is why demand for our services has made us the thought and program leaders in corporate safety and security and why it needs to resonate with schools.

WHAT ARE THE REAL THREATS TO OUR KIDS

Today our children face more unique and dangerous threats to their safety than any generation before them has ever faced. Among these, there are two that stand out as creating truly and potentially life-threatening circumstances to our children - drugs and violence. In the case of drugs, it IS truly a daily danger to our children. In the case of violence, it CAN BE a daily danger to our children. We can no longer think, whether in the case of drugs or violence, that it won't or can't happen to our kids. And our schools have a responsibility to keep our kids safe from not only these two threats, but others as well.

DRUGS

While the main focus of this article is on incidents of violence and active shooters, drugs have been, and continue to be a very serious threat to the safety of our children. While becoming a victim of a sudden, unplanned incident of violence is possible, I guarantee you that you have a drug problem in your school. And I can guarantee you that they absolutely pose a threat to your children. And today's drugs are not like drugs of the past. Today's drugs actually kill. We must provide practical and effective training in the area of drug abuse on a consistent, if not daily basis, to our children. This training must include parents who will quickly learn that thinking "not my kid" can be deadly - because it absolutely can be their kid. Let me explain:

You MUST understand that regardless of financial or social status, how good your kids have been in the past, how good your children are today, your religion, how good their friends are, how good, close and loving your family is, or how much money you have – this problem impacts the best of children and families. We have seen some of the best kids from the best families imaginable lose their lives figuratively, and literally, to drugs. Drug use and addiction is a wide-spread epidemic that can, and does, cause "ideal students and people" to make poor decisions, injure their health and/or overdose and die. As teachers, parents and peers, we must be diligent in understanding and spotting the signs and symptoms of drug use to help keep our kids safe. Later in this report we will discuss the details of "The Life or Death Gap" and how it applies to surviving an incident of violence. Unfortunately, there is a "Life or Death Gap" with drug addiction as well. The problem is that the start of the Life or Death Gap can be extremely difficult to see. And seeing the start of this Life or Death Gap will be critical to survival.

VIOLENCE

The threat of violence to our kids becomes more and more apparent every single day. In 2018 so far, there have been numerous acts of violence that have claimed many, many of our children's lives in our nation's schools. Most of these we never hear of because there are not massive victim counts. But losing even a single child to an act of violence is unacceptable! Our children are living in a world where they do not, and quite frankly should not, feel safe not only because there is a rising possibility of becoming involved in a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, but further because we just don't truly prepare our children to survive such an act.

Active shooters in schools have shaken the nation and caused discussions ranging from arming teachers to changing gun laws completely. Is there a law or change that can truly keep our children safe? Will the violence in schools ever stop? One thing I can assure you is that regardless of anything that we do to attempt to stop acts of violence from happening in their entirety, we will never be successful. While I do not have answers to everything involving this highly challenging topic, I want to share our plan for real safety with you that I believe can dramatically increase the chance of survival for our kids should they ever find themselves involved in a sudden, unplanned incident of violence.

BLUE
DEFENSE

THE NEED TO THINK AND DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Why, with all of the heightened awareness and interest in mass shooting incidents and how to keep our children safe, do we still find very high victim counts when they do happen? Following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, I heard numerous people say "even though this school had done extensive active shooter training and lockdown drills, many people were still injured and killed. Why didn't the training work?". It naturally raised questions about the effectiveness of, and reasons for, training and how and why we do it. When I heard this my immediate response was "of course it didn't work!". Why did I think this? Because the majority of what we do today, when it comes to physical site security, drilling, and training, is either worthless or close to worthless. Now, that is in no way meant to be offensive to anyone either providing for, contracting for, or receiving instruction in safety and security on violence. It is, however, fact. The problem is that while everyone is well meaning, there really aren't any real experts on this topic. One reason is that there really are no hard solutions that can be outlined in a "checklist of things to do during an incident". There are no acronyms that are going to do anything to keep you or your children safe when they find themselves involved in an incident where someone is trying to hurt them or take their life. Incidents of violence are like fingerprints, or snowflakes, there are no two exactly alike. Find a solution to solving one and even a very minor detail change will dramatically change the required solution for the next.

Mass shooting incidents also immediately bring out a multitude of opinions, both expert and non-expert (or those who think that they know what they are talking about but don't), on how to prevent such an incident from ever happening again. We hear things like - "we have to completely ban firearms"; "we have to have a greater police presence"; "we need sniper teams at all large crowd gatherings"; "we have to have a better system for mental health and finding the dangerous people before they explode"; and on-an-on. Again, these are all well-meaning and I don't disagree that these discussions must take place. The problem is that, in the end, regardless of what we do, we will never stop acts of violence in their entirety. It just will not happen. So, the focus needs to be on keeping ourselves and children safe during the time in which we/they are actually in danger or, as we have coined it, The Life-or-Death Gap. This will be explained in more detail later in this guide.

UNDERSTANDING THE "PASSION TO SURVIVE"

In our live training courses I always ask our students if there is "anyone whom does not have a passion to survive?" Inevitably, no one raises their hand and most people absolutely have a passion to survive. Without asking, I would guess, with complete confidence, that everyone reading this article would say they have a passion to survive.

So, what is passion? It's the thing that we can't wait to do when we are not doing it; we learn as much as we can about that passion and we can't wait to spend the time learning about it; we pass the knowledge of our passion on to those we love and care about most. A passion doesn't have time limits or the excuse that you don't have the time to pursue it; you make the time!

So, if I ask the question, "D0es anyone NOT have a passion to survive?" and assuming that you do, based on what a passion is, the next question is:

Do you do something, on a regular, if not daily basis, to give yourselves, or those you love and care about most, the best chance of survival if you ever find yourself in a position to have to do so?

Very rarely does anyone respond affirmatively to this question. Well, if you have a passion to survive, why would you not be doing something, on a regular, if not daily basis to give yourselves, or those you loved and care about most, the best chance of survival, should you ever need to?

There is only one answer for this; and it's the same for every person whom doesn't do something on a regular, if not daily basis, to prepare themselves to survive should they ever need to:

"Because you don't think it's going to happen to you!"

If I were to tell you that from this second on, until the day you die, whenever that might be, you will be a victim of a violent encounter and, in that encounter you might die, or worse yet, someone that you love and care about most might die" I guarantee you that you would begin to do things, on a regular, if not daily basis, to prepare yourself to survive that incident.

SO, IT ALL STARTS WITH THE ESTABLISHING OF THE BELIEF THAT IT CAN HAPPEN

It all starts with believing it can happen to us. Without believing that it can happen, we will not take the needed steps to ensure ultra-awareness, ultra-vigilance, all of the time. In fact, if you truly don't believe that "it can happen" anything that you are taught will go in one ear and

BLUE
DEFENSE

immediately out the other. So, establishing first that "it CAN happen" is critical to the foundation of any program designed to truly keep people safe. While we like to live in a world where tragedy will not affect us directly, each day we are reminded that safety and security are a luxury. Students must be taught in a way that develops the mindset that violence can happen to them. By believing it can happen, they will begin to seek out ways to improve their chances of reacting appropriately should they ever need too and their levels of awareness and preparedness will increase significantly.

Being Ultra Aware, Ultra Vigilant, All of the Time

If I were to tell you that from today until the time you die, you WILL be a victim of a violent encounter. I go further to tell you that this encounter, that is going to happen, you or someone you love may die. What's the first thing that you would do?

I guarantee that you would start to prepare yourselves for that encounter. You would begin to stop before walking outside of a room or building and scan the perimeter. You would be watching, checking, scanning for any sign of danger. Does this mean that you would live life paranoid?

Here is an example to relate this preparedness to paranoia: For those of you who drive automobiles, you understand that every time you get behind the wheel, there is a possibility that you will be involved in a crash that could take your life. With that being a fact, do you drive every day scared that you will crash and die? Are you praying as you drive asking for safety and security? Unlikely.

What you are doing, though, is truly paying attention! Every time you approach an intersection, you become cautious and look at both sides of the road to make sure that there is no one coming through the intersection from the opposite way.

If you are stopped to make a left-hand turn, you are checking your rearview mirror to make sure that the vehicles approaching from behind see that you are stopped to make a left-hand turn. Is this paranoia, or is this true awareness? You would say that you're just being aware, not paranoid when paying attention while driving.

Every criminal will tell you that their number one criterion for choosing a victim is finding someone who is not paying attention. Simply paying attention can significantly decrease your chances of becoming a victim. Why? Because if every criminal's number one criteria for choosing a victim is someone whom is not paying attention, and you are paying attention, guess what? They will go find one of the thousands of other people who aren't paying attention.

Being aware can help individuals, classrooms and entire schools significantly enhance security.

THE WILL TO WIN – THE NUMBER ONE INGREDIENT IN SURVIVAL

In the end, your will to win is going to be the number one greatest factor in surviving a sudden, unplanned incident of violence. Your will to win must be greater than the attacker's will to win, or your chances of survival diminish greatly. Creating this will to win takes a mindset that comes from proper training. There may come a time where your kindness, compassion and general care for others must be switched off and you will have to become a predator. A switch has to be flipped and the things we are prepared and willing to do might be something that most would consider unimaginable. We must be prepared to flip that switch in order to survive. This level of doing what it takes to win requires advance preparation, time, effort, thought, commitment and training.

Are we comfortable with teaching this will to win to our children? While we want to do our best to shelter children from the dangers of the world, there are real threats that can take their lives if they aren't prepared. We need to begin by sharing with our children the facts that this world is dangerous and there are people out there who can and will hurt them. They must know that defending themselves against this danger, flipping the switch and changing from victim to predator with a will to win will give them the best chance at survival.

THE MENTAL ASPECTS – UNDERSTANDING THAT SURVIVAL IS 90% MENTAL AND ONLY 10% PHYSICAL

People need to understand that success in a violent encounter is 90% mental and only 10% physical. Many companies focus all of their training on the physical aspect and leave the mental awareness and preparedness out of the equation. This type of training makes no sense once you understand that 90% of our success is in the understanding and mastering of the mental aspects.

Let me break this down for you. Survival based on the 10% physical occurs during the times when you have done everything in your power to prevent, de-escalate, and/or escape and every effort has failed. Your only option left is to fight for your life. This 10% scenario may assuredly present itself to a person at some point during their lives.

During those times when you must fight for your life, your mindset must know how to change to ensure you will win. What is practical in the physical aspects of survival? If you can't use your defensive weapons quickly and instinctively, they are likely not going to work. We tell our clients that everything that you need to learn to survive a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, you should be able to learn while sitting in a chair. Yes, this applies to the physical aspects as well. If you have to get out of a chair to learn either the mental or physical aspects of survival and

winning, then you are likely being taught technique. And technique only works in controlled environments where your opponent is allowing them to work.

We must be aware and be prepared to teach our children and others how to win utilizing the 90% mental and the 10% physical aspects of surviving an incident of violence.

An Example of How Improper Mindset and Lack of Proper Preparation Can Increase Victim Counts

On February 14, 2018 a lone gunman entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida and immediately started firing rounds from a semi-automatic rifle. As a result, the school went into its standard Lockdown protocol – the students and teachers went into their respective classrooms and locked the doors as trained to do. This basically left empty hallways for the "bad guy" to progress through. As the "bad guy" stopped at numerous classroom, broke out the window and began shooting into these classrooms, surviving students later stated that they could hear to gunshots "getting closer-and-closer" until finally, they were upon the classrooms that they were locked-down inside. Incidently, the students whom were in each classroom that sustained gunfire that were, only by chance rather than being taught, in the "proper" corners of the room, were physically uninjured. Those, however, whom were in the wrong corners of the classroom, because they had not been proper taught in advance, sustained heavy injury and fatalities.

Now, consider those students whom were locked and barricaded inside of their classrooms, that said they heard the shooter "getting closer and closer" until, ultimately, he was upon them. They knew there was danger and they knew exactly what the danger was. Bullets taking lives! Now, consider this:

Change the fact that bullets are the threat and taking lives to fire is the threat and taking lives. So, instead of bullets flying through the air taking lives, its fire! The students are locked in their classrooms and unable to get out because the hallways are engulfed in flames. The question is:

Would these students and teachers stay locked and barricaded in those very same classrooms?

Most would immediately say that they would not. Instead, and without hesitation, they would break out the window and evacuate the building through those windows. And most would say that this would be an obvious response. And they would be correct. But in the case of bullets, as opposed to fire, this did not happen? Why? Because that was just never taught, or drilled, as an option. In the event of fire, conversely, from the time we are old enough to understand anything at all, we are taught that if there is a fire, break the window out and jump. But in the case of an act of violence, that is not a specific taught and drilled option. It is simply an overall solution in the Run part of run hide and fight.

Picture these very same classroom having an egress to the outside rather than just windows. The plan, likely without even thinking about it would be to class and lock the hallway door and immediately exit out the classroom door to safety. The only difference in the one is glass and has to be broken where the door means simply open it and exit. This is how and why the mental aspects of an act of violence must be addressed.

It Takes a Complete, Yet Critical Mindset Change

Here is an interesting fact that many have a very difficult time getting their arms around. If we ever find ourselves in an encounter where someone is trying to hurt us, or take our lives, the people that we are normally must change significantly. In general, we are, as human beings, good, loving, and caring people. We naturally want to help rather than hurt. In fact, most could never picture themselves doing anything to harm another human being. The fact is, however, that if we have someone who is trying to hurt us, or worse take our lives, we must become someone completely different; someone that normally we could never imagine ourselves as. Think about it – does it stand to reason that if we have someone trying to hurt us or take our lives, that our ability and will do do more to them than they are willing to do to us could become absolutely critical in our ability to survive? This takes a complete mindset change that will not just happen naturally when we are in the moment. This takes development that starts with "believing that it can happen", the willingness to become someone different, and then doing what is necessary to get us there.

How Incidents of Violence End and How Each Impacts the Life or Death Gap

First, let's look at the details of the average active shooter situation:

They typically won't last any longer than about 10 minutes. Most last far less time, and some have lasted far longer. This compared with national average law enforcement response time of 14 minutes. So, this being the case, do you see a problem here? If we use a 10-minute active shooter situation, and assume law enforcement will arrive in 14 minutes, how long is our life or death gap? We usually only get one of a few answers in response to this: Either 10-minutes, 14-minutes, or 4-minutes.

Here's the real answer:

We don't know. Why?

Because active shooter incidents typically end in one of three ways:

1) The "bad guy" chooses to stop

2) Law Enforcement stops them
3) Someone else stops them

How do each of these 3 ways in which these incidents typically stop impact The Life-or-Death Gap?

Number One – The bad guy chooses to stop.

In this case we have no idea how long the life or death gap might be because its all based on the choice of the bad guy.

Number Two – Law Enforcement Stops Them

If law enforcement stops them, we are talking about a life or death gap that is, at very minimum 14 minutes. But here's what most people just don't apply. 14-minute national average law enforcement response time doesn't mean that they arrive and its immediately over. It means that they arrive, and then have to determine what the problem is, who is the problem, where is the problem, figure out how they're going to solve the problem, find the problem, and then eliminate it. So, you need to add many, many additional minutes to the 14-minute response time. This is an extremely long life or death gap

Number 3 – Someone Else Stops Them

That's right someone else, "a hero", stops them. There was study done of, I believe it was 54 active shooter incidents, and in only 8 of those did "someone else stop them". Interesting that, within those 8 incidents where "someone else" stopped the bad guy, fatalities were extremely low relative to the others.

What this tells us is that we have to be prepared to do something to resolve the issue ourselves. This, however, is highly situationally dependent on many things, one of which is where you are in relation to the bad guy.

How Critical is Muscle Memory in our Solutions?

Our ability to act appropriately during a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, relies heavily on solutions that are grounded in muscle memory. The things that we do naturally, all day, every day, must be taken advantage of when considering solutions.

Consider the following:

WHAT DOES QUALITY TRAINING MEAN?

Training, in order to be truly effective must be practical, engaging and seen as achievable for anyone receiving it. Effective training must have the attention of those whom are being taught, it must create a desire for them to want to seek out more and become more knowledgeable and skillful. And, effective training must be retained on an ongoing basis. The problem is that most training in survival skills if perishable. It will go away after a time. So, how do we address this problem:

With continuing education and a program that is designed to, and have a means of, delivering quality and critical content to students, on a regular basis.

And quality training must start with establishing a foundation that is built on understanding the problem first, and then delivering solutions.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES WITH WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

Understanding the problems with where we have been and where we are going is critical to understanding why our plan for true safety and security must be considered. The following are the many problems, as we see them. Our Plan for True Safety, which will be laid out at the end of this report, is designed to address, and correct, each and every one of the following problems. One of the keys to success is partnering with the best firm to assist in your safety and security efforts; one which has the knowledge and expertise to even recognize that the problems detailed below even exist. To understand the challenges to what we are currently facing takes full-time time desire and commitment. Further, it requires the expertise and ability to not only create a plan for real safety and security, but to actually initiate that plan and carry it out. So, here we go with the problems and challenges:

THE PROBLEMS

We Are NOT Establishing True Goals That Anchor Our Foundation

We work with numerous corporations from the largest in the world to the smallest; universities; private and public schools; hospital systems; law offices; associations; and healthcare organizations. We ask this question consistently:

"What are your real goals in your efforts to enhance safety and security"

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Inevitably, what we get in response is "We want to do what we can to keep people safe"; "Our employees are asking for it"; "We are required or mandated to do it"; or "Because that's what everyone is doing". The problem is that goals like these are far too broad and will almost certainly prevent the end result that we should be seeking. So, we have established three goals for our clients:

1) **Truly Keep People Safe** – No more "training for the sake of training"; "conducting training that makes us feel good that we did something"; "training that allows us to be able to check-a-box to say that we did it"; "drilling for the sake of drilling"; "conducting security surveys for the sake of conducting security survey's". Everything that we do must have a practical, effective, and real purpose that offers real results.

2) **Mitigate Risk** – We want to be able to prevent acts of violence from happening in the first place. The problem is that if we really think about this we would quickly realize that, no matter what we do, we will never be able to prevent acts of violence from happening in their entirety. The fact is, however, prevention efforts play a huge role in deterrence.

3) **Limit Organizational Liability** – If our prevention efforts fail, we want to be able to show that we not only did the bare minimum in our efforts to training and prevent, but that we did far more than the bare minimum.

There are numerous things that must take place, a coordinated series of steps required, to achieve these goals. It's not simply a matter of providing a single training course, going through a drill one time per year, or conducting a security assessment periodically. Success requires an ongoing effort that take time, financial, and human resources. I will detail each step of what is required later in this report and, following the conclusion of this report, I have laid out the plan the is required to get our schools to the achievement of these three goals.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Establishing a Foundation

Effective solutions, in any topical area, must start with establishing a solid, effective foundation. Without establishing a proper foundation, which must include consistency, the result is building a solution that simply is not what it was intended to be or a solution that just doesn't truly address the problem (a solution that amounts to "doing something for the sake of doing something). So how do we establish a solid foundation? This report will lay this out in extreme detail.

We Must First Ask the Question: Are We Unknowingly Creating "Victims"?

This is a Critical Element in Establishing Foundation.

Here me out on this one. If you have children in school (if you don't you can still easily

understand this), and someone walks up to your child and assaults them while at school, "what does the school expect for your child's response to this violence to be? Unfortunately the expected response is - Do nothing. Tell someone else and rely on someone else to solve your problem. Here's the question:

The question is - Does that always successfully happen?

The reality is that it rarely happens. In fact, in most cases it flat out doesn't happen. I can't tell you how many times, as a police officer, that I had parents come to the PD and complain that their kids are being assaulted in school. When I ask them if they've talked with the school about it they tell me that they have done so numerous times without the expected result.

Now, what happens to these kids who are being taught that not only should they not defend themselves, but that it's actually wrong to defend themselves? Think about it – If your child does defend themselves, who gets in trouble? Both the attacker and the victim of the attack.

So, our children are being taught to always rely on someone else to save them or solve their problems, and when that someone else doesn't come through for them or just isn't there when they are needed, what happens to those children? They become angry, depressed, suicidal, and sometimes, they become the "bad guy".

So, we are teaching kids not only that they should not defend themselves, but that its actually wrong to defend themselves. So, they don't. And then, when they need to be able to defend themselves, they have no idea how to and, as a result, victim counts mount.

This must change. Now I am not saying we need to turn our children into predators. Far from it actually. But they do need to know that its ok to defend yourself, and do whatever is necessary to stop the threat against them, and we need to be able to give them the appropriate tools to be able do so.

We Are NOT Establishing that Safety and Security is Our Individual Responsibility and Our Individually Responsibility Alone

One of our core messages to our students is that we can no longer put the responsibility for our individual safety, or the safety of our children and families on our schools, businesses, or churches. It is our responsibility, and our responsibility alone.

Think about this:

If we ever find ourselves involved in a sudden, unplanned incident of violence where someone is trying to hurt us or take our lives, the only thing that we know 100% for certain is that we are there. Everything else is pure speculation. This means that only we can do something to protect or save ourselves. This means, that the responsibility is ours, and ours alone, to provide for, or

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gain, the understanding, tools, training, etc. to give those that we are charged with protecting what is needed to give them the best chances of winning and going home. And, if you are a parent, then it's your responsibility to get this to your children. If you are a teacher of very young children, or those incapable of doing anything for themselves, then it becomes your responsibility; not by any means a small task.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Keeping Our Focus on the "Life or Death Gap"

 Think about conducting drills in our nation's schools. In almost every instance, these drills involve law enforcement agencies and emergency medical services. When we do this, what most don't realize, is that we are almost automatically reverting our drills real purpose and the focus from "The Life or Death Gap" and refocusing it to a response-based drill, or a drill for law enforcement and EMS response. In so doing, the entire focus goes from truly keeping our children and staff's safe, during the actual incident, to a "how is law enforcement and EMS going to improve response to the initiation of the Life or Death Gap". So, ultimately there should be drills conducted that focus on each of these things, The Life or Death Gap and response, separately, and others that combine to drill the overall incident. When we "drill" the focus needs to be completely directed to survival before law enforcement and EMS arrive. This is an extremely critical aspect of a safety and security program that is designed to accomplish the goals set-forth previously.

WHAT IS THE LIFE-OR-DEATH GAP AND WHY IS IT CRITICAL TO KEEP OUR FOCUS ON IT?

The Life-or-Death Gap is a time-gap that starts the second you know and understand that there is danger to yourself, someone that you love and care about, or you are responsible for keeping safe, and it continues until the point in which you know, 100% for certain, that the danger no longer exists. This gap can be seconds, several seconds, minutes, many minutes and, in rare cases, hours. Regardless of how long this gap is, however, it will be a lifetime while you are in it. As a result, the majority of our efforts must focus on understanding of, and solutions aimed at survival within this gap.

How the things that we are currently doing typically to keep ourselves, students, employees, and children safe impacts our focus negatively on this Life-or-Death Gap will be covered thoroughly later in this guide. It is extremely critical to understand.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Focused on the Fact That We Must Change Culture

True safety and security must be about culture. We tell our corporate and organizational clients that they must create a culture of safety and security. This means spending the time, money, and devoting resources to safety and security. A culture of safety needs to start at home and

must be a lifestyle that is lived every hour of every day.

We cant expect employees and students to come to school/work, turn that culkture on when they arrive, turn it off when they go home, turn it on again when they return the next day, etc. and expect that we are creating the necessary culture needed for true safety. Culture means that it starts at home and is lived all of the time.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Focused on First Establishing a True Level of Understanding of the Problems That Solutions are Meant to Correct

Today, there are many organizations that exist with a purpose of training others to stay safe during an active shooter or other incident of violence. Unfortunately, the majority focus on delivering solutions to problems that are not first understood. What happens when we don't first establish an understanding of the problem is that the solutions we deliver won't mean anything and therefore they will go "in one ear and directly out the other". It's not until this understanding happens that solutions will be understood, and therefore retained and truly useable to solve a problem. So a successful safety and security program will always start with delivering a high level of understanding to the problems that the solutions are meant to solve.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Providing Practical Solutions

Through not only this report, but our live and online training courses, we use this word "practical" over-and-over. Why? Because it's absolutely critical, when it comes to surviving a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, that solutions be based purely on practicality. Anything else simply adds confusion and therefore time to our life-or-death gap. In fact, in our live training courses, practicality is the very first thing that we discuss because it is so critical to foundation building. Unfortunately, so much of what we do in our attempt to enhance safety and security, is simply not based on practicality.

Here's what I mean by practicality – For Now (I'll go into much greater detail on this later in this report)

Everything we need to know to survive a violent encounter, even the physical aspects, we should be able to learn while sitting in a chair. Here's the reality – if you have to get out of a chair to learn anything that you need to know, then you are likely being taught "technique" of some sort and technique only works in controlled environments where your training partner is allowing it to work. If you get outside of this controlled environment and things "get real" I can assure you that your adversary will not let you do anything to them.

Practicality means that we should not have to think – just do. Practicality is really based in the understanding of Muscle Memory and how this applies directly to effective solutions. I will talk more about Muscle Memory later in this report as well.

The bottom line is that much of what we are doing in our attempt to solve these critical issue creates a belief that we are enhancing security, when, in reality, it simply is not accomplishing what we are intending because it's not based on practicality.

We DO <u>NOT</u> Have Our Priorities in Order

When we approach schools, and businesses for that matter, with our proposals for real safety, what we typically get is "we don't have the time, resources, or budget to get this done". Let's think this through, again, from a realistic perspective:

I was approached by a school board member who asked me what my thoughts are on "banning guns" and the role that it might play in keeping our kids safe. I explained that my personal opinion was that I just don't think that this will stop random acts of violence from happening". This person, in response, got upset and ultimately told me that he didn't think I cared about the safety of our kids based on my position. My response was asking him how much the school devoted each year, from a time, financial, and human resource perspective, to their football/ soccer stadium, prom's, dances, homecomings, etc. His estimate was somewhere in the area of a couple of million dollars. I told him that if the school system gave Blue-U Defense a couple of million dollars, it would ensure that their school and students would be as safe as could possibly be. I went on to explain that, instead of putting resources in this area, the choice was made to put the same resources into things that were social-based, and fun. So, where are the priorities here? If we truly want to keep students and staff safe, not having the time, resources, or budget really needs to be rethought. The great thing is that I really see this starting to happen.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Establishing Proper Policy and Procedure Which Must Be Based on Reality Rather Than What Looks Good on Paper

We work with every type of business and organization that you can possibly imagine including public/private schools, Fortune 500 corporations, financial institutions, universities, hospital systems, associations, law offices, etc. Regardless of the type of organization or its purpose or profession, they all have policies and procedures that are written by associations, may be industry standard, or written by someone that doesn't fully understand reality of the situation that it is being written for. These policies and procedures look excellent on paper, and then, reality strike's and we quickly find out that what looked great on paper just doesn't work so well under realistic situations. In many cases, we find that these policies and procedures don't work, at all. So, what looks good on paper doesn't mean that it's going to work in reality.

Let me give you an example that, regardless of your profession, you will likely be able to relate to:

Are you familiar with "cash recyclers" at banks? If not, these are machines that dispense cash automatically upon a customer service representative typing an amount into a computer which in return counts and dispenses the dollar amount that is being requested. So traditionally, when you walked into a bank to withdraw funds, a customer service representative would open a cash drawer, pull out and count your money, and then hand it to you. Now, with cash recyclers, the goal is to eliminate cash drawers. Incidentally, I really hate cash recyclers from a safety and security perspective.

So, I'll ask our banking clients this question:

"If someone walks into your bank (that utilizes these cash recyclers), points a gun at a customer service representatives head and say's "give me money now", a bank robbery, what does that CSR have to do in order to get that person the money that they are demanding?"

Most of our clients will tell us that its really simple. The CSR just hits an "F key" to change systems and then type a 4-digit PIN into the computer (designed specifically for a bank robbery) and the system will automatically spit out a predetermined amount of cash for the bank robber. In some banks their employees only have to hit an "F Key" and then hit only 1 predetermined digit as opposed to a 4-digit PIN number.

So, I say "Great! it's simple and fast"; "get the bad guy out as quickly as possible".

I want you to think about this, however:

If someone walks up to you and points a gun at your head, the first thing that is going to happen is your heart-rate is going to quickly go to 200+ beats per minute. When this happens to us, we lose many things that are critical to performance including, fine motor skill, finger dexterity, and many other things. The question becomes – "do you think those employees are going to be able to do what is being expected of them under these circumstances?". The answer is an emphatic – "No!". And I know this from experience following the testing of it. And when it doesn't happen, what happens to the overall situation? It gets far worse far more quickly or, it escalates! Think about how difficult it would be to even hit one single key on a keyboard when your hands are shaking uncontrollably because your heart rate is so high.

So, this is one, of many policies/procedures, that looks great and simple on paper, but simply won't work under the circumstances in which they are presented.

Policy and Procedure are meant to tell our students, staff, employees, etc. exactly what we expect their response to be to a specific circumstance. If we dig down deep, as we really need to be doing, on each policy and procedure and make the determination that it simply will not work

under the circumstances in which they will be presented, we have a significant problem that needs to be immediately corrected.

Every policy and procedure need's to be reviewed to ensure that what we are expecting for a response will be possible based on our natural reactions as human beings.

While in policy/procedure reviews of our client organizations, we see policy and procedure, on a very regular basis, that look and sound simple and easy but simply will not work in reality. And this is regardless of the business type or profession.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Developing Real Plans

There is a distinct difference between policy and procedure, and an actual plan. We have one client that, in my expert opinion, has the absolute best and most well-written policy/procedure on dealing with an act of violence, that I have ever seen. And their employees know the policy extremely well. So, when we travel around to the various locations within this corporation, we ask the employees if they are aware of, and familiar with, their organizations policy and procedure regarding an act of violence. And, surprisingly, they clearly know it.

In spite of this, however, when I ask them what they might do if someone were to walk into the building that they are in, point a gun, and start shooting, they find themselves at a complete loss. Why, because policy and procedures just don't address the dynamic and changing nature of a sudden, unplanned incident of violence. Policy and procedure are designed to deal with very clear cut, specified events. Sudden, unplanned incidents of violence are like fingerprints, every single on is different. Therefore, policy and procedure cannot address these problems effectively. In order to address these problems most effectively, we need to design an actual plan, to the extent that we can, but we also need to teach our students how to design their own plans based on ever changing environments and circumstances. If this is done properly and effectively, we can learn to constantly evaluate and plan as our circumstances change, without even thinking much about the fact that we are doing it.

We Have Become a Nation of "Doing Something Is Better Than Doing Nothing" and Therefore We Are Relying on Useless "Gadgets" and Tools

<u>Here's the problem:</u>

The solutions that are currently being offered may do little to nothing when it comes to real safety. As I stated earlier, we have become a nation of "doing something is better than doing nothing". In some case's doing something as opposed to nothing is better. In others, however, doing "something as opposed to nothing" may actually be creating a more complicated and dangerous situation for those we are trying to keep safe. Many of these "solutions" are a huge

part of the overall problem of "doing things for the sake of doing things" or "doing things just to make ourselves feel good that we did something" or the ability to "check a box to be able to say that we did it".

Some of the products and services that have been developed without the appropriate thought and expertise, yet appear to be valuable in the effort to save lives, are what I call "Gadgets"

There are few things that are as frustrating as hearing about the many ridiculous gadgets, faulty communication systems, and similar products and services that are becoming available in an attempt to help prevent or solve the problem of victimization during a sudden, unplanned incident of violence or more commonly known as an "active shooter situation". For most, their creators are well-meaning, yet few offer any real value as intended. In fact, many create more dangerous situations than had we not had these gadgets and services to start with. I've been asked many times "wouldn't you agree that doing something is better than nothing?" My answer – absolutely not! Not when that something creates more chaos and complication, and therefore prolongs "The Life or Death Gap", than had that product not been there in the first place.

Let me give you a couple of examples:

Consider Door Locking or Barricading Devices

I recently read an article about a state that is granting somewhere in the neighborhood of $60M to schools to develop or enhance safety protocol for an "active shooter" incident. A part of the program required that as much as $16M be used to acquire and deploy door barricading devices.

So, let's think this through. These devices, in many cases, are extremely sizable and require some, albeit minor, training in order to utilize them. When we are not in an incident of violence, these devices will likely sit in a corner and become "just another thing in the already crowded classroom". And then, suddenly, we find ourselves within "The Life or Death Gap". What now? Our school will go into lockdown protocol and someone will need to take responsibility for initiating this device which will take time, and in some cases, fine-motor skill in order to deploy it. In many schools, especially those in which the children are too young or unable to deploy it themselves, this responsibility will fall upon the teacher who will have many other immediate responsibilities – like getting their children to safety! In the end, if it's done at all, we have, in fact, truly solidified our doors and made it almost impossible for ANYONE to breach, including law enforcement or Emergency Medical Services.

Here is another critical fact. You have to understand that most doors set-ups in schools are either metal door frames with metal doors or metal door frames with very heavy, solid wooden doors. As a SWAT Team Commander, and someone with considerable door breaching training and experience, I can tell you that the basic locks that most classrooms utilize are extremely difficult to breach, even with the appropriate breaching equipment and expertise on how to

breach them. This means that the likelihood of an active shooter successfully breaching a classroom door that is simply locked by the lock that is already on it, is highly unlikely. And if one were to be successful, the time and tools required would be completely unacceptable to the attacker as they know, from the second that they initiate their violent act, that time is going to be extremely limited.

So, if we want to ensure that it becomes even more difficult, if not impossible to breach our classroom doors, regardless of the effectiveness of what we already have, what can we do? Consider a simple deadbolt.:

If there were any chance of breaching a basically locked door, adding a deadbolt would make it all but impossible.

Now, consider the critical role that muscle memory plays in our ability to act during an incident where our heart rate is 200 plus beats per minute and the result is loss of fine motor skill and finger dexterity. A deadbolt lock is truly muscle memory. Every time we walk into our homes, we automatically turn around and flip a switch to lock the deadbolt. It's something that is ingrained in our heads and in most cases we do it without even realizing that we are doing it. Consider this as compared to a "device that we literally have to train in order to utilize properly.

And finally, consider the cost comparison between these two options? Hundreds of dollars for a barricading device vs $30-40 for a deadbolt.

Here's the real bottom-line:

If there is a real threat inside of our building, why are we going through so many motions to barricade ourselves into a room when we may have options to simply get out and not be there? Now I realize that there are situations where escape is not an option – like being up too high in a building that wouldn't allow us to survive an escape. In many cases, however, like in most schools, they are typically not more than 2 stories off the ground. And many schools are single story so every room is on ground-level. So, our goal, which must be taught, should be to break out the window and get out.

In a recent high-profile school shooting, there were surviving students that said that they were barricaded in their classrooms and they heard the shooter getting closer and closer until finally, the bad guy was there – at their classroom. Many of these students were actually on the first floor of their school building and some where on the second floor! So, why would they stay locked in a classroom waiting for the shooter to get there as opposed to breaking out the window and evacuating? Think about it, had this been fire as opposed to bullets taking lives, and instead of these bullets the hallways were engulfed in flames, would they have stayed barricaded in their classrooms, or would they have broken out the windows and evacuated, without even thinking twice about it? I think the answer is clear – they would break the windows and immediately evacuate. But in the case of an active shooter, this just didn't happen.

Why? Because from the time we are old enough to understand anything at all, we are being taught that if there is a fire, get out immediately and by any means necessary and we discuss specifically the breaking of windows and jumping. And although we may train RUN as one of three options in a typical RUN, HIDE and FIGHT training course, the mental aspects just don't compute because we are not first establishing that critical understanding of the problem, rather, we are only providing solutions. If you think breaking a window and evacuating is something that you would clearly do under the circumstances, think again. It takes mindset development, training, and drilling for this to happen when faced with a real, life-or-death situation.

How About Bullet Proof Safe Rooms Within Classroom's:

Seriously! There's little I need to say about these. Where are we going to put them? It's a well-meaning idea but not in any way shape or form practical!

Now, consider communication systems that have not been completely though out:

I have reviewed countless numbers of phone and computer-based communication systems that, again are well-meaning, but they are neither well thought-out or just designed by people who know little to nothing about what it really takes to survive a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, what we will be capable of doing, and ultimately, what we should be doing during such an incident.

Here's how they work, in general:

In most cases these systems are cell phone-based. They are designed to initiate the service upon commencement of an act of violence in an effort to alert everyone that there is a dangerous situation at hand. Following this, many offer and promote the ability for teachers and students to begin typing messages into the system to inform others about what the problem is, or where the problem is. Great stuff right? I can tell you this, it's great stuff on paper. The question becomes, is it really going to be utilized under the circumstances in which they are presented? And, even if they are utilized, think about this:

Do we want our teachers and students "texting" information into a phone, or do we want them focused on surviving?
Additionally, think about how difficult accurate "texting" is even under the most calm and serene of circumstances. Now add in a 200 beat per minute heart rate and the coinciding loss of fine-motor skills and figure dexterity. I can tell you this is just not going to happen effectively or practically. In fact, if we adopt and train our teachers and students on the use of such a system, which it will take a considerable amount of such training, are we not potentially creating for a more complex problem when we should be focused on safety? In fact, I demoed several of these systems and throughout the demo process received numerous demo alerts and associated text messages. By far the majority of text messages that I received through these processes were inaccurate in that there were misspellings, the information was not comprehensible, and

many times the system didn't even work. And this is during a time when there is no real danger present. Again, what do you think will happen when presented with adrenaline and an extremely elevated heart rate!

These systems are one of the many things that exemplify that "something is NOT better than nothing". In fact, it's something that actually makes an already complicated and difficult situation worse!

Now, to qualify this, communications systems are critical to survival, but only if they are designed properly. And, unfortunately there are few that are. We have spent three years searching for the ideal communication system and even got to a point where we started to create our own. And then, we found one that met almost every criteria that we had established for our own system. If you are interested in learning more, contact me and I will point you in the right direction.

So, in the end, we need to be completely certain that everything that we do to enhance or develop safety protocol, and the products and services that we introduce, are truly going to work under the extreme circumstances as they will be presented. Again, it has to be about reality rather than things that simply "look good on paper"?

We Are <u>NOT</u> Using the Right Trainers or Content

Acronyms won't work. PERIOD! They are a complete waste of time when it comes to surviving The Life-or-Death Gap. Ever heard of Run, Hide, or Fight? Run, hide and fight offers little in the way of true effectiveness and practicality. More on this later.

How about Instructor Certification Programs that allow ANYONE, starting with absolutely zero knowledge of active shooter events, to attend a 1-2 day instructor certification course in which the students are given Instructor Level trainer status upon completion?? Are you kidding me? How do you become an expert in active shooter safety in 1-2 days? Consider even police officers taking the same course? Are they automatically experts in teaching people how to prevent or survive an active shooter attack? If you think so, like most people do, think again. Let me explain:

Law enforcement officers train for one thing: Response. Fast, effective, and safe response. Very little is directed to things like practical site security, how safety and security impact liability and insurance, policy and procedure, and, in general, how to keep people safe and prepare for survival during The Life or Death Gap.

In most cases, police officers that go into schools to work with them on safety, are doing it as a part of their daily duties. In many cases its simply "an assignment". Teaching people how to prepare themselves to survive a sudden, unplanned incident of violence is just not their area of expertise. Few live it and breathe it; something that is critical to real success. So, their training really amounts to one of these 1-2 day training courses in which they are given a slide

presentation that they simply turn around and re-teach using the slides that were given to them upon completion of the course.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Doing Security Assessment's Properly and From the Proper Perspective

I recently sat through a school board meeting in which part of the agenda was reviewing a site security assessment that had been completed by the Department of Homeland Security. This was a requirement established by the State in order to be eligible for State and Federal grant funds. I reviewed the proposal in detail. Following review everyone present had an opportunity to provide feedback and thoughts on the report. When they got to me my response was as follows:

"Show me one thing in this assessment that will do anything to keep our children and teachers safe DURING an incident of violence?"

The bottom line was that all majority of the recommendations and findings were purely "response-based" and focused on the types of things that could assist law enforcement and EMS with a faster, more efficient and effective response. There were also some, albeit minor, recommendations in the area of prevention.

This is a huge problem! Truly effective security surveys must be focused on the things that can keep people safe DURING THE LIFE OR DEATH GAP.

This is not to say that dealing with the improvement of law enforcement and EMS response is not a critical aspect of saving lives. The problem is that typically we only focus on the response aspects of the problem. Remember, our efforts must stay focused on providing an understanding of, and survival while within, The Life or Death Gap.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Drilling Properly

I have been involved in numerous school active shooter drills. And much like the problems with the way in which security surveys are conducted, I find the same critical problems with drills. Typically, they are full speed and focused on law enforcement, EMS, and response.

We work with an organization that is a community center in Indianapolis. We have done a significant amount of work with this community center, which includes a school.

The leader of this community center, one day, explained that they had conducted an active shooter drill with the SWAT Team. He explained that they were able to determine areas for Triage, how and where to stage various responding units, etc.

Here's the problem:

SWAT will not be the law enforcement officers that will be responding to an active shooter situation. It will be the closest patrol units that will be the immediate responders. Now, this drill was exceptional had the goal been to determine the things listed above. But what did this really do for teachers and students in providing skills and understanding of survival during the Life or Death Gap?

So, when drilling, the focus must be on The Life or Death Gap and what we can learn for that specifically.

Secondly, full speed drills rarely have much value for training for survival during The Life or Death Gap. We find that slow, walk-through drills are far more effective. They allow for an opportunity to talk through details as the drill progresses, show those involved how the incident evolves, and what types of things need to be addressed and considered for real survival. This is how those involved truly see what is happening and understand how we will be impacted.

Finally, effective drills require a debrief. When we complete a drill we schedule a significant amount of the time allotted to the project, to "debriefing". This process involves bring everyone involved in the drills into a room and one-by-one discussing what each participant saw, heard, didn't see, what they could've done better or differently, and what they perceive others could've done better or differently. This process is the majority of the true value on a drill. This process is where we really learn.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Conducting Experimentation Drills

Experimentation drills are an absolutely critical element in establishing a program that results in the achievement of our three established goals. Why are they so critical? Because if we are going to conduct a security assessment we first need to know where our real strengths and weaknesses are. In order to establish these strengths and weaknesses, we need to know what a real "bad guy" is likely to do – in our specific building. This must and can be established through experimental drills. Without experimentation drills, our efforts to enhance safety and security will amount to little, or no real benefit.

WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENTATION DRILL?

Fact:

Our building is our building, our layout is our layout, our people are our people, our resources are our resources! Very rarely is a school or business given an opportunity to rebuild from scratch in order to build safety and security features in to the building. And, very rarely do we even have the opportunity to remodel to accomplish a more safe and secure facility. In essence, it is what it is.

As a result, we need to determine how to make the absolute best out of what we have to work with. The first element that needs to be addressed, in order to achieve success, is the establishment of where our facility and human resources, strengths and weaknesses are. This is what experimentation drills are designed to establish because, without know this, everything we do is based purely on speculation.

How to Run an Effective Coordination Drill?

Experimentation drills start with using an actor, to play the role of the "bad guy" whom has never been inside of the building that we are studying. There are very critical reasons for this. In these drills we are attempting to determine exactly how a potential threat might progress through our building, whom they might address, which direction the natural flow of the building would take an individual intent on doing mass damage. Having actors that know nothing about the building that we are studying will have a much more accurate outcome. Also, the fact that they have never been inside the building creates for more stress that will be more realistic in the case of a real "bad guy".

The second thing that is critical is to create time stress. We cannot give a bad guy unlimited, or even lengthy times frames to work. They must be given instruction to enter into the building and create as much chaos, and damage to human beings as possible and they need to understand that they have only 1-2 minutes to complete their task. Again, this causes stress which creates for a more realistic situation and will give us a more accurate account of what might likely happen. There are numerous additional elements to experimentation drills however this should give you the basic idea behind the set-up.

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WHAT ARE WE ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE DURING AN EXPERIMENTATION DRILL?

First, Establish a The Path of Least Resistance

First, its critical to establish that every building has a "natural flow" or "Path of Least Resistance". This is the natural path in which a layout takes us if we were looking for something obvious, like the majority of people to harm. This path of least resistance can be fairly accurately determined by just about anyone.

How do we determine this "Path of Least Resistance"? Simply walk into your building and ask yourself "without knowing where everyone might be, which way would I go based on what I am seeing?". Once this determination is made, find the next "path of least resistance" from that point and begin to walk this path that begins to develop.

Whatever your determination is, that is likely to be the same for anyone else. As you walk this "path of least resistance," start looking for simple and easy ways to create resistance for an attacker, in as many places as you possibly can. In the case of many of our clients, we can walk into a lobby and find that by simply closing and/or securing one door, we can cut off a huge percentage of our employees, or in the case of a school, our students, from danger. What this resistance creates is time!

This process enables us to see where we have advantages and disadvantages. If, for example, every "bad guy" goes left, this tells us that a real "bad guy" is likely to go left as well. Now we know where we have to focus our efforts to enhance the building security, but it also tells us the if the bad guy is likely to go left, those on the right have time and therefore advantage that can help them survive by know this in advance.

Next, We Are Attempting to Determine Exactly What a Bad Guy is Likely Do

As well as see, not see, hear, not hear, pay attention to and not pay attention to, etc.

We must determine and understand these things before any type of security plan enhancement will mean anything. Without taking the time to study these things, we are leaving way too much to chance. And that's not what we are looking for when it comes to keeping our children and teachers safe.

We Are <u>NOT</u> Training <u>EVERYONE</u>

In far too many circumstances, I see plans for providing training, in both mental health, drug recognition, and violence training, be focused on staff, managements teams, and select groups of people within an organization. Here's the concern:

In most organizations, students and employees, far outnumber staff and management teams. So, the question is – "Who's more likely to note a potential problem?". "Who more likely to note an addiction problem?"; "Who more likely to note change in a mental state of a person?" Again, this is whether we are focused on schools, business or organizations of faith. I realize that there is "age appropriateness" is this particular area, but where age appropriate, why are we not training anyone who is capable of doing something for themselves? This applies to the "mental health" aspects of the problem. Again, "Who more likely to see change and/or mental issues of a student?" – a staff member or other kids? You see, in mental health states, there is a "potential "Life-or-Death Gap" that exists. The sooner we can see it, the more likely we will eliminate any potential problems or dangerous situations arising from it. The problem, like recognizing a drug addiction, its difficult because most don't know what a mental health problem really looks like. So, if this Life or Death Gap is so critical to note early on, why would we not be training as many people as possible to recognize the signs and symptoms?

The bottom line is that we need to provide survival remedies to everyone, "almost" regardless of age, although we fully understand that there is age appropriateness in everything. We are designing solutions for children of every age and this a critical aspect of keeping people safe. If they are old enough to do something, or anything, we need to educate them on their best chances of survival.

We Are NOT Teaching the Physical Aspects of Survival

Let's consider a physical altercation. Earlier we said that success in surviving a violent encounter is 90% mental and only 10% physical. Well, this 10% physical are the times when you have done everything possible to escape or retreat, to not be there, and your efforts have failed. Now, you find yourself in a position to have to fight to defend your life, or the life of someone that you love and care about most. Your ability to win depends, primarily, on your will to win, and your ability and willingness to do more to your attacker than they are willing to do to you. In order to have any level of success your weapons and skills must be practical. This is true in non-physical encounters as well.

What is Practical?

If you can't use your defensive weapons quickly, instinctively, and without thought, they are not going to work. It's that simple! Again, anything that is "technique based" will only work in controlled environments.

Let me illustrate this with an example. You have likely heard of, or are familiar with, Ultimate Fighting Championships. Or more commonly known as UFC. If you don't know what this is, two competitors get into a caged ring, and their goal is to either knock their opponent out, or get them to submit, to give up. It's similar to a boxing match except it allows for much more than just punching to include kicks, joint locks, pain compliance techniques, etc. It's the most realistic form of organized fighting that you will find anywhere.

I want you to think about this, however:

If I'm going to compete in one of these fights, I wake up, the morning of the day of my fight, and the first thing that pops into my mind is – "I have a fight tonight". And my fight is with "John Jones", someone that I have possibly fought before, someone that I have studied his strengths and weaknesses for the past several weeks, if not, months, and someone whom I have experience with. Next, when I step into the ring with John Jones, he cannot do anything to me until I acknowledge that I am ready, and the bell rings. So, I'll stop there to explain this:

There is a huge difference between planned and unplanned! There is a huge difference between rules, and no rules.

Now, when the bell rings, there are all kinds of things that John Jones can't do to me including pulling my hair, gouging my eyes out, scratching my face off; pulling my hair out, pinching me, kicking me in the groin, and many more things.

Now, think about this – this is the most realistic form of organized fighting anywhere in the world – why are they NOT allowed to do any of the things that I just mentioned? Well, because they hurt very badly and because they are highly effective and damaging.

So, think about this:

If you are ever in a physical confrontation where your opponent is trying to hurt you, or someone that you love and care for, or worse yet, trying to take your life, what types of things do you think you should be focused on using?

How about the things that are so effective and damaging that you cannot use them even in the most realistic forms of organized fighting.

Now, lets look at these very things from a practical level. How many of those things would you have to go home and practice? Biting? Grabbing and pulling hair? Gouging eyes? Scratching? The fact is that you would not have to practice any of these things.

In fact, I will say this:

Knowing nothing more than you already know right now, if you had the true will to be your

opponent, and using these very things that we are talking about, you could pick the person that you would least likely to fight with in your life, and give that person a bad, bad day. Again, this is right now knowing nothing more than you already know. And you would use these very things to give that person their bad, bad day. And one more thing, this is also in spite of how old/young, big/small, strong/weak, or what gender you are. And I can almost promise you this.

We've Accepted Run, Hide and Fight and Other Acronym -Based Solutions

Why Do Run, Hide and Fight and Other Acronym-Based Training Have Little to No Impact?

Consider Run, Hide and Fight. This is what you will find as training coming out of police departments, Dept of Homeland Security; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and many other sources. You'll find an overabundance of acronym-based training courses like ALICE; ALERTT; etc.

First, think about Run, Hide, and Fight. Excellent stuff, right? Simplicity creates for a faster, more effective response. And the acronym makes it easy for us to quickly run through our trained options under high levels of stress.

Think about this:

If you've never had a single second of training in how to survive a sudden, unplanned incident of violence, and someone walked into the room that you sit in right now and start shooting, and again, with absolutely zero training in how to resolve the issue, doesn't it stand to reason that you will do one of the three options – Run; Hide, and Fight? Of course, you would.

So, we don't need anyone teaching us to Run, Hide or Fight because we already know that. That's training for the sake of training or check the box type of training – training to make ourselves feel good that we did something.

Acronyms:

Think about it, when your heartrate is up to 200+ BPM, do you for one second think, or believe that you will not only recall your acronym, but actually go through it letter-by-letter, recall what each letter means, and then act based on this? Again, you can forget it as it's not going to happen.

We Are Not Considering What Lockdown versus Evacuation Really Means

Lockdown versus evacuation has been a topic of serious debate, especially in schools. It seems as though there is a hard divide between the two –it's either one or the other, but we cannot have both. Most experts would agree that the dynamics of an active shooter incident makes it impossible to choose either one or the other. To put these options more simply, it's the choice of either running or hiding. What is not often publicized is the option to FIGHT.

In most schools in which we've worked, lockdown is really the only option that is presented to staff. Both staff and students are trained how to handle a lockdown situation. Although we now offer the choice of solutions of run, hide, and fight, typically we only actually practice lockdown. When we do this, it really becomes the only thing to do. Remember the details that I provided about Stoneman Douglas High School and the reactions to the danger?

Why is there such a strong focus on the Lockdown aspect? Lockdown has really become "the industry standard". If you ask those responsible for making this decision as the best option for their school, what would their answers be? I would venture to say that most of them would respond that it's the best option because that's the option everyone else chooses. Also, we should question why, when we drill, we are only actually practicing the lockdown aspect of the choices. One reason is because its simple, fast and easy to recover from and get back to work more quickly. When the drill is completed, simply turn the lights on an resume your class. This rather than regather everyone where they are supposed to go, account for everyone, etc. Not nearly as simple. This is a problem!

To be truly concerned with the safety of staff and students, they both need to know and be trained in all potential ways of dealing with a sudden, unplanned incident or violent attack. Schools should continue becoming more open to building and awareness in other option.

For those schools who continue to utilize lockdown as the only practiced option, I recommend that you, at minimum teach them to lock down properly.

Here's the problem with typical lockdown drills:

1. They are always conducted only when class is in session.
2. They are not taken seriously and are not conducted properly to ensure success.

This Brings Some Very Serious Considerations

What would happen if an incident would occur during lunch or during the time between classes? Would the staff and students know how to respond properly?

If there is a hallway full of students being pursued by an active shooter, at what point does a teacher standing in the doorway close and lock the door and not allowing anyone else inside the classroom? Is the right choice to close the door as soon as possible to protect those who made it inside the room? Or is the right choice to leave it open as long as possible and perhaps let the shooter inside accidentally? This is a real scenario that teachers and students have and will face, and they should be ready to make those hard decisions.

Being able to make a good decision in fractions of a second doesn't happen by chance. It happens because of good, quality training and consideration for numerous scenarios of danger. Lockdowns should be practiced during multiple times of the day, as there are multiple locations of students during each moment of the day.

Let's take this a step further and investigate a scenario in which the classroom is full, and the door is locked. Knowing where to place students in a locked classroom can almost guarantee their survival of an active shooter. Proper training will teach students and staff best practices for placement and procedure during lockdown, if that is the only option taught.

Nikolas Cruz killed the majority of his victims while they were locked-down in classrooms. He did this by shooting through the glass windows that were a part of the classroom doors. Many of the students happened to be in the wrong corners or the room and were shot and killed. Students who were in the proper corners of the room were unharmed. In which corners should students and teachers hide? This would be very clearly stated and practiced with training in proper and effective lockdown procedures.

What about a scenario in which evacuation is the only answer. A great example of this would be a school fire. Would we expect students and staff to remain barricaded inside a classroom just waiting to be rescued from a fire? Assuredly not! We would expect them to break the windows, get out of the building and fun away from the danger. Evacuation is another option that could mean the difference between life and death.

In a recent school shooting, it was reported that there was a shooter inside of the school. The school went directly into lockdown. There were students outside the school during this lockdown who actually went back inside the school, as they had been taught. They walked right into a school where there was an active shooter.

It is time to really start thinking about what we are doing, how we are doing it and whether or not it's truly practical.

We Are Not Focusing on ALL Aspects of the Dangers Within the Life or Death Gap – The Topic of Medical Attention

Remember the definition of The Life or Death Gap? I explained that it's the gap that's starts the second that you know and understand that there is danger, potentially life threatening, to either yourself, or someone that you love and care about greatly and it expands until the time in which you know 100% for fact, that the danger no longer exists.

The problem is that, with an active shooter situation, and the fact that the school goes into lockdown, in many cases there have been victims that Emergency Medical services have not been able to reach for considerable amounts of time, because they were unable to enter into an incident that had not yet been deemed "safe". This time frame exists in every incident of this type. The problem is that we have people who need medical attention, but just can't get it. As a result, we lose many lives as a result.

So, how do we correct this problem? Every school must have a trauma kit in every single classroom, at minimum. And I'm not referring to a first aid kit. I'm talking about a kit that has the tools to deal with a traumatic injury specifically. Further, every staff member and student must be well-versed on using each and every tool within the kit. We have a source that has developed a kit, that comes with the appropriate training in a format and delivery that children who are very, very young could understand.

This is a critical aspect of savings lives that is well too often overlooked.

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ADDITIONAL TOPICS OF DISCUSSION, COMMON QUESTIONS, AND AREAS OF DEBATE

We've addressed that there are real threats that face our children today, we've learned that there is a huge problem with how threats are dealt with, and we realize that it is time for a change. What's next? Where there are problems, there are options presented that should be explored and understood before they are adopted as the only solution.

Arming Teachers

A solution that recently has jumped to the top of the list in keeping our children safe at school is arming teachers. President Trump has spoken repeatedly about this being one of several potential solutions to addressing the problem of mass casualty incidents in our nation's schools. A sheriff's office in one state has already started offering free firearm courses designed to train teachers in the county with the skills to safely and responsibility arm themselves while in school. Our response to this question:

Absolutely not!

Here's why.

Most people think that the only qualification to responsibly carry a firearm is shooting ability. That's only one of the critical qualifications however it is not the most important. I can go to a range and watch people step up to the firing line, calming and controllably raise their firearm, aim, and shoot. And many times I see some very impressive skills under these conditions. This, however, does little to impress me because, under these conditions, many people can shoot as well. The question is:

Can they do this while they are moving? Can they do this while their potential threat is moving? Can they do this while both they, and their potential threat are moving? Can they do this when their heart rate is 200+ beats per minute? In by far the majority of cases, the answer is no. And definitely not without a ton of practice, time, and dedication to raising their skills to a point where they can.

But here's the most important question:

Can they make good decisions under extreme circumstances?

Police Officers don't train frequently to obtain the ability to be able to make a small hole in a target using numerous rounds. They train to be able to hit a target under extreme circumstances. And, most importantly, they train to be able to make good decisions under the most extreme of circumstances.

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<u>Here's the deal:</u>

The second that you promote concealed carry in schools, businesses, or church is the second that you become responsible as an organization or entity.

The training required to ensure that those carry firearms are going to both make good decisions, but also have the skill to stay focused and only strike their intended target is way too much for anyone except law enforcement agencies or the military to ensure. It takes highly structured programs, training, and testing.

The bottom line is that we, as a company, don't believe that a firearm is needed to solve the problem. The reasons and demonstration of proof is all a part of our curriculum.

Using Dedicated Security in Our Schools

When it comes to consideration of dedicated security, schools are not unlike businesses. We work with numerous financial institutions, some that employee contract security companies to keep their organizations secure. In some cases, its armed security and in others its unarmed. Regardless, what many don't understand is that contract security companies have their own policies and procedures that, many times, don't match up properly with the organizations that contract with them. This can become a huge liability issue. Here's an example:

Many times, its assumed that if there is a contract security guard present that, if there is an incident of violence that erupts, that it's that security guard's responsibility to act. In reality, however, most contract security guards are bound by a policy that prohibits them for getting involved in any way. So, in essence, they are being hired for nothing more than deterrence.

In the case of armed security this may not be the case. But here's the problem:

If they make a bad decision and an innocent person ends up injured, or worse yet killed, as a result of a bad decision or errant gunshot, who holds the potential liability.

As police officers we always had "Rules of Engagement" because the responsibility that you carry in utilizing a deadly weapon is extremely high. So, it would be critical to make certain that policy and procedure, to include "Rules of Engagement" be in sync between contracting organization and contractor. This is not as simple as it sounds and can create for a major problem.

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THE BLUE-U DEFENSE TURNKEY SAFETY SOLUTION

For anyone who thinks that we can keep our children safe without sacrificing time and/or money, you would be wrong! Taking shortcuts when trying to keep children safe is wrong. Engaging in meaningless, ineffective training to keep children safe is also wrong. True security requires a series of elements that combine to form a plan that gives our children the absolute best chance of surviving today's threats.

Remember our three established goals for our clients:

1) Truly Keep People Safe
2) Mitigate Risk
3) Limit Liability

The following are the steps that are required in order to achieve these goals.

- Physical Site Security
- Policy Review/Development
- Developing a Real Plan/Drilling
- Live, Effective, Practical and Engaging Training
- Video/Online/Learning Management
- Skill Enhancement/Continuous Learning

The balance of this section will detail each of the above steps and their purpose within the overall plan.

Elements of the Blue-U Defense Training Plan

Practical and effective safety programs have to be strategically designed to offer a complete package of products and services that will significantly enhance the overall safety of facilities, students and employees. The goal is to utilize current and reasonable resources to your maximum advantage. As personal skills in safety and security are perishable, this program has numerous elements built into the system that are designed to not only to keep necessary skills in the forefront of the mind but also to have your students and staff wanting to learn more.

Another important aspect of an effective program is risk mitigation and limitation of vulnerability to liability to your organization. While keeping your employees and your students truly safe is everyone's top priority, limitation of liability and risk mitigation to your school or organization is also important.

The elements of an effective system that is designed to truly keep people safe are also the greatest factors in risk mitigation and limitation of liability. As a result, by putting a system in place that is designed to truly keep your employees and students safe, you are simultaneously limiting vulnerability to liability and mitigating risk to your school and/or organization.

Effective security has little to do with technology (alarms, cameras, locks, card readers) and everything to do with people. An added benefit is that effective security through people costs little to nothing. As a result, your program must place a significant emphasis on the "people" aspect of security. It's about creating truly effective and practical policies and plans that everyone understands and follows without any exceptions.

If we were to ask every one of your students or staff what they would do under various types of incidents including active shooter or workplace violence, every single one of them should have a quick and sensible answer. If they do no, this creates a huge problem both for their safety as well as the safety of others. A lack of a plan of action significantly increases vulnerability to liability should an incident or attack happen inside your school or organization.

PHYSICAL SITE SECURITY

This is an on-site review of your physical site, its current security measures, processes, protocol for allowing visitor/contractor/student access, and the overall facility as related to the safety of both employees and students. Our real, effective, and practical security surveys focus far less on the technology (alarms, card readers, locks, bushes, etc.) and more on the practical aspects of safety and security. Assessments focus on current, and real, assets that already exist in every school and organization. This means that it must be understood that your building is your building, your layout is your layout, and your people are your people. The question must be: How do we use our current assets (our building, layout, people, policy/procedure, and a plan) to significantly enhance our security without spending much if any money to do it? In every single case, this can be accomplished if the focus is in the right place.

Again, our Security Surveys focus on the real issues that impact and improve overall security.

When an attacker enters our building, we do not want them to be allowed to go where they want. We want to use our facility to direct the attacker to exactly where we want them to go. The criticality of this will become extremely important as we work through our program, and in particular, plan development.

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POLICY REVIEW/DEVELOPMENT

Effective policy on workplace violence/active shooter is rare. In fact, most companies have absolutely nothing in place at all. With Blue-U Defense policy review, we first do not accept that industry standard policy is the best or the only way. Secondly, we review policies to ensure that they will actually work during a real incident. Finally, we assess staff and student's knowledge, understanding and ability to retain all of the information and steps involved in the current policy.

By testing the current policy that is in place, we are able to pinpoint the points of weakness or vulnerability. After identifying the issues with the current policy, we work directly with management to make appropriate adjustments to ensure these issues are addressed and eliminated. Once the policy has been corrected, we provide training to all staff and students.

If an incident occurs at a school, we must be able to show that we did everything humanly possible to keep people safe from that incident. In addition to our desire to keep people truly safe, it is our duty to keep our clients safe from a liability standpoint.

DEVELOPING A REAL PLAN/DRILLING

Throughout the years, we have partnered with numerous clients. As I mentioned above, rarely does a company, regardless of profession or industry served, have a truly effective policy on workplace violence or active shooter. There was one company who had a great workplace incident policy in place that even their employees knew and could repeat back to us without much effort.

In spite of this, when we asked them about the specifics of what they might do under a threating and/or violent incident, few had answers. Why is this? If this company had done such an incredible job establishing policies and procedures, why would employees not have good, practical answers to these questions?

It's simple: there is a significant difference between policy/procedure and a plan. Once a client's policy/procedure is deemed to be sufficient, we go to the next level of plan development.

Drills must also include Experimentation Drills, coordinated and properly run, as previously discussed.

The Real Importance of Drills in Plan Development

There are articles and commentaries that surface following tragedies that oftentimes question the value of drills. Many of these writings focus on the fact that even if schools conduct drills, numerous children still lose their lives. My response to that is that I'm not surprised at all.

Why? My lack of surprise would come from my knowledge that schools drill in similar ways, and those ways are not effective. Traditionally run drills do little, if anything, to improve the value of the response of the students and teachers. The value that is brought by these drills is the involvement of the emergency services agencies.

Drills can, however, be extremely valuable, if you first understand what they are for and how to use them. Here's a question: What are drills and why are we doing them? I'd love to know what your answers are. My guess is that many of you had to really stop and consider your answer. Your answer might not be as clear as you thought it might be.

We are going to explore four areas of drilling:

• We learn from the wrong perspective.
• Why is the perspective of the attacker more important?
• We must be able to replicate chaos in our drills without creating danger.
• Who should be involved in your drills?

We learn from the wrong perspective.

While the perspective of the victims is a good perspective, it is not where our real focus should be. When we run traditional-type drills, we rarely take the time to gather much information from each and every participant following the drill. This element, called a debrief, is the most critical element of a truly meaningful and successful drill.

It's critical that we know as much as possible about what each participant heard, felt, saw, and could have done differently or better. Without a debrief, you will find that you are missing the most critical information available from these drills.

Why is the perspective of the attacker more important?

When we conduct drills for our clients, we start with using an "attacker" who has never been inside the building in which we are drilling. Why? We need to be able to test whether or not the policies and procedures that we've established after our policy/procedure review works or not. We must learn if the path of least resistance that we had determined is accurate or not.

Further, we need to know exactly what the attacker saw or did not see, hear or did not hear, etc. The reason for this is because the knowledge of these critical things tells us where our victims should or should not be. This will also help to create opportunities that we otherwise would not have known existed.

Too many times we think that the attackers see and hear everything and that they are capable of things that only happen in movies or fantasy. This is absolutely not the case. The intimate knowledge of why this is can change everything about the way we respond and the opportunities available to us that we otherwise never would have known about.

We must be able to replicate chaos in our drills without creating danger.

Think about the reality of most drills. The participants clearly know that there is no real danger of being hurt or injured (simulation drills aside, because they can absolutely hurt a lot!). As a result, the reactions of the participants just are not real. They do not create the chaos that is required to really make the attack real and learn from it. How do we correct this and still maintain the safety of those involved?

When Blue-U Defense conducts drills for our clients, we establish a scenario that will play out. In advance, we will provide each participant with this scenario to enable them to start developing a plan and thinking about exactly what they will do. Next, when we conduct the actual drill, we change the scenario 100%.

While this maintains the safety of the participants, it now creates a chaotic state within their minds – "this is not what I was expecting, now what should I do?". The answer is that they must figure it out very quickly, because the situation is what it is. This tactic makes drills far more effective and impactful than they might otherwise be.

Who should be involved in your drills?

Should you involve local law enforcement and other emergency medical services in your drills? While we have little issue with doing their involvement, the one thing that we have seen is that it reverts the attention of the drill away from the school/students to the response of law enforcement and emergency medical services.

While this is still very helpful in determining what will happen following the Life-or-Death Gap, which is an important element, we recommend separating the two. Do some drills without law enforcement and emergency medical services and others without that focus solely on the school and students. The focus needs to remain on those who will be inside of The Life-or-Death Gap.

LIVE, EFFECTIVE, PRACTICAL AND ENGAGING TRAINING

Truly successful training has to be live, effective, practical AND engaging. Truly live, effective, practical and engaging training must be designed and successful in capturing the hearts and minds of those taking it. Regardless of the amount of time that a training course takes, students must leave wishing that it had been longer. They must crave more information and personalize what they had learned. The material and solutions need to stay with them for a long period of time.

Typical "training for the sake of training" goes in one ear and out the other; therefore, it becomes useless to its students. Solutions of a training must be generally applicable rather than specifically applicable. They have to play an obvious and key role in our creation of a "culture of safety".

By now, most schools are familiar with the Run, Hide, and Fight model of Active Shooter training. This Run, Hide, and Fight training is little more than "training for the sake of training".

Let's assume that neither you nor your students have ever had ANY training in an active shooter or general survival of a sudden, unplanned incident of violence. ZERO! Does it stand to reason that if an attacker came into the room that you are in right now, that without any training at all, you would do one of those three things?

You would assuredly either run, hide, or fight, without any training that tells you to do this. My point is that we don't need anyone to tell us these things. The key is how, when and where do we run, how, when and where do we hide, and how, when and where do we fight. Even more importantly, what's naturally going to happen to us, as human beings, that will hinder us from doing what seems so simple and obvious.

What we do, foundationally in a Blue-U Defense training, is simply bring a much higher level of understanding to such a situation which automatically, in turn, creates a much greater likelihood of survival.

Video/Online/Learning Management

Training employees in a live environment is not always practical. Turnover, new hires, vacations, and daily operations all contribute to substantial challenges in getting students/employees trained effectively and efficiently. This becomes additionally challenging when there are multiple training courses and topics required to meet an overall objective of keeping people safe.

Your training partner must have the ability to deliver highly effective training in ways that can meet multiple demands on time and ability. This can be online, through learning management systems, webinars, video-on-demand, etc. At Blue-U Defense we offer video and online training courses to help meet each of our clients in a way that is practical and effective for them.

SKILL ENHANCEMENT/CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Survival skills are perishable; however, proven retention and understanding of the skills that we learn can ultimately contribute to risk mitigation and reduced vulnerability to liability.
Skills needed to fully be aware and be prepared are, unfortunately, perishable. As a result, students must keep these skills updated on a regular basis.
Your training partner must be capable providing your school, staff, and students with the regular and on-going information required in order to keep their skills fresh as well as stay abreast of new information on the topic. We offer training that is up-to-date with current threats and new information related to those threats.

CONCLUSION

When we first formed Blue-U Defense, our dream was to serve schools and play a significant role in keeping our nation's children safe. Finally, schools and parents are listening to, and understanding that what we do as a company is not only highly unique, but highly effective. When we complete training within our corporate client locations, its inevitable that those in attendance approach us and ask us if we would "do this in their kids school". Our answer was always the same – "absolutely! But it's unlikely to happen". Why? Because schools tend to use "standards" and standards have typically meant – lockdown. This slowly progressed more towards an options-based training curriculum – Run, Hide and Fight (or acronym-based) which, as I explained earlier really means nothing. Further, school administrators have tended to reply heavily on the advice of law enforcement, and understandably so and, as I've explained, law enforcement doesn't necessarily mean expertise in this area. Fortunately, for us and the schools, this is really starting to change for us and our expertise is starting to gain so leverage, but just barely. We are now in 32 states and more-and-more people are hearing our message, understanding it, changing their mindset, and taking steps to get their local school districts to listen to us.

It's time to start thinking differently about the safety of our schools, our children and our staff. We need to start thinking about the bigger picture and bringing structure to what is needed. Our schools need to be assured that the resources to deploy, carry-out and improve this program are available every year.

If we achieve our hopes and dreams for this company, we will spend all day, every day, working with our schools and children.