

**BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR RISK/THREAT ASSESSMENT  
AND CRISIS RESPONSE IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS**

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Edward and Sheila Ryan, and to my husband, Jed Snatic. Each of these individuals expressed a belief in my ability to succeed in the aspirations I set for myself, both personally and professionally. It was challenging yet rewarding to be involved in such a new area of research. They always stood behind me, and I knew I could always depend on them in a time of need. Their unconditional support and encouragement were the basis for my success.

## Abstract

This project assessed participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of a two-day training workshop entitled Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response. Three Ministries of the Government of Alberta -- Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Learning and Alberta Health and Wellness -- worked together in 2000 to develop the workshop, following an April 1999 incident in a Southern Alberta high school when a 15 year-old boy fatally shot one student and injured another. The workshop was designed to develop participant communities' capacity to recognize and assess risks and threats and to respond appropriately to crises. Workshops were offered to Alberta school jurisdictions and their community partners between September 2001 and June 2002. Participants included school administrators, trustees, counselors, and teachers; Alberta Mental Health Board managers and therapists; staff from the RCMP, Police, Child and Family Services and Public Health departments; physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The evaluation instrument included five statements for which respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement using a 5-point Likert scale, as well as six open-ended questions requiring written answers and comments. Analysis of the evaluation responses indicated that participants felt the workshop materials and activities were effective in empowering community members to develop their own Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response Protocols. They considered the workshop content informative, particularly the examples developed to illustrate the key concepts being taught.

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## Introduction

### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of this project was to assess workshop participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the two-day workshop titled Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response (CRACR). A tragic incident occurred April 28, 1999, when a heavily armed student entered a Taber, Alberta high school, fatally shot one student, and injured another. Suddenly it was clear that school violence can happen anywhere, even in a small town in Southern Alberta. It was equally clear that Alberta schools needed information and education on violence prevention and crisis management, for occasions when such crises might occur. The objectives of the workshop were to support and educate school districts in developing a collaborative, inter-agency crisis response team with written and regularly rehearsed protocols, and to help provide each school district with a risk assessment protocol for youth uttering serious threats.

The experience of the school shooting in Taber, Alberta affected many students, staff members, and parents across the country. As a result, most school jurisdictions and professionals, including police, therapists, and social workers, among others, have had to explore more closely how to respond to serious school crises involving violence, and how to deal with high-risk student behaviour.

### *Background and Justification*

On April 20, 1999, two students entered Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado and carried out an elaborate plan to terrorize their school. This was not the first school shooting in the United States, but it was considered one of the worst acts of violence on school property. Twelve students and a teacher were dead, twenty-four

students had been injured, two gunmen (fellow students) had shot and killed themselves, hundreds of students and staff were directly impacted, and an entire community was traumatized. Both Canadians and Americans were shocked at the occurrence of such a violent event in a school. Eight days later, a Canadian student entered a Canadian school and opened fire; an American tragedy had also become a Canadian experience.

Over the past several years, concern has increased about the safety of students in schools. Much of this concern stems from media reports of several school shootings. In reality, very few resources are available for training school staff and other professionals to respond in ways that help schools and communities deal effectively with tragedies, fostering growth rather than division and healing rather than long-term injury. Shootings and violent deaths in schools affect students and parents across North America, who fear these events could happen anywhere. The problem is multi-faceted, and a clear understanding of the causes and precipitants of school violence is complicated by the many factors that must be considered. However, the need to address this issue has become urgent with the recent increase in multiple-victim, highly lethal shootings. In one such incident, two students were shot, one injured and the other killed, in an Alberta school. In response to this incident, school jurisdictions are searching for ways to assess high-risk youth who may be homicidal or suicidal and to respond to crises, when and if they occur in their schools.

School jurisdictions and associated professionals need to determine how to respond to serious crises in schools. Furthermore, educators and others need assistance in order to understand the impact of trauma on their systems and to find ways to minimize the impact and to encourage healing. The shock and fear generated by school shootings

and other violent acts in schools, as well as violence in society at large, have led to intense public concern about violence and safety issues in schools.

*Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response Training*

This project examines the Alberta Government's initiative Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response Training (CRACR). CRACR, a provincial promotion/prevention initiative, offered workshops to schools and community agencies across Alberta during the 2001/2002 school year. Through a two-day workshop, a provincial team of three professionals representing Mental Health, Education, and the office of the Solicitor General provided facilitation and consultation on developing or enhancing existing community crisis response teams and a risk/threat assessment protocol for youth uttering threats. The CRACR Training workshops addressed the following goals:

- Enhance capacity to provide a safe, secure, and caring school environment
- Develop or enhance risk/threat assessment teams and protocols
- Develop or enhance in-school crisis response protocols
- Develop or enhance post-crisis capacity teams, protocols and resources

The CRACR workshops were developed in response to recommendations made in two separate but related reports: Alberta Children's Services' *Start Young, Start Now!* (Report of the Task Force on Children at Risk, 2000) and the *Taber Response Project* (cited in Ichikawa, 2000). Two primary recommendations emerged from these reports:

- That all school districts have a collaborative, inter-agency crisis response team with written, regularly rehearsed protocols

- That all school districts have a risk assessment protocol for youth uttering serious threats.

The CRACR workshops were delivered in 35 locations over 10 months in 2001-2002. Participants included school administrators and trustees, school counsellors, teachers, Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) managers and therapists, RCMP, Police, Child and Family Services and Public Health staff, physicians/psychiatrists, psychologists, and community participants involved in crisis response. In all, 35 workshops were delivered to almost 1400 participants. The purpose of this project is to describe the workshops, and to document the results of the participant feedback.

#### *Operational Definitions*

A number of specialized terms used throughout the CRACR project are referred to throughout this study and defined here.

- *Building Community Capacity* assists community members with developing or enhancing their response to the various needs or gaps in their community.
- *The Children's Mental Health Initiative* was created by the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Mental Health Board, in order to move into action the two recommendations from the Taber Response Project.
- *Crisis* is an event of limited duration that is typically unpredicted and overwhelming for those who experience it.
- *Crisis Response* is intended to protect safety and lives of students/staff, prevent or minimize damage, determine an appropriate response, and defuse or end the crisis.

- *Report of the Task Force on Children at Risk* is a comprehensive Government of Alberta report that attempted to determine how a tragedy such as the one in Taber occurred and to assess how to prevent future occurrences. The Report is entitled *Start Young, Start Now!*
- *Risk/Threat Assessment* tools assess the means, motivation, and intent of a threat maker, determine the level of risk of the threat, and aid in development of an intervention plan.
- *Safe and Caring School (SACS) Initiative* is a partnership among Alberta Learning, other government ministries, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and other education and community stakeholders who work together to ensure that Alberta's schools have a safe and caring environment that fosters respectful and responsible behaviour among students, parents, and teachers. A safe, secure, caring school environment is the foundation for risk/threat assessment and crisis response.
- *Taber Response Project* focused on the early identification of children at risk. Community consultations indicated a need for provision of early supports for young children and their families in order to promote health and address risk. The project provided information on effective early intervention programs.
- *Threat* is an expression of intent to do harm or to act out violently against someone or something. A threat can be physical, spoken, written, or a symbolic gesture such as making a fist and pointing a finger to represent a gun.

### *Workshop Curriculum*

One of the first tasks of the CRACR project team was to seek input from experienced Alberta professionals who had been involved in developing community crisis response and threat/risk assessment teams. Another task involved reviewing background information, including the key components of the crisis response plan suggested by the *Taber Response Project Report* (Ichikawa, 2000) and *Supporting Safe, Secure, and Caring Schools in Alberta* (Alberta Learning, 1999). The information obtained from this process was incorporated into the design of the workshops.

Crisis response is most effective as part of a continuum from promotion and prevention to crisis intervention and follow-up. The Safe and Caring School (SACS) Initiative, a joint initiative involving Alberta Learning, Alberta Teachers' Association, and other government, education, and community stakeholders, provides a collaborative and integrated approach to establishing a safe, secure and caring school environment as part of the continuum. Workshop expectations were for school communities to build on the work they had already done through Safe and Caring Schools or similar initiatives, or to begin the planning required to create such an environment. The design of the workshops ensured communities access to what is known about developing community capacity for crisis response and threat/risk assessment. The workshop design was flexible in order to assist communities in using this information as they developed or enhanced their own unique approaches to building capacity for community crisis response.

The two-day workshop focused on what was working well in each community and identifying what was needed to support and maintain immediate safety as well as longer-term well being. The introduction of each workshop facilitated teamwork and

partnerships by seating interdisciplinary teams in the community at the same table. The workshop addressed these topics:

- Safe, Secure and Caring Schools
- Risk and Threat Recognition and Assessment.
- Management of In-School Crises
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Aftermath

The first section of the workshop discussed the principles, components, and essential elements required to create a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary safe, secure and caring school environment. School jurisdictions developed a list of what was already happening in school communities through the Safe, Secure and Caring Schools curriculum and similar programs. Participants were given the opportunity to share with the entire group what they were doing and to celebrate what was working well. The objective was to build participants' understanding of the importance of fostering an environment that promotes safe behaviours.

The second section focused on Risk and Threat Recognition and Assessment. This section emphasized the expectation that all staff and students report behaviour or communication involving threats to self or others. A multi-disciplinary team approach was presented as the best way to determine risk in dealing with threats. In a multi-disciplinary team approach, a student's relevant personal history, behaviour, health and welfare status can be used collaboratively to determine and, if possible, reduce the risk that the student will act out violently.

The third workshop section highlighted the advantages and limitations of working within a team perspective. The stages of team development were presented, as well as information on how to use teams effectively, develop team leaders, and clarify the process of team development.

The fourth section was designed to raise awareness regarding the need to be prepared and the importance of having practiced protocols and plans for various incidents or crises. This section also emphasized using the media to ensure that information conveyed to the general public is accurate and sends a message of safety.

The fifth section addressed Crisis Response and Aftermath. Crisis response involves a planned team response that supports students and staff and helps them to understand their own physical and emotional reactions to crisis situations. It also includes planning for assistance in the first few weeks after a crisis. Planning for the aftermath of a crisis must include longer-term support for those with more serious traumatic responses, as well as development of protocols and plans for dealing with funerals, memorials, and significant dates or holidays in the months and years following a crisis.

#### *Workshop Evaluation*

CRACR developed a workshop evaluation in order to monitor the effectiveness of its implementation and follow up. The evaluation measured achievement of the four workshop goals of this initiative which were identified in the development phase:

- Enhance capacity to provide a safe, secure, and caring school environment
- Develop or enhance risk/threat assessment teams and protocols
- Develop or enhance in-school crisis response protocols
- Develop or enhance post-crisis capacity teams, protocols and resources

The two-day workshop was seen as an initial step in the process of creating or revising a community protocol to crisis response and threat assessment. At the end of each two-day workshop, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire/survey assessing their understanding of the concepts presented and the expected usefulness of the workshop in creating an appropriate crisis response and threat assessment protocol. Of the 1317 participants who attended the workshop, 900 (68%) completed an evaluation questionnaire/survey. Additional information was gathered from the journals completed by the team facilitators. The journals chronicled events such as requests for follow-up support and feedback. Interviews were also conducted with each facilitator in order to gather additional data related to strengths and challenges of the training.

#### *Summary*

It is evident that, in today's society, schools and communities need to find proactive ways to deal with youth who make threats and to respond to crises when they occur in school settings. School safety plans and crisis response protocols must be in place to minimize the risk of the threat escalating into violence and to protect the health and safety of all school students and staff members. School and school district personnel will be informed about the findings of this study, in order to help them develop or enhance their protocols and policies. Workshop participants will find this information valuable and informative as they continue working in the area of school violence.

Chapter 2 reviews the recent literature related to school violence and approaches to its eradication. It explores the interrelated topics of school violence, causes of violence, early intervention, safe school planning, indicators of school crime and safety, collaboration, needs assessment, problems with safe school approaches, threat assessment

programs, bullying, violence in the media, and school crisis response plans. It then introduces and describes in detail the program Building Community Capacity for Threat/Risk Assessment and Crisis Response (CRACR) and its two-day workshop. This approach was used to develop a collaborative, inter-agency crisis response team in a variety of locales throughout the province of Alberta. This chapter provides a framework for the importance of this study, as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of my study with other findings.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was utilized to conduct the efficacy assessment. Chapter 4 discusses in detail the results of the study, followed by the recommendations and concluding comments in Chapter 5.

## Literature Review

### *Violence in Schools*

April 20, 1999 was a day that many Colorado educators will never forget. On that beautiful spring morning three days after prom, gunshots pierced the crisp air at Columbine High School. The students' anticipation of the last month of school came crashing down. By the end of the day, twelve students and a teacher were dead, twenty-four students had been physically injured, and two gunmen (fellow students) had shot and killed themselves. The event directly impacted hundreds of students and staff members and traumatized an entire community. On April 28, 1999, on the heels of this incident, a fifteen-year-old Taber, Alberta boy walked into W. R. Myers High School, where he fatally shot one student and injured another. An American tragedy had become a Canadian experience.

School shootings are not confined to middle and high schools. In Michigan in 2000, a six-year-old boy found a semiautomatic weapon in the house where he lived with his mother and uncle. It was reported that local authorities knew the house as a place where guns were often traded for crack cocaine. One day, after a reported scuffle on the playground, the boy brought the gun to school and fatally shot a first-grade classmate. This tragedy illustrates the fact that violence in schools is a social problem spanning all ages and grade levels.

Much of the public's concern stems from media reports of several school shootings. Between 1992 and 1994, seventy-six students were murdered or committed suicide while in school, according to data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (Kaufman, Chen, Choy, Chandler, Chapman, Rand, & Ringel, 1998). Statistics

show that violence against students is more likely to occur away from school rather than on school grounds (McCann, 2002). The fact that a young person is more likely to be the victim of violence away from school does not automatically mean that students are safe at school. Between 1989 and 1995, for example, the number of students in the United States who feared being attacked or harmed at school rose from 5 percent to 9 percent, representing an increase of roughly 2.1 million students over this six-year period (Kaufman et al., 1998). Although the statistics support the notion that more violent incidents involving children and adolescents occur away from school than at school, violent incidents in school settings continue to cause alarm about the safety of students (McCann, 2002).

According to Verlinden, Hersen, and Thomas (2000), the number of violent deaths in school settings has steadily decreased since the 1992-1993 academic year. However, violent incidents involving multiple victims in school settings have increased. Between 1992 and 1995, an average of one violent school-based incident involving multiple victims occurred each year, whereas between 1995 and 1999 an average of five such incidents occurred each year. Therefore, while school violence may be declining in some respects, more highly publicized lethal incidents involving several victims may be contributing to increased concerns about school safety.

For Small and Dressler Tetrick (2001), most of the indicators (except for serious violent crimes and classroom disruption) suggest that progress is being made in reducing crime and violence in schools: “Since 1995, there has been a welcome decline in students’ fears of attack and harm at school and in their reports of gang presence at school” (p. 9). School-associated violent deaths are rare. Students are less likely to be

victims of serious violent crimes (for example, rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) and nonfatal violent crimes (serious violent crimes plus simple assault) while they are at school than while they are away from school. However, as Small and Dressler Tetrick (2001) point out, the statistics are still grim: “In 1998, 12 through 18 year-old students were victims of 1.2 million nonfatal violent crimes at school. This represents a decline from 48 per 1,000 students in 1992 to 43 per 1,000 students in 1998” (p.5). However, these indicators on school violence represent a wide range of events and behaviors that are not always easily interpreted. For example, although school-associated violent deaths are extremely rare, they are also extremely tragic.

Physical fighting and carrying weapons at school are clearly dangerous and disruptive to the learning environment. However, incidents involving these activities at school have also declined steadily in recent years. From 1993 to 1999, for example, the percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 who reported carrying a weapon to school on one or more days during the previous month declined from 12 to 7 percent (Small & Dressler Tetrick, 2001, p.8).

No matter how infrequently they occur, crimes involving students and teachers contribute to a climate of fear that undermines the learning environment. Monitoring the full range of violent, criminal and delinquent incidents that occur in school settings can help school and communities better understand their school safety needs. Monitoring incidents can help schools to identify troubled youth and provide them with services before their problems overwhelm them and, perhaps, result in violence (Small & Dressler Tetrick, 2001).

### *Causes of Violence in Schools*

Most of the recent literature on the topic of addressing and combating school violence has emerged from the United States, although some crisis-response and threat-assessment protocols have been developed in Canada. Various studies have explored the causes behind the increase in violence in schools. Verlinden, Hersen, and Thomas (2000) examined several key variables that were associated with these incidents, including individual, family, school/peer, social, situational, and attack-related behavioral factors for nine cases of multiple victim shootings in the three years prior to their study. A detailed analysis of these cases indicated that most of the offending youths had a history of emotional disturbance, including depression and anger, aggression, and previous threats of violence. Most of the youths either lacked parental supervision or had families in which there was considerable disruption, a lack of support, and a history of abuse or neglect. Moreover, many of these youth were socially isolated, rejected by peers, and equipped with poor social skills. McCann (2002) adds that violent youth tend to take an extensive interest in video games, music and other media that involve graphic violence.

The literature on violence prevention theory (reviewed by Prinz, 2000) considers various assumptions about the development of youth violence and antisocial behaviour. Many studies attempt to explain how youth move toward violence and to identify the variables that play a crucial role in this development. Some theories emphasize parent-child interaction and parenting gone awry. Others implicate larger systems, such as neighborhoods and schools, while still others combine the different domains into a composite. Over time, prevention researchers have moved beyond the child as the main target of intervention and have increasingly targeted the socialization practices and

influences of families, teachers and peers. Prevention research that examines the social climates and physical environments of schools can be expected to focus to a greater degree on the neighborhood, community and school district as potentially important contexts for mitigating school violence.

### *Early Intervention*

Violence prevention research underscores the benefits of early intervention. A large body of research indicates that risk for aggressive behaviour begins in early childhood (Prinz, 2000). For youths exhibiting the greatest risk, it is not advisable to delay the start of intensive programming until adolescence. Schools and communities are much more inclined now than twenty years ago to recognize the need to launch interventions at school entry or earlier. However, attempts to alter the risk for antisocial behaviour and violence that have focused exclusively on processes internal to the child have met with limited success (Prinz, 2000). Violence prevention research also indicates the benefits of intervention in multiple settings, as Prinz explains:

Several comprehensive preventive interventions trials include programming in multiple settings. Potential settings include the classroom, school, family peer group, neighbourhood, and one-on-one interactions such as mentoring, tutoring or counselling. First, socially learned behaviours, including aggression and violence, are shaped through interactions in many settings. Second, intervening in only one setting may not be sufficient to have a positive impact. Third, interventions across settings allow programming in one setting to compensate for less effective programming in another setting. Fourth, children learn best when environments are more consistent with the message and expectations. (pp. 28-29)

Prevention research also indicates the benefits of moving beyond the individual child and taking into account larger contexts. Children do not function in a vacuum, and clearly youth violence and conduct problems are socially embedded issues. At the minimum, family, classroom, and peer contexts are integrally related to child functioning and should be considered in designing a comprehensive prevention plan (Prinz, 2000). Efforts to prevent youth violence must involve the community. As Prinz indicates, “Two of the strongest predictors of school violence rates are neighborhood crime rate and level of local community disorganization” (p. 23). Both schools and their surrounding communities suffer from the ill effects of crime and violence. Neighborhood crime feeds school violence, and youth who have been suspended or expelled from school contribute to neighborhood crime. Prevention of school violence, then, offers a challenge for schools and communities to work together to reduce violence in all settings.

### *Planning for Safe Schools*

Communities across North America are taking action to reduce school violence and ensure that schools are safe places. While many school districts are mandating the development of safe school plans, schools must go beyond merely creating crisis response plans, which do little to prevent violence. Planning for safe schools cannot eliminate all in-school violence; however, if properly developed and implemented, it will foster a safer environment for students and their teachers.

According to Pollack and Sundermann (2001), school shootings of recent years have taught the public and the schools that school safety is not about any one method of control, such as metal detectors, surveillance systems, or swift punishment. Nor is it about any single risk factor, such as dysfunctional homes and inadequate schools.

Furthermore, professionals cannot identify with certainty those students who, for reasons clear only to themselves, will abuse their teachers and peers. Therefore, safe schools require broad-based efforts on the part of the entire community, including educators, students, parents, law enforcement agencies, businesses and religious organizations.

In *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, Kaufman et al. (1998) state that a school is still the safest place for a child. If that is to remain true, schools must ensure the safety and security of their students by adopting a comprehensive approach to school safety, one that focuses on prevention, intervention and response planning. Staff, students and parents must be better able to identify the early warning signs of violence and respond in a timely manner, to protect students and teachers from potential danger.

*Collaboration.* Isolating individual factors that contribute to school safety can be a difficult challenge for even the most skilled analyst. Safe schools are typically the result of the efforts, planning, and collaboration of many people. The National Resource Center for Safe Schools (NRCSS) (1999) has identified several components that are essential for creating safe schools. When effectively administered, these components give schools the foundation and building blocks needed to ensure a safe learning environment. The following components must be included in the process of planning for safe schools:

- Creating school-wide prevention and intervention strategies
- Developing emergency response planning
- Developing school policies and understanding legal considerations
- Creating a positive school climate and culture
- Implementing ongoing staff development
- Ensuring quality facilities and technology

- Instituting links with mental health/social services
- Fostering family and community involvement
- Acquiring and utilizing resources
- Fostering school/law enforcement partnerships (p. 14)

School/community partnerships are a key component in the drive to create safe schools and communities. Students, teachers, parents, law enforcement officials, and civic and business leaders have important roles to play in reducing school violence and improving the learning environment. One example of such partnerships exists in Denver, Colorado, where public schools have hired school safety officers and promoted effective communication between the school district and the Denver Police Department (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001).

*Needs assessment.* Once effective community collaboration has been established, schools need to perform a comprehensive needs assessment, in order to gather the data they need to make informed decisions and implement positive change. Schools must develop an understanding of existing problems so that they can develop effective strategies to prevent school violence and promote school safety. Assessment of school safety involves many factors and raises many questions.

A needs assessment will reveal the nature and extent of problems, identify existing efforts and activities, and help establish the schools' priorities. Pollack and Sundermann (2001) list the following crucial steps in conducting a needs assessment:

- Create a planning team consisting of all stakeholders: administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students and community members.

- Collect data in various ways, including community forums, surveys, and questionnaires. Social indicators can be another important source of data. At the community level, indicators are socio-demographic characteristics of a community's population and social behaviour as related to crime, substance abuse and other factors.
- Develop a school/community profile describing the school's community, facility, staff, students, programs, policies and culture. Profiles establish a baseline for improvement efforts. (pp. 16-17)

*Safe school plan.* After completion of the school/community profile and identification of the challenges facing the school, the school is ready to develop a comprehensive school plan, in collaboration with its community. Part of this process is working to prioritize problems and designate goals and measurable objectives that will address the school's needs. According to Pollack and Sundermann (2001), developing a comprehensive safe school plan must become an integral part of the school improvement process. For example, after looking at the data and school profile, the planning team may determine that bullying and harassment are problems at the school and plan to address these issues.

#### *Problems with Safe School Approaches*

Many of the policies and procedures that have been proposed or implemented for dealing with school violence arise from a need to respond to the risk of violence in schools. These policies create an appearance of reasonable and well-intended responses that may provide some reassurance to students, their parents and the community. However, they can often be faulted for several reasons, according to McCann (2002),

including the fact that they have not been tested empirically, intervene after the fact, or result in critical errors when identifying those students who actually pose a threat to others. For example, zero tolerance policies are essentially unproven with respect to their ability to prevent violence, because they fail to target situations where a student does not make a threat, or where threats are not known to school officials, and the student later commits an act of violence. In other circumstances, laws that make parents criminally liable for the acts of their children impose a punishment “after the fact,” when violence has already occurred. Most of these approaches are based on a reactive approach in which changes are made after violence has occurred, or on a simplistic view of threatening and violent behaviour.

#### *Threat Assessment Programs*

One approach to managing school violence that holds considerable promise for dealing with threatening behaviour among students is the threat assessment model developed by the United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (2000). This model conceptualizes threatening behaviour and violence differently than do traditional models of violence prediction. McCann (2000) indicates that its development was based on evaluation and study of incidents involving threats to individuals falling under the protection of the U.S. Secret Service. The model is preventive in nature and can be adapted to evaluation and management of threatening behaviour in school settings, as detailed in the Safe School Initiative (U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, 2000).

The Safe School Initiative model proposes to intervene at an earlier stage by assessing the threat, gathering pertinent data regarding the threat-maker and the type of

threat made, and offering interventions depending on the specific needs of the situation. Understanding threat assessment and management is a critical component to this model. Fein and Vossekuil (1998) define threat assessment as “the process of gathering and assessing information about persons who may have the interest, motive, intention, and capability of mounting attacks against public officials and figures” (p. 7). The management of threats has also been referred to as “protective intelligence” whose goal is preventing an attack on an identified target. Although these definitions and principles arose within the law enforcement community responsible for assessing and managing threats against public figures, they also apply to the problem of school-based threats and violence.

Fein and Vossekuil (1998) identified three components to a protective intelligence program. The first involves identifying various ways in which an individual may present a risk for attack or violence, perhaps through an overt verbal or written statement. The threat may be direct, indirect or conditional. For example, in a school setting, a direct threat might involve a male student telling a female teacher that he is going to attack her physically when she walks to her car after school. An indirect threat might involve the student saying aloud to a peer, within the teacher’s hearing, “Teachers at this school better watch their backs when they leave at night.” A conditional threat might occur when the student hands in a paper and says, “If I don’t pass this, I’m going to mess you up.”

While the type of threat is important, so is the manner in which it is conveyed to the victim, other students, or school administrators. In several recent school shootings, the perpetrators’ violent intentions were communicated to peers, and these threats were associated with an interest in violence and weapons (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas,

2000). In each of these cases, there was an apparent lack of concern by peers who knew the school assailants, because they believed that the threats were not genuine.

Furthermore, peers failed to report these threats to family members, school officials, or professionals who were in a position to assist. Threats are difficult to assess because they are often communicated to people who fail to warn professionals, preventing the taking of appropriate measures. The second component of a protective intelligence program involves assessment and evaluation of the threat (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998). It is important to know whether the threatening person has a specific plan, whether there is access to weapons, conditions under which the threat will be carried out, and so forth.

The third major component of a protective intelligence program is case management (Fein & Vossekuil, 1998). A threat management program calls for a plan to be developed whereby a series of progressively more intrusive steps can be taken. A less intrusive measure might include supervision of the identified student. More intrusive measures might include referral of the student for psychological assessment and treatment, temporary removal of the student from the school or classroom, or a series of scheduled contacts with specific individuals (for example, hourly checking in with a principal or weekly meetings with family members).

### *Bullying*

One pervasive form of school violence involves bullying of one student by others. Adolescent bullying is not a new problem for schools and society; however, its impact on young students is now viewed more seriously than perhaps it used to be, as parents, students and educators speak out about its pervasiveness and its long-term effects on the individuals involved. According to Buchanan and Winzer (2001), “The bully of

the past bears little resemblance to the bully of today” (p. 70). In fact, today’s bullies tend to carry weapons. Bullies may suffer from depression, have more family problems than other children, be physically or emotionally abused, or be disciplined inconsistently at home (Viadero, 1997). They may also be at risk for antisocial behaviour, violent behaviour, and unstable relationships as adults (Buchanan & Winzer, 2001). The victims of bullying often suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression well into adulthood (Banks, 2000; NRCSS, 1999). According to Viadero (1997), youth who are involved in school-associated deaths frequently demonstrate or talk to others about problems with bullying and feelings of isolation, depression and frustration. For the victim, bullying can have long-term effects, including feelings of loneliness, anger, despair and thoughts of suicide.

Statistics are available concerning the degree and severity of bullying in schools. Studies from the United States, Norway and Sweden suggest that unsafe conditions at school are a reality for the majority of students. For example, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1995), 71 percent of students in grades 6 through 12 report having knowledge of bullying, physical attack, or robbery at their schools. The same study reports that elementary (29 percent) and middle and junior high school students (34 percent) also worry about becoming victims of bullying at school. Over 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by a bully (Fried & Fried, 1996). Roughly 7 percent of eighth graders in the United States report staying home at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 2000). In Canada, Charach, Pepler and Zielger (1995) found that 49 percent of grade 6, 7 and 8 students

surveyed in Toronto had been bullied at least once during the term, while 8 percent reported being bullied on a regular basis.

Despite these numbers, bullying behaviour is rarely detected by teachers, and is even less frequently taken seriously (NRCSS, 1999). Most studies suggest that there is a wide gap between the amount of bullying students witness and endure, and the amount of bullying that their teachers perceive (Viadero, 1997a). Others argue that, although many school districts have implemented bully-proof programs, guidelines and policies related to bullying, they still do not give enough attention to changing the school culture that at least ignores and often condones put-downs, jokes and negative remarks among students. Students themselves seem to agree. As Shakeshaft (cited in Viadero, 1997a) reports, “What we found was that kids believe that teachers thought it was OK to behave this way because teachers didn’t intervene – especially kids coming into middle school” (p. 3). The message to teachers is to identify and stop bullying behaviours. In “Bullying – Everyone’s Problem,” the Alberta Teachers’ Association (1997) states that teachers must take immediate action whenever they witness or hear reports of bullying.

Understanding and taking seriously the dynamics of bullying behaviour among school-aged children is essential if we are to succeed in building safe and effective schools (Banks, 2000). Across North America, bullying is receiving increased attention in schools, in the media, and in the legislatures. Between 1999 and 2001, at least eight American states considered and/or adopted legislation directing schools to develop anti-bullying policies or programs (Zehr, 2001).

Bullying can also trigger more extreme forms of violence in its victims. A study by the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) (2000) analyzed

37 school shootings. These events involved 41 attackers who were current or recent students at the school, and who chose the school for a particular purpose and not simply as a site of opportunity. The study's findings are based primarily on the information gathered from available files in each case. For each incident, researchers reviewed primary source materials, such as investigative, school, court and mental health records. Information gathered about each case included facts about each attacker's development of an idea and plan to harm the target, selection of the target, motivation for the incident, communications about the idea and intent, acquisition of weapons, as well as demographic and background information. In addition to file reviews of each case, NTAC personnel conducted supplemental interviews with 10 of the attackers. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain the attacker's view on his decision to engage in a school-based attack.

One of the preliminary findings of the study indicates that, in a number of the cases, having been bullied played a key role in the attack. In over two-thirds of the cases, the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the incident. A number of the attackers had experienced bullying and harassment that was longstanding and severe. In those cases, the experience of bullying appeared to play a major role in motivating the attack at school. In this study, bullying was not a factor in every case; clearly not every child who is bullied in school will pose a risk for targeted violence in school. However, in a number of cases, attackers described experiences of being bullied in terms that approached torment. They told of behaviour that, if it occurred in the workplace, would meet the legal definitions of harassment. The fact that bullying played a major role in a number of these school shootings strongly supports ongoing

efforts to combat bullying in North American schools (Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum & Modzeleski, 2000).

### *Violence in the Media*

Over the past 40 years, a body of literature has emerged that strongly supports the notion that viewing violence in the media is a contributing factor to the development of aggression. The impact of violence in the media, including video games and movies, is a particular cause for concern when researchers explore violent behaviour in young people.

The typical American child spends on average over 38 hours a week, nearly 5.5 hours a day, watching TV, playing video games, and listening to music outside of school, according to a major U.S. National study released by the Kaiser Family Foundation (1999). That amount of time is even higher, 6.43 hours a day, for children age eight and older. The Kaiser Family Foundation's study *Kids & Media @ The New Millennium* (1999) examined media use among a nationally representative sample of over 3,000 children 12 to 18 years old, including more than 600 who completed detailed media use diaries. The study included children's use of television, computers, video games, movies and print media. In a press release concerning the study, Altman (1999) explains:

Watching TV, playing video games, listening to music and surfing the Internet have become a full-time job for the typical American child. This study really underscores the importance of paying attention to the messages and the information kids are getting from the media, both good and bad. (p. 1)

The study also found that many parents are not exercising much control over their children's media use. Among children eight years and older, 65 percent have a TV in their bedroom and say that the TV is usually on during meals in their home, and 61

percent report that their parents have set no rules about TV watching. Parents watch TV with their children in this age range only 5 percent of the time. Nearly one out of every four children in this age group (24 percent) spends over 5 hours a day watching TV (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999).

Even very young children are dedicating much of their day to media use. According to their parents, children in the 2-7 year old age range spend an average of 3.5 hours a day using media. Even among these younger children, one in three (32 percent) has a TV in his or her bedroom. Furthermore, 35 percent of parents of children age 2 to 7 say the TV is on in their home most of the time. Almost half (47 percent) say it is usually on during meal times. Parents watch TV with their young children only 19 percent of the time (Kaiser Foundation Family, 1999).

This study highlights the fact that electronic media – televisions, computers or video games - dominate young people's time. The media's influence in shaping a child's outlook on life should be considered frightening, given the overwhelming focus on guns, fighting, killing and general violence in these programs. Over 100 studies point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behaviour in some children (e.g., American Psychological Association, 1998).

It is estimated that, by the time a child reaches the age of 18, he or she will have witnessed over 200,000 acts of television violence, including 33,000 murders (American Psychological Association, 1993). These findings indicate that children and adolescents are exposed to frequent and intense levels of violence on television, in movies (e.g., *Terminator*), on MTV (particularly some forms of hardcore rap music), through video games (e.g., *Mortal Kombat*), every morning in the newspaper, and nightly on the

evening news. This article asks, “Does this chronic exposure to violence in the media impact children?” Several large-scale studies have concluded that exposure to media violence is strongly associated with a child’s risk for engaging in aggressive and sometimes violent behavior (APA, 1993; Derksen & Strasburger, 1996; Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1993; Gerbner & Signorielli, 1990). According to Derksen and Strasberger (1996), media in all forms, but particularly television, exert a powerful influence on children’s aggressive and prosocial tendencies and behaviors. This has been shown in laboratory studies, in field studies, in general reviews of many studies, and in one Canadian community, before and after the introduction of television to an entire community (Murray, 1997).

The conclusion of the public health community, based on over 30 years of research, is that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behaviours, particularly in children. These effects are measurable and long lasting. Moreover, prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward violence in real life. Preliminary studies indicate that the negative impact of violent video games may be significantly more severe than that of television, movies or music (Grossman, 2000).

A study conducted by Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen, and Brook (2002) indicated that teenagers who watch more than one hour of television a day are more likely to become violent adults. Grossman and DeGaetano (1999) argue that movies, TV, and video games are not only conditioning children to be violent but are also teaching them the mechanics of killing. The major scientific studies and empirical research document the assertion that media violence is indeed related to youth violence and is a

public health concern. A review of almost 1,000 studies (Grossman & DeGaetano, 1999) found that all but 18 studies demonstrated that screen violence leads to real violence. It is interesting to note that 12 of those 18 studies were funded by the television industry, which may have a vested interest in disputing the link between screen violence and real violence. However, notwithstanding the findings of the comparatively few dissenting reports, there is compelling evidence that the recent wave of violence by children is directly linked to the desensitizing and bloody imagery found on TV and in films and video games (Grossman & DeGaetano, 1999).

Another study researched the long-term effects of children's exposure to TV violence and their aggressive and violent behaviour in young adulthood, from 1977 to 1992 (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2000). This 15-year longitudinal study of 329 youth found that children's viewing of TV violence between the ages of 6 and 9, children's association with aggressive same-sex TV characters, and children's perceptions that TV violence is realistic were significantly correlated with their adult aggression. The results were the same for both male and female participants. Overall, the results of the study indicate that both males and females from all social strata and all levels of initial aggressiveness are at increased risk for the development of adult aggressive and violent behaviour when they view a high and steady intake of violent TV shows in early childhood. There is not as much concern for adults' or even teenagers' exposure to media violence as there is for children's exposure. Viewing media violence may have short-term effects on adults, but the real long-term effects seem to occur mainly with children.

Other longitudinal studies suggest similar results. One of the first longitudinal studies on this topic began in 1960 and focused on 8568 youth in New York State (Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1972). This study found that boys' early childhood viewing of violence on TV was related to their aggressive and antisocial behavior 10 years later (after completing high school), even after initial aggressiveness, social class, education and other relevant variables were controlled. Follow-up studies of these same boys over 22 years revealed that their early aggression predicted later criminality at age 30, and that early violence viewing was independently, although weakly, related to their adult criminality (Huesmann, 1986, 1995). A more representative longitudinal study was begun in 1977 (Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984; Huesmann & Eron, 1986). This three-year longitudinal study, which focused on children as young as grade one students, also predicted later childhood aggression, even after initial levels of aggression were controlled.

Over the past several decades, the connection between viewing of TV violence and childhood or adolescent aggression has been unambiguously demonstrated. A few longitudinal studies (Huesmann & Miller, 1994; Milavsky et al., 1982) have seemed to produce results at odds with the theory that media-violence viewing causes aggression. Upon closer inspection of the research, most of these studies are not in disagreement but rather are not strongly supportive of the theory. It has also been clearly confirmed that, in the short run, exposure to violence causes an immediate increase in aggressive behaviour. These effects have been repeatedly obtained for both boys and girls. The few completed longitudinal studies have also suggested that there is a long-term effect of early childhood exposure in aggression later in childhood, in the teen years, and less strongly in

adulthood. The longer-term effects have been found only for boys in a study initiated in the 1960s by Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walder (1972). This study reported that boys' early childhood viewing of violence on TV was statistically related to their aggressive and antisocial behaviour 10 years later (after graduating from high school) even after initial aggressiveness, social class, education and other relevant variables were controlled (Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder, & Huesmann, 1977). A 22-year follow-up of these same boys revealed that their early aggression correlated with criminality at age 30 and that early violence viewing also was independently but weakly related to their adult criminality (Huesman, 1986, 1995).

McMann (2000) takes a somewhat less rigid stance, suggesting, "Certain children and adolescents who are predisposed through a combination of psychological, situational, social and other factors to act violently are more prone to act violently when they have regular exposure to violent video games, television programs or movies" (p.79). Media violence can be viewed as a catalyst for violent behaviour in some students who are predisposed, rather than as a major causal factor of violence (McMann, 2000).

A threat assessment protocol can be a significant tool for determining the impact of viewing TV violence on young people. McCann (2002) states that, as part of a threat assessment protocol, students' interest in television program, movies, computer and video games, and other media influences should be explored. Students should be asked which television shows they watch regularly, how much time they spend watching television, with whom they watch these shows, and why particular shows are of interest. All these factors provide information on the students' individual viewing patterns. Other media influences, including movie interests, video games, and computer habits can also be

assessed. Such steps can help to indicate whether a student is at low, medium or high risk to carry out a violent act towards other students, teachers or administrators at school.

### *School Crisis Response Plans*

Various studies acknowledge that school safety plans need to include crisis response plans, which can save time and energy and maintain commitment when unforeseen problems arise. Pollack and Sundermann (2001), among others, promote crisis response plans within school safety plans. Evaluation research indicates that school-based violence prevention efforts may serve as primary prevention for children, particularly when the intervention targets several key stages of development. However, school-based violence prevention programs are not enough to change the tide of violence on school grounds. Changes in school policies and in the ways schools deal with the growing number of violent incidents seem to be necessary. School safety plans and crisis response protocols must be in place to minimize the risk of the threat escalating into violence, and to protect the health and safety of all school students and staff members. The incentive for teachers, principals and school boards to keep schools safe is coupled with the increase of potential lawsuits when parents are concerned that not enough has been done to protect their children.

Unfortunately, comprehensive safe school planning will not ensure the elimination of every act of violence on every school property. Schools that engage in such planning and implement their plans effectively will likely foster safe environments for their students and teachers. Schools need to develop strategies for both prevention of violence and intervention when violence occurs. The Alberta Teachers' Association's Safe and Caring Schools Initiative (1997) seeks to address issues of violence by

incorporating these issues in curriculum in all subject areas (e.g., language arts, physical education, math, and science). This approach seeks to teach children and adolescents key principles that are essential for school-based violence prevention programs.

Most violence prevention program work represents the thoughtful responses of professionals, advocates and policy makers to the increase of fear, violence and general disorganization in the schools. Most of the work is offered in the absence of any evidence regarding its effectiveness (Kazdin, 1993). The lack of outcome effectiveness data is one of the major reasons why the U. S. Congress has reduced funding for drug and violence prevention in schools (Modzeleski, 1996).

It is not that there is limited interest in determining the effectiveness of efforts to reduce school violence, but that there are often limited resources for doing it. A common reaction from school administrators is that, in a time of few resources, there is little justification for spending money on evaluation when it could be spent on provision of programs and services. There is consistent declining Federal support for safe school initiatives; therefore, schools will need to increase their requests to alternative funding sources, such as businesses, families and community foundations. These potential funders are demanding clear evidence that programs are effective, efficient and cost beneficial. Even the U.S. Department of Education has demanded objective outcome evaluation data for the Safe Schools money allocation ( Embry, personal communication, Fall 1997).

Along with limited resources, there is limited information about what works best to reduce violence at school, and limited energy to sustain long-term efforts to effect positive change. One way to achieve effective, efficient, and cost beneficial violence prevention is to implement only strategies that have been empirically validated with

intensive, thorough evaluations of program effectiveness (Flannery, 1997). Evaluation is essential to implementing successful long-term school violence prevention programs.

Hamilton, Hare, Hierlihy, and Kilbourn (1994) reviewed a sampling of violence prevention programs currently in place in elementary and secondary schools across Canada. Their study profiled initiatives that were perceived by school administrators and staff to be successful in addressing school violence issues, at least to some extent, or in encouraging a positive school climate. Educators often describe programs in their schools in the context of trying to alter the school climate or school culture, with a view to making the school safe and secure for all students. However, little evidence was found of well-developed methods for program evaluation. Many programs were relatively new and need to run for up to three years before being extensively evaluated. It was also apparent that schools have too little time or money available to make evaluating and reporting on the success of violence prevention initiatives a priority. Evidence of the perceived success of the various initiatives was mainly anecdotal. As a result, up-to-date reporting on the effectiveness and results of the violence prevention programs was difficult at the time of this study (Hamilton, Hare, Hierlihy & Kilbourn, 1994).

*Building Community Capacity for Threat Assessment and Crisis Response*

This project, entitled Building Community Capacity for Crisis Response and Threat Assessment, focused on teaching both prevention and intervention strategies to schools and community partners that experience violence on school premises. Based on a thorough review of the literature, teaching materials were developed for a two-day workshop related to building community capacity for in-school crisis response and the assessment of risk for youth uttering threats within schools and communities across

Alberta. Its purpose was to teach schools and community partners how to respond to a dangerous event, should it occur.

The intent behind teaching the two-day workshop to Alberta school jurisdictions was two-fold. First, it was intended to help prevent tragedies like the one that occurred in Taber, Alberta. As well, if a crisis should occur, the workshop was designed to help minimize the trauma and bloodshed that can result from violence in schools.

## Methodology

The purpose of this project was to assess workshop participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the two-day workshop titled Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response (CRACR). The workshop was created in response to an act of violence in an Alberta school in 1999. This section describes the methods used to collect assessment data and the means by which the data were analyzed.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was used to conduct the efficacy assessment. A questionnaire was distributed to all participants registered in the two-day workshop. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess how valuable the participants found the information presented during the workshop. The information presented in the workshop was designed to assist the professionals in establishing policies and procedures for responding to crises and assessing threats and risks. Throughout Alberta, 33 workshops were conducted; evaluation questionnaires were returned at the end of the second day of each workshop. A total of 900 questionnaires out of 1317 (68%) were completed and returned for analysis.

Evaluation was built into the CRACR project in order to monitor its implementation and effectiveness. The four measurable goals of this project were identified in the development phase.

- To enhance capacity to provide a safe, secure, and caring school environment
- To develop or enhance risk/threat assessment teams and protocols
- To develop or enhance in-school crisis response protocols
- To develop or enhance post-crisis capacity teams, protocols and resources.

It was determined that achievement of the following specific outcomes would fulfill these goals:

- Each school has a safe, secure and caring environment supported by comprehensive, multi-disciplinary programs.
- Each school has a multi-disciplinary risk/threat assessment team that assesses students whose behaviour poses a risk and/or students making threats, according to an approved risk/threat protocol.
- Students and school staff are protected during an in-school crisis, according to an approved in-school crisis response protocol that has been practiced on a regular basis.
- A multi-disciplinary crisis response team supports students, parents and school staff after a crisis, according to an approved crisis response protocol.
- Trauma associated with a crisis and post-crisis response is prevented or reduced.
- Risk/threat assessment teams and crisis response teams are supported by policies and procedures.
- Parents and community members support school violence prevention programs, risk/threat assessment protocols, and in-school crisis and other crisis responses.

This study employed a purposive/non-random sample; that is, all participants in the workshop training were invited to complete the questionnaires at the conclusion of their training. Participants came from a variety of occupations and included school administrators, mental health workers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers,

civic police, social workers, parents, other school personnel and community members. A total of 33 workshops were delivered between September 2001 and June 2002. Responses were provided anonymously, so that individual respondents could not be identified.

Data were gathered from the following sources: a journal I maintained during selected two-day workshops which I attended and observed; journal notes compiled during and after the workshops by the three community facilitators teaching the material; and evaluation forms dispersed during the workshop to participants and completed at the end of the two-day workshop. The first page of the questionnaire included questions to be answered using the open-ended Likert scale, from 1-5 (1 stating strong disagreement with the statement and 5 stating strong agreement with the statement). The second page asked 5 open-ended questions. Participants were asked to provide a global measure of their perceived improved understanding of terms taught in the workshop. Frequencies were calculated for each response type. I established a cut off of 4 or better (those who agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of designated terms) on questions 1 through 5 of the questionnaire, deeming any response lower than 4 not significant.

Following each workshop, data was collected and preliminary analysis performed on an ongoing basis. When data collection was complete, I formally analyzed and interpreted all the data collected. My qualitative analysis was based on data reduction and interpretation. I developed a system for analyzing qualitative data that included developing a list of categories that reflected any major or minor themes and making contrasts and comparisons (Spradley, 1990). I looked objectively for alternate explanations of the findings and interpreted the information based on the research collected throughout the study.

Triangulation of the data helped to ensure that the information gathered and analyzed came from more than a single source, thus increasing the validity of the findings (Creswell, 1994). In this study, triangulation methods included use of personal observations, journals, and workshop participant questionnaires

On the second page of the questionnaire, participants were asked to respond to the following three open-ended questions and two closed-ended questions, in order to provide feedback on the workshop:

6a. Do you believe that your community/school division has a concrete plan for responding to crisis? YES NO

6b. If you responded YES, please indicate what your community/school division has in place. In you indicated NO, what needs to happen to develop your local plan?

7a. Do you believe that your school has a concrete plan for risk/threat assessment?  
YES NO

7b. If you responded YES, please indicate what your school has in place. If you indicated NO, what needs to happen to develop your local plan?

8. How can the facilitators of Building Community Capacity provide further support to your process?

Data analysis was conducted on a question-by-question basis. Each question yielded both qualitative and quantitative data, which will be presented in the following format. In the next chapter, I will document the responses to each question and then present the themes/categories that emerged from these responses. Finally, I will report the

percentage of participants who provided responses within each of the top five designated themes/categories.

To ensure the validity of the study, another set of data was gathered and analyzed at the conclusion of the project. The three facilitators involved in the delivery of the workshops were interviewed, and their personal journals were reviewed. The principal purpose of these interviews and journals was to gather the facilitators' thoughts about the success of their work in contributing to the community's ability to respond to crises and threats. Facilitators were asked their opinions about how the workshop affected community capacity to respond to crisis and risk/threats, what hurdles they thought communities might encounter as they develop protocols, what follow-up assistance they have provided, and what is needed to continue to build community capacity in this area. In addition, facilitators were asked the benefits of seconding staff to this project and what they personally learned from their involvement in this project. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. (See Facilitator Evaluation Interview Questions, Appendix A).

#### *Scope and Limitations of the Project*

In a qualitative study, data analysis is less structured and more open to alternative procedures (Creswell, 1994). I looked for a particular type of experience and patterns of information, and then submitted these experiences/patterns to another well-qualified researcher for confirmation of interpretation. The second researcher holds a Ph.D. in Education. After being familiarized with the themes for interpretation, the second researcher was asked to read and classify the information according to my categories. Agreement on classification was reached through discussion.

External validity is difficult because of the limited generalizability of the findings. However, this does not compromise the findings for the particular situation under study, because the findings were shared with the relevant workshop participants in order to develop CRACR policies and procedures. Reliability is also difficult because there are significant limitations to replicating the study. Again, this does not reduce the impact of the findings for this particular study, because the findings were discussed with the workshop participants. One should be cautious when generalizing from the findings of this study. However, the results of this project will be most pertinent to the Alberta school jurisdictions that participated in the two-day workshop. I informed school and school district personnel about the findings in order to help them develop or enhance their protocols and policies. Participants reported finding this information valuable and informative; they expressed the expectation that it would be useful to them as they continue working in the area of school violence.

## Post-Workshop Data Evaluation

### *Measurable Goals and Outcomes*

The purpose of this study was to examine workshop participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the two-day workshop titled Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response (CRACR) project. As described in the previous chapter, the CRACR project included an evaluation to monitor the workshops' effectiveness. The following four measurable goals of this project were identified in the development phase:

- To enhance capacity to provide a safe, secure, and caring school environment
- To develop or enhance risk/threat assessment teams and protocols
- To develop or enhance in-school crisis response protocols
- To develop or enhance post-crisis capacity teams, protocols and resources.

It was determined that achievement of seven specific measurable outcomes would fulfill these goals. Most of these outcomes will be completely achieved only through participants' continued commitment to developing appropriate crisis response protocols; however, the workshops represent an initial step in the creation or revision of a community protocol to crisis response and threat assessment.

At the end of each two-day workshop, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing their understanding of the concepts presented and the expected usefulness of the workshop in creating an appropriate crisis response protocol. Of the 1317 participants who attended, 900 (68 percent) completed an evaluation questionnaire. Additional information related to the outcomes was gathered from the journals kept by the team facilitators that chronicled events such as comments/feedback related to the

workshop and requests for follow-up. Interviews were conducted with each workshop facilitator to gather additional data related to strengths and challenges of the training. The measures and results on each outcome defined for this project are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Outcomes, Measures, and Results of CRACR Project Workshops

Outcomes	Measure	Result
Each school has a safe, secure and caring environment supported by comprehensive, multi-disciplinary programs.	1. # workshops	1. 33
	2. # participants	2. 1317
	3. # school districts	3. 36
	4. type and % of professional participation	4. School admin: 46.2% School Direct Serv: 36.4% Community Serv: 17.4%
	5. % participants who agree training is a good fit with safe and caring schools	5. 96%
Each school has multi-disciplinary risk/threat assessment team that assesses students whose behaviour poses a potential risk and/or students making threats, according to an approved risk/threat	1. % participants who perceive crisis response plans exist	1. 50%
	2. % participants who perceive risk and threat plans exist	2. 33%
	3. % participants who agree that they better	3. 91%

Outcomes	Measure	Result
protocol.	understand risk/threat assessment processes	
	4. % participants who agree local capacity has been enhanced	4. 87%
	5. # school jurisdictions with dedicated assessment team	5. to be determined at a later time
	6. # school jurisdictions with formal crisis response protocol	6. to be determined at a later time
Students and school staff are protected during an in- school crisis, according to an approved in-school crisis response protocol that has been practiced on a regular basis.	1. % participants who agree that local capacity has been enhanced	1. 87%
	2. # school jurisdictions with formal crisis response protocol developed	2. to be determined at a later time
	3. # school jurisdictions that practice protocol on a yearly basis	3. to be determined at a later time

Outcomes	Measure	Result
A multi-disciplinary crisis response team supports students, parents and school staff after a crisis, according to an approved crisis response protocol	1. % participants who agree that they have a better understanding of crisis response	1. 88%
	2. % participants who agree that they have a better understanding of aftermath	2. 89%
	3. # school jurisdictions with formal crisis response protocol	3. to be determined at a later time
	4. % crisis incidents requiring response and responded to	4. to be determined at a later time
Trauma associated with a crisis and post-crisis response is prevented or reduced	1. # people accessing early intervention services provided by crisis team	1. to be determined at a later time
Risk/Threat assessment teams and crisis response teams are supported by policies and procedures	1. #school jurisdictions with policies and procedures in place	1. to be determined at a later time

Outcomes	Measure	Result
Parents and community members support school violence prevention programs, risk/threat assessment protocols, and in-school crisis and other crisis responses.	1. type and % of professional participation	1. School admin: 46.2% School direct serv: 36.4% Community dev: 4.2% Community serv: 13.2%

As Table 1 suggests, progress has been made towards achieving the goals of the project.

#### *Analysis of Quantitative Data*

##### *Participants*

Across Alberta, 33 workshops were provided to 1317 participants from 36 school districts. Participants represented a variety of professional disciplines; however, the majority (83%) were somehow involved with the school system. School system employees were either in administration (46.2%), such as trustees, principals or service developers, or in indirect service (36.4%), such as teachers, school counsellors or family liaison workers. The other 17% of participants outside of the school system were either involved in development of services (4.2%), such as program directors, or service providers (13.2%), such as police officers, mental health therapists or Child and Family Services Authorities social workers.

### Questionnaire Responses

The following Figures demonstrate the percentage of participants from each jurisdiction who indicated agreement with statements 1 through 5 by rating them 4 (agreement) or 5 (strong agreement). Statement 1 was “I believe that this training is a good fit within the safe and caring schools environment.” Most (96%) agreed that the training was a good fit with the safe and caring schools environment (see Figure 1).

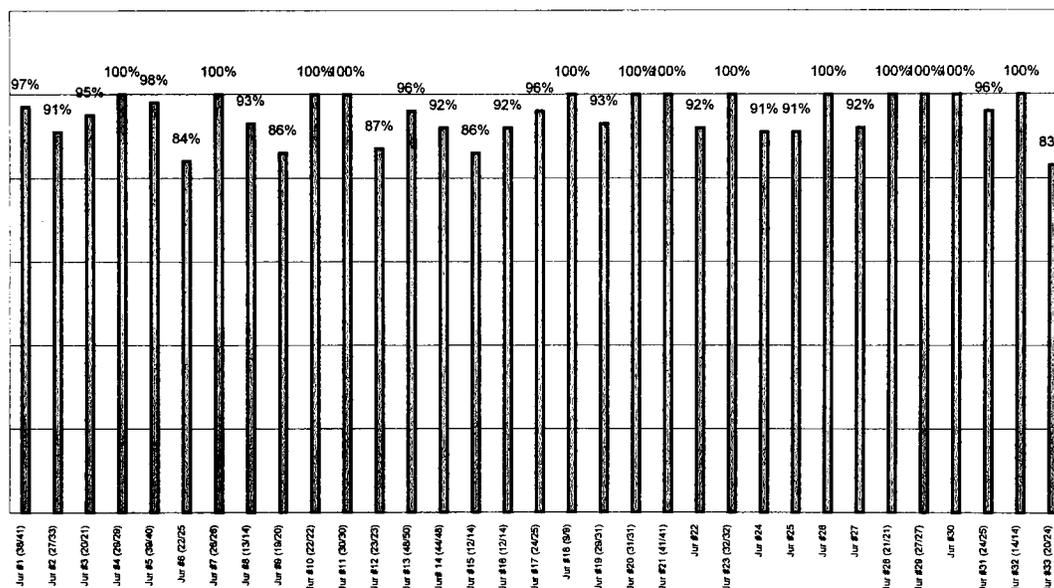


Figure 1. Number of respondents/total number respondents indicating agreement (4) or strong agreement (5) with statement 1.

Statement 2 reads, “I have a better understanding of effective risk/threat assessment processes as a result of the training session.” Most respondents (91%) thought they had a better understanding of effective risk/threat assessment processes as a result of attending the workshop (see Figure 2).

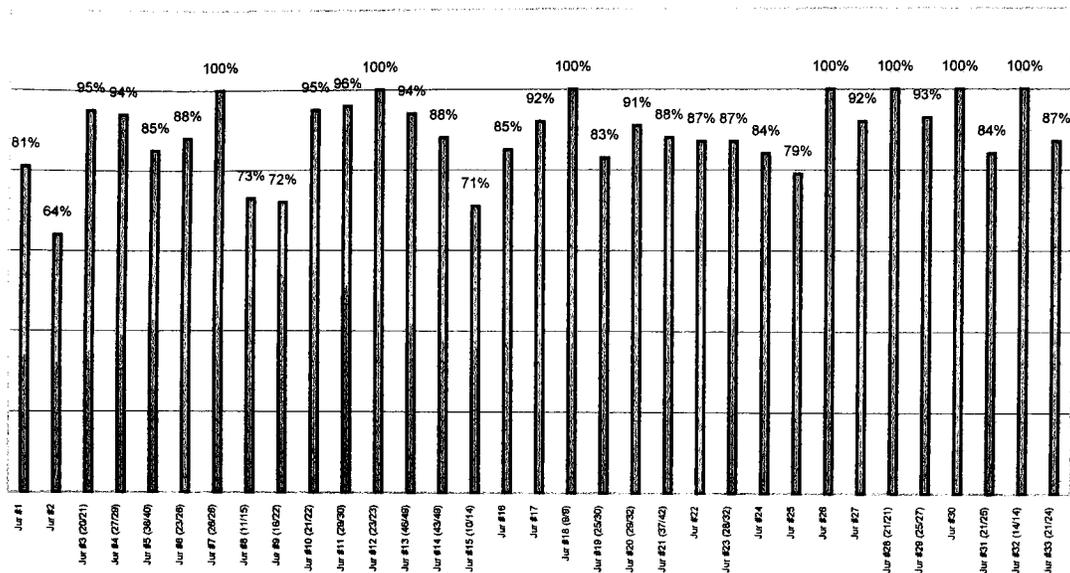


Figure 2. Number of respondents/total number respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement with statement 2.

Statement 3 was worded “I have a better understanding of effective community crisis response and post-crisis follow up as a result of this training.” Most (87%) thought they better understood crisis response after attending the workshop (see Figure 3).

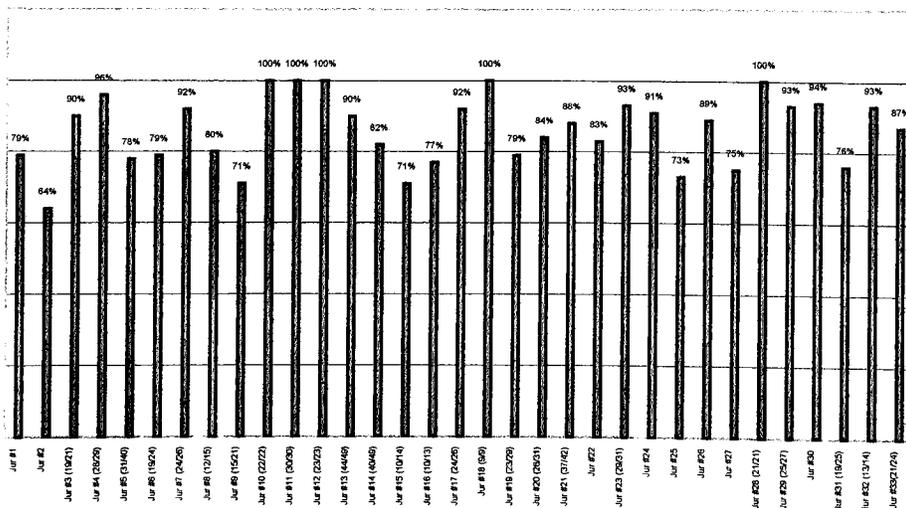


Figure 3. Number of respondents/total number respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement with statement 3.

Statement 4 read, “I have a better understanding of aftermath as a result of this training session.” Most respondents (89%) thought they had a better understanding of aftermath as a result of attending the workshop (see Figure 4).

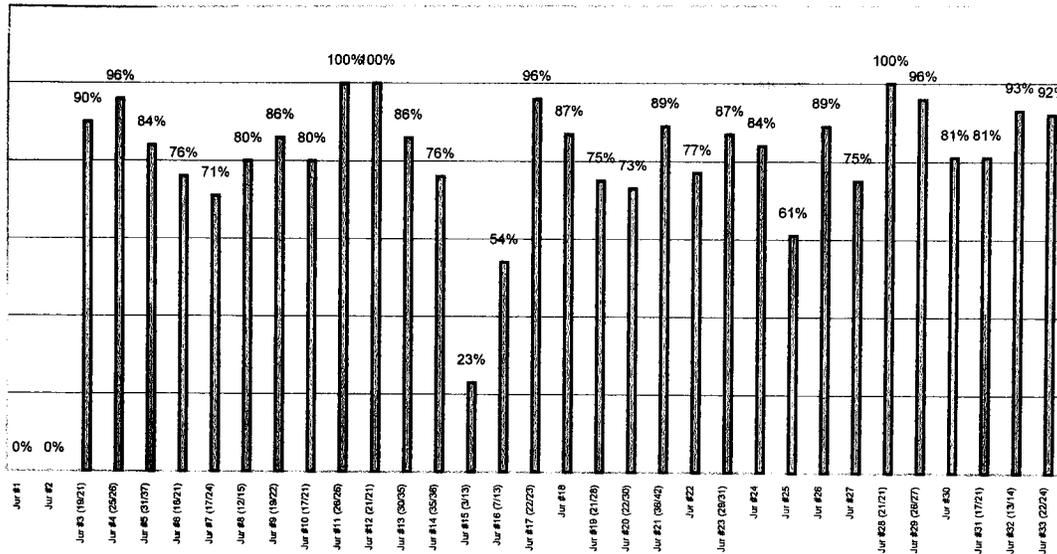


Figure 4. Number of respondents/total number respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement with statement 4.

Finally, question 5 stated, “I believe that local capacity in my region has been enhanced through this training.” Although the development of a crisis response and risk/threat assessment protocol was not directly measured in this evaluation, 87% of participants thought that the local capacity to develop such plans had been enhanced through attending the workshop (see Figure 5).

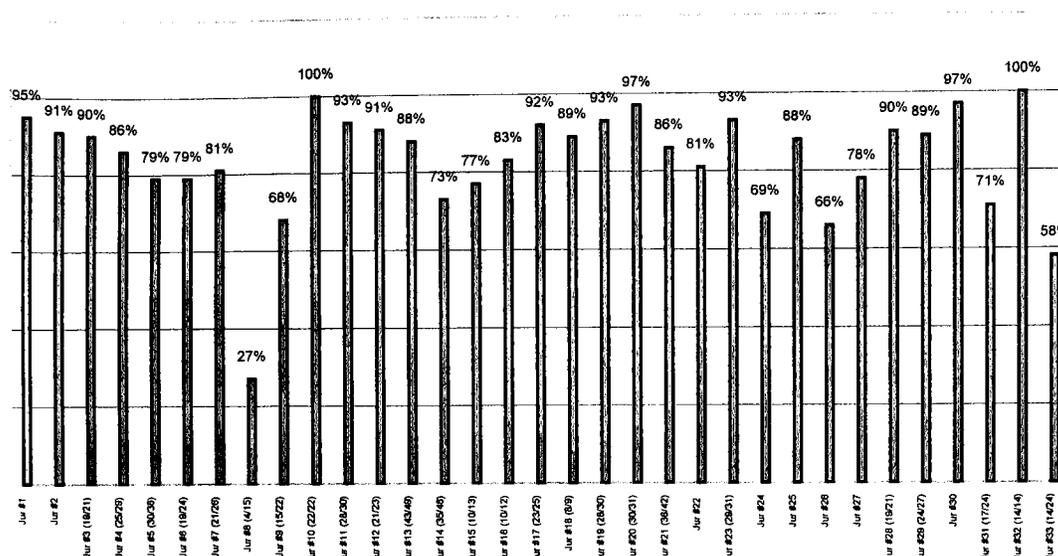


Figure 5. Number of respondents/total number respondents indicating agreement or strong agreement with statement 5.

### *Analysis of Qualitative Data*

#### *Open-Ended Questionnaire Responses*

Analysis of the qualitative data involved participants' responses to questions 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b and 8. Question 6a asked, "Do you believe that your community/school division has a concrete plan for responding to crisis?" Fifty percent responded that they believed a concrete plan for responding to crisis existed in their community. However, when asked in 6b to describe their plans, it became clear that these plans were not extensively detailed and not well communicated beyond the boundaries of the school.

Question 7a asked, "Do you believe that your school has a concrete plan for risk/threat assessment?" One-third of participants thought their community had a concrete plan for responding to risk/threat assessment. When asked in 7b for details on what their community/school has in place, or thoughts about what needs to happen to develop the

local plan, the five most common responses from participants suggested the need for formalizing a plan, teamwork, communication, time, and practice or training.

- **Formalizing a plan.** These comments indicated that a plan is currently in existence but not written down, or that the community is currently in the process of writing down protocols. Roughly 28% and 25% of participants respectively indicated that a formalized plan needed to be written for crisis response and risk/threat assessment.
- **Teamwork.** These comments suggested the need to develop a team or to bring other team members from outside the school into a current team. For development of a crisis response plan, 11% of participants indicated that teamwork needed to occur. For development of a risk/threat assessment plan, 10% of participants indicated teamwork needed to occur.
- **Practice/Training.** These comments indicated a need to practice plans/protocols or to provide additional training to team members. Six and seven percent of participants respectively indicated that practice and/or training needed to occur for the development of crisis response and risk/threat assessment plans.
- **Communication.** Comments relating to communication indicate a need to ensure that all community and school partners know about the plan or protocol or team. Of participants, 7% and 4% respectively indicated that communication is required to develop crisis response and risk/threat assessment plans.
- **Time.** Many comments indicated a need to designate time for developing a protocol. One percent of participants indicated that time is required to develop crisis response and risk/threat assessment plans.

Most participants' comments indicated the need to further develop or formalize current plans in order to incorporate the information shared in the workshops. Highest rated was the need to formalize a plan, with a combined percentage of 53% for all relevant comments. The second highest response, or 21% of the relevant comments, was the need to develop a team or to enhance the current school-based team to include community partners. The third highest response, with 13% of the comments in this category, was the need to practice protocols and procedures as well as to ensure all relevant partners inside and outside the school were aware of them.

Question 8 asked, "How can the facilitators of Building Community Capacity provide further support to their process?" The top five requests for support were the following.

- Resources/templates. These comments indicated a desire for the facilitators to send either a developed protocol containing all necessary components, or copies of sample letters and protocols being used in other jurisdictions in the province. Thirty percent of participants indicated wanting this type of support.
- Evaluation. Many indicated a desire for the facilitators to critique and offer recommendations about a protocol or plan prior to implementation. This type of support was desired by 22% of participants.
- Availability for questions. These comments indicated a desire to communicate with the facilitators in order to ask questions, while the school jurisdictions are developing their protocol and putting their protocols into practice. Twenty-one percent of participants indicated wanting this type of support.

- Second session. Some comments indicated a desire that facilitators offer the workshop a second time to people who were either not in attendance (for example, absent agencies or principals) or for a particular school's personnel. Sixteen percent of participants indicated wanting this type of support.
- Protocol development. These comments indicated the desire for a facilitator to be a part of the team developing the protocol for the school jurisdiction. Eleven percent of participants indicated wanting this type of support.

The most common request for further support mentioned additional resource materials, including a request for development of a provincial template of crisis response and risk/threat assessment protocol/policy, or samples of protocols/policies that other school jurisdictions were using. The second most common request was for the facilitators to evaluate what the school jurisdictions developed and to be available to answer questions arising when the jurisdictions developed their own protocols/policies.

Other requests worth noting but not significant in number include the following:

- Lobby for increased resources/ funding to support this process.
- Present this workshop to the Alberta Association of School Boards.
- Develop a website to encourage the sharing and accessibility of new protocols/resources among school jurisdictions.
- Ensure all relevant stakeholders take the training.
- Alberta Learning mandate school jurisdictions to develop crisis response and risk/threat assessment protocols.

### *Interview Responses*

Interviews were conducted with the three facilitators involved in the delivery of the workshops, primarily to gather their thoughts about the success of their work in contributing to the community's ability to respond to crises and threats. (See Appendix B, Facilitator Evaluation Interview Questions). The key themes emerging from these interviews are summarized below as related to each interview question.

First, the facilitators were asked their opinions about how the workshop affected community capacity to respond to crisis and risk/threats. In general, all expressed confidence that the goal of the project -- to enhance community capacity to develop or enhance protocols for dealing with crisis, risk/threat, and post-crisis incidents -- had been achieved. They strongly believed that the workshop had empowered community members to develop their own protocols. Rather than providing a template for developing a protocol or teach about a standard protocol, facilitators were confident that communities could rely on their own members to develop, implement and sustain a protocol specific to their needs.

The workshop content was thought to be informative, particularly the examples developed to illustrate the key concepts taught during the workshop. Facilitators thought that the collaboration evident during the workshops worked to strengthen capacity. They commented that it was typical for new contacts to be established among participants, explaining that often participants were unaware of many of the services offered or the service providers within their community. One workshop exercise, in which participants were invited to work through an example of a crisis intervention collaboratively with

other participants, significantly contributed to their awareness of the role that community partnerships can have in developing plans.

The second interview question asked what barriers the facilitators thought communities might encounter in developing protocols. Although they thought they were successful in empowering communities to begin the process of developing crisis and risk/threat protocols specific to the community, the facilitators mentioned several barriers that might prevent successful development and implementation of plans. While they saw the work of introducing key concepts and developmental processes as central to developing a plan, facilitators considered it essential for leaders in the community to commit to developing a plan and keeping it current. Included in the list of key leaders are principals, school superintendents, and service providers, such as police officers and mental health therapists. Facilitators also thought that community participation would enhance support for development and implementation of plans.

Another potential barrier to successful development of plans mentioned by the facilitators was the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). At issue is the perceived requirement that information about an individual's past threat activity remain in the student's file and be available across school jurisdictions and for an extended period of time.

The third question asked what follow-up assistance the facilitators had provided after the workshops. Although all three received follow-up requests for information available in electronic format, few communities requested or received extensive follow-up services. Most communities requested electronic copies of the presentation slides, the participant manual given to each person at the beginning of the workshop, and examples

of risk/threat and crisis response protocols. Six communities requested assistance in editing draft plans and protocols. Of these, two plans were officially launched with a facilitator's assistance.

Asked what is needed to continue to build community capacity in this area, the workshop facilitators unanimously endorsed the commitment to this project by the three partnering ministries. Asked to comment on the benefits of seconding staff to this project, all three facilitators mentioned the secondment of staff from each ministry as a working example of how inter-ministerial partnership is possible. They considered the modeling of such a partnership central to the success of the initiative.

The facilitators considered it important that the individual components of the team be representatives from the school, justice, assessment, and treatment sectors, so that each participant can relate to at least one facilitator. Furthermore, because schools are the target location and police are ubiquitously involved in crisis response, the inclusion of representatives from these areas was considered vital.

Another factor that the facilitators considered an important contributor to the project's success was offering the workshops within each of the school jurisdictions' communities. The facilitators suggested that doing this allowed more people to attend the workshops because they incurred minimal travel costs. They perceived that the emphasis on bringing together community partners for the workshop increased participants' awareness of community agencies and individuals.

Finally, facilitators were asked what they had gained personally from involvement in this initiative, and how their involvement might affect their work. Each reported having learned new presentation skills, whether enhancing technical knowledge or

improving personal presentation style. Each facilitator felt that she had made significant personal discoveries about herself that would likely increase the confidence with which she approached her work.

In summary, the results of the participant workshop evaluations and the interviews with workshop facilitators indicate that this project has contributed to building community capacity to develop and implement crisis response, risk/threat assessment, and post-crisis response plans and protocols.

## Summary and Recommendations

### *Summary*

The purpose of this project was to assess workshop participants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of the two-day workshop titled Building Community Capacity for Risk/Threat Assessment and Crisis Response (CRACR).

CRACR was a provincial initiative that offered workshops across Alberta during the 2001-2002 school year. It was developed in response to recommendations made in the *Start Young, Start Now! Report of the Task Force on Children at Risk* (2000) and the *Taber Response Project Report* (2000). The recommendations were that all school districts have a collaborative, inter-agency crisis response team with written, regularly rehearsed protocols and a risk assessment protocol for youth uttering serious threats. The CRACR workshop was created in response to an act of violence that occurred in an Alberta school in 1999. CRACR provided a continuum of teaching services from prevention, to intervention, to post-crisis intervention. Each two-day workshop presented to school and community professionals a range of concepts and ideas concerning prevention and management of crises in schools.

Progress has been made toward achieving the goals of the project. Four measurable goals of this project were identified in the development phase:

- To enhance capacity to provide a safe, secure, and caring school environment
- To develop or enhance risk/threat assessment teams and protocols
- To develop or enhance in-school crisis response protocols
- To develop or enhance post-crisis capacity teams, protocols and resources

It was determined that achievement of seven specific measurable outcomes would fulfill these goals. Most of these outcomes will be completely achieved only through participants' continued commitment to developing appropriate crisis response protocols. The workshops represented an initial step in the creation or revision of a community protocol to crisis response and threat assessment.

It is evident from participant responses on the evaluation questionnaire that school jurisdictions and their communities are committed to developing and/or maintaining a concrete plan for risk/threat assessment, crisis response, and post-crisis protocols, procedure and resources.

#### *CRACR, a Preventive Approach*

As McCann (2000) states, most of the approaches to dealing with school violence are reactive in nature; that is, changes are made after violence has occurred. This is true also of the CRACR initiative, which was developed after the shooting in Taber. The significant difference is that the CRACR initiative was designed to help school jurisdictions and communities build on preventive approaches. It did not focus entirely on intervention strategies for violent situations. CRACR provided training and information on the development of crisis response and risk/threat assessment protocols, as well as on forming community inter-agency teams.

#### *Government Mandating of CRACR Protocols and Procedures*

The Government of Alberta considers risk/threat assessment and crisis response in schools very important, and the Alberta Learning Ministry was a partner in the CRACR initiative. School jurisdictions are mandated to develop or enhance protocols and policies as a vital part of safe school planning. During and since the CRACR initiative,

consideration has been given to mandating school jurisdictions across Alberta to develop or enhance existing risk/threat assessment and crisis response protocols and policies. In keeping with the research on school safety planning, communities across North America are taking action to reduce school violence and ensure that schools are safe places. Many school districts are developing safe school plans. Planning for safe schools cannot eliminate all in-school violence; however, if properly developed and implemented, it will foster a safer environment for students and their teachers.

#### *Evaluation and Funding of CRACR Protocols and Policies*

Another area that is in keeping with the research is the evaluation component of such threat/risk assessment and crisis response protocols and policies. Most of the work in these areas is offered in the absence of any evidence regarding its effectiveness (Kazdin, 1993). The lack of data about outcome effectiveness is a major reason why funding for violence prevention in schools has been reduced (Modzeleski, 1996). It is not that there is limited interest in determining the effectiveness of efforts to reduce programs and services. There is declining support for safe school initiatives. The premise behind the CRACR initiative is that evaluation is essential to implementing successful long-term school violence prevention programs. Many existing programs are relatively new and need to run for a few years before they can be extensively evaluated. Schools have too little time or money available to make evaluating and reporting on the success of violence prevention initiatives a priority. Evidence of the perceived success of the various initiatives has been mainly anecdotal.

It is evident from the literature and the CRACR initiative that the area of risk/threat assessment and crisis response needs ongoing funding and resources to

develop and build on the existing policies and procedures, as well as an evaluation component. The three facilitators of the workshop continuously heard from participants during the workshop, and then in the evaluation questionnaire responses, that full-time, dedicated people and resources need to be provided to all school jurisdictions and community agencies to help them develop and build on existing protocols and policies. Support and time were considered essential to assist schools and communities in this very daunting task. Financial support is crucial to the ongoing services required in this important area of work.

#### *Teamwork and Community Partnerships*

Kaufman et al. (1998) state that a school is still the safest place for a child. If that is to remain true, schools must ensure the safety and security of their students by adopting a comprehensive approach to school safety, one that focuses on prevention, intervention and response planning. Staff, students and parents must be better able to identify the early warning signs of violence and respond in a timely manner, to protect students and teachers from potential danger.

Safe schools require broad-based efforts on the part of the entire community, including students, teachers, parents, educators, law enforcement agencies, businesses and religious organizations. School/community partnerships are a key component in the drive to create safe schools. They have important roles to play in reducing school violence and improving the learning environment.

The findings indicate that, in the area of teamwork and community partnerships, the CRACR initiative made a unique contribution by demonstrating the positive outcome of bringing together school jurisdictions, associated professionals and community

members. The resulting atmosphere was one of cooperation and collaboration. This joint effort showed that partnerships are pivotal in the work of risk/threat assessment and crisis response policy and protocol development. The CRACR initiative brought together all the community partners that schools need to work with, in order to develop effective risk/threat and crisis response policies and protocols.

### *Focus on Planning*

Unlike other initiatives reported in the literature on risk/threat assessment and crisis response, the CRACR initiative did not address other forms of violence or causes of violent behaviour. Its primary focus was to assist participants in committing to and developing complete risk/threat assessment protocols, in-school crisis response protocols, and post-crisis response protocols. The CRACR training provided workshop participants with the knowledge and skills required for effective safe school planning.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, it seems clear that organizations wishing to develop appropriate protocols for risk/threat assessment and in-school crisis response should plan to include the following: evaluation of effectiveness of protocols and policies, collaboration with local community partners, and involvement of partners at the regional and provincial levels.

Evaluating the effectiveness of risk/threat assessment and crisis response protocols and policies is necessary for the survival and longevity of safe school protocols and policies. Time and money are the two key resources required in order to ensure that effective protocols and policies are developed appropriately, and that they become an integral part of school systems. It became apparent to this writer, as the Manager

overseeing the operations of the CRACR initiative, that the Alberta government must continue to fund the area of risk/threat assessment and crisis response protocol and policy development. Almost every school jurisdiction and the community partners expressed the need for the two resources of time and money to enable proper development of these protocols and policies. It is also important that trained staff, such as the facilitators who taught the two-day workshops, be appointed to follow up with each school jurisdiction in assisting, supporting and educating professionals who did not take the initial training from September 2001 to June 2002. Dedicated staff members, perhaps two or three for the province, should be made available to the schools to provide consultations, answer questions, and meet future training needs.

This area of research is extremely important to the safety and security of students; it should be recognized as such and funded appropriately. If the professionals who educate our children are not educated and informed of the risks of student violence, the cycle of abuse and torment will be perpetuated to future generations. Teamwork and community partnerships are required in the drive to create safe schools. Reducing school violence and improving the learning environment depend upon such collaboration and collective planning. The success of the CRACR project was related to the participation and commitment of the community partners at the provincial level, and to the collaboration of community partners and school districts/divisions at the regional level.

In conclusion, this study underlines the critical importance of risk/threat assessment and crisis response to the health and safety of the children and adolescents attending schools throughout Alberta.

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## Appendix A

## Participant Evaluation Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please indicate level of agreement with the following statements using the following scale, where 1 represents strong disagreement and 5 represents strong agreement.*

1. I believe that this training is a good fit within the safe and caring schools environment. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I have a better understanding of effective risk/threat assessment processes as a result of the training session. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have a better understanding of effective community crisis response and post-crisis follow up as a result of this training session. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I have a better understanding of aftermath as a result of this training session. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I believe that local capacity in my region has been enhanced through this training session. 1 2 3 4 5

*Please answer the following questions by circling YES or NO.*

- 6.a Do you believe that your community/school division has a concrete plan for responding to crisis? YES NO
- 6.b If you responded YES, please indicate what your community/school division has in place. If you indicated NO, what needs to happen to develop your local plan?

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7a. Do you believe that your school has a concrete plan for risk/threat assessment?

YES NO

7b. If you responded YES, please indicate what your school has in place. If you indicated NO, what needs to happen to develop your local plan?

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8. How can the facilitators of Building Community Capacity provide further support to your process?

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Thank you for your time and assistance!

## Appendix B

### Facilitator Evaluation Interview Questions

As part of evaluating the Community Capacity for Threat/Risk Assessment and Crisis Response workshops, the three facilitators seconded to this project were interviewed. The principal purpose of these interviews was to gather the facilitator's thoughts about the success of their work in contributing to the community's ability to respond to crises and threats. The questions asked during these interviews follow.

1. As you know, the goal of the CRACR workshops was to "enhance the community's ability to respond to crises and threats and to manage post-crisis activity." To what extent do you think that the workshops affected community capacity to respond to threats and crises? In your opinion, what have the participants learned from attending the workshop? Elaborate with specific examples.
2. What, if any, processes have the communities you have visited been able to put in place to handle crises and threats? Can you give specific examples of communities that you know have developed or enhanced threats and crisis protocols as a result of the workshop?
3. What do you think are the major hurdles for communities in developing or enhancing their threats and crisis protocols?
4. What, if any, follow-up services have you specifically provided to the communities following the workshops? What motivates people to contact you after the workshops are completed? Who usually calls for more information or for assistance after a workshop?

5. To what extent do you think it was effective to have three facilitators seconded to the Alberta Mental Health Board offer the workshops? What do you see are the major advantages and disadvantages of having these workshops delivered in this way? Do you think there would have been a more effective or efficient way to deliver these workshops?
6. How will being involved in this project affect the way you do the job you will return to after your secondment? Will you do anything differently?
7. This project is now completed. In your opinion, what is needed to continue to build community capacity for response to threats and crisis?
8. Additional comments?