Every day, law enforcement is called to investigate some type of murder in our communities or in our schools. How can law officers prepare for shootings that occur in schools and that target our children? Officers, teachers and mental health professionals continue to be perplexed by these tragic events. In this article, we will examine one such case and review some current statistics to help us understand and hopefully prevent future incidents.

Case Example
Who would have known that on Friday, December 14th, 2012, a little before 9:30 a.m., that Adam, a 20-year-old man, would wake up, shoot his mother four times in the head while she still lay sleeping in her bed, then proceed to the same elementary school he attended years before and kill 20 children and six adults?

The first calls to 911 were made at 9:35:39, and at 9:36:06 police were dispatched to the Sandy Hook Elementary School. At 9:39:00 (2 minutes and 54 seconds later), the first police officer arrived on the scene. Thirteen seconds later, two additional police officers arrived. At 9:40:03 (50 seconds later), the last shot is heard that is believed to be Adam Lanza shooting himself in the head and committing suicide. The entire shooting event took less than 6 minutes, and police never had a chance to fire a single shot. Sadly to say, there have been many more incidents of mass murder since this happened three years ago.

Differentiating Mass Murder
Mass murder is one type of multicide (the killing of multiple people), with the others being spree murder and serial killing. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines mass murder as murdering three or more persons during an event with no “cooling-off period” between murders; this typically occurs in a single location. According to the United States Secret Service, most offenders are white, middle aged, angry males. Also, most mass murder takes place in one of three locations: the home, the workplace or schools. Many mass murderers commit suicide after having completed their deadly rampage.

It has been shown that some school shooters have been “picked on” or “bullied.” A recent 2013 student survey found that 24% of girls had been bullied compared to 20% of boys. The most common bullying tactics were name-calling, being made fun of, and false rumors.
Cyber-bullying also has become more common because of increased use of the Internet and a wide range of other social media.

According to a U.S. Secret Service article published in 2010, “Campus Attacks: Targeting Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education” found three categories of mass murderers: suicidally depressed, delusionally insane and psychopaths. Let’s explore these three categories.

A suicidally depressed assailant may have a history of long-term depression, and many could be under the care of a mental health professional. Some may also be on an anti-depressant medication, but there are always people who start feeling better and stop taking their medications. An example of a clinically depressed assailant was Eric Harris, one of the two shooters who murdered 12 and injured 21 people when he and Dylan Klebold opened fire at Columbine High School in 1999. Both assailants committed suicide at the end of the incident. The antidepressant Fluvoxamine was found in Harris’ blood after the autopsy.

A delusionally insane assailant lacks the ability to know right from wrong during the act that was committed. The M’Naghten Rule states a person is legally insane if they cannot distinguish right from wrong at the time of the crime. The MPC test posits a person must be diagnosed with a mental defect at the time of the incident and was unable to either: 1) appreciate the criminality of his conduct or 2) conform his conduct to the requirements of the law.

A person diagnosed with Antisocial Personality Disorder is also called a psychopath. Symptoms include: superficial charm, lying, cheating, deceit, disregard for right and wrong, lack of empathy for others, prior criminal history, egocentrism, risk taking, hostility, impulsiveness and aggression. One of the disheartening facts about psychopaths is that there is no known cure or treatment.

Statistics on School Shootings
The majority of school shootings (99%) were committed by one shooter, and 94% were committed by male assailants. Of the 272 incidents studied, 67% resulted in student deaths and 26% resulted in the deaths of school
employees. In a U.S. Secret Service study of the last 26 years, almost all the assailants were male, and maybe more importantly, 81% of the time the assailant warned someone overtly that he was going to do the act. Another key finding was that over 90% of the assailants had suffered a significant loss in their lives. Lastly, the findings indicated that the majority had significant behavioral problems noted by their friends and relatives.

**Implications for Law Enforcement**

The U.S. Secret Service suggests that schools create “threat assessment teams” in which schools partner and collaborate with mental health professionals, police and student affairs with the goals of identifying those who could pose a risk, including students, faculty and other employees. After identification, the second step is to work with law enforcement to see if these individuals have the ability and intent to plan an attack or if they have actually taken steps to prepare for the attack.

In conclusion, knowing the warning signs and encouraging people to ask for help and for others to report warning signs are critical. A partnership with schools, law enforcement and mental health professionals working collaboratively may have the ability to identify, investigate, and mitigate or disrupt the planning and implementation of these mass murders.

Dr. Christiansen, Assistant Professor of Psychology at St. Louis Community College, holds graduate degrees in both criminology and psychology. He worked in law enforcement for 12 years in the St. Louis area, then moved to the Seattle area where he coordinated both the criminal justice and forensic technology programs at Green River Community College. Dr. Christiansen is a Certified Flight Instructor licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration, and is a single dad whose daughter is in her third year of veterinary medical school.
Youth Connection Helplines

St. Louis County 314-629-2929 or 877-928-2929; Text 4HLP to 31658
This helpline is funded by St. Louis County’s Children’s Service Fund (CSF). Funds have been awarded to 76 providers of mental health and substance abuse services, covering 169 programs. County residents age 19 and younger qualify for services.

St. Charles County 636-642-0642 or 855-642-4242; Text BSAFE to 31658
This helpline is funded by the Community and Children’s Resource Board (CCRB). Funds have been awarded to 27 providers of mental health and substance abuse services, covering 34 programs. Residents of St. Charles County age 18 and younger qualify for services.

St. Louis City 314-485-4635 or 844-336-2435; Text 2TALK to 31658
This helpline is funded by the City of St. Louis Mental Health Board’s Children’s Services Fund. Funds have been awarded to 46 providers of mental health and substance abuse services, covering 91 programs. St. Louis City residents age 18 and younger qualify for services.

Project Aware
In addition to the Helplines, BHR, in cooperation with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Great Circle, was chosen by the Missouri Institute of Mental Health (MIMH) to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid Training to 2,025 adult members of the community.

Focusing specifically on Ferguson and surrounding communities in north St. Louis County, a three-year Project AWARE-Community grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) was awarded to train a diverse group of adults in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA).

This training will help adults detect and respond to mental illness in youth. YMHFA is a public education program that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems and builds an understanding of the importance of early intervention. Participants learn about local mental health resources, national organizations, support groups, and online tools for mental health and addictions treatment and support.

“When a child is sick, we are quick to take them to the doctor, bring them chicken noodle soup, and do anything we can to take care of them. But when someone experiences depression, anxiety, trauma or other symptoms of mental health challenges, people do not always know how to respond,” said Rachel Taube, Project Director for Mental Health First Aid at MIMH. “We are part of a community that cares deeply for its youth. YMHFA will help these caring adults build the knowledge and skills they need to recognize symptoms and support youth who may be developing a mental health challenge.”

The goal of the Project AWARE is to increase awareness of mental health issues and connect youth with behavioral health issues to needed services. Objectives include increasing mental health literacy in adults, increasing their capacity to respond to behavioral health issues that impact youth, and conducting outreach and engagement strategies to increase awareness and promote positive behavioral health.

For more info or to schedule a class, contact Rachel Taube at 314-516-8499 or info@mhfamissouri.org, or visit www.mhfamissouri.org.

Holly Nemec, MA, joined BHR in 2008 as a Crisis Intervention Clinician. She now serves as the Community Engagement Liaison for the St. Louis City Youth Connection Helpline. Holly is a certified Youth Mental Health First Aid Trainer and has trained community members and police officers. She is a member of the Street Talk Advisory Committee.
CIT CORNER: EXPANSION BENEFITS ALL

By Officer Chris Koester

The St. Louis County Police Crisis Intervention Team continues to provide leadership and training necessary to support a growing need for mental health intervention at the street level in St. Louis County. Under the leadership of Lt. Col. Michael Dierkes and Sgt. Jeremy Romo, St. Louis County’s CIT Unit continues to thrive and spread throughout our community and the state. Opportunities in 2015 allowed the St. Louis County CIT Unit to advance in many ways. Highlights include adding an Assistant Coordinator position to the Unit, training all graduating academy recruits in Mental Health First Aid, and receiving a grant from the Justice Mental Health Collaboration Program.

In February 2015, I was fortunate to be selected as the Assistant CIT Coordinator for St. Louis County. This new position has allowed the Unit to create a more effective follow-up program, while still maintaining a rigorous training schedule. Under Sgt. Romo’s direction, he and I became instructors in Mental Health First Aid. This training program has been very well received nationwide and rapidly continues to grow in popularity. Sgt. Romo and I make up one of the very few Police Instructor Teams in the country for this program. Our involvement has led to opportunities to train staff at numerous local and federal agencies. The program’s popularity encouraged the CIT Coordinating Council to implement it as the advanced CIT curriculum in 2016.

Our crisis intervention efforts continue to be undermined by the lack of a comprehensive reporting system. The good news is the St. Louis County CIT Unit was recently awarded the Justice Mental Health Collaboration Program Grant. The federal government selected St. Louis County Police Department to head an effort to develop and implement a web-based reporting system to track mental health-related incidents in and around St. Louis County and City. Officer Kim Haus has been detached to the CIT Unit and will work as Project Manager for the grant. The initial buzz of this effort quickly spread to the state level. Ongoing discussions with the Missouri Department of Mental Health will foster the relationship necessary to offer this new programming as part of CIT expansion throughout the state. The cooperative use of this program will also help agencies standardize their CIT trainings, as well as the evaluation component. This needed structure will advertise to the nation that crisis intervention efforts are best organized through Missouri’s Model.

Statewide expansion efforts continue to encompass a large part of our time as a special unit. Lt. Col. Dierkes is the current chair of the Missouri CIT committee. Sgt. Romo heads the expansion efforts for the state which requires him to manage a rigorous travel schedule, training and promoting CIT to agencies that are new to the program. I work to lead a separate committee that encourages expansion through social media. Our combined efforts also find us involved in developing curriculum and helping plan the annual Missouri CIT Conference.

With the growing number of mental health consumers in our society, the importance of awareness and stigma reduction drives CIT program growth. It’s our responsibility as law enforcement to be able to recognize when a person is experiencing a mental illness, and to train officers in this capacity to better serve our communities. With the combination of local, state and federal support, the St. Louis County CIT Unit is positioned to have a very productive 2016.

Officer Chris Koester joined the St. Louis County Police Department in 2010. While assigned to the division of patrol, he worked out of the Central County Precinct. In 2015, he was reassigned to the Division of Special Operations as the Assistant CIT Coordinator and Crisis Negotiator for the department.
This past fall, local area CIT Councils held CIT Officer Appreciation Banquets to present awards to outstanding officers and recognize community volunteers. Congratulations and Thank You to the officers who utilized their CIT skills to help individuals who were experiencing a mental health crisis.

The St. Louis Area CIT Council also recognized two individuals from the mental health community. Craig Politte, LPC, was named Mental Health Professional of the Year for his volunteer contributions as an instructor and as a resource for officers and their families. Richard Stevenson, Special Projects Coordinator at NAMI-St. Louis, received special recognition for his years of dedication to the program, working closely with the Council to ensure coordinated and quality training programs.

The Great Rivers CIT Council also presented its CIT Commendation award to Jamie Bartin, Community Mental Health Liaison with Crider Health Center. Jamie was recognized for her commitment to the program as a trainer and mental health professional who works closely with officers assisting individuals in the community. Sandy Miller, Fox 2 News, received the Outstanding Service Award. For several years, Sandy has served as emcee for the awards dinner and has garnered excellent news coverage on the successes of CIT.

Jefferson County CIT held its first banquet and was proud to honor several officers, including a Special Recognition of Captain Dan Contarini, retired from DeSoto Police Department.
St. Louis Area CIT

Outstanding Officer Award
Officer Sean Burbach, St. Louis County
Officer Terry Cordia, Chesterfield
Officer Ryan Enge, Hazelwood
Officer Jody Franey, St. Louis County
Officer Jason Horlacher, Glendale
Officer Brittany Klein, St. Louis County
Officer Scott Krohn, St. Louis County
Officer Joshua Little, Hazelwood
Officer Gregg Ortlip, Maryland Heights
Officer Jeff Roediger, St. Louis County
Officer Evan Waters, Manchester

Sean Gollubske Award
Officer Marty Ingram, St. Louis County

Great Rivers Area CIT

Officer Commendation Award
Officer Michael Doerge, O’Fallon
Officer Deric Dull, O’Fallon
Officer Brian Harr, O’Fallon
Officer Jeana Huntoon, Wentzville
Officer Karen Meiser, St. Charles
Officer Chris Shannon, St. Peters

Ryan Kendall Award
Officer Deven Falzone, St. Charles

Outstanding Service Award
St. Charles County Police Dept.
St. Peters Police Dept.

Jefferson County CIT

Award of Excellence
Cpl. Ernie Howell, VA
Sgt. Roger Ide, Byrnes Mill
Deputy Adam Lambrich, Jefferson County
Cpl. Poe, Jefferson County
Cpl. Taylor, Jefferson County
Deputy Mike Toombs, Jefferson County

CIT Officer of the Year
Deputy Phillip Shearin, Jefferson County

Special Recognition
Captain Dan Contarini, Ret., De Soto