

Mitigating the Risk of Murder-Suicide

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Murder-Suicide

“Is it hard for the reader to believe that suicides are sometimes committed to forestall the committing of murder? There is no doubt of it. Nor is there any doubt that murder is sometimes committed to avert suicide.”

Karl A Menninger

Murder-Suicide in the USA: Statistics

Frequency

- More people kill themselves with a gun than by all other methods combined
- Between 1000 and 1,500 deaths per year from murder-suicide
- The most common type of murder-suicide is between intimate partners.

Gender

- 93-97% of perpetrators are males
- 70-88% of victims are females
- Women tend to kill their children and themselves but not their intimate partner; men kill their intimate partner, their children and themselves

Weapon

- 92% involved a firearm
- Firearms are used more frequently in murder-suicide than in spousal murder alone

Age

- Female victim is usually several years younger than offender. Risk of homicide victimization increases as age difference between partners increases.
- The percentage of murder-suicides involving murderers 55 years old and older is the same as the percentage of this age group in the population, about 23%. But increasing with baby boomer population.

Murder-Suicide in the USA: Statistics

(continued)

Location

- 75% of murder-suicides occur in family home. Most common room is bedroom.

Clinical Findings

- Depressions previously diagnosed - 38%-75%
- Alcohol in suicide victims - 31%
- Chronic alcoholism - 16%
- Alcohol in homicide victims - 0%
- Domestic violence history - 50%
- Restraining order in place at time of murder - 25%
- People taking psychiatric medication are less
- Likely to have a gun in the home than those not taking psychiatric medication

Motives in elderly murder-suicide:

- Depression
- Mutual consent both parties
- Estranged relationship
- Mercy killings (actually rare)
- In about 45% of cases, no major medical illness

Definitions

Mass Murder: Killings occur in a single incident (defined as within 24 hours) and have multiple victims (defined as 4 or more not counting the shooter).

Serial murder: Killings occur one at a time over a period of time.

Spree killing: Killings occur repeatedly during a series of crimes motivated by money, valuables and/or excitement. Example: Bonnie and Clyde

Filicide: homicide of a child by his/her parent

Fratricide: homicide of one's brother or sister

Infanticide: child homicide by a parent within the first year of life

Neonaticide: infant homicide by a parent on the first day after birth

Parricide: homicide of a parent by a child

Early Examples of Murder-Suicide

November 8, 1865. John Stiteshy, 19, shot his father and then his mother through a window using the two barrels of one gun in Caledonia, Wisconsin. He then shot himself using another weapon, dying almost instantly and before either parent had died. John had “labored under a mental aberration at intervals, though he had never been violent or been considered at all dangerous.”

August 15, 1914. Julian Carlston, a recently hired family chef, set the house on fire and as people tried to escape, he killed them with a hatchet. He killed 3 adults and 3 children, the youngest being 3-years old. He wounded 4 others. His employer, and the owner and designer of the house he set on fire, was Frank Lloyd Wright. He fled and was quickly captured. A few days later, in jail he suicided by poison.

Early Examples of Murder-Suicide

(continued)

May 18, 1927. Andrew Philip Kehoe, 55, a farmer and treasurer of his township school board (Bath, Michigan) killed his wife and 43 others (38 of them children) and injured 58 by setting off bombs, before killing himself by detonating dynamite in his truck.

December 26, 1929. J.H. Haggard, 56, an impoverished tenant farmer in Vernon, Texas shot to death his 5 children while they slept: Simon 18 years old, Alta 15, Alma 12, John 10 and Dorothy 6. He then shot himself. Haggard's wife and the mother of his children had died 3 years earlier. There were no signs of Christmas presents in the small house where "only the scantiest necessities of life were on hand."

Early Examples of Murder-Suicide

(continued)

January 9, 1936. Thomas King, 28, an out-of-work chauffeur and mechanic, killed his wife and three children with the crushing blows of a baseball bat, left them all on one bed, cut his throat, turned on the gas and died from asphyxiation.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

March 12, 2005. Terry Michael Ratzmann, a 44-year old on the verge of losing his job as a computer technician and infuriated by a sermon the minister had given two weeks earlier killed seven members of the Living Church of God (LCG) before committing suicide at a Sheraton Hotel in Brookfield, Wisconsin. The victims ranged in age from 15 to 72 years old.

March 21, 2005. Jeffrey Weise, a 16-year-old student in Minnesota, killed his grandfather, grandfather's companion, then five students, a teacher, and a security guard. He wounded 7 others before taking his own life.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

January 30, 2006. Jennifer San Marco, a former postal employee, first killed one victim in a condominium complex where she once lived, and then killed 6 postal employees before committing suicide at a large postal processing facility in Goleta, California.[9] *This incident is believed to be the deadliest workplace shooting ever carried out in the United States by a woman.*

March 25, 2006. Kyle Aaron Huff, age 26, was a last minute invite to a rave afterparty, where he knew no one, in the southeast part of Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. At one point he left the party, retrieved weapons from his car, and return to opened fire, killing six and wounding two. He then killed himself as he was being confronted by police on the front porch.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

October 2, 2006. Charles Carl Roberts IV, a milk truck driver, killed 5 Amish girls in a one-room school house in Nickel Mine, Pennsylvania before killing himself.

April 16, 2007. Seung-hui Cho, a 23-year old Virginia Tech senior, open fire on the campus, killing 32 in dorms and an academic building; injures 17 more; then kills himself.

October 7, 2007. At a post-homecoming party inside a duplex in Crandon, Wisconsin, 20-year-old Tyler Peterson, who was a full-time deputy in the Forest County Sheriff's Department and a part-time officer at the Crandon Police Department, shot and killed 6 people and critically injured a seventh before committing suicide.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

December 5, 2007. In the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska, 19-year-old Robert A. Hawkins killed 8 people and wounded four, two of them critically, before killing himself.

February 14, 2008. Steven Kazmierczak, age 27, from a stage in a lecture hall in a geology class at Northern Illinois University open fires. He killed 5 students, injures 16, and then killed himself on stage.

June 25, 2008. The Atlantis Plastics factory shooting was an incident that took place in Henderson, Kentucky. 25-year-old Wesley Neal Higdon, shot and killed 5 people and critically injured a sixth person before taking his own life.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

March 10, 2009. Michael Kenneth McLendon, 28, a sausage factory worker, killed 10 people in the span of one hour: first his mother (and burned her house down); then at his uncle's house he killed his uncle, two cousins, a neighbor and her daughter; then he went next door and killed his grandmother. He also killed a pedestrian, a store customer and a motorist. He injured 5 more before killing himself.

April 3, 2009. At the American Civic Association immigration center in Binghamton, New York, Jiverly Antares Wong, a 41-year old naturalized American citizen from Vietnam, entered the facility and shot and killed 13 people and wounded 4 before committing suicide.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

August 3, 2010. At a warehouse in Manchester, Connecticut owned by Hartford Beer Distributors, former employee Omar Sheriff Thornton, age 34, shot and killed 8 people before turning a gun on himself.

September 6, 2011. Eduardo Sencion, age 32, arrived in a minivan at an IHOP in Carson City, Nevada., He shot a man on a motorcycle and then walked inside the restaurant where he killed 4 people, wounded 7, and killed himself. 3 of the people killed along with 2 of the injured were members of the National Guard.

November 10, 2011. Matthew Denton, 17, sped up his SUV to 97 mph and intentionally went head-on into a minivan travelling in the opposite direction, killing the 4 individuals in that vehicle. The coroner ruled this a murder-suicide.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

February 21, 2012. Jeong Soo Paek, age 59, who worked for one of the victims in the building maintenance industry, slew his 2 sisters and their husbands before killing himself at a suburban Atlanta spa.

May 30, 2012. Ian Lee Stawicki, age 40, walked into Café Racer in the University District of Seattle, Washington and opened fire, killing four patrons and wounding the café's chef. 30 minutes later, he killed another woman in a parking while carjacking her SUV. Later that afternoon, he committed suicide on a sidewalk as police closed in.

August 5, 2012. Wade Michael Page, a 40 year old white supremacist, fatally shot 6 people and wounded 4 others in a mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Page committed suicide by shooting himself in the head after he was shot in the stomach by a responding police officer.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

September 27, 2012. Inside Accent Signage Systems, Andrew John Engeldinger, age 36, a former employee, killed 5 people including the gunman who committed suicide. Of 4 others who were injured, 2 later died from their gunshot wounds.

December 14, 2012. At age 20 years old, Adam Lanza killed his mother at the family home in Newtown, Connecticut. He travelled to Sandy Hook Elementary School where he killed:

- School principal, female, age 47
- School psychologist, female, age 52
- 4 teachers, females, age 27 – 52
- 10 six-year old girls
- 8 six-year old boys
- 2 seven-year old girls
- Himself

Total killed by Adam Lanza is 28 people.

Mass Murder With Suicide 2005-2013

(continued)

February 3, 2013. Christopher Dorner, 33, a former Los Angeles police officer, killed four people and wounded three others in southern California in a rampage that ended on February 12, 2013, when Dorner committed suicide during a stand-off with police. A manifesto by Dorner posted on Facebook declared "unconventional and asymmetric warfare" upon the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), their families, and their associates, until the LAPD admitted publicly Dorner was fired in retaliation for reporting excessive force. In two separate incidents during the manhunt, police shot at three civilians unrelated to Dorner, mistaking their pickup trucks for the vehicle being driven by Dorner. One of the civilians was hit by the police gunfire, another was wounded by shattered glass, and a third individual was injured when police rammed his vehicle and opened fire.

Descriptors of Mass Murderers Who Commit Suicide

Adam Lanzer (Sandy Hooke)

- Incredibly smart and quiet
- Kept to himself
- Socially awkward
- Stayed close to the corridor walls when he walked through the halls
- A member of the audio-visual club, aka tech club (“the nerdiest club in school” said another member)
- He sometimes wore a pocket protector to school
- Had issues with learning
- Had a form of autism, Asperger’s Syndrome
- Classmate first and third grades remembers: Lanza standing alone while other children played at recess, straining himself to make his face turn red and making animal-like noises.
- Richard Novia, school districts head of security: “If Adam would’ve burned himself, he would not have known it or felt it physically.”
- Crisis episodes involve “total withdrawal from whatever he was supposed to be doing.”

Descriptors of Mass Murderers Who Commit Suicide (continued)

Adam Lanzer (Sandy Hooke) continued

- 10th grade classmate: “He always came to school toting a briefcase and wearing his shirt buttoned all the way up...He was very different and very shy and didn’t make an effort to interact with anybody...it was almost painful to have a conversation with him, because he felt so uncomfortable”
- A neighbor and former classmate: “Adam Lanza has been a weird kid since we were 5 years old.”
- Another classmate: “He didn’t fit in with other kids. He was very, very shy. He wouldn’t look you in the eyes when he talked to you.”
- Ryan Lanza describing his brother: “He has always been a nerd.”
- Another classmate, “I always saw him walking alone, sitting on his own at a table or on a bus.”
- Consensus: “I knew him but I didn’t know him.”

Descriptors of Mass Murderers Who Commit Suicide (continued)

Cho Seung-Hui (Virginia Tech)

- Outcast (self description)
- Perverted loner
- Mentally unbalanced
- Harassed female students
- Frightened students and professors
- Bizarre manner
- Lonely, sad young man; never took off his sunglasses, even indoors.
- On basketball court in neighborhood always played alone
- Never talked, never made eye contact, walked with head down
- As a senior in high school (HS): “As soon as he started reading, the whole class started laughing and pointing and saying, 'Go back to China!'”
- HS classmate: "I think of Seung as this shy kid who got picked on every day at school."
- Another HS classmate: "There were just some people who were really mean to him and they would push him down and laugh at him.”

Descriptors of Mass Murderers Who Commit Suicide (continued)

Cho Seung-Hui (Virginia Tech) continued

- Classmate middle school through college: “I think it just got to the point where teachers just gave up because they realized he wasn't going to come out of the shell he was in.”
- Same classmate: “he always had that same damn, blank stare, like glare, on his face... he'd always just look right past you like you weren't there.”
- Came to USA in 1992 (age 8) and was diagnosed with autism.
- Diane Strickland, member of VA Governor's panel to investigate the shooting at the Virginia Tech, after interviewing 44 people: “My sense is that he was a very insecure person, very immature, too. But he was so uncommunicative that he was hard to know.”
- The suicide note police found criticized “rich kids”, “debauchery” and “deceitful charlatans”.

Descriptors of Mass Murderers Who Commit Suicide (continued)

Cho Seung-Hui (Virginia Tech) continued

- Roger L. Depue, who oversaw the F.B.I.'s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, and also a panel member: People like Mr. Cho may act “out of a distorted sense of unfairness and disappointment stemming from their own actual inadequacies and unsatisfied needs for attention, adulation, power and control.”
- From Cho's “multimedia manifesto”: “Thanks to you, I die like Jesus Christ, to inspire generations of the weak and the defenseless people.”

Not Quite a Mass Killing-Suicide. Is There a Difference?

- **May 20, 2007.** Jason K. Hamilton, 36, a custodian for a maintenance company, killed his wife, a police officer, a church sexton and then himself in a quiet northern Idaho town. Here months earlier Hamilton had told a doctor he would not overdose if he committed suicide. Rather he “would take a whole bunch of people with him, either by shooting or by a bomb.”
- **February 8, 2008.** Latina Williams, 23, killed two fellow students with a .357 revolver in a classroom at Louisiana Technical College, Baton Rouge. Williams entered the room briefly, spoke with the instructor and left. She returned through another door and fired six rounds, reloaded and shot herself in the head.
- **February 12, 2013.** Dayvon Maurice Green, a 23-year-old graduate student at U of Maryland set 2 small fires to lure his roommates out of the house. When they exited he fired, killing one and wounded the other. He then killed himself with the same gun. Green, mentally ill, was thought to be plotting more violence before the shooting.

Family Murder-Suicide-I

Filicide

- Parents committing a filicide-suicide are older than those who do not attempt suicide after killing their child
- In filicide-suicide the children are older than when the parent kills her child but does not attempt suicide
- Filicides are more likely to end in a suicide when the perpetrator is a genetic parent
- Filicides are more likely to end in a suicide when the filicide involves multiple victims
- Filicides are more likely to end in a suicide when the perpetrator has gone through recent conjugal separation
- **The role of mental illness is particularly pronounced in filicide-suicide—depression and psychosis are the most frequent disorders**
- Motives are of two types
 - Pseudo-altruistic
 - Retaliation against an intimate partner

Family Murder-Suicide-II

Adolescent Parricide

- Do not usually end in a suicide of the adolescent. The adolescent can choose between suicide and parricide.
- Diagnosis of the adolescent usually major depression or bipolar, psychosis is a minority. (Adult parricidal acts more commonly due to psychosis).
- Construct: There is an accumulated sense of humiliation and shame. The parricide is, in part, a protest against continuing humiliation. The adolescent has opted to escape from what he perceives as being trapped in a situation in which an abuser can periodically attack him. **The humiliated adolescent who becomes preoccupied by vengefulness senses an option for relief of a dysphoric feeling.**
- Case
 - On June 20, 2006, William Bruce, a 24-year-old with schizophrenia, approached his mother as she worked at her desk at home and struck killing blows to her head with a hatchet. Two months earlier, William had been released from Riverview Psychiatric Center in Augusta, Maine, against the recommendations of his doctors, but backed by patient advocates who appear to have fought for his right to refuse treatment, to have coached him on how to answer doctors' questions and to have resisted the medical staff's efforts to contact his parents. William's father, Joe Bruce, obtained his son's medical records from Riverview after the killing. "I read through the records and I just remember crying all the way through," Joe Bruce says. "My God, these people knew exactly what they were sending home to us."

Are Mass and Family Murderers Who Don't Commit Suicide Different From Those Who Do?

October 19, 2005. LaShuan Harris, 24, took her 3 sons by train from Oakland to San Francisco, bought them hotdogs for lunch, undressed them and then dropped her 3 young sons into San Francisco Bay from Pier 7. All perished.

January 8, 2011. Jared Lee Loughner, 22, shot and severely injured U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, his target, and killed six people, including Chief U.S. District Court Judge John Roll, as well as a 9-year-old girl. Loughner shot and injured 12 other people, and one man was injured while subduing him. He later confessed and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

July 20, 2012. James Eagan Holmes , 24, reentered a Century movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, during a midnight screening of the film *The Dark Knight Rises*. Dressed in tactical clothing, he set off tear gas grenades and shot into the audience with multiple firearms, killing 12 people and injuring 58 others. The dead ranged in age from 6 to 51; the youngest injured person was 3-months old.

Report to the President

On Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy

June 13, 2007

Chairs

- Secretary, DHHS
- Secretary, Dept of Education
- Attorney General, DOJ

Introduction

- Questions were raised about the proper balance between proving for the safety and security of our communities, while protecting privacy and liberty, and helping people with mental illness get the care they need.

Key Findings

- Critical information sharing faces substantial obstacles
- Accurate and complete information on individuals prohibited from possessing firearms is essential to keep guns out of the wrong hands
- Improved awareness and communication are key to prevention
- It is critical to get people with mental illness the services they need
- Where we know what to do, we have to be better at doing it

WE LET LOOSE THE LOONIES

New York Post headline
April 20, 2007

Commitment Phobia

Wall Street Journal

April 27, 2007

E. FULLER TORREY

“To be precise, mentally ill individuals who are taking medication to control the symptoms of their illness are not more dangerous. But on any given day, approximately half of severely mentally ill individuals are not taking medication. The evidence is clear that a portion of these individuals are significantly more dangerous.”

Prevention & Interventions

PREVENTION

Mental Status Exam. Actually ask the questions **BEFORE** you write down: “Denies suicidal ideation. No acute risk factors.” “Denies homicidal ideation. No acute risk factors.”

How many of you have recorded on the mental status exam: “Denies homicidal ideation” when you never asked the question?

The Economy. Most experts agree that the strength or weakness of the national economy is not related to the frequency of murder-suicides, despite media coverage that suggests otherwise.

Education. Focus on subjects that can prevent murder suicide:

- Signs and symptoms of depression
- Signs and symptoms of psychosis
- Signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug misuse
- Signs and symptoms of social exclusion/rejection
- Bullying and its consequences
- Firearms

Prevention & Interventions

PREVENTION (continued)

Policies.

- Zero tolerance for bullying
- Revenge is never a reason for any action
- Mandatory reporting of involuntary psychiatric admissions
- Mandatory reporting of dismissals—see intervention
- Involuntary Community Treatment/Assisted Outpatient Treatment
- Adequate psychiatric inpatient bed capacity
- Modification of civil commitment criteria, i.e., lower thresholds
- Jail diversion
- Coordinated outpatient services
- Easier exchange of health information
- Increase thresholds and procedures to procure firearms
- Ban automatic weapons (certain ones or all)
- Stop newspaper sensationalization of murder-suicide

Prevention & Interventions

PREVENTION (continued)

Include families.

- Naturalistic environment
- Exchange of information
 - Release of information controls your mouth not your ears
- NAMI
- Hospital and community-based family support groups
- Guardianships: Family or another person?
- Leverage tools—pros and cons.
 - Remember the Hinckley family

Training of professionals

- It's not necessarily in the curriculum
- Staff development
- Conferences—and here you are!
- Study bad outcomes.

Prevention & Interventions

INTERVENTION

Assess and treat depression. In many murder-suicides within the family, the perpetrator is depressed: post partum depression, situational depression, major depressive disorder. Ask the questions. Treat when necessary. Medication alone is not enough. The person needs to be heard. He/she always has a story.

Assess and treat psychosis. Less common, but frighteningly real contributor to murder-suicide. Treat psychosis with psychotropic drugs concurrent with psychotherapy. The person needs to be heard. He/she always has a story.

Assess and treat “malignant inadequacies”. This is a common basis for family murder-suicide, mass murder suicide.

Assess and treat long-term consequences of bullying. Bullying in childhood has been shown to have lasting effects in adulthood. This is true for the bully and the bullied.

Prevention & Interventions

INTERVENTION (continued)

Role of Shelters. Domestic violence shelters are meeting the needs of abuse survivors and their children, providing services like housing, mental health counseling and legal assistance. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of domestic violence survivors rate the assistance they received at their shelters as "very helpful," and another 18 percent rate it as "helpful."

Mandatory reporting. "If a school or a business ejects or otherwise removes a student or employee out of concern about behavior and dangerousness, the principal, dean, or head of the Human Resources department would be required, under a mandatory reporting law, to inform the medical director of the appropriate public health jurisdiction. This public official would then have to initiate an evaluation that might lead to a face-to-face evaluation and, depending upon its outcome, possibly involuntary treatment." (Geller & Satel, USA Today, 9/17/11)

Prevention & Interventions

INTERVENTION (continued)

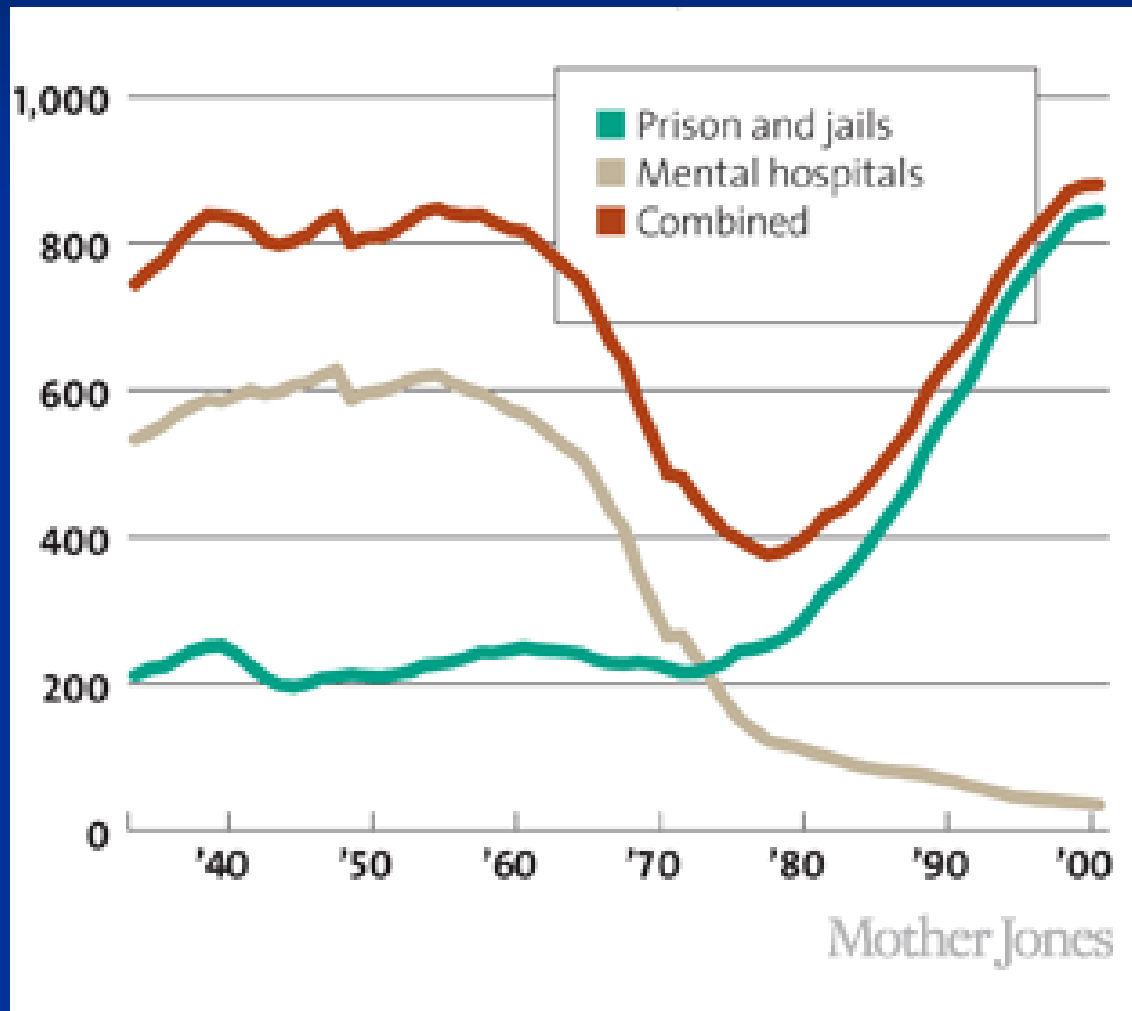
Act when necessary. Take to outpatient treatment. Emergency detention when meets criteria. Do not think someone else will do it. This has been in the history of many mass murder-suicide cases.

Voluntary or coercive. Voluntary treatment is always preferable. Coerced treatment may be necessary. Coercion is far better than multiple deaths. Too many cases have a coda: “I should have...”

Include families. Engage the patient to engage the patient. Motivational interviewing techniques to deal with resistance.

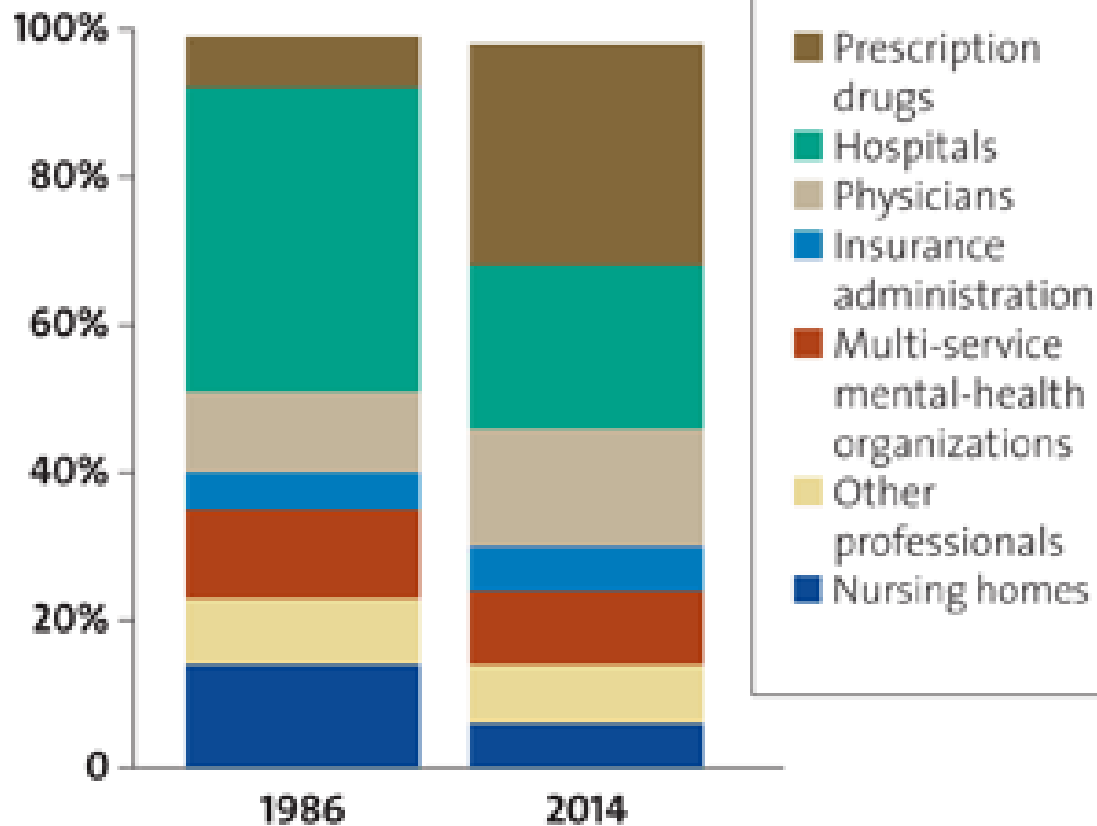
Locked Up. But Where?

Rates of institutionalization, per 100,000 adults



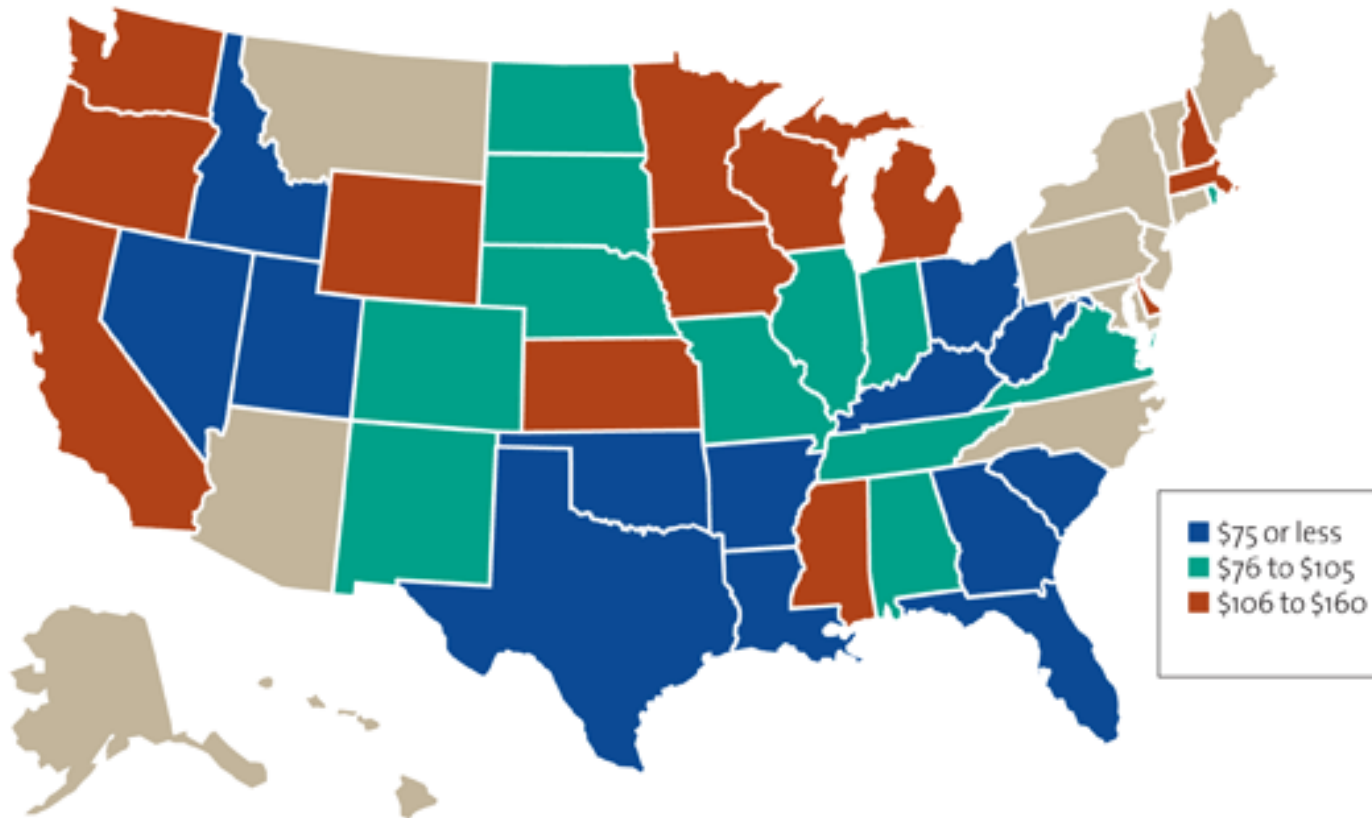
Docs to Drugs

Where does our mental-health spending go?



States of Denial

Mental-health spending per capita



Sources: Bernard E. Harcourt; SAMHSA; NASMHPD

Mother Jones

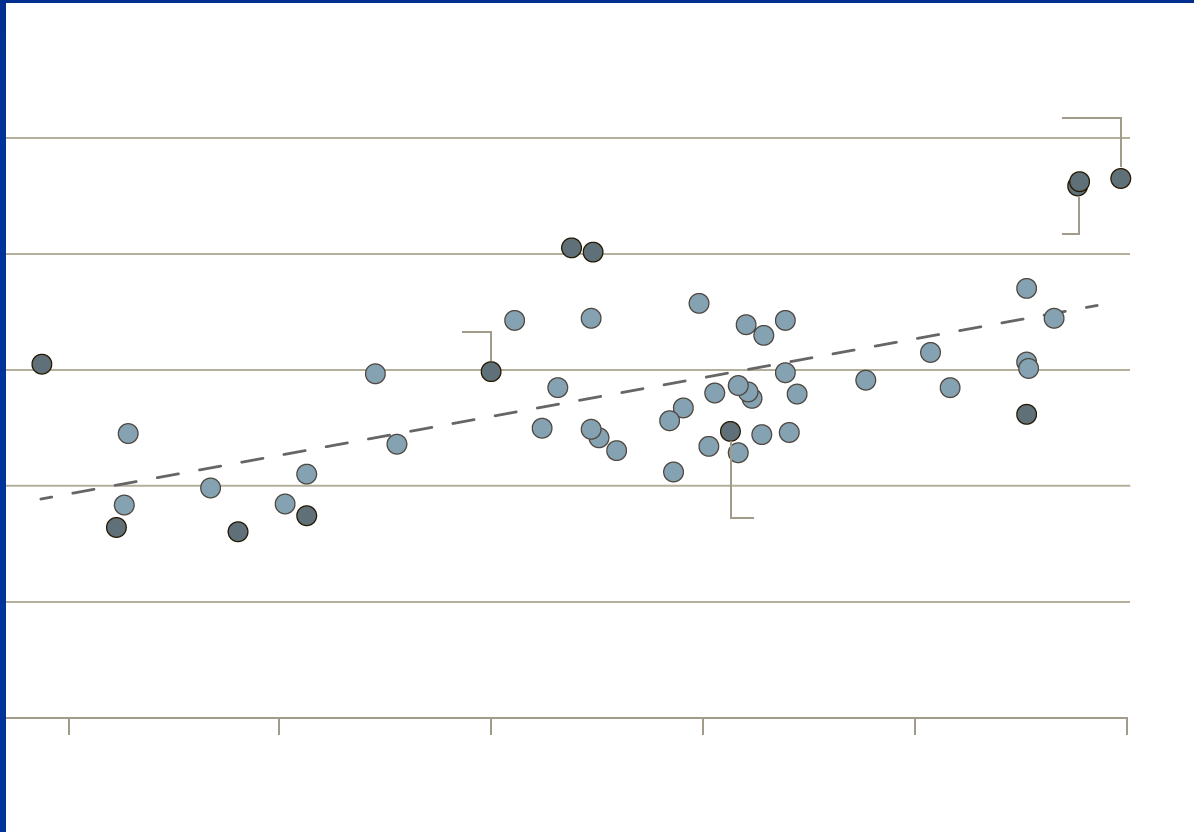
WHO GUNS REALLY KILL

In 2010

- 11,078 homicides by firearm
- 19,392 suicides by firearm
- If you include gun deaths by accident, 3 out of 5 people who died from gunshot wounds took their own lives
- 2010 is not an anomaly. With a few exceptions, the majority of gun deaths in the USA have been self-inflicted every year since at least 1920

Guns and Bullets

US states with higher rates of gun ownership tend to have higher rates of suicide than states with less gun ownership.

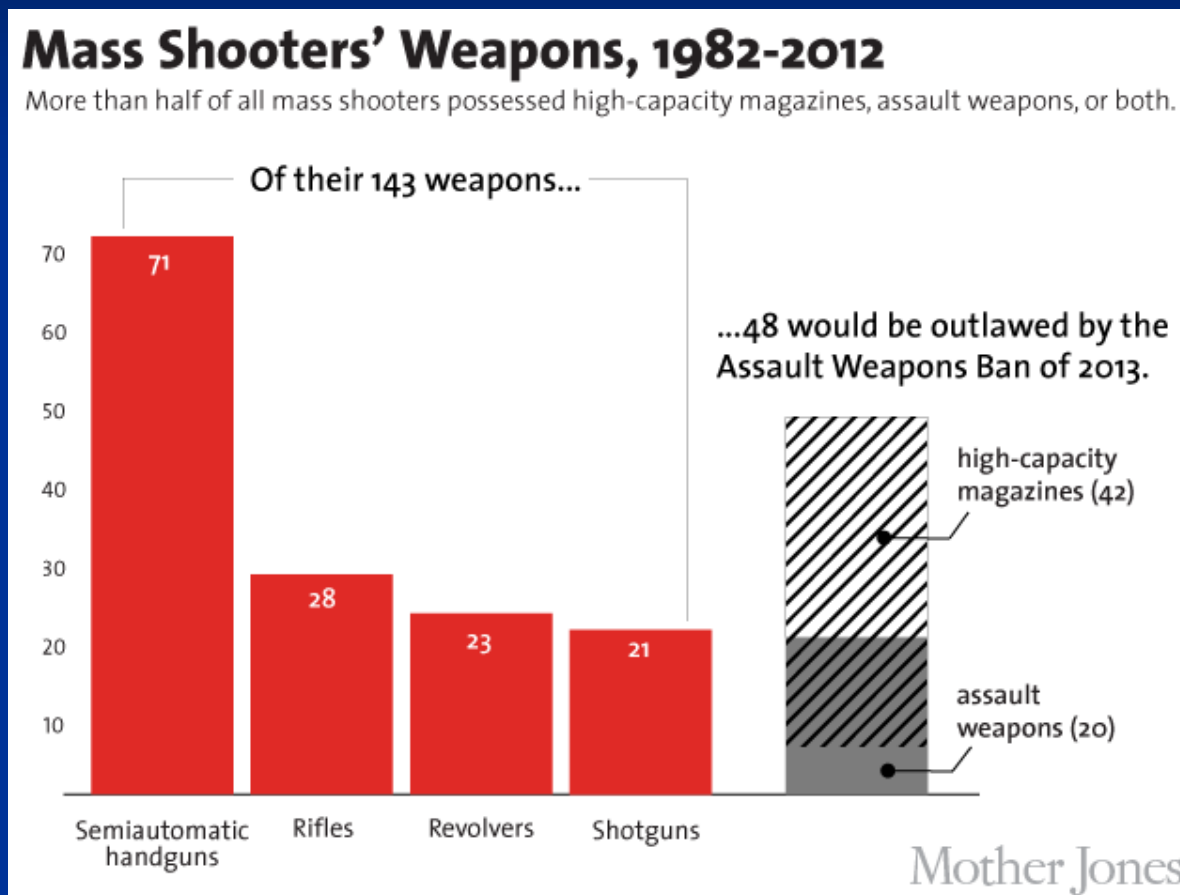


Lowest: NJ, NY, MD

Highest AK, MT, WY

Mass Shooters' Weapons, 1982-2012

More than half of all mass shooters possessed high-capacity magazines, assault weapons, or both.



Most mass shooters—nearly 80 percent of them—obtained their weapons legally. It remains very easy to buy guns on the internet, a key issue addressed by the legislation mandating broader background checks that died in the Senate in April, 2013.

What Kills?

It's not GUNS.

It's BULLETS.

WHAT ABOUT MAKING BULLETS ILLEGAL?

Think about it.

Does anyone need bullets?

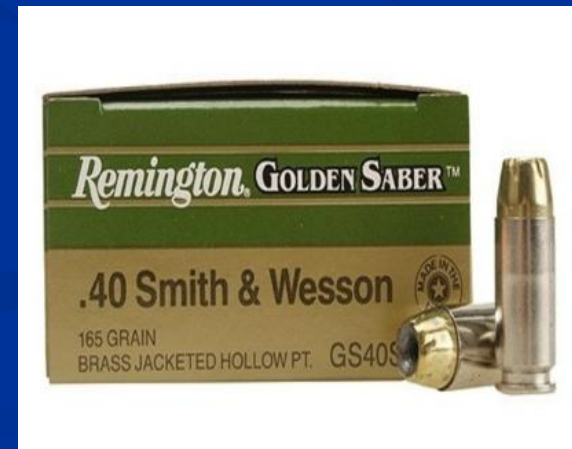
Police and hunters can shoot tranquilizers.

Bullets are only for combat soldiers outside of America.

No 2nd amendment issues.

Decrease suicide rates.

OUTLAW BULLETS.





Schizophrenic. Killer. My Cousin.

It's insanity to kill your father with a kitchen knife. It's also insanity to close hospitals, fire therapists, and leave families to face mental illness on their own.

—By [Mac McClelland](#)
Mother Jones, [May/June 2013 Issue](#)241



Mark with Houston at Houston's high school graduation in 2009

A Death in the Family

Aided by advocates for the mentally ill, William Bruce left the hospital -- only to kill his mother



William Bruce, left, with his father, Joe Bruce, who feared his son's release from a psychiatric facility.

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Worcester Police Department: Hadwen Road case a possible murder-suicide

By Scott J. Croteau TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

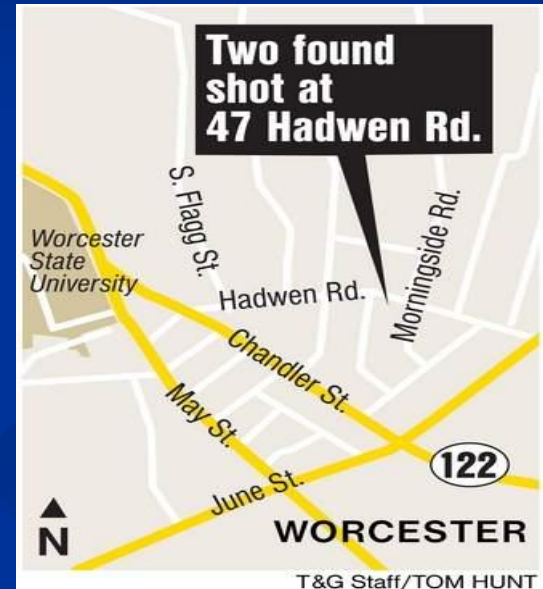
scroteau@telegram.com



Mr. Youmans



Ms. Martinez



Collateral Damage

In the wake of Sandy Hooke:

“We grieve for the families of those we lost. And we keep in our prayers the parents of those who survive. Because as blessed as they are to have their children home, they know that their child’s innocence has been torn away far too early”
Any of these neighborhoods could be our own. So we have come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this. Regardless of the politics...”

Barak Obama

December 15, 2012

Yet, 6 months later nothing has been done. And the prospect that anything will be done is close to zero.