

Case Example: Danny

Reason for Referral

Danny, a 16 year-old sophomore, was referred for a risk assessment because he had made a comment to a peer that he wanted to kill himself and others “like that guy in Las Vegas.”

Background Information

Although Danny had no prior history of violence at school, his mother reported he had been aggressive at home toward both her and his older sister, which resulted in the mother’s making a referral to the juvenile authorities. The mother and father are divorced, but Danny remains in contact with both parents. Due to conflict between the parents, Danny lived with other relatives and in foster care throughout his early elementary school years. During the past five years, however, he has lived in a stable home environment with his mother.

During an interview Danny stated he made the comment at lunch in an effort to impress a new student with whom he hoped to become friends. Students at his lunch table were discussing the recent shooting in Las Vegas, and Danny uttered the threat without thinking about the possible consequences. He said he was just kidding and had no intention of hurting himself or anyone else. According to Danny, he enjoys school because he plays on the football team and has a lot of friends. He likes his teachers as well as most of his classes, in which he earns As and Bs with a few Cs. He helps to coach a little league football team, and he hopes to be a football coach or run his own business.

Test Results

Danny’s RSMP results were negative for three of the four scales considered to be instigators for violence. That is, he scored in the average range for Vengeance, Acceptance, and Tranquility. On the Status scale, however, he scored as having a very strong need for attention or respect based on social standing. Further, Danny’s RSMP results were positive for the two motives that inhibit aggression. Specifically, he scored in the average range for both Honor and Idealism.

Danny’s motivational profile included a strong desire for thinking (Curiosity), a weak desire for structure (Order), and a very strong desire for peer companionship (Social Contact).

Other tests revealed that, compared to his peers, Danny experiences average anger, exhibits better coping skills, and has few factors indicative of a high risk for school violence.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the RSMP as well as on other data collected during the evaluation, school personnel concluded that Danny presented a relatively low risk for violence. He was permitted to return to school, and an intervention plan was

implemented to help Danny meet his strong needs for Social Contact and Status in socially appropriate ways. For example, he was asked to serve on the planning team for a new youth sports program at his church, a role that earned him respect (Status) and that allowed him more opportunities to socialize with peers (Social Contact).

Case Example: Kevin

Reason for Referral

Kevin, a 14 year-old freshman, was referred for a risk assessment because he had attempted to choke a much younger, smaller boy. The incident occurred within a few days of Kevin's enrollment in a new school.

Background Information

Kevin attended four previous schools where he was suspended on multiple occasions for fighting with peers. He generally earned low grades which left him academically ineligible for extracurricular activities.

During an interview Kevin admitted that he was affiliated with a gang before moving to his current school and that most of his friends are gang members. He attempted to choke the younger boy because he believed the student belonged to a rival gang. Although Kevin expressed a desire to leave the gang, he also stated that he enjoys his friendships with gang members and that extricating himself from the gang would be difficult. He would like to do better in school so he can play on the football team, but he acknowledged a history of poor grades that have precluded his participation in sports.

Test Results

Kevin's RSMP results were positive for three of the four scales considered to be instigators for violence. Although he scored in the average range for Acceptance, his scores for Vengeance (very high), Status (high), and Tranquility (low) reflect a student who is extremely angry and confrontational, is seeking attention, and is not afraid of getting hurt. Further, Kevin's RSMP results were positive for only one of the two motives that inhibit aggression. He scored in the average range for Honor but in the low range for Idealism. The latter finding is suggestive of a student who does not care about treating others fairly.

Kevin's motivational profile included strong needs for muscle movement (Physical Activity), peer companionship (Social Contact), and self-reliance (Independence) as well as a weak need for thinking (Curiosity).

Other tests revealed that, compared to his peers, Kevin experiences stronger anger, exhibits fewer coping skills, and has several indicators of a high risk for school violence.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the RSMP as well as on other data collected during the evaluation, school personnel concluded that Kevin presented a high risk for violence.

He was suspended for the remainder of the school year but was allowed to return to school at the beginning of the current academic year. To lessen the likelihood of a recurrence of aggressive behavior, an intervention plan is being designed based on Kevin's overall motivational profile.

1. Given his strong need for Physical Activity coupled with his strong need for Vengeance, Kevin will be encouraged to challenge himself to improve his athletic skills, thus channeling his desire for competition into a more socially appropriate avenue.

2. Kevin will be encouraged to satisfy his strong desire for Social Contact by attempting to make new friends among other students who also enjoy sports – students who are not gang members and who may exert a positive influence.

3. In light of his weak need for Curiosity, Kevin will be enrolled in classes that offer more applied or hands-on learning activities such as vocational electives. Further, he may be offered tutoring to support him in classes which are theoretical and for which he may have little interest.

4. In an effort to address his strong need for Independence, Kevin will be encouraged to apply for a position as an equipment manager for a sports team, a role that could offer him the opportunity to make increasingly independent decisions after a period of training.

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