

CCHR: Mental Health Month Spotlights Failures—More Acts of Senseless Violence

Watchdog Finds Spate of Violent Acts in the Community a Disturbing Reminder of Our Mental Health System's Failure to Curb Aggression & to Potentially Incite It

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 23, 2022

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a mental health industry watchdog, said that with recent reports of senseless mass shootings has come increasing reports of perpetrators' earlier mental health treatment, which should be the subject of official review. As an example, an 18-year-old shooter in a Buffalo, New York grocery store, who killed 10 and injured three, talked last year about "murder-suicide," at which point he was referred for mental health evaluation and counseling. He left a psychiatric facility 36 hours later.[1]



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Since the 1980s, CCHR has documented the potential role of some mental health treatments adversely impacting a percentage of the people undergoing them, including violent behavior. [Psychotropic medications have been the most often implicated](#), but CCHR has also found that some forms of counseling can trigger aggressive reactions. Although there can be numerous reasons for violent crime, with just as many solutions proposed to curb it and funding poured into its prevention, senseless acts of violence continue unabated.

CCHR stresses that all potential influences be addressed, including the potential impact of psychological programs and psychotropic drugs. This is not to excuse any crime committed, but to help identify influences because to ignore them may put the community at risk.

Providing examples:

The two teens involved in the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 were examples of the failure of “anger management” and “death education.” The two had attended court-ordered psychological counseling, including anger management. In his death education class in school, one of the boys was told to imagine and write about his own death. His essay was about his dream that he and his later accomplice went on a shooting rampage in a shopping center. After turning the story in to his teacher, the two boys acted it out by killing a teacher, their classmates and themselves.[2] One of the boys was also taking the antidepressant fluvoxamine, the side effects of which include mania that is linked to violent behavior. In a clinical trial of the drug, four percent of patients treated with fluvoxamine experienced manic reactions, compared to none of the placebo patients.[3]

In 2018, a Florida school shooter who pleaded guilty in 2021 to charges of killing 17 and wounding 17 more, had received services at a mental health clinic. Police were called to his home 36 times, yet a therapist with the clinic deemed the boy “to be no threat to anyone or himself” in 2016. He’d been in the hands of one or another type of psychotherapist since the age of four.[4]

Last month, CCHR issued a report on a Brooklyn, New York subway shooter who injured ten, and who had been treated in psychiatric facilities for decades. He posted a now-removed video on YouTube about the failure of the treatment, stating, “These are people that were supposed to be helping me. They made me worse. They made me more dangerous than anybody could...imagine.”[5]

In November 2021, four students were tragically killed and seven others injured in the Oxford High School (Michigan) shooting. The alleged 15-year-old perpetrator had undergone behavioral meetings only the day before and on the day of the shootings, yet was allowed to return to school. “At no time did counselors believe the student might harm others based on his behavior, responses and demeanor, which appeared calm.” Yet “counselors asked specific probing questions regarding the potential for self-harm or harm to others,” a Superintendent said, adding that counseling was recommended for him, and his parents were notified that they had 48 hours to seek it.[6]

CCHR said that, unfortunately, research and experts point out that psychiatrists and psychologists cannot predict if anyone is likely to commit violence. But in interviewing someone to determine such behavior, asking pointed questions might elicit aggression. “There is no instrument that is specifically useful or validated for identifying potential school shooters or mass murderers,” according to Stephen D. Hart, a psychologist at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, quoted in The Washington Post.[7]

A classic example was Edmund Kemper III, part of the inspiration behind the film *Silence of the Lambs* and a key character portrayed in the Netflix series *Mindhunter*. In the 1970s, at age 15, he shot dead his grandparents. Thereafter he was imprisoned and evaluated and treated for years by numerous psychiatrists and psychologists. He convinced them that he had been rehabilitated

and was released into his mother's care. One psychiatrist wrote, "...it is my opinion that he had made a very excellent response to the years of treatment and rehabilitation and I would see no psychiatric reason to consider him to be of any danger to himself or to any member of society...." Kemper killed six women and his mother after his release.[8]

There is an enormous amount of literature that links prescription psychotropic drugs to violent behavior. Psychopharmacology expert Professor David Healy estimated that 90 percent of school shootings, over more than a decade leading up to 2012, were linked to SSRI antidepressants.[9] "What is very, very clear is that people do become hostile on the drugs," he found.[10]

CCHR's report, [Psychiatric Drugs: Create Violence & Suicide](#) includes dozens of studies and expert opinion in support of this.

The report calls for any investigations into acts of mass violence to include a review of all past and current mental health treatment the suspect may have had, including, if school-aged, any school counseling and psychological classes the student may have participated in.

[1] <https://www.wxnews.org/local-news/2022-05-18/broome-county-district-attorney-confirms-buffalo-shooting-suspect-talked-about-murder-suicide>

[2] Richard Restak, "The 'inner child, the 'true self' and the wacky map of Eupychia," The Washington Times, 18 Aug. 2002

[3] https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2007/021519lbl.pdf

[4] <https://www.cchrnt.org/florida-school-shooter-timeline/>; Jose Pagliery and Curt Devine, "School shooter showed violence and mental instability at home, police reports reveal," CNN, 17 Feb 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/16/us/florida-shooter-cruz-records-police-calls-to-home-invs/index.html>; Brianna Sacks, "Authorities Were Called to Alleged Florida School Shooter Nikolas Cruz's House More Than 35 Times," BuzzFeed News, 16 Feb 2018, https://www.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeednews/florida-school-shooting?utm_term=.wto6Lro7L#.fhG2bnqKb.

[5] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2022/04/20/frank-james-the-prophet-of-doom/>

[6] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2021/12/06/cchr-urges-investigation-into-failed-behavioral-programs-funding-in-education-increasing-violence/>

[7] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/predicting-violence-is-a-work-in-progress/2013/01/03/2e8955b8-5371-11e2-a613-ec8d394535c6_story.html?utm_term=.b09e546246de

[8] <https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/867678/mindhunter-ed-kemper-edmund-netflix->

[series-accurate-serial-killer-fbi-interview; https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wicked-deeds/201403/the-real-life-horror-tale-the-twisted-co-ed-killer](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wicked-deeds/201403/the-real-life-horror-tale-the-twisted-co-ed-killer)

[9] "Psych meds linked to 90% of school shootings, WND, 18 Dec. 2012, <http://www.wnd.com/2012/12/psych-meds-linked-to-90-of-school-shootings/#i1JviHwg3g2T7KSt.99>

[10] FDA Mulls Antidepressant Warnings," Daily Press, 21 Mar. 2004, http://articles.dailypress.com/2004-03-21/news/0403210207_1_dr-joseph-glenmullen-corey-baadsgaard-school-shootings-and-murder-suicides

Amber Rauscher

Citizens Commission on Human Rights

+1 323-467-4242

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