

Sandy Hook Elementary School

As we reflect on another mass shooting, we find tragically that in all of the mass killings, which go back to the Oklahoma City Federal Building, children have been injured, killed, or endangered. Therefore, when we consider client threats to “kill a lot of people” or to shoot people at the client’s former school, we need to consider such threats as potential child abuse or child endangerment. State laws and Ethical Standards require therapists to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Child abuse consists not only of injury to children, but also includes situations which pose a risk of injury or harm to children. Therefore, when a client makes a threat that involves a risk of harm to children in a school, in a mall, in a movie theater, or in any other public setting, you should consider whether you suspect that child endangerment may occur; and then report the threat if potential child endangerment is suspected.

These are thoughts and considerations which may assist professionals in situations where they may need to report suspected child abuse resulting from a client’s threats. As always, if any question exists concerning whether a report needs to be made regarding a client’s threat of violence, consultation with colleagues, supervisors, or attorneys may be indicated.

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