

## **Mass Violence Prevention: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go from Here?**

James Densley, PhD

Opening Presenter

CE: CPA/BBS/BRN (2.0)

### Narrative

For three years, James Densley (with his colleague Jillian Peterson) has studied the life histories of mass shooters in the United States for a project funded by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. He's built a database dating back to 1966 of every shooter who killed four or more people in a public place and has interviewed incarcerated mass shooters and their families and friends; people who planned a shooting but changed their minds; shooting survivors and first responders. The goal has been to find new, data-driven pathways for preventing mass shootings. The study shows that mass shooters typically have four things in common: They suffered early-childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age. They were angry or despondent over a recent event, resulting in feelings of suicidality. They studied other mass shootings, often online, and found inspiration. And they had the opportunity to carry out an attack. By understanding the traits that mass shooters share, we can do more than just upgrade security or lockdown an entire generation. We can instead plan to prevent the violence.

### BIO

#### **James Densley, PhD**

James Densley is a Professor of Criminal Justice and Chair of the School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice at Metropolitan State University, part of the Minnesota State system. He is also co-founder and co-president of The Violence Project, a nonpartisan research center known for its work on mass shootings. Densley has received global media attention for his work on street gangs, criminal networks, violence, and policing. He is the author of four books and over 100 articles in leading social science journals and in outlets such as the LA Times, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. He earned his DPhil in sociology from the University of Oxford.

### Learning Objectives

1. Define a mass shooting
2. Describe historical mass shooting trends
3. Differentiate types of gun violence
4. Analyze what nearly all mass shooters have in common
5. Describe the overlap between homicide and suicide
6. Assess how some of our current interventions might be doing more harm than good
7. Identify warning signs for mass shooters
8. Apply crisis intervention and de-escalation to mass shooting prevention
9. Assess the practice of threat assessment
10. Identify workplace strategies for mass shooting prevention