

Idaho shooting: Few school incidents committed by girls

By **REBECCA BOONE** and **LINDSAY WHITEHURST**
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — Authorities said they are trying to determine what prompted a young girl to open fire at a rural Idaho middle school, one of the few school shootings in which the suspect is female.

The shooting happened around 9 a.m. Thursday, May 6, when police reported the girl pulled a handgun out of her backpack and shot two other students and an adult custodian before a teacher disarmed and held her until police arrived. All three were shot in the extremities, and none had life-threatening injuries.

Jefferson County Sheriff Steve Anderson said May 7 the investigation is likely to take a “considerable amount of time.” He said neither the name of the suspect — a sixth-grade girl — nor the name of the teacher who disarmed her would be immediately released.

The shooting took place over the course of about five minutes, Anderson said.

School shootings are rare in Idaho, and shootings



John Roark /The Idaho Post-Register via AP

People embrace outside after a shooting at Rigby Middle School in Rigby, Idaho, on Thursday, May 6, 2021. Authorities said they are trying to figure out what led a sixth-grade female student to shoot in the rural middle school, injuring two students and a custodian, before a teacher disarmed her.

where the suspect is identified as a young girl are uncommon but not unheard of nationwide.

Girls and women commit just 2% of both mass shootings and school shootings in the U.S., according to data compiled by the group The Violence Project.

The group maintains a database of shootings at schools where more than one person was shot or

a person came to school heavily armed with the intention of firing indiscriminately. It includes 146 cases going back to 1980. Girls were the shooters in just three of those cases. Experts differ on exactly why, though it’s known that men commit over 90% homicides in general.

Researchers have also found shooters who target bigger groups or schools

tend to study past perpetrators, who are more likely to be male.

“They see themselves in some of these other shooters,” said Violence Project President Jillian Peterson, a forensic psychologist and professor at Hamline University in Minnesota.

Boys in general tend to externalize anger and sadness against other people,

whereas girls are more likely to internalize those emotions and have higher rates of depression and anxiety, Peterson said.

The Idaho girl is also younger than most school shooters, who are more often in high school.

The Violence Project’s database shows about 18% of school shootings were at middle schools, though most of those were among older teenagers. Only a handful involved sixth-grade students, Peterson said.

Two recent studies by the U.S. Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center offer insight into common characteristics between many kids who plan or carry out school shootings. The students were often badly bullied, suffered from depression with stress at home and exhibited behavior that worried others. They were often absent from school before the attack.

Most attackers who carried out deadly school shootings were male; seven were female, according to the studies. Researchers said 63% of the attackers

were white, 15% were Black, 5% Hispanic, 2% were American Indian or Alaska Native, 10% were of two or more races, and 5% were undetermined.

School shootings have become increasingly common in the U.S. over the past two decades, but they remain relatively rare in Idaho. In 1999, a student at a high school in the community of Notus, west of Boise, fired a shotgun several times. No one was struck by the gunfire, but one student was injured by ricocheting debris from the first shell.

In 1989, a student at Rigby Junior High pulled a gun, threatened a teacher and students, and took a 14-year-old girl hostage. Police safely rescued the hostage from a nearby church about an hour later and took the teen into custody. No one was shot in that incident.

In 2016, Idaho lawmakers passed a bill that allowed most people to carry concealed weapons without a permit. But that right doesn’t extend to schools, courthouses or correctional facilities.

Reversing Trump, U.S. restores health protections for transgendered people

By **RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. will protect gay and transgender people against sex discrimination in health care, the Biden administration announced Monday, May 10, reversing a Trump-era policy that sought to narrow the scope of legal rights in sensitive situations involving medical care.

The action by the Department of Health and Human Services affirms that federal laws forbidding sex discrimination in health care also protect gay and transgender people. The Trump administration had defined “sex” to mean gender assigned at birth, thereby excluding transgender people from the law’s umbrella of protection.

“Fear of discrimination can lead individuals to forgo care, which can have serious negative health consequences,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “Everyone — including LGBTQ people — should be able to access health care, free from discrimination or interference, period.”

It marked the latest step by President Joe Biden to advance the rights of gay and transgender people across society, from military service, to housing, to employment opportunities.

Becerra said in a statement the policy shift will bring HHS into line with a landmark 6-3 Supreme Court decision last year in a workplace discrimination case, which established that federal laws against sex discrimination on the job also protect gay and transgender people.

Despite that ruling, the Trump administration proceeded to try to narrow the legal protections against health care discrimination, issuing rules that narrowly defined “sex” as biological gender. A federal judge had blocked those rules from taking effect, although Trump administration officials argued that as a legal matter health care discrimination was a separate issue from the employment case the Supreme Court decided.

Monday’s action means the HHS Office for Civil Rights will again investigate complaints of sex discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Hospitals, clinics and other medical providers can face government sanctions for violations of the law.

The Biden administration action essentially restores the policy established during the Obama years. The Affordable Care Act included a prohibition on sex discrimination in health care but did not include the term “gender identity.” The Obama administration interpreted the law as shielding gay and transgender people as well. It relied on a broad understanding of sex shaped by a person’s inner sense of being male, female, neither or a combination.

Behind the dispute over rights for transgender people in particular is a medically recognized condition called “gender dysphoria” — discomfort or distress caused by a discrepancy between the gender that a person identifies as and the gender assigned at birth. Consequences can include severe depression. Treatment can range from gender confirmation surgery and hormones to people changing their outward appearance by adopting a different hairstyle or clothing.

Under the Obama-era rule, a hospital could be required to perform gender-transition procedures such as hysterectomies if the facility provided that kind of treatment for other medical conditions.

LGBTQ groups say explicit protections are needed for people seeking gender transition treatment, and even for trans-

gender people who need care for illnesses such as diabetes or heart problems.

More than 1.5 million Americans identify as transgender, according to the Williams Institute, a think tank focusing on LGBT policy at the UCLA School of Law. A bigger number — 4.5% of the population — identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, according to Gallup.

Professional groups like the American Medical Association, along with civil rights organizations, have supported health care protections for gay and transgender people, while social and religious conservatives sought to narrow their scope.

HHS is a traditional battleground for conflicts over social issues. During the Trump administration the department clearly bent to the will of conservatives. Other Trump policies applauded by the right restricted abortion referrals and broadened employers’ ability to opt out of providing birth control to women workers covered by their health plans. Under Biden, the policy pendulum has been swinging back in the opposite direction, as officials unwind actions taken in the Trump years.

One of Biden’s first steps after taking office was a Jan. 20 executive order on combating discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. The new president directed every executive branch

agency to examine what it could do to combat such discrimination.

Biden quickly followed that up with another order reversing a Trump-era Pen-

tagon policy that largely barred transgender individuals from serving in the military.

And earlier this spring, the Department of Housing

and Urban Development withdrew a Trump policy that would have allowed taxpayer-funded homeless shelters to deny access to transgender people.

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