

THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Adapted from the *Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence (Cornell & Sheras, 2006)*

IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE THREAT

A threat is an expression of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or communicated in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other electronic means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended victim(s) and regardless of whether the intended victim is aware of the threat. This protocol does NOT address threats to damage property, threats made by non-students, fights with no threat, or verbiage such as slurs, insults, or verbal abuse that does not constitute a threat. Threats may be implied or stated in an indirect manner if a recipient would reasonably regard the behavior as a threat. **WHEN IN DOUBT, treat the expression as a threat and conduct a threat assessment.**

Student threats shall be reported to the school administrator (principal, assistant principal, or principal designee) if they cannot be easily and readily resolved by other staff. Criteria for reporting threats should include age of the child, and the context of the threat or remark.

The administrator makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. The student, recipients of threat, and other witnesses shall be interviewed to obtain a specific account of threat in context using the *Threat Assessment Documentation* form. If the threat has not been resolved, and the administrator determines it is potentially serious, then the *Threat Assessment Documentation and Threat Assessment and Response Summary Sheet* should be completed.

Student Interview

- Do you know why I wanted to talk with you?
- What happened when you were [place of incident]?
- What exactly did you say? And what exactly did you do?
- What did you mean when you said or did that?
- How do you think he/she feels about what you said or did?
- What was the reason you said or did that?
- What are you going to do now that you have made this threat?

Witness Interview

- What exactly happened when you were [place of incident]?
- What exactly did [student] say or do?
- What do you think he/she meant when saying that?
- How do you feel about what he/she said or did?
- Why did he/she say or do that?

DETERMINE WHETHER THREAT IS CLEARLY TRANSIENT OR SUBSTANTIVE

Transient Threat

Meets one or more of the following:

- Non-genuine expression or intended as joke or figure or speech
- Non-sustainable intent to harm or temporary anger that is resolved
- Resolved on scene or office (time-limited)
- Conflict is resolved and ends with apology, retraction, or clarification

WHEN IN DOUBT, consider threat as substantive and assess further

Substantive Threat

Factors to consider in judging a threat to be substantive:

- Specific, plausible details such as a specific victim, time, place, and method
- Threat has been repeated over time or related to multiple persons
- Threat is reported as a plan or planning has taken place
- Recruitment of accomplices or invitation for an audience
- Physical evidence of intent to carry out threat (e.g., lists, drawings, written plan)
- Student's age and capability of carrying out the threat
- Student's history of aggressive behavior
- Credibility of student and witness accounts

DETERMINE IF SUBSTANTIVE THREAT IS SERIOUS OR VERY SERIOUS

Serious

A threat to assault

Very Serious

Threat to kill, rape, or inflict severe injury or use weapons

RESPOND TO TRANSIENT THREAT

- ❖ Contact student's parents if necessary
- ❖ Notify intended victim's parents if necessary to prevent further problems
- ❖ See that threat is resolved through explanation, apology or making amends
- ❖ Consult with safety and security specialist/SRO if appropriate
- ❖ Refer for conflict mediation or counseling, to resolve problem if appropriate
- ❖ Follow discipline procedures
- ❖ Develop Behavior Intervention Plan /behavior contract as appropriate
- ❖ Maintain threat assessment documentation in student's cumulative file, if completed, as appropriate

RESPOND TO SERIOUS THREAT

- ❖ Mobilize threat assessment team members as needed
- ❖ Notify student's parents
- ❖ Protect and notify intended victim and parents of victim
- ❖ Caution the student about the consequences of carrying out the threat
- ❖ Provide direct supervision of student until parents assume control
- ❖ Consult with SRO or safety/security specialist
- ❖ Refer for conflict resolution or counseling
- ❖ Follow discipline procedures
- ❖ Develop Behavior Intervention Plan/behavior contract
- ❖ Maintain threat assessment documentation in student's cumulative file

RESPOND TO VERY SERIOUS THREAT

- ❖ Mobilize threat assessment team and follow procedures for Serious threat, including protective action and notification of intended victim and parents of victim
- ❖ Provide direct supervision of student until parents assume control
- ❖ Notify assistant superintendent or designee
- ❖ Consult with SRO or safety /security specialist for investigation of threat
- ❖ Initiate immediate mental health assessment if emergency situation; otherwise notify parents of need for mental health assessment
- ❖ Follow discipline procedures
- ❖ Develop Behavior Intervention Plan/behavior contract
- ❖ Maintain threat assessment documentation in student's cumulative file

Model Regulations for Conducting a Threat Assessment

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for conducting threat assessments in response to student threats of violence.

II. DEFINITIONS

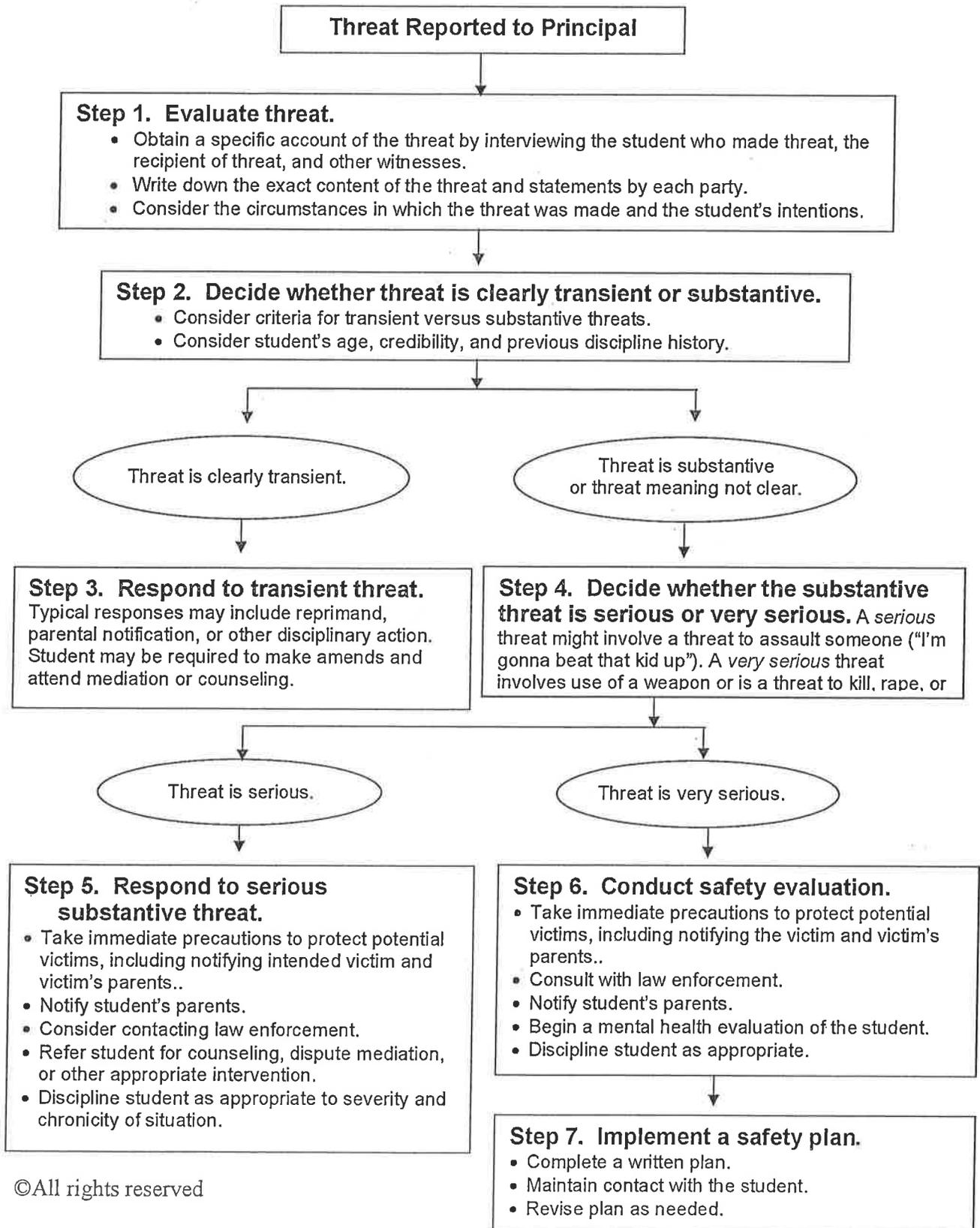
- A. A threat is an expression of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, or gestured. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to an actual or prospective victim and regardless of whether the actual or prospective victim is aware the threat existing in any fashion, whether orally, visually, in writing, or electronically. A threat assessment is a procedure to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations and resolve them.
- B. A transient threat is a threat that does not express a lasting intent to harm someone. A threat is transient only if it can be quickly and easily resolved and no longer exists.
- C. A serious substantive threat is a threat that expresses a continuing intent to assault someone.
- D. A very serious substantive threat is a threat that involves using a weapon or a threat to kill, rape, or inflict severe injury to someone.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. A threat assessment may be conducted if a student makes an explicit or implicit threat, or if the student's behavior indicates that a threat is reasonably likely. The goal of the threat assessment is to provide assistance to the student being assessed, to support victims or potential victims, and to take appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain a safe and secure school environment. A threat assessment is not a disciplinary action, and is not a prerequisite to disciplinary action. Documents completed as part of a threat assessment may or may not be used in a disciplinary proceeding.
- B. Student threats shall be reported to the school administrator (principal, assistant principal, or principal designee) if they cannot be easily and readily resolved by other staff. Criteria for reporting threats should include the age of the child and the context of the threat or remark.
- C. The student who communicated the threat, the recipient(s) of the threat, and witnesses shall be interviewed to obtain specific information regarding the threat, in accordance with the Threat Assessment Guidelines. The Guidelines can be found at <address>
- D. When a threat is reported to the school administrator, the administrator makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. If it can be determined that the threat is a transient threat and has been resolved, the Threat Assessment Documentation may be completed at the administrator's discretion. If the threat has not been resolved, the Threat Assessment Documentation and Threat Assessment and Response Summary Sheet forms shall be completed.
- E. In every instance in which a threat against a student is not immediately resolved, the school administrator shall notify the parent/guardian of the student who made the threat. The school administrator shall also notify any identifiable victims or targets of the threat. If the target is a student or students, the parent/guardians shall also be notified. If the threat is not specific about the identity of the victim(s), the school administrator shall make a determination based on the circumstances of the threat whether it is appropriate to communicate to a more general notification to potential victims, such as in the form of a letter to parent/guardians. In most cases, such a letter would be appropriate to address questions and concerns that might be disruptive to learning and to solicit information that would be relevant to resolving the threat.
- F. Threat assessment and disciplinary procedures are separate processes. Regardless of whether a threat is determined to be transient, serious substantive, or very serious substantive, appropriate disciplinary procedures shall be followed.
- G. If the threat is determined to be serious substantive or very serious substantive, the Threat Assessment Documentation and Threat Assessment and Response Summary Sheet forms and other relevant documents regarding the threat shall be maintained in the cumulative file of the student's scholastic record. If the threat is determined to be transient and the forms were completed, they may be maintained in the student's scholastic record at the administrator's discretion.

Adapted from Fairfax County Public Schools

Figure 1. Decision tree for student threat assessment.



Bullying Assessment Flow Chart

Interview all students involved in the incident.

For use by school administrators and staff. "What happened between you two?" "How did it start?" "Did you tell him/her to stop?" "Is there anything you did that might have contributed to this happening?"

Was this possibly a crime?

Was there physical contact or injury, use of a weapon, serious threat of injury, stalking, kidnapping or detainment, loss of property, or damage to property?

Yes

Contact law enforcement.

Let the SRO investigate and decide whether a crime has occurred.

Notify parents.

Let parents of the targeted student know that you have contacted the SRO or other law enforcement.

Was there aggression?

Physical aggression such as hitting, shoving or threatening injury; verbal aggression such as teasing or name-calling; social aggression such as spreading rumors and shunning.

No

Not bullying

Consider another infraction.

Was there dominance?

Was the aggressor stronger or dominant over the other? Was one side outnumbered?

No

Not bullying

Could be a fight or some other infraction.

Was there persistence?

Was there more than one incident or did the aggressor fail to stop when asked? Look for evidence of a repeated problem.

No

Not bullying

Consider another infraction. Would be bullying if behavior continues.

Respond to bullying.

1. Discipline aggressor for bullying, based on the seriousness and persistence of the behavior, in accordance with the school division's policy and student code of conduct.
2. Educate and counsel all students, including bystanders, about bullying.
3. Suggest that the aggressor apologize and promise not to do it again.
4. Ask all students, "What could you do that would keep this from happening again?"
5. Ask all students, "Would you let me know if anything like this happens again?"
6. Monitor and follow-up to make sure that bullying does not recur.

Threat Assessment Documentation

Instructions: This form should be completed by the school administrator when conducting a threat assessment. This form should be maintained as part of the student's cumulative file if the threat is determined to be substantive. If the threat is determined to be transient, the form may be maintained in the student's cumulative file at the discretion of the administrator. Record specific account(s) of the threat made from the student making the threat and from the recipient(s) of the threat and witness(s) as applicable.

Administrator completing form:

Position:

School:

Date this form completed:

Information on student making threat

Name of student

Date of birth

Grade

Address

Home phone

Emergency contact

Relationship

Is there a history of violent behavior in school?

Yes No Unknown

Is there a history of violent behavior away from school?

Yes No Unknown

Is there a history of discipline referrals? Yes No Unknown

Other information:

Information about the threat

Date threat occurred: ___/___/___ Date administrator learned of threat: ___/___/___

Where the threat was made:

Who reported the threat:

What was reported (use quotation marks to identify direct quotes)

Information on target(s) of threat

Has the intended target/victim(s) been identified? Yes No

Name(s) & grade of victim(s):

Target(s) of the threat (check all that apply):

Student Teacher Parent Administrator Other

Number of victim/recipients of threat: one two three four five or more

Threat Assessment Student Interview Form

Directions: Use these questions as a guide to interview the student making the threat. Other questions can be asked as appropriate. This form should not be completed by the student. Use quotation marks to indicate student's exact words when possible.

Administrator completing form:

Position:

School:

Date this form completed:

Student interviewed:

1. What happened today when you were [place of incident]? (Record student's exact words for key statements if possible.)

2. What exactly did you say? And what exactly did you do?

3. What did you mean when you said or did that?

4. How do you think [person who was threatened] feels about what you said or did? (Probe to see if the student believes it frightened or intimidated the person.)

5. What was the reason you said or did that? (Probe to find out if there is a prior conflict or history to this threat.)

6. What are you going to do now? (Ask questions to determine if the student intends to carry out the threat.)

7. Additional witnesses or other relevant information.

Threat Assessment Witness Interview Form

Directions: Use these questions as a guide to interview witnesses who have direct or indirect knowledge of the threat. Complete separate forms for each witness. Other questions can be asked as appropriate. This form should not be completed by the witness. Use quotation marks to indicate witness's exact words when possible.

Administrator completing form:

Position:

School:

Date this form completed:

Witness interviewed:

1. What exactly did [student who made the threat] say or do? (Record witness's exact words for key statements if possible.)

2. What do you think he or she meant when saying to doing that?

3. How do you feel about what he or she said or did? (Gauge whether the witness feels frightened or intimidated.) Are you concerned that he or she might actually do it?

4. Why did he or she say or do that? (Find out whether the witness knows of any prior conflict or history behind the threat.)

5. Additional witnesses or other relevant information.

