



Threat Assessment

Administrative Procedure 8.140

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Assessing Violence Potential: Protocol for Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviors

PURPOSE

High profile school shootings in Canada and the United States have increased anxiety among many students, staff, parents and others. Without formal procedures in schools and communities to assess threats that are common in the aftermath of high profile traumatic events, the likelihood of over-reacting or under-reacting to threat behavior is increased. The general purpose of a student threat/risk assessment team in school jurisdictions is to assist in creating and maintaining an environment where students, staff, parents and others feel safe. The primary task of the team is to identify indicators that suggest a student may be engaging in attack related behaviors against some target and intervene to decrease the risk, prevent injury to self or others, and assist the student to receive the help he or she needs to address the issues contributing to the high-risk student behavior.

Important

This protocol is not a substitute for training in the field of threat assessment and should not be used until adequate training is received. This protocol is used as part of the “Threat Assessment Training” program (2001) developed by J. Kevin Cameron and Superintendent Glenn P. Woods who is the OIC Behavioural Sciences Branch, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Canada. The training guide and program is part of a collaborative initiative led by the Canadian Threat/Risk Assessment Teams. This protocol is to be used by multidisciplinary teams who are adequately trained in the theory and practice of student threat/risk assessment through this initiative or some other suitable training program.

A. Student Threat/Risk Assessment (TAT) Team Membership

Multi-Disciplinary Team (Initial Response)

- Team Leader –Student Services Coordinator and/or District Clinician
- School Principal and/or designate
- School Counsellor and/or Behavioural Teacher
- R.C.M.P.
- Other (As appointed by the TAT Team Leader, e.g. Classroom teacher)

Extended TAT Team (may be invited for Comprehensive Assessments)

- Community Mental Health
- Physicians
- Psychiatrists
- Social Workers (Child & Family Services)

Additional Resources

- Criminal Profilers (RCMP)
- Forensic Psychologists
- Other

B. Definition of High-Risk Behaviors (Violence Potential)

The high-risk behaviors addressed in this protocol include but are not limited to:

- Possession of weapons
- Bomb Threats
- Verbal/written threats to kill or injure others
- Internet website threats to kill or injure others

Note: Threats may be written, verbal, drawn, posted on the Internet or made by gesture only and, as noted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Reporting

Any person in a school having knowledge of high-risk student behavior or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high-risk behavior shall promptly report the information to the school principal and/or their designates. No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless the report is made maliciously and without reasonable grounds. In such cases the person shall be dealt with according to school division policy and law, where applicable.

Issues to be Considered

1. There is no common profile or check list for the high-risk student. Some students who actually pose a threat display very few traits of the traditional high-risk students while others seem to meet the general criteria. In reality, students who commit serious acts of school violence can function anywhere on the High-Risk Student Continuum (traditional and nontraditional). The key point is that multidisciplinary teams should not be led by stereotypes of the traditional high-risk student while failing to take seriously the threats of those who appear non-traditional.
2. Fluidity between homicidal and suicidal domains is common in many youth who commit serious acts of violence. Many threat makers do not pose a risk to others but may be thinking of killing themselves. However, it is not the role of the risk assessment team to assess suicidal students unless the student has engaged in other high-risk behaviour that has resulted in the team being called in the first place. General suicide risk assessment, independent of threats towards others, is outside the specialized role of the TAT team. Counselors or others trained in suicide prevention would continue to handle these cases independent of the team. Where the TAT teams may become involved is when factors contributing to the suicidal behaviour of the student are identified and related to school dynamics (e.g. the student is the recipient of violence or threats of violence at school).
3. High-risk behaviours are assessed using dispositional and contextual data. Teams are not just interested in the disposition or personality of the threat maker; they are also interested in the context within which threats occur. Contextual variables (e.g. a student loses a friend from the basketball team who was just killed in a car accident; parent just separated and his girlfriend broke up their relationship and the student has just threatened to kill a classmate who has been bullying him for years) are example of factors that may contribute to threat making behavior at a certain point in time. The implication is that someone could be high-risk under certain circumstances that when addressed may result in eliminating the risk.

C. Procedures

1. Fair Notice

Prior to any risk assessment protocol being implemented all students, staff, and parents should be provided with information about the protocol and procedures so that “**fair notice**” is given, that threat behavior will not be tolerated. The TAT Team Leader and other appropriate school division personnel should take the lead in presenting the protocol to ensure that students, parents and staff are all aware that the new protocol is a division policy and that a consistent message is given regarding the use of the protocol. Standard “zero tolerance” policies are too difficult to apply to the endless complexities confronting school systems. As noted earlier, under-reacting and over-reacting to threats is a concern. An alternative standard then is that schools have “zero tolerance for not responding to threat-related

behaviours". All high-risk behaviours will be taken seriously and high-risk students assessed accordingly.

2. Four categories for action:

a) Immediate Risk Situations

When immediate risk is identified, the principal will contact the police and take steps to ensure the safety of all school members, as denoted in established protocols (e.g. the student has a weapon in their possession and poses a serious threat to others). In these cases a threat is posed and the matter is one of immediate police intervention; not risk assessment. TAT teams do not have an immediate role in this circumstance but may be utilized following the immediate crises to assist with a follow-up inquiry and recommendations.

b) High-Risk Student Behaviors

All high-risk student behaviours, as defined above, shall be reported to the principal (and/or their designate) that will then activate the protocol for the initial response of the TAT team (principal, team leader and police) to assess the threat behavior. In general, high-risk behaviors are those of student age twelve or older who are believed to have contravened Section 264.1(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that students "who in any manner knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat...to cause death or bodily harm" has committed an offense.

In these cases, the police officer assigned to the TAT teams has the "first call" as to whether or not charges will be laid. If the law enforcement team member chooses to not proceed legally at the time then the initial response of the team will continue by conducting a risk assessment and determining follow-up recommendations. *It is understood that collaboration with team members will be ongoing, notwithstanding the fact that each team member has their own "jurisdiction". When the protocol is activated, parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity by one of the initial TAT team members. Parents should be an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.

When data is obtained that suggests a student who has made a threat actually poses a threat, other members of the larger team may become involved in the "comprehensive assessment" phase that can draw on the expertise and/or jurisdictional authority of the physicians, child welfare workers, criminal profilers, forensic psychologists, or psychiatrists (see attachment A for a general risk assessment framework). In some cases, students will be suspended from school during an assessment period to protect others from potential harm, to protect the threat maker, or both.

i) *Pre-suspension and Pre-expulsion Assessments and Interventions*

Pre-suspension assessments are critical as this period is often viewed as the “last straw” for high-risk students. It is in this stage that many threat makers decide to finalize a plan to terrorize their school. The suspension does not “cause” the violence to occur but creates the necessary “context” for the high-risk student who is already struggling with suicidal and homicidal ideation. School Administration is responsible to determine whether suspension or expulsion is warranted. However, when suspension occurs, a key question beyond “when to suspend” is “where to suspend to”. The isolation and disconnection felt by high-risk students during a suspension may be exacerbated if steps are not taken to keep the child connected to helpful supports.

ii) *Guidelines for Re-Entry into School*

When data suggests a student poses a threat to others they may be suspended from school until a more comprehensive assessment can be conducted. TAT teams guide the process from initial assessment, to planning interventions to decrease risk, to plans for re-entry into a school where a suspension has occurred. This is best accomplished when the TAT team outlines, in writing, steps the student, family, school, and others need to follow to ensure an appropriate assessment(s) is conducted prior to re-entry into the school. Following the completion of necessary assessments, the initial TAT team members may work with the student and their parent(s) (caregiver) to develop a plan for re-entry that becomes a signed contract by all participants including the student and parent(s), if circumstances warrant.

iii) *Students Under Twelve Years of Age*

For students under the age of twelve who engage in threat-related behaviors, developmental issues need to be taken into consideration. Just because a student is ten or eleven years of age does not mean they cannot pose a risk. Students who are even younger may benefit from police involvement as a way for the law enforcement team member to provide a “teaching moment” for the child. Generally speaking, most threat-related behavior exhibited by elementary aged students would fall into the third category of “worrisome behaviors”.

c) Worrisome Behaviors

The majority of high-risk behavior, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, falls into this category. In keeping with zero tolerance for not responding to high-risk behavior, all worrisome behaviors will be communicated to the risk assessment team leader for consultation. Worrisome behaviors are those that cause concern for members of the school system that may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of

violent behavior. This would include instances where a student may be engaging in behaviors such as drawing pictures, writing stories in class, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute “uttering threats” as defined by law, but are causing concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content. In these cases, the team is not activated formally. The principal consults with the team leader as to whether or not there needs to be some formal action (assessment). The police may be consulted with but it is not done as a formal “complaint” because there is not sufficient data/evidence to warrant that action. If data is obtained that suggests the student has uttered threats to kill or injure then the team is formally activated to deal with the new data.

To restate, when students exhibit early warning signs or when generalized threats are uttered with no specific target (e.g., “I could kill somebody today!”), the administrator shall contact the TAT team leader for consultation to determine if the information or incident warrants an activation of the Protocol for Dealing with High-risk Student Behaviors. This allows the administrator to consult confidentially on cases without needing to activate the formal team for what may be minor incidents.

d) Exceptional Cases: High Profile Threat-Related Behavior

Previous high profile school shootings have resulted in elevated sensitivity by some students, staff, and parents to high-risk student behaviors and worrisome behaviors. There are situations where students engage in threat-related behavior that would be assessed as “worrisome behavior” but, due to the context of the threat, formal activation of the TAT team may be require (e.g., during lunch hour a fifteen year old student posts a picture he drew on the cafeteria wall depicting a boy shooting student in a school cafeteria). In these exceptional cases, the “worrisome behavior” occurs in a setting where, by circumstance or design, there is an audience that may be traumatized and their reactions to the incident may trigger a broader trauma response in the school and community system. In these cases, failure to recognize the traumatizing impact of high profile “worrisome behavior” (under-reacting) may result in dramatic over-reacting by members of the school and community system. To avoid over-reactions we recommend a formal activation of the TAT team.

3. Further Steps to be Considered

The TAT leader shall be responsible to ensure that the recipient(s)/victim(s) of the student threats/behaviors shall be assessed and services provide as necessary. As the threat may be directed towards one or two students, an entire class, or the school population in general, the circumstances will dictate how far reaching an intervention may be. The TAT leader and the administrator shall determine if crisis counseling or a crisis response team is needed to re-establish calm.

Key Point: There may be cases where the recipient of a threat has been engaged in high-risk behaviors themselves that lead to the threat(s) in the first instance. In

those situations the recipient of the threat(s) may need to be assessed for high-risk behavior as well.

The TAT team leader shall be responsible to complete a TAT incident report and keep records on file (See Attachment "B") according to governing professional standards.

The administrator shall notify all school staff, within a reasonable time period, when the protocol has been activated as a result of high-risk student behavior.

Attachment “A”

- Question 1: What motivated the student to make the statements, or take the action that caused him/her to come to attention?
- Question 2: What has the student communicated to anyone concerning his/her intentions?
- Question 3: Has the student shown an interest in targeted violence, perpetrators of targeted violence, weapons, extremist groups, or murder?
- Question 4: Has the student engaged in attack-related behavior, including any menacing, harassing, and/or stalking behavior?
- Question 5: Does the student have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, etc., with indications that the student has acted on those beliefs?
- Question 6: How organized is the student? Is he/she capable of developing and carrying out a plan?
- Question 7: Has the student experienced a recent loss and or loss of status and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair?
- Question 8: Corroboration. What is the student saying and is it consistent with his/her actions?
- Question 9: Is there concern among those that know the student that he/she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?
- Question 10: What factors in the student’s life and/or environment might increase/decrease the likelihood of the student attempting to attack a target?

Adapted from: Borum, Randy; Fein, Robert; Vossekuil, Bryan; and Berglunk, John (1999). Threat Assessment: Defining an Approach for Evaluating Risk of Targeted Violence. Behavioral Sciences & the Law 17 323-337. Published in 1999 by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Assessment and Planning for Intervention should be a concurrent process that takes into consideration the four-pronged assessment model developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that includes four major areas:

- Prong One: Personality of the Student
- Prong Two: Family dynamics
- Prong Three: School dynamics and the student’s role in those dynamics
- Prong Four: Social dynamics

In the data collection stage, the team quickly collects as much information as is available in the four categories.

The following section outlines factors to be considered in each of the four prongs.

Personality of the Student: Behaviour Characteristics and Traits

Personality shapes how people consistently view the world and themselves and how they interact with others. Forming an accurate impression of someone's personality requires observing his or her behaviour over a period of time and in a wide variety of situations.

Clues to student's personality can come from observing behaviour when the student is:

- Coping with conflicts, disappointments, failures, insults, or other stresses encountered in everyday life.
- Expressing anger or rage, frustration, disappointment, humiliation, sadness, or similar feelings.
- Demonstrating or failing to demonstrate resiliency after a setback, a failure, real or perceived criticism, disappointment, or other negative experiences.
- Demonstrating how the student feels about himself, what kind of person the student imagines himself or herself to be, and how the student believes he or she appears to others.
- Responding to rules, instruction, or authority figures.
- Demonstrating and expressing a desire or need for control, attention, respect, admiration, confrontation, or other needs.
- Demonstrating or failing to demonstrate empathy with the feelings and experiences of others.
- Demonstrating his or her attitude toward others. (For example, does the student view others as inferior or with disrespect?)

Assessors who have not been able to observe a student first-hand should seek information from those who knew the student before he or she made a threat.

Leakage: Leakage occurs when a student intentionally or unintentionally reveals clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, attitudes, or intentions that may signal an impending violent act. These clues can take the form of subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions, or ultimatums. They can be spoken or conveyed in stories, diary entries, essays, poems, letters, songs, drawings, doodles, tattoos, or videos.

Another form of leakage involves efforts to get unwitting friends or classmates to help with preparations for a violent act, at times through deception (for example, the student asks a friend to obtain ammunition for him because he is going hunting).

Leakage can be a cry for help, a sign of inner conflict, or boasts that may look empty but actually express a serious threat. Leakage is considered to be one of the most important clues that may precede an adolescent's violent act.

An example of leakage could be a student who shows a recurring preoccupation with themes of violence, hopelessness, despair, hatred, isolation, loneliness, nihilism, or an "end-of-the-world" philosophy. Those themes may be expressed in conversation or jokes or in seemingly offhand comments to friend, teachers, or other school employees, parents, or siblings. Statements may be subtle, or immediately minimized by comments such as, "I was just joking," or "I didn't really mean that."

Another example of leakage could be recurrent themes of destruction or violence appearing in a student's writing or artwork. The themes may involve hatred, prejudice, death, and dismemberment, mutilation of self or others, bleeding, use of excessively destruction weapons, homicide, or suicide.

Many adolescents are fascinated with violence and the macabre, and writings and drawing on these themes can be a reflection of a harmless but rich and creative fantasy life. Some adolescents, however, seem so obsessed with these themes that they emerge no matter what the subject matter, the conversation, the assignment, or the joke.

Low Tolerance for Frustration: The student is easily bruised, insulted, angered, and hurt by real or perceived injustices done to him by others and has great difficulty tolerating frustration.

Poor Coping Skills: The student consistently shows little, if any, ability to deal with frustration, criticism, disappointment, failure, rejection, or humiliation. His or her response is typically inappropriate, exaggerated, immature, or disproportionate.

Lack of Resiliency: The student lacks resiliency and is unable to bounce back even when some time has elapsed since a frustrating or disappointing experience, a setback, or putdown.

Failed Love Relationship: The student may feel rejected or humiliated after the end of a love relationship, and cannot accept or come to terms with rejection.

Injustice Collector: The student nurses resentment over real or perceived injustices. No matter how much time has passed, the "injustice collector will not forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he or she believes are responsible. The student may keep a hit list with names of people he feels have wronged him.

Signs of Depression: The student shows features of depression such as lethargy, physical fatigue, a morose or dark outlook on life, a sense of malaise, and loss of interest in activities that he once enjoyed.

Adolescents may show different signs than those normally associated with depression. Some depressed adolescents may display unpredictable and uncontrolled outbursts of anger, a generalized and excessive hatred toward everyone else, and feelings of hopelessness about the future. Other behaviours might include psychomotor agitation, restlessness, inattention, sleep and eating disorders, and a markedly diminished interest in almost all activities that previously occupied and interested him. The student may have difficulty articulating these extreme feelings.

Narcissism: The student is self-centered, lacks insight into others' needs and/or feelings, and blames others for failures and disappointments. The narcissistic student may embrace the role of a victim to elicit sympathy and to feel temporarily superior to others. He or she displays signs of paranoia, and assumes an attitude of self-importance or grandiosity that masks feelings of unworthiness (Malmquist, 1996). A narcissistic student may be either very thin-skinned or very thick-skinned in responding to criticism.

Alienation: The student consistently behaves as though he feels different or estranged from others. This sense of separateness is more than just being a loner. It can involve feelings of isolation, sadness, loneliness, not belonging and not fitting in.

Dehumanizes Others: The student consistently fails to see others as fellow human beings. He characteristically views other people as "nonpersons" or objects to be thwarted. This attitude may appear in the student's writings and artwork, in interactions with others, or in comments during conversation.

Lack of Empathy: The student shows an inability to understand the feelings of others, and appears unconcerned about anyone else's feelings. When others show emotion, the student may ridicule them as weak or stupid.

Exaggerated Sense of Entitlement: The student constantly expects special treatment and consideration, and reacts negatively if he doesn't get the treatment he feels entitled to.

Attitude of Superiority: The student has a sense of being superior and presents himself as smarter, more creative, more talented, more experienced, and more worldly than others.

Exaggerated or Pathological Need for Attention: The student shows an exaggerated, even pathological, need for attention, whether positive or negative, no matter what the circumstances.

Eternalizes Blame: The student consistently refuses to take responsibility for his her own actions and typically faults other people, events or situations for any failings or shortcomings. In placing blame, the student frequently seems impervious to rational argument and common sense.

Masks Low Self-Esteem: Though he may display an arrogant, self-glorifying attitude, the student's conduct often appears to veil an underlying low self-esteem. He avoids high visibility or involvement in school activities, and other students may consider him a nonentity.

Anger Management Problems: Rather than expressing anger in appropriate ways and in appropriate circumstances, the student consistently tends to burst out in temper tantrums or melodramatic displays or to brood in sulky, seething silence. The anger may be noticeably out of proportion to the cause, or may be redirected toward people who have nothing to do with the original incident.

His anger may come in unpredictable and uncontrollable outbursts, and may be accompanied by expressions of unfounded prejudice, dislike, or even hatred toward individuals or groups.

Intolerance: The student often expresses racial or religious prejudice in intolerant attitudes toward minorities, or displays, slogans or symbols of intolerance in such things as tattoos, jewelry, clothing, bumper stickers, or book covers.

Inappropriate Humour: The student's humour is consistently inappropriate. Jokes or humorous comments tend to be macabre, insulting, belittling or mean.

Seeks to Manipulate Others: The student consistently attempts to con and manipulate others and win their trust so they will rationalize any signs of aberrant or threatening behaviour.

Change of Behaviour: The student's behaviour changes dramatically. His academic performance may decline, or he may show a reckless disregard for school rules, schedules, dress codes, and other regulations.

Unusual Interest in Sensational Violence: The student demonstrates an unusual interest in school shootings and other heavily publicized acts of violence. He may declare his admiration for those who committed the acts, or may criticize them for "incompetence" or failing to kill enough people. He may explicitly express a desire to carry out a similar act in his own school, possible as an act of "justice".

Fascination with Violence-Filled Entertainment: The student demonstrates an unusual fascination with movies, TV shows, computer games, music videos or printed material that focus intensively on themes of violence, hatred, control,

power, death, and destruction. He may incessantly watch one movie or read and reread one book with violent content, perhaps involving school violence. Themes of hatred, violence, weapons, and mass destruction recur in virtually all his activities, hobbies and pastimes.

The student spends inordinate amounts of time playing video games with violent themes, and seems more interested in the violent images than in the game itself.

On the internet, the student regularly searches for websites involving violence, weapons, and other disturbing subjects. There is evidence the student has downloaded and kept material from these sites.

Negative Role Models: The student may be drawn to negative, inappropriate role models such as Hitler, Satan, or others associated with violence and destruction.

Behaviour Appears Relevant to Carrying-Out a Threat: The student appears to be increasingly occupied in activities that could be related to carrying out a threat for example, spending unusual amounts of time practicing with firearms or on various violent websites. The time spent in these activities has noticeably begun to exclude normal everyday pursuits such as homework, attending classes, going to work, and spending time with friends.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics are patterns of behaviour, thinking, beliefs, traditions, roles, customs and values that exist in a family.

When a student has made a threat, knowledge of the dynamics within the student's family and how those dynamics are perceived by both the student and the parents is a key factor in understanding circumstances and stresses in the student's life that could play a role in any decision to carry out the threat.

Turbulent Parent-Child Relationship: The student's relationship with his parents is particularly difficult or turbulent. This difficulty or turbulence can be uniquely evident following a variety of factors, including recent or multiple moves, loss of a parent, addition of a step parent, etc. He expresses contempt for his parents and dismisses or rejects their role in his life. There is evidence of violence occurring within the student's home.

Acceptance of Pathological Behaviour: Parents do not react to behaviour that most parents would find very disturbing or abnormal. They appear unable to recognize or acknowledge problems in their children and respond quite defensively to any real or perceived criticism of their child. If contacted by school officials or staff about the child's troubling behaviour, the parents appear

unconcerned, minimize the problem, or reject the reports altogether even if the child's misconduct is obvious and significant.

Access to Weapons: The family keeps guns or other weapons or explosive materials in the home, accessible to the student. More important, weapons are treated carelessly without normal safety precautions; for example, guns are not locked away and are left loaded. Parents or a significant role model may handle weapons casually or recklessly and in doing so may convey to children that weapon can be a useful and normal means of intimidating someone else or settling a dispute.

Lack of Intimacy: The family appears to lack intimacy and closeness. The family has moved frequently and/or recently.

Student "Rules the Roost": The parents set few or no limits on the child's conduct and regularly give in to his demands. The student insists on an inordinate degree of privacy, and parents have little information about his activities, school life, friends, or other relationships.

The parents seem intimidated by their child. They may fear he will attack them physically if they confront or frustrate him, or they may be unwilling to face an emotional outburst, or they may be afraid that upsetting the child will spark an emotional crisis. Traditional family roles are reversed: for example, the child acts as if he were the authority figure, while parents act as if they were the children.

No Limits or Monitoring of TV and Internet: Parents do not supervise, limit or monitor the student's television watching or his use of the internet. The student may have a TV in his own room or is otherwise free without limits to spend as much time as he likes watching violent or otherwise inappropriate shows. The student spends a great deal of time watching television rather than in activities with family and friends.

Similarly, parents do not monitor computer use or internet access. The student may know much more about computers than the parents do, and the computer may be considered off limits to the parents while the student is secretive about his computer use, which may involve violent games or internet research on violence, weapons, or other disturbing subjects.

School Dynamics

The relationship between school dynamics and threat assessment has not been empirically established and therefore its level of significance can either increase or decrease depending on additional research into these cases.

While it may be difficult for educators/assessors to “critique” their own school, it is necessary to have some level of understanding of the particular dynamics in their schools because their school can ultimately become the scene of the crime.

School dynamics are patterns of behaviour, thinking, beliefs, customs, traditions, roles and values that exist in a school’s culture. Some of these patterns can be obvious, and others subtle.

Identifying those behaviours which are formally or informally valued and rewarded in a school helps explain why some students get more approval and attention from school authorities and have more prestige among their fellow students. It can also explain the “role” a particular student is given by the school’s culture, and how the student may see himself or herself fitting in, or failing to fit in, with the school’s value system.

Students and staff may have very different perceptions of the culture, customs, and values in their school. Assessors need to be aware of how a school’s dynamics are seen by students. A big discrepancy between students’ perceptions and the administration’s can be a significant piece of information for the assessor.

Student’s Attachment to School: Student appears to be “detached” from school, including other students, teachers, and school activities.

Tolerance for Disrespectful Behaviour: The school does little to prevent or punish disrespectful behaviour between individual students or groups of students. Bullying is part of the school culture and school authorities seem oblivious to it, seldom or never intervening or doing so only selectively. Students frequently act in the roles of bully, victim, or bystander (sometimes, the same student plays different roles in different circumstances). The school atmosphere promotes racial or class divisions or allows them to remain unchallenged.

Inequitable Discipline: The use of discipline is inequitably applied or has the perception of being inequitably applied by students and/or staff.

Inflexible Culture: The school’s culture official and unofficial patterns of behaviour values, and relationships among students, teachers, staff and administrators is static, unyielding, and insensitive to changes in society and the changing needs of newer students and staff.

Pecking Order Among Students: Certain groups of students are officially or unofficially given more prestige and respect than others. Both school officials and the student body treat those in the high-prestige groups as though they are more important or more valuable to the school than other students.

Code of Silence: A code of silence prevails among students. Few feel they can safely tell teachers or administrators if they are concerned about another student’s behaviour or attitudes. Little trust exists between students and staff.

Unsupervised Computer Access: Access to computers and the internet is unsupervised and unmonitored. Students are able to use the school's computers to play violent computer games or to explore inappropriate websites as those that promote violent hate groups or give instructions for bomb making.

Social Dynamics

Social dynamics are patterns of behaviour, thinking beliefs, customs, traditions, and roles that exist in the larger community where students live. These patterns also have an impact on students' behaviour, their feelings about themselves, their outlook on life, attitudes, perceived options, and lifestyle practices.

An adolescent's beliefs and opinions, his choices of friends, activities, entertainment, and reading material, and his attitudes toward such things as drugs, alcohol, and weapons will all reflect in some fashion the social dynamics of the community where he lives and goes to school.

Within the larger community, an adolescent's peer group plays an especially crucial role in influencing attitudes and behaviour. Information about a student's choice of friends and relations with his peers can provide valuable clues to his attitudes, sense of identity, and possible decisions about acting or not acting on a threat.

Media, Entertainment, and Technology: The student has easy and unmonitored access to movies, television shows, computer games, and internet sites with themes and images of extreme violence.

Peer Groups: The student is intensely and exclusively involved with a group who share a fascination with violence or extremist beliefs. The group excludes others who do not share its interests or ideas. As a result, the student spends little or no time with anyone who thinks differently and is shielded from the "reality check" that might come from hearing other views or perceptions.

Drugs and Alcohol: Knowledge of a student's use of drugs and alcohol and his attitude toward these substances can be important. Any changes in his behaviour involving these substances can also be important.

Outside Interests: A student's interests outside of school are important to note, as they can mitigate the school's concern when evaluating a threat or increase the level of concern.

The Copycat Effect: School shootings and other violent incidents that receive intense media attention can generate threats or copycat violence elsewhere. Copycat behaviour is very common; in fact, anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that threats increasing schools nationwide after a shooting has occurred anywhere in the United States. Students, teachers, school

administrators and law enforcement officials should be more vigilant in noting disturbing student behaviour in the days and weeks or even several months following a heavily publicized incident elsewhere in the country.

Attachment B

Threat/Risk Assessment Incident Report

- Name of the threat maker and his/her relationship to the school and to the recipient.
- Name(s) of the victims or potential victims.
- When and where the incident occurred.
- What happened immediately prior to the incident?
- The specific language of the threat.
- Physical conduct that would substantiate intent to follow through on the threat.
- How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally).
- Names of others who were directly involved and any action they took.
- How the incident ended.
- Names of witnesses.
- What happened to the threat-maker after the incident?
- What happened to the other students or employees directly involved after the incident?
- Names of any administrators, teachers, or staff and how they responded.
- What event(s) triggered the incident?
- Any history leading up to the incident.
- The steps that have been taken to ensure the threat will not be carried out.
- Suggestions for preventing school violence in the future.

Adapted from the “*Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence*”. Published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Threat Assessment Documentation

This form should be used to document the threat assessment team's response to a student threat of violence. School administrators are advised to consult their district policy on record keeping for these forms.

Your Name: _____ Position: _____ School: _____

Name of Student: _____

Date Learned of Threat: / / Date Threat Occurred: / /

Type of Threat: Transient Serious Substantive Very Serious Substantive

Who reported threat: _____ Location of Threat: _____

What student said or did to express a threat (quote student if possible):

Student Who Made Threat

Grade: _____

Gender: M F

Special Education Needs: Yes No

Yes No - Had or sought accomplices

Yes No - Reported the threat as a specific plan

Yes No - Written plans or a list

Yes No - Repeated the threat over time

Yes No - Mentioned weapon in threat

Yes No - Used weapon in the threat

Yes No - Had prior conflict with recipient

(within 24 hours of threat)

Yes No - Student previously bullied the recipient

Victim or Recipient of Threat

Number of Victims:

1 2 3 4 5 or more

Primary Recipient:

Student Teacher Parent

Administrator Other: _____

Special Education Needs: Yes No

Yes No - Recipient witnessed threat

Yes No - Recipient previously bullied the student

Evaluation of Threat (Use these questions as the interview foundation: modify them and use additional pages as needed.)

Student Interview

1. Do you know why I wanted to talk with you? Tell me.

2. What happened today when you were (place of incident)?

3. What exactly did you say? And what exactly did you do? (Write down student's exact words).

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

5. How do you think (person who was threatened) feels about what you said or did? (See if student believes it frightened or intimidated the person who was threatened.)

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

7. What are you going to do now that you have made this threat? (Ask if the student intends to carry out the threat?)

For more information visit: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/guidelinesmanual80305.html>

Witness Interview

Recipient (target) of threat or Witness to threat, but not recipient

Witness name and grade or title: _____

1. What exactly happened today when you were (place of incident)?

2. What exactly did (student who made the threat) say or do? (Write down witness's exact words.)

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

4. How do you feel about what he or she said or did? (Gauge whether the person who observed or received the threat feels frightened or intimidated.) Are you concerned that he or she might actually do it?

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

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Threat Responses

Disciplinary Action

- Yes No - Reprimanded Student
- Yes No - Parent Conference
- Yes No - In School time – out
- Yes No - Detention (number of days): _____
- Yes No - Suspension (number of days): _____
- Yes No - Expulsion recommended
- Yes No - Other disciplinary action: _____

Interventions and Safety Precautions

- Yes No - Interviewed and advised student who made threat
 - Yes No - Interviewed and advised student’s parents
 - Yes No - Consulted with one or more school staff members
 - Yes No - Interviewed and advised other students
 - Yes No - Law enforcement consulted
 - Yes No - Law enforcement contact with the student who made the threat
- Consequence of legal action (probation, detention, release into parent’s custody, etc.):

- Yes No - Student might be eligible for special education services; referred for evaluation
- Yes No - Student already received special education services; referred to IEP team for review
- Yes No - Student referred for a 504 plan

- Yes No - Mental health assessment conducted by school – based staff
 - Yes No - Mental health assessment conducted by outside agency (court, DSS, psychologist, etc.)
-

- Yes No - Parents of threat recipient notified of the threat
 - Yes No - Conflict mediation
 - Yes No - School-based counseling
 - Yes No - Alter schedule of the student to increase supervision or minimize contact with the recipient
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- Yes No - Alternative educational placement (alternative school, day treatment program, homebound, etc.)
 - Yes No - Change in transportation (bus suspension, special transportation, etc.)
 - Yes No - Inpatient mental health services
 - Yes No - Outpatient mental health services (counseling or therapy with outside mental health provider)
 - Yes No - Other safety precautions (please list):
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-

For more information: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/guidelinesmanual80305.html>

Threat Assessment Safety Plan

Student Demographics

Student:

Birthdate:

MET # :

Site:

Grade:

School Year:

Legal Guardians

Parent(s) / Guardian (s) : (1)
(2)

Relationship to student: (1)
(2)

Address: (1)
(2)

Telephone (Home) (1)
(2)

Telephone (Work) (1)
(2)

Child Care Agency

Job Title

Team Members

Signature and Date

Parent (s) / Guardian(s)	
Administrator	
Classroom Teacher	
Resource Teacher (s)	
Counselor	
Behaviour Intervention Specialist Teacher	
School District of Mystery Lake Counsellor	

Threat Assessment Safety Plan

<u>Student's Name:</u>	<u>Date:</u>
<u>Grade:</u>	

Reasons for Safety Plan:

Possible Causes:

Interventions:

<u>Proactive Approaches</u>	<u>Reactive Approaches</u>

<p><u>Review</u> Date/Comments:</p>	<p><u>Review</u> Date/Comments:</p>