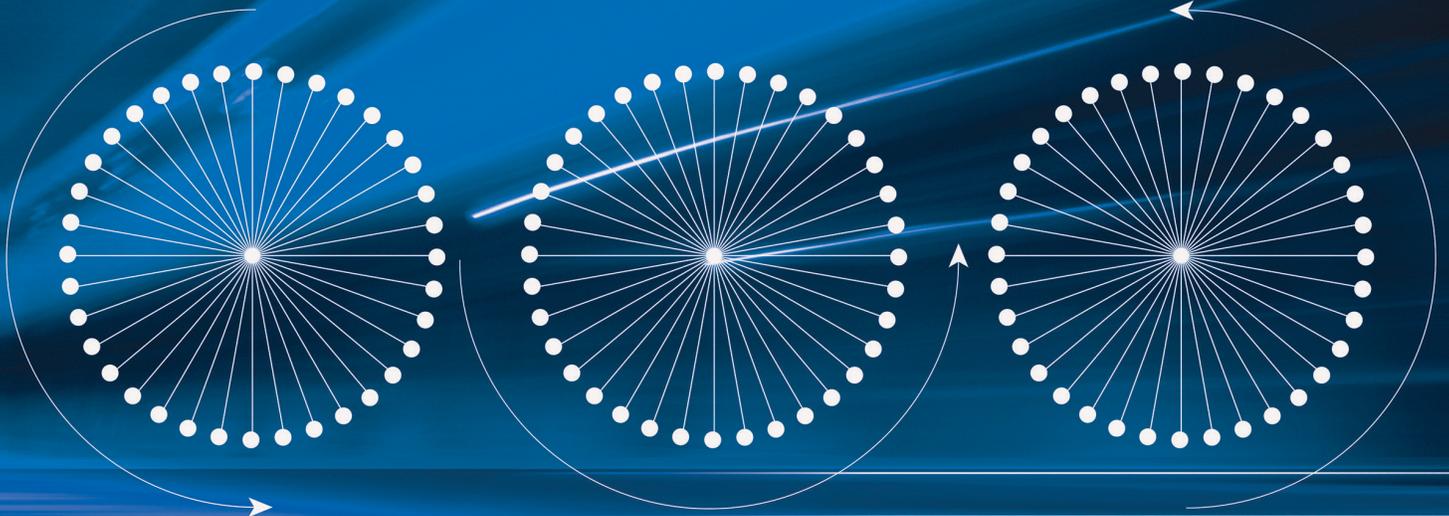


# Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines



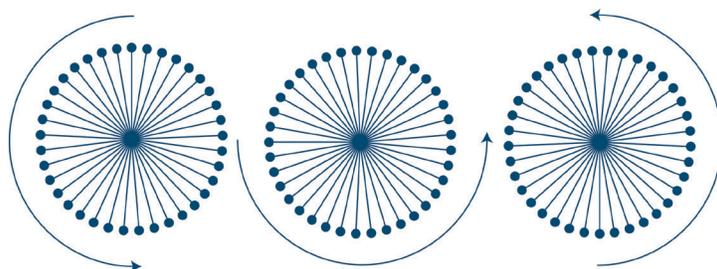
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## INTRODUCTION

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The model threat assessment policies, procedures, and guidelines contained herein were developed in response to legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2013. In accordance with *Code of Virginia*, § 9.1-184.A.10, requiring the development of model policy, the primary focus is on providing schools with “a model policy for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including procedures for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.”

The model policy and procedures are based on a synthesis of known best practices. They are consistent with the process for identifying, assessing, and managing students who may pose a threat set forth in *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, a 2002 publication of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education (Fein et al, 2002). The process described in the *Guide* was informed by research on incidents of targeted violence in schools that concluded that over 80 percent of attackers did not threaten their targets directly, but did engage in pre-attack behaviors that would have indicated an inclination toward or the potential for targeted violence had they been identified. Findings about the pre-attack behaviors validated use of a fact-based threat assessment process relying primarily on an appraisal of *behaviors*, rather than traits, as the basis for determining the nature and degree of any safety concerns, and for developing a strategic approach to reducing risk and improving the safety and well-being of the school community. Although expressed/communicated threats require assessment, this model contemplates the identification and assessment of a broader range of concerning behaviors. The model emphasizes that effective threat assessment can only occur in school cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support – environments in which students, teachers, and administrators pay attention to the social and emotional, as well as academic, needs of students and have access to assistance for addressing and resolving underlying problems.

Procedures and guidelines also reflect a review and synthesis of procedures currently used in Virginia school divisions. A model that is used extensively in Virginia is based on the “Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines” developed by the Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. This model has been tested, including three controlled studies (Cornell, Allen, & Fan, 2012; Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Fan, 2009) and, in 2013, the model was added to the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). The model was derived from threat assessment principles developed in law enforcement and adapted for use in schools. The guidelines specify a series of decision steps and related criteria and offer an alternative to zero tolerance practices.

The *Code of Virginia* makes reference to **student** threats in § 9.1-184.A.10, requiring the development of model policy, and in § 22.1-79.4, requiring each local school board to “adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment of and intervention with **students** whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students...” Assessment of threatening behavior(s) from **non-students** is not specifically addressed by the *Code of Virginia*. Additionally, most models for threat assessment in K-12 public schools focus on assessing threats from students. However, emerging research and practice literature on workplace violence prevention and intervention suggests that a comprehensive approach to school safety would also identify and assess threats from non-students.

Some non-student threats are already addressed by most local school board policies and procedures. Model policies promulgated by the Virginia School Boards Association as well as the Virginia Department of Education’s publication *Crisis Management and Emergency Response in Virginia Schools* address unauthorized visitors, hostile parents, and trespassers who may include former employees and students. Two types of non-student threats frequently not addressed in local school board policies are threats from school division employees and from persons involved in abusive relationships with school division employees that spill over into the school workplace. Although not explicitly required by law, school boards may wish to consider developing policies addressing these non-student threats as an element of a comprehensive approach to school safety.

Section I contains a model policy, procedures, and guidelines for assessing threats from students.

Section II includes sample policies and procedures for non-student threat assessment focusing on threats from school division employees and from persons involved in abusive relationships with school division employees that spill over into the school workplace. The sample policies and procedures are based on a synthesis of emerging research and practice literature on workplace violence prevention and intervention from the most authoritative sources.

**The threat assessment policies and procedures contained herein are *models* that are based on a synthesis of known best practices and are consistent with Virginia law. They are *not* intended to be prescriptive. Although required to adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, local school boards have authority to establish any policies or procedures that are consistent with applicable laws and regulations.**

## SECTION I. STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT

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The Model School Board Policy on Student Threat Assessment presented here is based on the precise language and requirements of § 22.1-79.4, *Code of Virginia* requiring local school boards to adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams and prescribing the composition and responsibilities of teams as well as related referral and reporting requirements.

### MODEL SCHOOL BOARD POLICY ON STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT

#### STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT

- A formal threat assessment team shall be established for each school for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students.
- The superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team; a particular threat assessment team may serve one or more schools as determined by the superintendent.
  - Each team shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement.
  - Each team shall:
    - Provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self;
    - Identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported; and
    - Implement school board policies for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.
- All school division employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report any expressed threats or behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self.
- In cases determined to be appropriate, teams shall follow established procedures for referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment when appropriate.
- Regardless of threat assessment activities, disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement are to occur as required by school board policy and the *Code of Virginia*.
- Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to self or others, a threat assessment team shall immediately report its determination to the superintendent or designee. The superintendent or designee shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian. Nothing in this policy shall preclude school division personnel from acting immediately to address an imminent threat.
- The superintendent may establish a committee operating within the division charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams. An existing committee may be designated to assume the oversight responsibility; however, any such team shall include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.
- Each threat assessment team established pursuant to *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-79.4 shall report quantitative data on its activities according to guidance developed by the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Reference statutory authority for policy: *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-79.4

Refer to: [School division lists here the specific local school regulation(s) setting forth student threat assessment procedures and any closely related regulations.]

## MODEL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENTS

These model procedures are consistent with the requirements of the *Code of Virginia* and reflect practices set forth in *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* as well as best practices identified in school divisions in Virginia. Elements of the procedure that are aligned with *Code of Virginia* requirements include a cross-reference to the applicable section of the *Code*.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this regulation is to establish procedures for the assessment and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.

### DEFINITIONS

- A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that suggests a person may intend to harm someone else. The threat may be spoken, written, or gestured and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat existing in any fashion, whether orally, visually, in writing, or electronically.
- A threat assessment is a fact-based process relying primarily on an appraisal of behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations and address them.
- A low risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily.
- A moderate risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent to harm and potential for future violence.
- A high risk threat is one in which the person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan.
- An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified target(s).

### THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM

- School threat assessment teams shall be headed by the principal or administrative designee and include at least one guidance counselor, a school psychologist and/or school social worker, a law enforcement representative who is typically a school resource officer, and a member with expertise in instruction. Other school staff may serve on the team and/or be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate, or as determined by the principal. [Note: § 22.1-79.4.D., *Code of Virginia*, requires school threat assessment teams to include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement]
- In fulfilling statutory responsibilities, school threat assessment teams shall:
  - Conduct the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of the school staff or students.
  - Provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening behavior that may represent a threat by conducting presentations, broadly disseminating relevant information, and ensuring access to consultation from teams;
  - Clearly identify the person(s) to whom members of the school community are to report threatening behavior; and

- Implement school board policies in an effective manner for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat, including, in appropriate cases, referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment. (§ 22.1-79.4.C., *Code of Virginia*)
- The school division level threat assessment team shall oversee and provide support for school threat assessment teams. [Note: § 22.1-79.4.B., *Code of Virginia*, authorizes the superintendent of each school division to establish a committee charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams operating within the division, which may be an existing committee established by the division. *If established*, it is required that the committee include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.]
  - The team shall include a senior division administrator (e.g., Assistant Superintendent for Administration) and senior division administrators in school safety, in student services, and in human resources in consultation with designated representatives of the (specify) community services board and (locality) police department (or sheriff’s office).
  - The school division level threat assessment team shall provide oversight to school level threat assessment teams; ensure that procedures are maintained for effective information sharing between the school division and community mental health and law enforcement agencies; assess the effectiveness of the threat assessment process throughout the school division; and recommend changes to policies and procedures, as needed, to ensure an effective threat assessment process reflecting known best practices.

## PROCEDURES

- Identifying and Reporting Threats
  - When a student makes a threat or engages in concerning communications or behaviors that suggest the likelihood of a threatening situation, the [school division] **Student Threat Assessment Guidelines** shall be followed. The goal of the threat assessment process is to take appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain a safe and secure school environment, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed, to the student being assessed.
  - Regardless of threat assessment activities, disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement are to occur when required by school board policy or the *Code of Virginia*.
  - Threats of self harm require compliance with § 22.1-272.1, *Code of Virginia* and with applicable school board policies and regulations [cite Division Regulation #]. When threats of self harm are accompanied by threats to harm others, or investigation suggests the existence of a threat to others, the threat assessment team shall be notified and take appropriate action to prevent acts of violence.
  - All school division employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report immediately to the designated school administrator any expression of intent to harm another person, concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest a student may intend to commit an act of violence.
  - Anyone who believes that a person or situation poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence that requires containment should notify school security and/or law enforcement in accordance with school board policies on Critical Incident Response [cite Division Regulation #].
  - In accordance with § 22.1-279.3:1, *Code of Virginia* certain types of threats require immediate notification to law enforcement. The school administrator shall immediately report to the local law enforcement agency:
    - A threat that involves stalking of any person on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity.
    - Threats to bomb, burn, kill, or harm school personnel.

- Threats of death or bodily injury to a person or members of his or her family; and/or threats to commit serious bodily harm to persons on school property.
  - The school administrator shall also immediately report any act noted above that may constitute a criminal offense to the parents and/or guardians of any minor student who is alleged to have committed the act and shall report that the incident has been reported to local law enforcement, as required by law. The school administrator shall inform the parents and/or guardians that they may contact local law enforcement for further information, if they so desire. In addition, the school administrator may report other threats to the local law enforcement agency, as necessary and appropriate.
- Assessing Threats
  - When a threat is reported, the school administrator shall initiate an investigative process and, in consultation with the threat assessment team, make a determination of the seriousness of the threat as expeditiously as possible in accordance with [school division] **Student Threat Assessment Guidelines**.
  - The initial phase of the threat assessment process typically follows a standard discipline investigation process. As soon as the threat is reported, the school administrator is to conduct timely interviews of the student who made the threat, the recipients of the threat, and other witnesses who have knowledge of the threat. The purpose of the interviews is to evaluate the student’s threat in context, so that the meaning of the threat and intent of the student can be determined.
  - **Imminent threat.** If the student appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence, the administrator shall notify law enforcement in accordance with School Board policies on Critical Incident Response (cite Division Regulation #). [Note: In accordance with *Virginia’s Crisis Management and Emergency Response Resource Guide* responses may include actions such as evacuation, lockdown, and shelter-in-place.]
  - **Low risk threat.** If it is determined that the threat is a low risk threat and the threat assessment team determines no further assessment or monitoring is required at this time, the administrator shall complete the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Form** and retain a copy with the student’s disciplinary records in accordance with School Board policy. If the student appears to be in need of assistance, the threat assessment team shall refer the student for assistance from the appropriate school or community-based resources and assign a case manager to monitor progress.
  - If it cannot be determined with a reasonable degree of confidence that the threat is low risk, then a more in-depth investigation is to be undertaken by the threat assessment team to determine the nature and degree of any safety concerns and to develop strategies to reduce risk, as necessary. The investigation may include but not be limited to reviews of records, consultation with staff who know the student, and interviews of the subject student and threat recipient(s).
  - Based on information collected, the school threat assessment team is to determine strategies to mitigate the threat and provide assistance, as needed. As a step in this process, the threat assessment team is to classify threats and respond in accordance with the level of threat in accordance with **Student Threat Assessment Guidelines**.
  - Upon a determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to self or others, a threat assessment team shall immediately report its determination to the superintendent or designee. The superintendent or designee shall immediately attempt to notify the student’s parent or legal guardian. (§ 22.1-79.4.D., *Code of Virginia* and § 22.1-272.1., *Code of Virginia*).
  - In instances where the threat is deemed moderate risk or high risk, or requires further action, the school administrator shall notify the parent and/or guardian of the student who is the recipient of the threat and the parent and/or guardian of the student who made the threat. In cases involving low risk threats, the parent or guardian of the threat recipient may be notified at the discretion of the threat assessment team.

- Findings from assessment and classification of the threat are to be documented in writing by submitting the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** to the [designated school division administrative office] within 72 hours of the initial receipt of the threat.
- Intervening, Monitoring, and Resolving
  - If it is determined that the student poses a threat of violence, the threat assessment team shall develop, implement, and monitor an individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat. The individualized plan is to be documented in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**.
  - The student who made the threat and any impacted students are to be assisted in accessing appropriate school and community-based resources for support and/or assistance.
  - A member of the threat assessment team shall be designated case manager to monitor the status of the student and to notify the threat assessment team of any change in status or additional information that would be cause for a re-assessment. Additional information from monitoring and any re-assessment are to be documented in updates to the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**. These updates are to be submitted at least every 30 days until the case is resolved.
  - Resolution of the case is to be documented in the Verification of Case Closure portion of the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**.

***See also:***

Student Conduct Policies (specify those dealing with threat/intimidation)

Suicide Prevention Policies and Procedures

Critical Incident Response Policies and Procedures

§ 22.1-79.4., *Code of Virginia*

## STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

These guidelines are based on principles and practices recommended in *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, a 2002 publication of the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education. The publication is available online at [www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi\\_guide.pdf](http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_guide.pdf)

### PRINCIPLES OF THREAT ASSESSMENT

Threat assessment is to be viewed as one component of an overall strategy to reduce school violence and implemented within the larger context of strategies to ensure schools are safe and secure environments. The principle objective of school violence-reduction strategies should be to create cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support within the school.

Among other school safety strategies employed by [school division] are:

[School division to insert list of strategies employed; examples include:

- School climate assessments
- Emphasis on school connectedness
- Strong, but caring, stance against the code of silence
- Bullying prevention and intervention
- School-law enforcement partnerships including school resource officers
- Collaborative relationships with mental health, social services, and other community-based resources]

### Assumptions

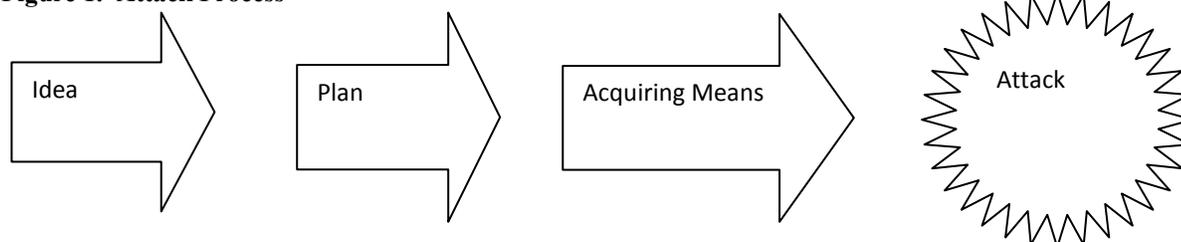
Assumptions reflected in the guidelines are informed by findings of the *Safe School Initiative*, a study that examined 37 incidents of targeted school violence that occurred in the United States from December 1974 through May 2000. Among key findings:

- Incidents of targeted violence at school are rarely sudden, impulsive acts.
- Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack.
- Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack.
- Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused concern or indicated a need for help.

The fact that most attackers engaged in pre-incident planning behavior and shared their intentions and plans with others, suggests that the information is likely to be uncovered through a sound threat assessment process.

Attacks examined under the *Safe School Initiative* appeared to be the end result of a process of thinking and behavior that begins with an idea, progresses to development of a plan, moves on to acquiring the means (e.g., weapons, training, capacity, access) to carry out the plan, and culminates in an attack. A graphic representation of the process is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Attack Process**



## Principles

The appraisal of risk in a threat assessment focuses on actions/behaviors, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to engage in violence and is planning or preparing for that event. The threat assessment process is centered upon an analysis of the facts and evidence of behavior in a given situation.

According to experts, six core principles that form the foundation of the threat assessment process are:

1. The central question in a threat assessment inquiry or investigation is whether a student poses a threat, not whether the student has made a threat.

The Safe School Initiative found that fewer than 20 percent of school shooters communicated a direct or conditional threat to their target before the attack. By contrast, individuals who are found to pose threats of violence frequently do not make threats to their targets. The study found that in more than 80 percent of the cases, school shooters did not threaten their targets directly, but they did communicate their intent and/or plans to others before the attack.

2. Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and often discernible, process of thinking and behavior.

Students who have committed targeted attacks did not “just snap,” but engaged in a process of thought and escalation of action over days, weeks, months, and even years.

3. Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the individual, the situation, the setting, and the target.

Preventing acts of violence requires a focus on these four components and their interaction. A focus on the individual should provide insight into how the individual perceives and deals with conditions, often stressful, in his or her life. A focus on the situation should examine circumstances and events such as bullying or personal losses that contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed. Almost all school shooters experienced some major situational stress at some point prior to their attacks.

4. An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment.

Those who carry out threat assessment must strive to be both accurate and fair, continuing throughout the assessment process both to gather pieces of information and to fit the pieces into a larger picture.

5. Effective assessment is based upon facts and observations of behavior, rather than on characteristics or “traits.” Student “profiles” do not provide a reliable basis for making judgments of the threat posed by a particular student.

6. An “integrated systems approach” coordinated with agencies and service systems within the school and the community (e.g., mental health services, law enforcement) should guide threat assessment inquiries.

Relationships with agencies and service systems within the school (e.g., school psychologist, school social worker, school-based mental health clinicians) and community (e.g., mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare) are critical to identifying, assessing, and managing students who are on a path to carrying out an act of targeted violence.

## Definitions

- A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that suggests a person may intend to harm someone else. The threat may be spoken, written, or gestured and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat existing in any fashion, whether orally, visually, in writing, or electronically.
- A threat assessment is a fact-based process relying primarily on an appraisal of behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations and address them.
- A low risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily.

- A moderate risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent to harm and potential for future violence.
- A high risk threat is one in which the person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan.
- An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified target(s).

### **School Threat Assessment Teams**

[Note: § 22.1-79.4.D., *Code of Virginia*, requires school threat assessment teams to include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement.]

School threat assessment teams shall be headed by the principal or administrative designee and include at least one guidance counselor, a school psychologist and/or school social worker, a law enforcement representative who is typically a school resource officer, and a member with expertise in instruction. Other school staff may serve on the team and/or be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate, or as determined by the principal.

At the discretion of the superintendent, a threat assessment team may be established to serve more than one school when logistics and staff assignments make it feasible. (§ 22.1-79.4.C., *Code of Virginia*)

School threat assessment teams are required by § 22.1-79.4.D, *Code of Virginia*, to do the following:

- Provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening behavior that may represent a threat by conducting presentations, broadly disseminating relevant information, and ensuring access to consultation from teams;
- Identify the person(s) to whom members of the school community are to report threatening behavior; and
- Implement school board policies in an effective manner for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat, including, in appropriate cases, referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment.

### **Division Threat Assessment Teams**

[Note: § 22.1-79.4.B., *Code of Virginia*, permits the superintendent to establish a division-level threat assessment team charged with oversight of the school threat assessment teams operating within the division and permits an existing division-level committee to function as the division threat assessment team. *If established*, the division-level threat assessment team must include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.]

The division-level threat assessment team shall oversee and provide support for school threat assessment teams.

The team shall include a senior division administrator (e.g., Assistant Superintendent for Administration) and senior division administrators in school safety, in student services, and in human resources in consultation with designated representatives of the (specify) community services board and (locality) police department (or sheriff's office).

The division-level threat assessment team shall perform the following duties:

- provide oversight to school level threat assessment teams;
- ensure that procedures are maintained for effective information sharing between the school division and community mental health and law enforcement agencies;
- assess the effectiveness of the threat assessment process throughout the school division; and

- recommend changes to policies and procedures, as needed, to ensure an effective threat assessment process reflecting current best practices.

### **Documentation**

When a threat assessment is conducted and results in a determination of low risk, the administrator shall complete the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** and maintain a copy with the student’s discipline record in accordance with existing policy.

When a student threat is determined to be moderate or high risk, the administrator shall ensure that the determination is documented in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** and that the report is submitted to [designated school division administrative office] within 72 hours of the initial report of the threat.

Any individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat is to be documented in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**. Additional information from monitoring and any re-assessment are also to be documented in updates to the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** that are to be submitted at least every 30 days until the case is resolved. Resolution of the case is to be documented in the Verification of Case Closure portion of the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**.

## **IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING THREATS**

All school division employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report immediately to the school administrator any expression of intent to harm another person, concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest a student may intend to commit an act of targeted violence.

The school threat assessment team shall strive to make the reporting process both understandable and highly accessible and to discourage a “code of silence” that may be a barrier to reporting. Faculty and staff, students, volunteers, and other members of the school community need to know:

- their role and responsibility to report;
- what to report;
- where to report it;
- that reports are wanted and will be acted upon.

Members of the school community should be encouraged on an ongoing basis to report any threatening communication or troubling behavior and be reminded that reporting is an act of caring and not “snitching” or “tattling.”

Section 8.01-47, *Code of Virginia*, enacted in 2013, grants immunity from all civil liability to any person who, in good faith with reasonable cause and without malice, reports, investigates, or causes an investigation to be made into information that any person poses a credible danger of serious bodily injury or death to any other person on school property.

All threats of self harm require compliance with § 22.1-272.1, *Code of Virginia* and with applicable school board policies and regulations [cite Division Regulation #]. However, when threats of self-harm are accompanied by threats to harm others, or investigation suggests the existence of a threat to others, the threat assessment team shall be notified and take appropriate action to prevent acts of targeted violence.

Anyone who believes that a person or situation poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence that requires containment should notify school security and law enforcement in accordance with school board policies on Critical Incident Response [cite Division Regulation #].

## ASSESSING AND CLASSIFYING THREATS

When a threat is reported, the school administrator shall initiate an investigative process and, in consultation with the threat assessment team, make a determination of the seriousness of the threat as expeditiously as possible in accordance with [school division] **Student Threat Assessment Guidelines**.

The initial phase of the threat assessment process typically follows a standard discipline investigation process. As soon as the threat is reported, the school administrator is to conduct timely interviews of the student who made the threat, the recipients of the threat, and other witnesses who have knowledge of the threat. The purpose of the interviews is to evaluate the student's threat in context, so that the meaning of the threat and intent of the student can be determined.

If the student appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence, the administrator shall notify law enforcement in accordance with School Board policies on Critical Incident Response (cite Division Regulation #). [Note: In accordance with *Virginia's Crisis Management and Emergency Response Resource Guide* responses may include actions such as evacuation, lockdown, and shelter-in-place.]

Information obtained from the threat assessment should be recorded in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** which documents information collected from multiple sources. All questions should be asked and responses recorded.

The following are examples of key questions to help assess the situation. Additional questions may be asked for clarification and/or to probe more deeply to fully understand the circumstances.

Questions for student who made the threat:

- What exactly was said or done
- What was meant by what was said or done
- Student understanding of how what was said/done would make target feel
- Reason student said or did concerning act
- What student now plans

Questions for witness(es):

- What exactly the student said or did
- What witness thinks student meant based on the context of the comment or action
- What witness thinks was motive for what student said/did
- Has the student engaged in any behaviors that would assist them in committing violent acts towards others (e.g., seeking weapons)

Questions for recipient(s) of threat:

- What exactly the student said or did, if witnessed
- Nature of relationship with student; whether there is history of conflict or prior threats
- What recipient thinks was motive for what student said/did

Information from records and consultation with adults in school who know student best:

- Recent disciplinary and school performance history
- Presence of known problems in the life of the student

Regardless of threat assessment activities, disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement are to occur as required by school board policy or § 22.1-279.3:1, *Code of Virginia*. Certain types of threats require immediate notification to law enforcement. The school administrator shall immediately report to the local law enforcement agency:

- A threat that involves stalking of any person on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity.
- Threats to bomb, burn, kill, or harm school personnel.
- Threats of death or bodily injury to a person or members of his or her family; and/or threats to commit serious bodily harm to persons on school property.

In accordance with § 22.1-279.3:1, *Code of Virginia*, the principal (or designee) shall also immediately report any act noted above that may constitute a criminal offense to the parents and/or guardians of any minor student who is alleged to have committed the act and shall report that the incident has been reported to local law enforcement, as required by law. The school administrator shall inform the parents and/or guardians that they may contact local law enforcement for further information, if they so desire. In addition, the school administrator may report other threats to the local law enforcement agency, as necessary and appropriate.

If it is determined that the threat is a low risk threat and the threat assessment team determines no further assessment or monitoring is required at this time, the administrator shall complete the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Form** and retain a copy with the student's disciplinary records in accordance with School Board policy.

If the student appears to be in need of assistance, the threat assessment team shall refer the student for assistance from the appropriate school or community-based resources and assign a case manager to monitor progress.

The school administrator should be able to investigate and resolve most low risk threats in consultation with members of the threat assessment team with minimal direct involvement by the full team.

If it cannot be determined with a reasonable degree of confidence that the threat is low risk, then a more in-depth investigation is to be undertaken by the threat assessment team to determine the nature and degree of any safety concerns and to develop strategies to reduce risk.

Before conducting an interview with a student of concern, threat assessment team members should be well acquainted with the facts that brought the student to the attention of school administrators and others. In addition, team members should review available information concerning the student's background, interests, and behaviors.

**Review of records/consultation with staff members who know the student best:** Background information can inform the threat assessment team's approach to and questioning of the student. This information may help the threat assessment team determine whether the student poses a threat to particular targets. In addition, knowledge of background information concerning the student prior to the interview may help the threat assessment team judge whether the student is forthcoming and straightforward.

**Student interview:** Generally, a student should be asked directly about his or her intentions. Often, adolescents will respond forthrightly to a direct question. A student interview conducted during a threat assessment inquiry can elicit important information that permits the threat assessment team to better understand the situation of the student and possible targets. This understanding, in turn, will help the threat assessment team to assess the risk of violence that the student may pose in a given situation. Interviews with a student of concern also can generate leads for further inquiry.

An interview can also send the message to the student that his or her behavior has been noticed and has caused concern. Interviews give students of concern the opportunity to tell their personal stories, to be heard, and to reassess and redirect their behavior away from activities that are of concern. The interview may suggest to a student who has mixed feelings about attacking that there are people who are interested in his or her welfare, and that there are better, more effective ways to deal with problems or with specific people.

Although an interview with a student of concern can provide valuable information, relying too heavily on that interview as a basis for making judgments about whether that student poses a threat may present problems. The information offered by the student may be incomplete, misleading, or inaccurate. It therefore is important to collect information to corroborate and verify information learned from the student interview.

**Interview with threat recipient(s):** Individuals who have been identified as potential targets of the student of concern should also be interviewed. The threat assessment team should inform the subject of the interview that the primary purpose of that interview is to gather information about a possible situation of concern.

A potential target should be asked about their relationship to the student of concern and queried about recent interactions with that student. The interviewer should gather information about grievances and grudges that the student of concern may hold against a target or against others. Interviews with potential targets should be conducted with special sensitivity. Care must be taken to gather information without unduly alarming a potential target. If the threat assessment team believes that there may be a risk of violence to an identified target, that target should be offered assistance and support.

The assessment process facilitates increased and revised understanding of issues over time. That is, when new information is made available to the team during or after the initial assessment, the team should review the new information and re-evaluate the threat accordingly.

### **Assessing Potential Threatening Behavior**

Information gathered in a threat assessment inquiry should be examined for evidence of behavior and conditions that suggest that the student of concern is planning and preparing for an attack. Analysis of this information should, in the end, answer these questions:

- Is the behavior of the student consistent with movement on a pathway toward attack?
- Do the student's current situation and the setting incline him or her toward or away from targeted violence?

Based on the information available, the threat assessment team should seek to answer the following questions:

#### **1. What are the student's motive(s) and goals?**

- What motivated the student to make the statements or take the actions that caused him or her to come to attention?
- Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
- Does the student have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result? Does the potential attacker feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternatives?

#### **2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?**

- What, if anything, has the student communicated to someone else (targets, friends, other students, teachers, family, others) or written in a diary, journal, or on a Web site concerning his or her ideas and/or intentions?
- Have friends been alerted or "warned away"?

#### **3. Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?**

- school attacks or attackers;
- weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
- incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers).

**4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors? These behaviors might include:**

- developing an attack idea or plan;
- making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons;
- casing, or checking out, possible sites and areas for attack;
- rehearsing attacks or ambushes.

**5. Does the student have the means to carry out an act of targeted violence?**

- How organized is the student's thinking and behavior?
- Does the student have the means, e.g., access to a weapon, to carry out an attack?

**6. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?**

- Is there information to suggest that the student is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
- Has the student experienced a recent failure, loss, and/or loss of status?
- Is the student known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
- Is the student now, or has the student ever been, suicidal or "accident-prone"?
- Has the student engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?

**7. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?**

- Does the student have at least one relationship with an adult where the student feels that he or she can confide in the adult and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions? (Students with trusting relationships with adults may be directed away from violence and despair and toward hope.)
- Is the student emotionally connected to – or disconnected from – other students?
- Has the student previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

**8. Does the student see violence as an acceptable – or desirable – or the only – way to solve problems?**

- Does the setting around the student (friends, fellow students, parents, teachers, adults) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
- Has the student been "dared" by others to engage in an act of violence?

**9. Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?**

- Does information from collateral interviews and from the student's own behavior confirm or dispute what the student says is going on?

**10. Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?**

- Are those who know the student concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
- Are those who know the student concerned about a specific target?
- Have those who know the student witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?

## 11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?

- What factors in the student’s life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the student will attempt to mount an attack at school?
- What is the response of other persons who know about the student’s ideas or plan to mount an attack? Do those who know about the student’s ideas actively discourage the student from acting violently, encourage the student to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with an attack, etc.?

Thoughtful consideration of the answers to the above 11 questions will produce a sound foundation for the threat assessment team’s response to the overarching question in a threat assessment inquiry: ***Does the student of concern pose a threat of targeted violence at school?***

Behaviors that should raise concern about potential violence include:

- ideas or plans about injuring him/herself or attacking a school or persons at school;
- communications or writings that suggest that the student has an unusual or worrisome interest in school attacks;
- comments that express or imply the student is considering mounting an attack at school;
- recent weapon-seeking behavior, especially if weapon-seeking is linked to ideas about attack or expressions about interest in attack;
- communications or writings suggesting the student condones or is considering violence to redress a grievance or solve a problem; and
- rehearsals of attacks or ambushes.

### Classifying Threats to Determine Response Strategies

The threat assessment is designed to identify and assess risks in a deliberate and thorough manner. In determining response strategies to mitigate the risk and to provide assistance, as needed, it is helpful to classify threats by level. Based on the information collected, the threat assessment team may classify threats using the following basic criteria:

Threat Levels	Criteria
Low risk threat	person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily.
Moderate risk threat	person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent to harm and potential for future violence.
High risk threat	person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan.
Imminent threat	person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified target(s).

## RESPONDING TO THREATS

Successful management of a threatening situation can require substantial time and effort. Management of these situations comprises three related functions:

1. controlling/containing the situation and/or student in a way that will prevent the possibility of an attack;
2. protecting and aiding possible targets to the extent possible; and
3. providing support and guidance to help the student deal successfully with his or her problems.

If it is determined that the student poses a threat of violence, the threat assessment team shall develop, implement, and monitor an individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat. The individualized plan is to be documented in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**.

The student who made the threat and any impacted students are to be assisted in accessing appropriate school and community-based resources for support and/or assistance.

A member of the threat assessment team shall be designated case manager to monitor the status of the student and to notify the threat assessment team of any change in status or additional information that would be cause for a re-assessment. Additional information from monitoring and any re-assessment are to be documented in the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report Update** to be submitted at least every 30 days until the case is resolved. Resolution of the case is to be documented in the Verification of Case Closure portion of the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report**.

### Threat Assessment and Disciplinary Responses

Response strategies selected should be the ones with the greatest potential for long-term preventive power. While holding students accountable for their actions, school administrators must be fair and reasonable in disciplinary responses. A broad range of corrective disciplinary actions may be employed including admonition and counseling, student behavior contract, after-school or in-school detention, and suspension of student privileges for a specified period. These disciplinary responses may be combined with other actions such as parent conferences, modifications of student classroom assignment or schedule, and referrals to in-school and community-based programs such as mediation and community service.

It is important for threat assessment teams to recognize that even fair and reasonable discipline can be perceived as another grievance to which the student may react. In such cases, the disciplinary response could lead to escalation in threatening behavior.

The most punitive responses may or may not prevent acts of violence. Suspension or expulsion of a student *can* create the risk of triggering either an immediate or a delayed violent response unless such actions are coupled with containment and support. A student who is expelled may conclude: "I have lost everything. I have only a short time to act. I will give them what they deserve." In addition, a student who is suspended or expelled is often under less supervision than if he or she were to remain in a school setting.

Although detaining a student may be necessary in a particular situation, without careful attention to the need for confinement, weapons removal, or interpersonal intervention, that action may be insufficient to prevent an eventual attack at school or otherwise protect a target. Similarly, referring a student to the mental health system, without seeing that referral in the context of an overall monitoring/management plan, may not be sufficient to prevent violence.

### Low Risk Threat Responses

A low risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily. The response to such a threat depends on the context of the threat, whether the threat requires some form of disciplinary action, and what is necessary to resolve the situation. All low risk threats must end in an apology, retraction, or explanation that indicates that the threat is over. School administrators should do the following:

- Since low risk threats by definition do not appear to pose a threat and can be easily resolved, action to protect the person(s) to whom the threat was directed may not be necessary. When the person to whom the threat was directed is a student, his/her parents or guardian may be notified, at the discretion of the threat assessment team. If parents of a threatened student are notified, they should be contacted promptly and reassured that the threat has been resolved.
- All low risk threats are subject to disciplinary action based on school board policy. Regardless of disciplinary action, the parent or guardian of the subject student is to be notified of the incident and of the disciplinary action taken.
- When the threat assessment team determines a threat to be low risk, the case may be resolved entirely with no further action or resolved with referral to appropriate school or community-based resources. When students are referred for services, a member of the threat assessment team is designated case manager to monitor the student and the ongoing situation. At any time that new information is made available after the initial assessment, the team should review the new information and re-evaluate the threat accordingly.

### **Moderate Risk Threat Responses**

A moderate risk threat will typically result in notifying the intended victim(s) of the threat and taking precautions to protect them, taking steps to monitor and supervise the subject student, and taking disciplinary action in accordance with existing discipline policy. The threat assessment team will also work to address the conflict or problem that led to the threat.

Examples of strategies that may be employed include but are not limited to:

- Take precautions to protect potential victims. Precautions typically include:
  - Provide direct supervision so the student cannot carry out the threat while at school or on the bus.
  - Caution the student who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
  - Contact the subject student’s parents to assume responsibility for supervision of the student and to enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat.
  - Notify the intended victim(s) and their parents. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
- Consult with the school resource officer to assist in monitoring and supervising the subject student as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.
- Follow applicable disciplinary procedure in accordance with conduct policy.
- Where appropriate, refer the subject student for counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce the threat of violence and to address the underlying conflict or issues that led to the threat. The school administrator should involve school-based professionals, such as the psychologist, counselor, or social worker, who can provide assistance in resolving the conflict and appropriate intervention.
- At the discretion of the threat assessment team, a mental health evaluation may be conducted, following parameters for response to high risk threats below.
- If warranted by findings from the mental health evaluation, the threat assessment team shall convene to complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment.

## High Risk Threat Responses

Threats to rape, kill, inflict severe injury, or use weapons, or other actions indicating intent to commit such offenses require the immediate involvement of the threat assessment team. When the threat is determined to be high risk, the threat assessment team must:

- Notify law enforcement per regulation to contain the threat and consult with School Safety and Security.
- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims:
  - Provide direct supervision so the subject student cannot carry out the threat while at school or on the bus.
  - Caution the student who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
  - Contact the subject student’s parents and enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat; either law enforcement or the student’s parents should assume responsibility for supervising the student.
  - Notify the intended victim(s) and their parents. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be fully notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
- Follow applicable disciplinary procedure in accordance with conduct policy.
- A mental health evaluation is to be conducted either by a clinically qualified team member or by someone contracted to provide the assessment. The clinician conducting the evaluation should not have a treatment relationship with the student. The assessment should be based on a review of all available information as well as information from the student. The written report must identify the problem or conflict that prompted the threat and recommend strategies to address the problem and to reduce the risk of violence.
- The school administrator or disciplinary hearing officer will determine the conditions of readmission to school that may include the requirement to cooperate in a mental health evaluation. The parents are to be notified of all requirements and any failure to comply. A re-admission meeting must be held prior to the subject student’s return to school.
- Every effort will be made by threat assessment team members to obtain any required signed permission for release and exchange of information with mental health provider(s), if any, and local law enforcement agencies.
- After receiving the mental health evaluation report, the threat assessment team shall convene to complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment.

The safety plan should include:

- conditions under which the subject student may return to school;
- interventions, such as counseling or mediation, that are needed to reduce risk;
- scheduled follow-up contact with the subject student and parent to assess changes in risk and update the safety plan over time, until the perceived threat is resolved; and
- person(s) who are responsible for monitoring and verifying that the safety plan recommendations are being followed.

## **Imminent Threat Responses**

An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others. Such threats require immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s) and referral to law enforcement and consultation with school security.

Following immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s), these threats require the involvement of the threat assessment team for the purpose of conducting/coordinating appropriate mental health assessment and developing a safety plan.

Procedures for notification of the superintendent or designee, senior division administrator, and parents of the subject student and intended target student(s) that are set forth for high risk threats are to be followed.

Following mental health assessment, the threat assessment team shall complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment. The safety plan should include:

- conditions under which the subject student may return to school;
- interventions, such as counseling or mediation, that are needed to reduce risk;
- scheduled follow-up contact with the subject student and parent to assess changes in risk and update the safety plan over time, until the perceived threat is resolved; and
- identification of person(s) who are responsible for monitoring and verifying that the safety plan recommendations are being followed.



## PART II. FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

### Student Interview

What exactly was said or done:

What was meant by what was said or done:

Student's understanding of how what was said/done would make target feel:

Reason student said or did concerning act:

What student now plans:

### Witness Interview

What exactly the student said or did:

What witness thinks student meant:

What witness thinks was motive for what student said/did:

### Threat Recipient(s) Interview (if applicable)

What exactly the student said or did, if witnessed:

Nature of relationship with student; whether there is history of conflict or prior threats:

What recipient thinks was motive for what student said/did:

### PART III. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

1. What are the student's motive(s) and goals?		
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?		
3. Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in:	If yes, describe:	
<input type="checkbox"/> school attacks or attackers <input type="checkbox"/> weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon) <input type="checkbox"/> incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers)		
4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviors such as	If yes, describe:	
<input type="checkbox"/> developing an attack idea or plan <input type="checkbox"/> making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons <input type="checkbox"/> casing, or checking out, possible sites and areas for attack <input type="checkbox"/> rehearsing attacks or ambushes		
5. Does the student have the means to carry out an act of targeted violence?		
6. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?		
7. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?		
8. Does the student see violence as an acceptable – or desirable – or the only – way to solve problems?		
9. Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?		
10. Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?		
11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?		
12. Are any of the following indicators of potential for violence present?		
Indicators		Comments
Ideas or plans about injuring him/herself or attacking a school or persons at school	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Communications or writings that suggest that the student has an unusual or worrisome interest in school attacks	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Comments that express or imply the student is considering mounting an attack at school	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Recent weapon-seeking behavior, especially if weapon-seeking is linked to ideas about attack or expressions about interest in attack	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Communications or writings suggesting the student condones or is considering violence to redress a grievance or solve a problem	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
Rehearsals of attacks or ambushes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	

## PART IV. DETERMINATION OF THREAT LEVEL

Check one:

- Imminent threat     High risk threat     Moderate risk threat     Low risk threat

Basis for determination:

## PART V. RESPONSE

Once the threat is classified, follow **all corresponding, prescribed responses specified below.**

### Imminent Threat Response

Steps taken to contain the threat:

### Low Risk Moderate Risk High Risk/Imminent

RESPONSES TO LOW RISK THREAT	RESPONSES TO MODERATE RISK THREAT	RESPONSES TO HIGH RISK/IMMINENT THREAT
<input type="checkbox"/> Consult with threat assessment team, as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Contact subject student's parents and/or guardians, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Notify intended victim(s)'s parents and/or guardians, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> See that threat is resolved through explanation, apology, or making amends <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with Safety and Security specialist and/or SRO, if necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Refer subject student for services to resolve problem, if appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Follow discipline procedures as per conduct policy <input type="checkbox"/> Develop behavior intervention plan and/or contract, as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Refer for school- or community-based services, as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Assign a case manager to monitor student and status of intervention, as appropriate <p><b>Documentation</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete appropriate Parts of Student Threat Assessment and Response Report and maintain with student's discipline record	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobilize threat assessment team <input type="checkbox"/> Notify subject student's parents and/or guardians <input type="checkbox"/> Provide direct supervision of subject student until parents and/or guardians assume control <input type="checkbox"/> Caution the subject student about the consequences of carrying out the threat <input type="checkbox"/> Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents and/or guardians of victim(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with SRO to assist in monitoring/supervising subject student and determining need for law enforcement action. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify superintendent or designee <input type="checkbox"/> Follow discipline procedures as per conduct policy <input type="checkbox"/> If needed, refer subject student for mental health assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Assign a team member to monitor student and status of intervention, as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> If warranted by findings of mental health assessment, develop/monitor safety plan. <p><b>Documentation</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Submit report to [designated administrative office] within 72 hours of receipt of threat. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit updated report every 30 days until resolution and closure of case <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain threat assessment documentation in the Student Threat Assessment and Response Report.	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify law enforcement per regulation to contain threat; and consult with Safety and Security <input type="checkbox"/> Mobilize threat assessment team <input type="checkbox"/> Provide direct supervision of subject student until removed from campus by law enforcement or parent/guardian. <input type="checkbox"/> Caution the subject student about the consequences of carrying out the threat <input type="checkbox"/> Protect and notify intended victim(s) and parents and/or guardians of victim(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Notify subject student's parents and/or guardians <input type="checkbox"/> Notify superintendent or designee <input type="checkbox"/> Follow discipline procedures as per conduct policy <input type="checkbox"/> Refer subject student for mental health assessment, notifying parents of requirements for re-admission to school <input type="checkbox"/> Assign team member to monitor student and intervention/safety plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop/monitor safety plan <p><b>Documentation</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Submit report to [designated administrative office] within 72 hours of receipt of threat. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit updated report every 30 days until resolution and closure of case <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain threat assessment documentation in the Student Threat Assessment and Response Report.

Print name of administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Signature indicates agreement with identified level of threat and the above actions have been taken.)*

## PART VI. STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE REPORT UPDATE

**Instructions:**

*This section should be completed by the administrator **and** other team members such as the school psychologist, school social worker, or others, as appropriate, within one week of incident.*

**Date of Update**

Disciplinary action(s) taken:

Student suspended?  Yes  No

Student recommended for expulsion?  Yes  No

Student recommended for further disciplinary action and/or consideration?  Yes  No

Comment:

Special Education? If yes:

Recommendation to reconvene IEP team?  Yes  No

Develop Functional Behavioral Assessment and/or Behavior Intervention Plan for IEP?  Yes  No

If no, should the student be referred to Child Study or Local Screening?  Yes  No

Comment:

**Actions with potential victim(s) of the threat or students impacted by the threat:**

Case Manager Name:

Case Manager Job Title:

Offered or provided brief supportive counseling?  Yes  No  Provided  Declined

Communicated with victim(s) and parent(s) or guardian(s)?  Yes  No

Altered schedule to minimize contact with student who made the threat?  Yes  No

Advised victim(s) and/or parent(s) or guardian(s) of their right to contact police?  Yes  No

Name of staff member who provided this information:

Student services staff to monitor student at regular intervals?  Yes  No

Name of staff member who will monitor student:

Informed victim(s) and parent(s) or guardian(s) of re-entry date and plan for re-entry of student who made the threat, if applicable?  Yes  No

Additional Comments:

**Actions with student making the threat:**

Case Manager Name:

Case Manager Job Title:

Alter schedule to minimize contact with threatened student?  Yes  No

Student services staff to monitor?  Yes  No

Name of staff member who will monitor student:

School-based supportive counseling offered or planned?  Yes  No

Name/position of staff member who will provide counseling to student:

Referral for private or community-based mental health services?  Yes  No

Consult with any other agency?  Yes  No

Agency & Name of Contact:

Other actions planned:

Print name of administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of administrator: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature indicates agreement with identified level of threat and the above actions have been taken.)

### **PART VII. VERIFICATION OF CASE CLOSURE**

This case has been resolved and necessary actions have been taken to provide support or assistance to the student who made the threat and to any impacted students.

Signature of case manager (if appropriate): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Related Reading on Student Threat Assessment

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## Related Resources

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### **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSE)**

<http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=01>

The Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to:

- provide training and support to state administrators, including 11 grantees funded under the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program; school and district administrators; institutions of higher education; teachers; support staff at schools; communities and families; and students and
- seek to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive environments.

The Center's website includes information about the Center's training and technical assistance, products and tools, and latest research findings.

### **Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia**

<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/labs/youth-violence-project>

The Youth Violence Project conducts research on effective methods and policies for youth violence prevention and school safety. The project's website contains extensive information about the Virginia model of threat assessment, an approach to violence prevention that emphasizes early attention to problems such as bullying, teasing, and other forms of student conflict before they escalate into violent behavior. School staff members are encouraged to adopt a flexible, problem-solving approach, as distinguished from a more punitive, zero tolerance approach to student misbehavior.

## SECTION II. NON-STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT

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Workplace violence is a complex and widespread issue that in recent years has received increased attention from law enforcement, mental health, and human resources professionals. Reports of disgruntled employees or former employees returning to their places of employment with a gun and killing co-workers is one form of workplace violence. Another type, representing approximately 24 percent of workplace violence, is related to personal relationships where an individual gains access to a workplace and commits a crime targeting an employee who is a current or former intimate partner.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health defines workplace violence as violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assaults, directed toward persons at work or on duty (NIOSH, 2001). Workplace violence ranges from offensive or threatening language to homicide. It may include domestic violence, sexual violence, including sexual harassment or sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Workplace violence often results in serious injuries that may result in disabilities requiring ongoing care. Workplace violence may also result in life threatening injuries and even death.

The Centers for Disease Control, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health categorize workplace violence into four types based on the relationship among victims, perpetrators, and work settings.

- Type I incidents involve offenders who have no relationship with either the victims or the workplaces.
- Type II incidents involve offenders who receive services from the school.
- Type III incidents involve current or former employees acting out toward their present or past places of employment.
- Type IV incidents involve domestic disputes between an employee and a perpetrator that spill over into the workplace.

Type I incidents are largely addressed in current school board policies and procedures that limit access to schools and prescribe responses to intruders and other criminal acts by non-students and non-employees. All school divisions address Type II acts in student codes of conduct.

Types III and IV are least frequently addressed in school board policies. When compared with models for student threat assessment, non-student threat assessment policy models and protocols for identification and intervention in schools are far less well developed.

This section provides sample policies and procedures for non-student threat assessment with particular focus on threats from school division employees and from persons involved in abusive relationships with school division employees that spill over into the school workplace. Materials are based on a synthesis of emerging research and practice literature on workplace violence prevention and intervention from authoritative sources listed in Related Reading on Non-Student Threat Assessment and Related Resources. Although not explicitly required by law, school boards may wish to consider developing such policies as an element of a comprehensive approach to school safety.

## **SAMPLE POLICY FOR CONDUCTING EMPLOYEE THREAT ASSESSMENTS**

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Note: School divisions should have in place policies on employee conduct prohibiting acts of violence, including threats, and stating that violation of the policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. The following sample policy focuses on establishing an employee threat assessment process.

### **Employee Threat Assessment**

- A formal process for employee threat assessment shall be established and implemented by the [school division] Department of Human Resources in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security.
- A Threat Assessment and Management Team shall be established and include [school division] human resources, security, employee assistance, and, as appropriate, mental health and law enforcement representatives. The school board attorney is to serve as an advisor to the Threat Assessment and Management Team. [Note: A school division may designate the division level committee authorized by *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-79.4.B. as a threat assessment and management team for employee threat assessment. If established, the team must include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.]
- The [school division] Department of Human Resources, in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security, shall implement activities to ensure that all employees are aware of policies requiring the reporting of all employee threats, understand the problem-solving purposes of threat assessment, and know how to report threats. Methods of reporting shall include at least one method for anonymous reporting.
- The Threat Assessment and Management Team is responsible for assessing employee threats of violence and determining what steps are necessary to prevent violent acts from being carried out. This team will coordinate resources both within and outside of the school division, as appropriate.
- All [school division] employees are required to report through established channels any threatening behavior that they witnessed, were subject to, or of which they have knowledge. No employee shall be subject to retaliation or retribution of any kind for reporting a suspected incident of workplace violence.
- The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall document findings from investigation, actions taken, and the rationale for the actions taken.

# **SAMPLE PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING EMPLOYEE THREAT ASSESSMENTS**

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## **PURPOSE**

To establish procedures for conducting threat assessments in response to employee threats of violence towards others.

## **DEFINITIONS**

- A threat is an expression of intent to harm someone other than oneself 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 victim or to a prospective victim, and regardless of whether the actual victim or prospective victim is aware of the threat existing in any fashion, whether orally, visually, in writing, or electronically.\
- Threat assessment is a fact-based investigative approach that evaluates whether an individual's behavior poses a risk to their safety or the safety of others. The appraisal of risk in a given situation focuses on an individual's actions, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to commit a violent act and/or is engaged in planning or preparing for that event.

## **PROCEDURES**

- Identifying and Reporting Threats
  - All [school division] employees are required to report through established channels any threatening behavior that they witnessed, were subject to, or of which they have knowledge. No employee shall be subject to retaliation or retribution of any kind for reporting a suspected incident of workplace violence.
  - The [school division] Department of Human Resources, in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security, shall implement activities to ensure that all employees are aware of policies requiring the reporting of all employee threats, understand the problem-solving purposes of threat assessment, and know how to report threats.
    - Training for members of the Threat Assessment and Management Team shall include, but is not limited to behavioral and psychological aspects of workplace violence, violence risk screening, investigatory and intervention techniques, incident resolution, and multi-disciplinary case management strategies.
    - Training for supervisors should be designed to strengthen their capacity to recognize behaviors of concern and to report concerns in accordance with established policy.
    - Training for employees should focus on the school division's commitment to ensuring a safe school workplace, policies requiring reporting of problematic behavior, the problem-solving purposes of threat assessment, and school division and community resources available to employees to help with personal problems.
- Threat Assessment
  - The Threat Assessment and Management Team is to take steps to determine whether the employee threat poses a risk to the workplace and to determine what steps are necessary to prevent violent acts from being carried out.
  - Upon initial notification of a threat, the team shall make an initial risk screening to determine whether the concern is unwarranted, the behavior is concerning, or the behavior is an urgent concern.
    - When it is determined that the concern is unwarranted, the incident can be handled within normal human resources, disciplinary, or employee relations protocols.
    - When the behavior is concerning, the team is to continue with additional fact-gathering and take steps to prevent violent acts from being carried out.

- When the behavior is an urgent concern, emergency measures should be taken including, but not limited to, notification of law enforcement, heightened security measures, and referral for mental health assessment.
  - Deeper investigation may involve viewing security video recordings and searches of workplace computers or networks, public records, social media, and other sources legitimately available to the school division for information pertinent to expressed hostilities, violent ideation, and other evidence of aggression and violence.
- Response to Threats
  - Responses to threats may include appropriate and safely-conducted employment actions including discipline, suspension, or termination, referral to Employee Assistance Program (EAP), transfer, or administrative leave.
  - When employees present an ongoing, serious threat, a restraining or protective order may be sought, after appropriate consultation with the school board attorney and/or other legal counsel.
  - Employees who are targets of threats should be instructed about steps to be taken to inform the team of any future contacts by the person of concern and how to respond to communications. These employees should be kept informed in a general fashion of the actions the team is taking to address the threat. The target employee may also be provided services from an EAP or community source qualified to provide counseling and safety training as well as workplace security measures, and offered opportunity for relocation or transfer within the organization, if deemed appropriate.
- Monitoring Response Effectiveness and Documentation
  - The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall maintain thorough documentation including all information gathered during incident management and ongoing monitoring and all personnel and security measures taken.
  - The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall assess the effectiveness of its actions and, as needed, revise policies, procedures, and training. Policies, procedures, and training needs are to be reviewed annually in advance of the beginning of the school year.

## **SAMPLE POLICY FOR ASSESSING WORKPLACE-RELATED THREATS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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### **ASSESSMENT OF WORKPLACE-RELATED THREATS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- A formal process for assessing workplace-related threats of domestic violence shall be established and implemented by the [school division] Department of Human Resources in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security.
- A Threat Assessment and Management Team shall be established and include [school division] human resources, security, and employee assistance, and, as appropriate, mental health and law enforcement representatives. The school board attorney is to serve as an advisor to the Threat Assessment and Management Team. [Note: A school division may designate the division level committee authorized by *Code of Virginia*, § 22.1-79.4.B. as a threat assessment and management team for assessing workplace-related threats of domestic violence. If established, the team must include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.]
- The [school division] Department of Human Resources, in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security, shall implement activities to ensure that all employees are aware of policies requiring the reporting of all workplace-related threats of domestic violence, understand the problem-solving purposes of threat assessment, and know how to report threats. Methods of reporting shall include at least one method for anonymous reporting.
- The Threat Assessment and Management Team is responsible for assessing all workplace-related threats of domestic violence and determining what steps are necessary to prevent violent acts from being carried out. This team will coordinate resources both within and outside of the school division, as appropriate.
- Employees who have secured any protective or restraining order that lists the workplace as a protected area are required to inform the Office of School Safety promptly of such orders. Employees who have not secured such orders but have safety concerns with regard to intimate partner violence are strongly encouraged to report their concerns to the Office of School Safety so that appropriate safety measures can be put in place. Employees can be assured that [school division] will not retaliate against employees making such reports and will support victims of intimate partner violence by making workplace safety plans, providing referrals to Employee Assistance and other appropriate community resources, and permitting time off for addressing the threats of violence. No employee shall be subject to retaliation or retribution of any kind for reporting a suspected incident of workplace violence.
- [School division] recognizes and respects an employee's right to privacy and need for confidentiality. Therefore, [school division] shall maintain the confidentiality of an employee's disclosure to the extent permitted by law. When information must be disclosed to protect the safety of individuals in the workplace, the breadth and content of the information disclosed will be limited to that reasonably necessary to protect the employees and others. The [school division] shall make every effort to provide advance notice to the employee of any disclosure required by law or to protect persons in the workplace.
- The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall document the nature of threats known and safety measures taken and assistance provided to employee victims.

# **SAMPLE PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING AND RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE-RELATED THREATS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

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## **PURPOSE**

To establish procedures for assessing and responding to workplace-related threats of domestic violence in order to maintain a safe environment for victims of violence, fellow employees, and students.

## **DEFINITIONS**

- Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior, including acts or threatened acts, that is used by the perpetrator to gain power and control over a current or former spouse, family member, intimate partner, or person with whom the perpetrator shares a child in common. Domestic violence includes, but is not limited to, physical or sexual violence, emotional and/or psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking, economic control, harassment, physical intimidation, or injury.
- Threat assessment is a fact-based investigative approach that evaluates whether an individual's behavior poses a risk to their safety or the safety of others. The appraisal of risk in a given situation focuses on an individual's actions, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to commit a violent act and/or is engaged in planning or preparing for that event.
- A workplace safety plan is a strategy developed in collaboration with the victim to implement workplace safety options including, but not limited to, handling of court protection orders; procedures for alerting security personnel; temporary or permanent adjustment of work schedules and locations; change in parking places; and requests for escorts to and from the workplace location.

## **PROCEDURES**

- Identifying and Reporting Threats
  - Unlike most other types of violence, victims of intimate partner violence commonly will try to conceal their abuse. However, the [school division] has an overriding responsibility to respond to and take action to prevent violence that threatens school safety.
  - Employees who have secured any protective or restraining order that lists the workplace as a protected area are required to promptly inform the Office of School Safety and Security of such orders.
  - Employees who have not secured protective or restraining orders but have safety concerns with regard to intimate partner violence are strongly encouraged to report their concerns to the Office of School Safety so that appropriate safety measures can be put in place.
  - All [school division] employees are required to report to the Office of School Safety and Security any threats of domestic violence that they witness or of which they have knowledge.
  - Employees can be assured that [school division] will not retaliate against employees making such reports and will support victims of intimate partner violence by making workplace safety plans, providing referrals to Employee Assistance and other appropriate community resources, and permitting time off for addressing the threats of violence.
  - The [school division] Department of Human Resources, in collaboration with the Office of School Safety and Security, shall implement activities to ensure that all employees are aware of policies requiring the reporting of all workplace-related threats of domestic violence, understand the problem-solving purposes of threat assessment, and know how to report threats. Training for members of the Threat Assessment and Management Team shall include, but is not limited to:

- Dynamics of intimate partner violence
- Methods of responding to reports of workplace threats arising from abusive relationships
- Circumstances requiring reporting to law enforcement
- Employer legal obligations to victims of intimate partner violence and related employee privacy issues
- Key elements of a workplace safety plan.

Training and awareness activities for co-workers shall include but not be limited to:

1. Warning signs that an employee may be involved in a violent relationship
2. Circumstances that appear to be tied to an abusive relationship that should be reported to the Threat Assessment and Management Team
3. Community, EAP, and other outside resources that can assist employees in addressing intimate partner violence including legal, psychological, and financial resources.

- Threat Assessment

- All incidents and acts constituting a violation of law or applicable protective order will be reported immediately to law enforcement.
- The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall determine whether intimate partner violence poses a risk to the workplace and determine what steps are necessary to prevent violent acts from being carried out. The assessment of risk should include inquiry about whether:
  - a relationship has recently been broken off. This is important because the most dangerous time in an abusive relationship typically occurs when the abused partner tries to separate from an abuser;
  - the abuser has made threats and, if so, how specific and credible are they;
  - the abused employee has sought or been granted a court order of protection and whether the abuser has violated an order in the past;
  - the abuser has a history of violence or other criminal activity;
  - the abuser has access to weapons or has recently acquired one;
  - there is a pattern of stalking behavior; and
  - the abuser has physically or sexually assaulted the employee.

- Response to Threats

- The Threat Assessment and Management Team will coordinate resources both within and outside of the school division, as appropriate, to put in place a workplace safety plan. Security measures that may be established include, but are not limited to:
  - steps to limit the abuser’s access to the workplace;
  - moving the abused employee’s work space to a more protected, less vulnerable area;
  - providing a parking space close to building entrance or providing a security escort;
  - removing the employee’s name from office telephone directories, changing his or her workplace e-mail address, or screening his or her calls;

- requiring the employee to keep members of the team informed as to any contacts with and threatening actions of the abuser outside the workplace; and
  - referral to appropriate legal, financial, and counseling resources.
- Monitoring Response Effectiveness and Documentation
    - The Threat Assessment and Management Team shall maintain thorough documentation including all information gathered during incident management and ongoing monitoring, and all security measures taken as well as copies of all restraining, protective, or judicial orders relevant to the specific situation.
    - The Threat Assessment and Management Team will assess the effectiveness of its actions and, as needed, revise policies, procedures, and training. Policies, procedures, and training needs are to be reviewed annually in advance of the beginning of the school year.

***See also:***

Employee Policies (specify those dealing with employee conduct and reporting of intimate partner violence)

School Security and Critical Incident Policies (specify those most relevant for threat assessment and response)

## Related Reading on Non-Student Threat Assessment

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ASIS International & Society for Human Resources Management (2011).

Workplace violence prevention and intervention. Alexandria, VA: ASIS International. Available online at <https://www.asisonline.org/Standards-Guidelines/Standards/>

Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (2006).

Risk assessment guideline elements for violence: Considerations for assessing the risk of future violent behavior. Sacramento, CA: Author. Available online at <http://atapworldwide.org/associations/8976/files/documents/RAGE-V.pdf>

Romano, S.J., Levi-Minzi, M.E., Rugala, E.A., & Van Hasselt, V.B. (2011, January).

Workplace violence prevention. *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin*. Retrieved from [www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/january2011/workplace\\_violence\\_prevention](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/january2011/workplace_violence_prevention)

Rugala, R.A. & Isaacs, A.R. (Eds) (2003).

*Workplace violence: Issues in response*. Quantico, VA: National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime, FBI Academy. Available online at [www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/workplace-violence)

## Related Resources

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**National Resource Center on Workplace Responses** – [www.workplacesrespond.org](http://www.workplacesrespond.org)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, the Center offers Internet-based information for those interested in providing effective workplace responses to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking. The site contains a workplace policy creation tool offering choices of model language.

**National Resource Center on Domestic Violence** – [www.nrcdv.org](http://www.nrcdv.org)

The Center is an independent, non-profit organization that serves as a comprehensive source of information for those wanting to educate themselves and help others on the many issues related to domestic violence.

**Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime** – [www.victimsofcrime.org/src](http://www.victimsofcrime.org/src)

The Center works to enhance the ability of professionals, organizations, and systems to respond effectively to stalking by providing training, technical assistance, and resource materials for professionals working with and responding to stalking.

**Association of Threat Assessment Professionals** – [www.atapworldwide.org](http://www.atapworldwide.org)

The Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP) is a non-profit organization comprised of law enforcement, prosecutors, mental health professionals, corporate security experts, probation and parole personnel, and others involved in the area of threat and violence risk assessment. The purpose of ATAP is to afford its members a professional and educational environment to exchange ideas and strategies to address such issues as stalking, threats, and homeland security. The Association's website includes a Resource Library, Conference presentation materials, and information about membership and events.

## APPENDIX A. Selected Virginia Laws on Threat Assessment

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### § 22.1-79.4. Threat assessment teams and oversight committees.

- A. Each local school board shall adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students consistent with the model policies developed by the Virginia Center for School Safety in accordance with § [9.1-184](#). Such policies shall include procedures for referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment, when appropriate.
- B. The superintendent of each school division may establish a committee charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams operating within the division, which may be an existing committee established by the division. The committee shall include individuals with expertise in human resources, education, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.
- C. Each division superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team that shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement. Threat assessment teams may be established to serve one or more schools as determined by the division superintendent. Each team shall (i) provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self; (ii) identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported; and (iii) implement policies adopted by the local school board pursuant to subsection A.
- D. Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to self or others, a threat assessment team shall immediately report its determination to the division superintendent or his designee. The division superintendent or his designee shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian. Nothing in this subsection shall preclude school division personnel from acting immediately to address an imminent threat.
- E. Each threat assessment team established pursuant to this section shall report quantitative data on its activities according to guidance developed by the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

(2013, c. [710](#).)

### §8.01-47. Immunity of persons investigating or reporting certain incidents at schools.

In addition to any other immunity he may have, any person who, in good faith with reasonable cause and without malice, acts to report, investigate or cause any investigation to be made into the activities of any student or students or any other person or persons as they related to conduct involving bome threats, firebombs, explosive materials or other similar devices as described in clauses (vi) and (vii) of subsection A of §22.1-279.3:1, alcohol or drug use or abuse in or related to the school or institution or in connection with any school or institution activity, or information that an individual poses any credible danger of serious bodily injury or death to one or more students, school personnel, or others on school property shall be immune from all civil liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed as the result of the making of such a report, investigation, or disclosure.

(2013, c. 665.)

## § 22.1-272.1. Suicide prevention in public schools

Responsibility to contact parent of student at imminent risk of suicide; notice to be given to social services if parental abuse or neglect; Board of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Health, to develop guidelines for parental contact.

- A. Any person licensed as administrative or instructional personnel by the Board of Education and employed by a local school board who, in the scope of his employment, has reason to believe, as a result of direct communication from a student, that such student is at imminent risk of suicide, shall, as soon as practicable, contact at least one of such student's parents to ask whether such parent is aware of the student's mental state and whether the parent wishes to obtain or has already obtained counseling for such student. Such contact shall be made in accordance with the provisions of the guidelines required by subsection C.
- B. If the student has indicated that the reason for being at imminent risk of suicide relates to parental abuse or neglect, this contact shall not be made with the parent. Instead, the person shall, as soon as practicable, notify the local department of social services of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or the state Department of Social Services' toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline, as required by § [63.2-1509](#). When giving this notice to the local or state department, the person shall stress the need to take immediate action to protect the child from harm.
- C. The Board of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Department of Health, shall develop guidelines for making the contact required by subsection A. These guidelines shall include, but need not be limited to, (i) criteria to assess the suicide risks of students, (ii) characteristics to identify potentially suicidal students, (iii) appropriate responses to students expressing suicidal intentions, (iv) available and appropriate community services for students expressing suicidal intentions, (v) suicide prevention strategies which may be implemented by local schools for students expressing suicidal intentions, (vi) criteria for notification of and discussions with parents of students expressing suicidal intentions, (vii) criteria for as-soon-as-practicable contact with the parents, (viii) appropriate sensitivity to religious beliefs, and (ix) legal requirements and criteria for notification of public service agencies, including, but not limited to, the local or state social services and mental health agencies. These guidelines may include case studies and problem-solving exercises and may be designed as materials for in-service training programs for licensed administrative and instructional personnel.

(1999, c. [425](#); 2009, cc. [813](#), [840](#).)

## §9.1-184. Virginia Center for School Safety created; duties.

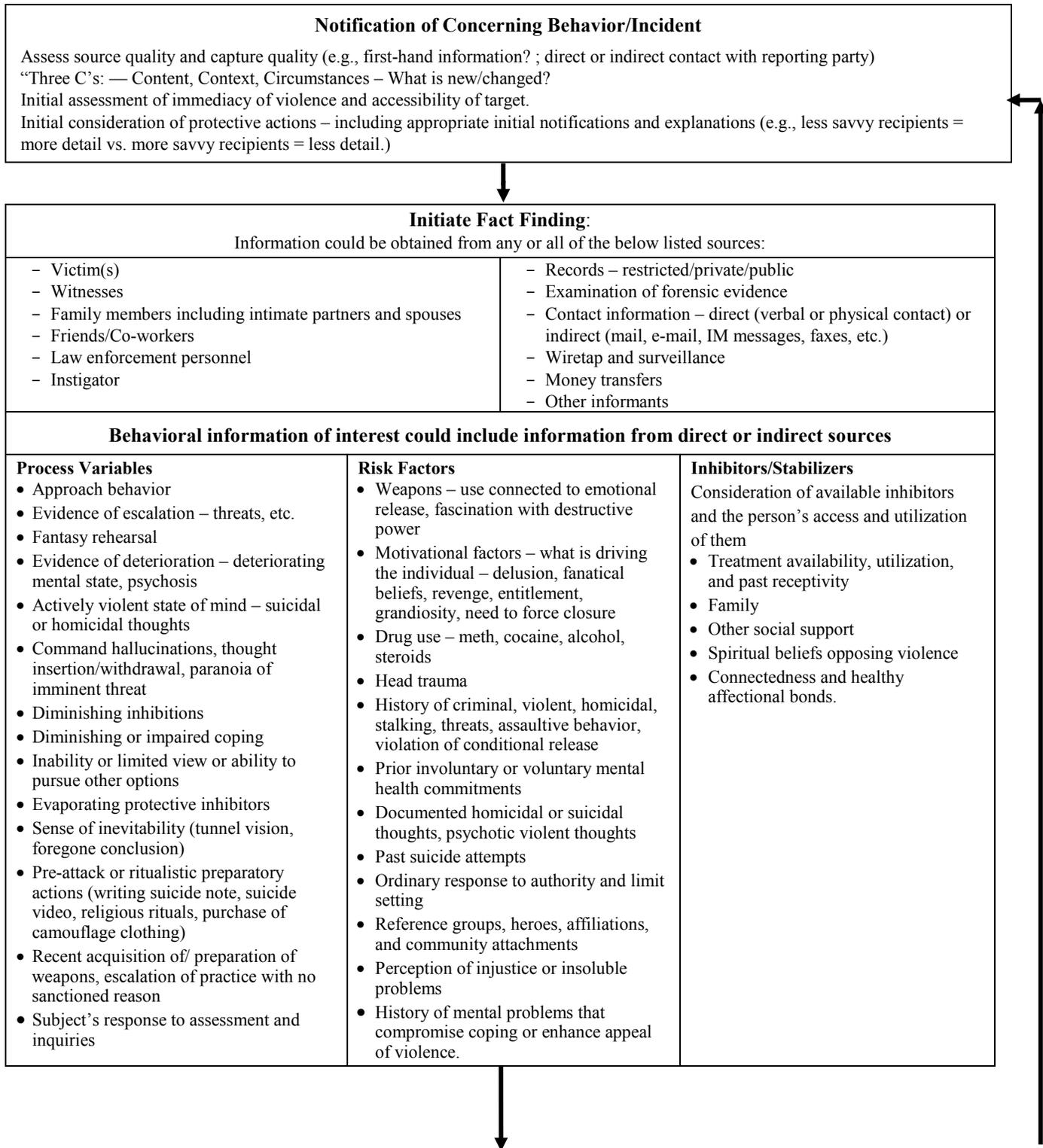
- A. From such funds as may be appropriated, the Virginia Center for School Safety (the Center) is hereby established within the Department. The Center shall:
  1. Provide training for Virginia public school personnel in school safety, on evidence-based antibullying tactics, and in the effective identification of students who may be at risk for violent behavior and in need of special services or assistance;
  2. Serve as a resource and referral center for Virginia school divisions by conducting research, sponsoring workshops, and providing information regarding current school safety concerns, such as conflict management and peer mediation, bullying, school facility design and technology, current state and federal statutory and regulatory school safety requirements, and legal and constitutional issues regarding school safety and individual rights;
  3. Maintain and disseminate information to local school divisions on effective school safety initiatives in Virginia and across the nation;

4. Collect, analyze, and disseminate various Virginia school safety data, including school safety audit information submitted to it pursuant to § [22.1-279.8](#), collected by the Department;
  5. Encourage the development of partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote school safety in Virginia;
  6. Provide technical assistance to Virginia school divisions in the development and implementation of initiatives promoting school safety, including threat assessment-based protocols with such funds as may be available for such purpose;
  7. Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure collaboration and coordination of roles and responsibilities in areas of mutual concern, such as school safety audits and crime prevention;
  8. Provide training for and certification of school security officers, as defined in § [9.1-101](#) and consistent with § [9.1-110](#);
  9. Develop, in conjunction with the Department of State Police, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and the Department of Education, a model critical incident response training program for public school personnel and others providing services to schools that shall also be made available to private schools in the Commonwealth; and
  10. In consultation with the Department of Education, provide schools with a model policy for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including procedures for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.
- B. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with the Center and, upon request, assist the Center in the performance of its duties and responsibilities.

(2000, c. [519](#), § 9-173.21; 2001, cc. [436](#), [440](#), [844](#); 2002, cc. [836](#), [868](#); 2012, cc. [281](#), [433](#); 2013, cc. [676](#), [710](#).)

# APPENDIX B. Association of Threat Assessment Professionals Model Violence Risk Assessment Process

Source: *Risk Assessment Guideline Elements for Violence: Considerations for Assessing the Risk of Future Violent Behavior (2006). Association of Threat Assessment Professionals*



**Analysis Guidelines**

Consideration of multiple behavioral and risk factors:

- Must involve consideration of contextual factors, mitigation factors, or inhibitors to risk as well as risk factors, potential stressors – as well as resiliency factors
- Access to sufficient, credible, first-hand collateral data sources
- Must assess the impact of gathering information and investigative/threat assessment process itself upon risk
- Avoid over-reliance on single factors (factors considered must be scientifically relevant or those considered within the field based upon empirical and published literature)
- When conceptualizing risk level, must recognize professional limitations pertinent to the threat assessment – seek out relevant consultation or expertise when necessary
- Qualify assessment when necessary (e.g., availability of information, recognize assumptions, potential changes in relevant context, time-limited nature of assessment)
- Assessor must be aware of the complex contextual, legal, ethical, and regulatory issues that impact the violence risk assessment process

