

TURTLE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DIVISION

Protocol for Response to Threats: A Team Process

This document is intended to be completed by a team

WHAT IS A THREAT?

The Criminal Code of Canada states:

- 264.1 (1) Every one commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys, or causes any person to receive a threat
- a) to cause death or bodily harm to any person;
 - b) to burn, destroy or damage real or personal property; or
 - c) to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of any person.

The FBI document, **The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective**, defines a threat as “an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. A threat can be spoken, written or symbolic – for example, motioning with one’s hands as though shooting at another person”.

Contrary to the assumption that some of our youth “just snap” – they don’t. They exhibit obvious warning signs either through behaviour remarks such as voicing problems or grievances, complaining about persecution or bullying or showing signs of depression or desperation. The Secret Service found that when young people plan targeted violence, they often tell at least one person about their plans, give out specifics before the event takes place and obtain the weapon they need – usually from their own family members. Young people who need help do not keep it a secret. But adults who are in a position to help prevent such acts of violence are often the last ones to know.

It is especially important that a school not deal with threats by simply kicking the problem out the door. Expelling or suspending a student for making a threat must not be a substitute for careful threat assessment and a considered, consistent policy of intervention. Disciplinary action alone, unaccompanied by any effort to evaluate the threat or the student’s intent, may actually exacerbate the danger – for example, if a student feels unfairly or arbitrarily treated and becomes even angrier and more bent on carrying out a violent act.

Protocol

1. Principal or Designate receives a report of a threat to any person.
2. If the concern is an Immediate Threat Situation that poses imminent and serious danger to the safety of others, the matter is one of Immediate Police Intervention and Protective School Response, NOT a threat assessment. Call 911, and activate school safety protocols (e.g. lockdowns, evacuation)
3. Threat Assessment Team is gathered and roles are established as per the Procedures Manual 4-S.
4. A parent/guardian may be contacted if appropriate, and informed of
 - a. The in-school suspension (if one was given)
 - b. The pending threat assessment by the Threat Assessment Team
 - c. The probable need for a team member to interview the parent/guardian.
5. The Threat Assessment Team completes Stage 1 of the Threat Assessment Report Form.
6. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate interventions and increased supervision.
7. If the threat is a high level of risk, a Stage 2 comprehensive risk assessment will be conducted which includes reporting the incident to the RCMP, Community Mental Health Services, potential victims, the Superintendent and staff.
8. The Principal submits the original copy of the Threat Assessment Report to the Superintendent for filing.

STAGE 1 VIOLENCE-THREAT/RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM (V-TRA)
(Data Collection and Immediate Risk Reducing Interventions)

Violence/Threat Making Behaviours (Examples of high-risk behaviours addressed in this protocol include but are not limited to:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Verbal/written threats to kill others (“clear, direct, plausible”)
- Internet (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) text messaging, threats to kill others
- Possession of weapons (including replicas)
- Bomb threats (making and/or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire setting
- Sexual Intimidation or assault
- Gang related intimidation and violence

Student: _____	School: _____
DOB: _____	Grade: _____
Parents/Guardian Names: _____	
Date of Incident: _____	
Multi-Agency Involvement: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Three Primary Theories:

1. Is it a conscious or unconscious “Cry for Help”?
2. Conspiracy of two or more! Who else knows about it? Who else is involved?
3. Is there any evidence of fluidity?

Pre-Interview Considerations

1. When possible, interview the Threat Maker(s) or Student of Concern
 - a. after initial data has been collected such as locker check, interviewing the individual who reported the threat
2. there should never be more than two people in the room interviewing the Threat Maker or Student of Concern
3. Remember to distinguish between Assessing the Threat versus Assessing the Threat Maker

STEP 1:

Make Sure All Students Are Safe and the whereabouts of the target(s) and the threat maker(s) are known and address any immediate risk factors if they exist.

Check When Completed:

- Appropriately detain the student(s)
- Do not allow access to coats, backpacks or lockers
- If there is imminent danger call the RCMP Liaison Officer or 911
- Threat Assessment Team is activated

STEP 2:

- Determine if the threat maker has access to the means (knife, gun, etc.).**
- Locker checked by:** _____
- Backpack checked by:** _____
- Vehicle (if applicable) checked by:** _____

STEP 3:

Interview *witnesses* including all parties directly and indirectly involved.

Prior to initiating the interview process determine:

1. **How much time do we have?**
2. **Who will be interviewed?**
3. **What order will we interview them in?**
4. **Who will interview whom?**

Consider:

- Peers, Siblings
- Teachers, Substitutes
- EAs, Admin Assistants, Custodians
- Bus Drivers
- Coaches, Youth Leaders (school or community)

STEP 4:

Notify the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s)

- Parents/Legal guardians have been notified of the situation and this assessment.
- Parents/Legal guardians have **NOT** been notified because _____

- Notify the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services**

Sources of Data:

May be obtained from multiple sources including Teachers and other school staff, students, target(s), threat maker(s), parents/caregivers and others.

Check if Considered:

- Reporter (s)
- Target
- Witnesses
- Teachers and other school staff (secretaries, educational assistants, bus drivers, etc.)
- Friends, classmates, acquaintances
- Current and *previous* school records (call the sending school)
- Check the student(s) locker, desk, backpack, recent text books,/assignments binders, cars, etc.
- Police record check.
- Searches of the student(s), bedroom, etc.
- Parent interview: (call both parents)
- Check/Search or question parents/caregivers about the student(s) bedroom, etc.
- Other agencies: mental health, human services, etc.
- Activities: internet histories, diaries, notebooks, cell phones / texts

STEP 5:**INITIATE THE STAGE 1 THREAT ASSESSMENT****Call the Comprehensive Response team (as per procedure Manual 4-S)**

The following warning signs are offered to guide the threat assessment process. The purpose of this process is to determine whether a student **poses** a threat to the safety of others.

- ? Does the student appear to have the resources, intent, and motivation to carry out the threat?
- ? Is there evidence of attack-related behaviours that suggest movement from violent thought to action?

Document and discuss all warning signs that apply.

SERIES I QUESTIONS (THE INCIDENT)

Where did the incident happen, and when?	
How did it come to the interviewee's attention?	
<p>Was there stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Justification for the threat? •Means to carry out the threat? •Consequences weighed out (I don't care if I live or die!)? •Conditions that could lower the level of risk (unless you take the Facebook post down I will stick my knife in your throat!)? 	
Who was present and under what circumstances did the incident occur?	
What was the motivation or the perceived cause of the incident?	
What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident? Did he/she add to or detract from the Justification Process?	
What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident? Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?	

SERIES II QUESTIONS (ATTACK-RELATED BEHAVIOURS)

Has the student (subject) sought out information consistent with their threat making or threat-related behaviour?	
Has there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past?	
Has the student (subject) attempted to gain access to weapons or do they have access to weapons they have threatened to use?	
Have they developed a plan and how general or specific it is (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal of justifications, maps and floor plans)?	
Has the student (subject) been engaging in suspicious behaviour such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, sprinkle systems, video surveillance in schools or elsewhere, schedules & locations of Police or security patrol?	
Have they engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including packing or brandishing fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting (i.e. lighting fire to cardboard tubes cut and taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc.)?	
Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in their locker (back pack, car trunk, etc.) at school or bedroom (shed, garage, etc.) at home?	
Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because "something big is going to happen?"	

SERIES III QUESTIONS (THE THREAT MAKER/SUBJECT)

<p>Does the threat maker (subject) appear to be more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional Predominately Behavioural Type? <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional Predominately Cognitive type? <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed Type? <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Traditional? 	
<p>Does the threat maker (subject) have a history of violence or threats of violence?</p>	
<p>If yes, what is his/her past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) (HTS) History of Human Target Selection b) (SS) History of Site Selection c) (F)requency of Violence or threats d) (I)ntensity of Violence or threats e) (R)ecency 	
<p>In the case at hand, what is his/her current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) (HTS) Human Target Selection b) (SS) Site Selection c) Does it denote a significant increase in BASELINE behavior? 	

NOTE:

In Stage 1, history of violence is a significant risk enhancer but the best predictor of future violent behavior is an increase or shift in Baseline. This may also include an individual who has become more withdrawn or quiet as opposed to acting out!

What has been their past site selection?	
Do they have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behaviour?	
Is there evidence of fluidity?	
Does the threat maker (subject) use drugs or alcohol?	
Is there a mental health diagnosis or evidence of a mental health diagnosis that may be a risk enhancing factor in the case at hand?	

SERIES IV QUESTIONS (THE TARGET)

Does the target have a history of violence or threats of violence?	
If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recency (FIR) of the violence?	
What has been their past human target selection?	
What has been their past site selection?	
Is there evidence that the target has instigated the current situation?	

SERIES V QUESTIONS (PEER DYNAMICS)

<p>Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification process?</p>	
<p>Who is in the threat makers (subject's) peer structure & where does the threat maker (subject) fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader, and follower)?</p>	
<p>Is there a difference between the threat maker's individual baseline and their peer group baseline behaviour?</p>	
<p>Who is the target's peer structure & where does the target fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader and follower)?</p>	
<p>Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?</p>	

SERIES VI QUESTIONS (EMPTY VESSEL)

Does the student of concern (subject) have a healthy relationship with a mature adult?	
Does the student have inordinate knowledge versus general knowledge or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school-based attacks?	
How have they responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc.)?	
What type of violent games, movies, books, music, Internet searches, does the student (subject) fill themselves with?	
Is there evidence that what they are filling themselves with is influencing their behaviour? (Imitators vs. Innovators?)	
What related themes are present in their writings, drawings, etc.?	
Is there evidence of fluidity and/or religiosity?	

Series VII Questions (Contextual Factors)

Has the threat maker experienced a recent loss, such as a death of a family member or friend; a recent break-up; rejection by a peer or peer group; been cut from a sports team; received a rejection notice from a college, university, military, etc.	
Have his/her parents just divorced or separated?	
Is he/she the victim of child abuse & has the abuse been dormant but resurfaced at this time?	
Is he/she being initiated into a gang & is it voluntary or forced recruitment?	
Has he/she recently had an argument or "fight" with a parent/caregiver or someone close to him/her?	
Has he/she recently been charged with an offence or suspended or expelled from school?	
Is the place where he/she has been suspended to likely to increase or decrease his/her level of risk?	

SERIES VIII QUESTIONS (FAMILY DYNAMICS)

How many homes does the student (subject) reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparent home)?	
Is the student (subject) connected to a healthy/mature adult in the home?	
Who all lives in the family home (full and part time)?	
Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often are they around?	
Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards their siblings or parent(s) caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom, including Frequency, Intensity and Recency (FIR)?	
What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home?	
Are parent(s) or caregiver(s) concerned for their own safety, or the safety of their children or others?	

<p>Does the student's level or risk (at home, school, or in the community) cycle according to who is in the home (i.e.: the student is low risk for violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times their father travels away from home for work)?</p>	
<p>Does the student have a history of trauma? Including car accidents, falls, exposed to violence, abuse, etc.?</p>	
<p>Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM IV diagnosis?</p>	
<p>Is there a history of mental disorders in the family?</p>	
<p>Is there a history of drug or alcohol use in the family?</p>	

GENOGRAM



STEP 6:**Review Findings with the Threat Assessment Team**

Convene the Threat Assessment Team and discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the question: “*To what extent does the student **pose** a threat to school/student safety?*” “Do they pose a threat to themselves or someone outside the school (i.e. family)?”

Low Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff and school safety is minimal.

- Threat is vague and indirect.
- Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail; threat lacks realism.
- Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.
- Typical baseline behaviour.

Medium Level of Concern

The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.

- Threat is more plausible and concrete than a low level threat. Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (e.g., Possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (e.g., weapon, seeking), although there may be an ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: “I’m serious!”
- Moderate or lingering concerns about the student’s potential to act violently.
- Increase in baseline behaviour.

High Level of Concern

The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

- Threat is specific and *plausible*. There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.
- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on the threat. For example, information indicates that the student has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had a victim under surveillance.
- Information suggests strong concern about the student’s potential to act violently.
- Significant increases in the baseline behaviour.

STEP 7:**Decide on a Course of Action**

With the help of ***all*** Threat Assessment Team members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision.

Low to Medium Level of Concern

- Implement the Intervention Plan (Most students can be managed at school with interventions)

Medium to High Level of Concern

- The Threat Assessment Team has determined that a Stage II Threat Assessment is needed.
- *The Threat Assessment Lead will notify the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.*
- If there is imminent danger, call the RCMP Liaison Officer or 911 (e.g., a gun is found).

STEP 8:**Develop an Intervention Plan**

Use the following Intervention Plan to address all concerns identified during the Stage I Assessment.

Stage I Intervention Plan (attach additional pages as needed)

Disciplinary action taken:

- Intended victim warned and/or parents or guardians notified.
- Suicide assessment initiated on: _____
by: _____
- Contract not to harm self or others created (please attach).
- Alert staff and Teachers on a need-to-know basis.
- Daily or weekly check-in with: (Title/Name) _____
- Travel card to hold accountable for whereabouts and on-time arrival to destinations.
- Backpack, coat and other belongings check-in and check-out by:

- Late arrival and/or early dismissal.
- Increased supervision in these settings:

- Modify daily schedule by: _____
- Behaviour plan (attach a copy to this Threat Assessment).
- Intervention by support staff (Psychologist, Social Worker, Counsellor).
- Identify precipitating/aggravating circumstances, and intervene to alleviate tension.
Describe: _____

- Drug and/or alcohol intervention
with: _____
- Referral to IEP Team to consider possible Student Services Assessment.*
- If Student Services Student, review IEP goals and placement options.*
- Review community-based resources and interventions with parents or caretakers.
- Obtain permission to share information with community partners such as Counsellors and Therapists (see TMSD Release of Information Form)
- Other action:

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIANS (attach additional pages as needed)

- Parents will provide the following supervision and/or intervention: _____

- Parents will: _____

- Other: _____

Who will take lead in monitoring this Intervention Plan regularly and call team together modify it as appropriate?

Threat Assessment Team members	
Principal: Name _____	Date: Signature:
Vice-Principal: Name _____	Date: Signature:
Clinician: Name _____	Date: Signature:
School Liaison Officer (RCMP): Name _____	Date: Signature:
Guidance Counsellor: Name _____	Date: Signature:
Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Name _____	Date: Signature:
Other: Name _____	Date: Signature:
Other: Name _____	Date: Signature:
Other: Name _____	Date: Signature:

Glossary of Terms

Types of Threats

Direct threat

Identifies a specific act against a specific target delivered in a straightforward, clear and explicit manner (e.g. "I'm going to place a bomb in the school's gym.")

Indirect threat

Tends to be vague, unclear and ambiguous. Violence is implied, but threat is phrased tentatively and suggests that a violent act COULD occur, not that it WILL occur (e.g. "If I wanted to, I could kill everyone at this school.")

Veiled threat

Is one that strongly implies but does not explicitly threaten violence (e.g. "We would be better off without you around anymore."?)

Conditional threat

Is often seen in extortion cases. It warns that a violent act will happen unless certain demands or terms are met (e.g. "If you don't pay me one million dollars, I will place a bomb in the school.")

Other Terms

Baseline

The "normal" levels of violence for this student

Worrisome behavior

Those that cause concern for members of the school system that may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. This would include instances where a student may be engaging in behaviours such as drawing pictures, writing stories in class, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute "uttering threats" as defined by law but are causing concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content.

Evolution

The process of moving from baseline behaviours toward severe violence. Severe violence evolves from established baselines. The path towards violence has signposts along the way with behaviours (increases in the frequency, intensity and repetition of violent behaviours) that suggest a student is traveling down the road towards severe violence.

Fluidity

The student shifts between wanting to hurt self (suicide ideation or attempts), and wanting to hurt others (assaults, attack-related behaviours).

Justification Process

The process whereby a person makes the necessary emotional and cognitive shifts to allow for, or justify, an act of severe violence.

Uni-dimensional Assessment

An assessment based only on one person's experience with an individual

Religiosity

Refers to the extent or influence of religious beliefs in part of threat making behaviour and perceived j

Special thanks to the following people and resources for their assistance and expertise in the creation of this document:

Cameron, Kevin. Threat Assessment Training Guide. 7th Edition. 2007

Prairie Spirit School Division

Portage La Prairie School Division. Threat Assessment and Crisis Response Policy Manual. 2004.

Brandon School Division. Student and Staff PowerPoint Presentations. 2007.

Pembina Trails School Division. Fair Notice and Process Brochure.

Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth. When Words Are Not Enough: Precursors to Threat – An Early Warning System for School Counsellors

