

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

SECTION: 300 - STUDENTS

CODE: AP 354

PROCEDURE: **THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL**

BACKGROUND

“When members of a school system become aware that a threat has occurred but no protocol is in place to deal with the threat, the system anxiety increases. When steps are not taken, or perceived to not be taken to ensure safety, there is an increased risk for multiple threats to occur within the system until it is seen to be taking those necessary steps to ensure safety.” Cameron. K. Violence Threat Risk Assessment Training Guide (3rd Ed.), p. 51.

1. Violence prevention in our schools and neighbourhoods is a community responsibility. The Division and our community partners are committed to making our schools and community safer and this commitment is evident through the development of the Yorkton and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support (CTASP), which can be viewed on the division website.
2. The Division is committed to providing safe and caring environments for our students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers and members of our wider learning community who are guests in our facilities. In accordance with this administrative procedure, threats must be taken seriously, investigated, and include an appropriate response. All actions or statements suggesting intent to harm or act violently against someone or something will be considered a threat and will be assessed using Division procedures. The threat may include verbal, written, drawn, symbolic, posted on the Internet (social media) or made by gesture. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.
3. The Division will respond to student behaviours that may pose a potential risk for violence to students, staff and members of the community, or towards the school or other property. School threat assessment teams, in collaboration with necessary community partners from the CTASP team, will assess threatening behaviours and plan for appropriate interventions as outlined in the Yorkton and Area CTASP.
4. Student and Staff safety is our first priority. Each school has a multi-disciplinary Threat Assessment Team (School TAT) that includes the school principal and/or vice principal, school counsellor, and RCMP member. Central Office support is provided through the school’s assigned Superintendent of Education, the Superintendent who oversees VTRA, and the Coordinator of Student Achievement and Supports.

Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this administrative procedure.

1. **Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol (CTASP):** A protocol developed collaboratively between the Division and community partners. The CTASP outlines a comprehensive and multidisciplinary response to assessing student threat making behaviours and provides a commitment to the appropriate and timely sharing of information and the development of intervention and support plans for children and youth.
2. **Fair Notice Letter:** This letter informs all students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers that a Violence Threat /Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol is in place and that the Division will not accept a “no response” to a serious threat. This letter explains the division-wide protocol, provides a consistent message regarding its use, and invites parents/guardians/caregivers to contact their school principal if they have any questions or concerns.
3. **Immediate Risk Situations:** Those situations involving high-risk behaviours that require immediate police intervention (i.e. student has made a threat and is in possession of a weapon).
4. **High Risk Behaviours:** Behaviours which express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High risk behaviours will require a VTRA to be enacted. High Risk behaviours include but are not limited to: possession of weapon/replica, bomb threat plan, verbal/written or Internet threats to kill/injure self or others, fire setting, threatening violence and hate motivated violence.
5. **Risk:** Level and frequency of thoughts or behaviours that suggest violence.
 - **Low:** Risk to target(s), students, staff and school safety is minimal.
 - **Medium:** The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear realistic. Violent action is possible.
 - **High:** The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.
6. **School Threat Assessment Team (School TAT):** The School TAT consists of the principal and/or vice principal, school counsellor, Coordinator of School Achievement and Supports, and assigned school RCMP officer. School TAT members will respond after the immediate threat to student/staff safety has been contained. The School TAT will assess whether a risk to student/staff safety still exists and develop an intervention plan to support the students(s) involved, the greater student body, staff, and the community.
7. **Threat:** A threat is any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, and posted on line or through social media, or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional, or veiled. Multi-disciplinary Threat Assessment Teams, as outlined in our Yorkton and Area CTASP, engage in a data collection process to determine “initial levels

of risk” and plan necessary risk-reducing interventions. Although a student may be assessed as low risk, data collected may indicate a more comprehensive risk assessment is required which moves the VTRA to Stage 2.

8. **Threat Assessment:** Threat assessment is the process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails, etc., threats to kill a target or targets) actually poses a risk to the target(s) being threatened.
9. **Worrisome Behaviour:** Worrisome behaviour is defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behavior.
10. **Violence:** Violence is a continuing process of thoughts and behaviours that is dependent on the interaction between a person who is include to violence; a stimulus that causes the violence; and a setting that allows for violence or does nothing to prevent a violent act from occurring. Violence is dynamic and multidimensional. It is a process that is developed over time.
11. **Baseline Behaviour:** A level of typical behaviour seen in an individual. When considering changes in baseline behaviour, it is important to note that a simultaneous increase in frequency, intensity, and recency suggests evolution and an increase in potential risk. Consistent behavioural documentation should be kept to determine whether a student’s baseline behaviour is increasing.

PROCEDURES

1. Fair Notice

- a. The principal shall take the necessary steps to inform, on an annual basis, all students, staff, parents/caregivers of the information summarized in this Administrative Procedure. At the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians will receive a Fair Notice Letter informing them of the threat assessment protocol and that threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Notification may also be shared by posting print material in the school, in student handbooks and agendas, and through assembly presentations.
- b. As part of the fair notice process students, staff and parents/caregivers must be informed that our Division has a Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol in place, that the threat assessments will occur when warranted, and that the threat assessment and support process may involve multiple community partners.

2. Purpose and process

- a. The purpose of a Student Violence Threat/Risk Assessment (VTRA) is to:
 - Ensure the safety of students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers and others;

- Ensure a full understanding of the context of the threat;
- Understand the factors that contribute to the threat maker's behaviour;
- Be proactive in developing an intervention and support plan that addresses the emotional and physical safety of the threat maker; and
- Promote the emotional and physical safety of all.

3. Duty to Report

- a. Safe schools operate as open systems and promote the appropriate sharing of information. To keep school communities safe and caring, staff, parent/guardians, students and community members must report all threat related behaviours to the school principal or vice principal. Any person having knowledge of high risk student behaviour or has reasonable ground to believe there is a potential risk to students, staff, or division property shall immediately notify the principal or vice principal.
- b. Principals will ensure that students are made aware of their role in reporting violence and threats of violence to school authorities.
- c. School staff shall report all worrisome behaviours to the principal. The principal or designate shall consult with members of the School TAT and Central Office personnel (school superintendent, superintendent who oversees VTRA, and the Coordinator of Student Achievement and Supports) to determine the level of assessment that needs to be conducted.

4. Duty to Respond- Threat Assessment Summary Process

- a. Schools shall respond to all high risk/threat related behaviours. These behaviours will be taken seriously and assessed accordingly.
- b. In immediate risk situations, the principal or designate will call 911 immediately and take steps to ensure the safety of all those in the school by activating established procedures such as school lockdown or school evacuation (AP 169.12).
- c. The principal or designate shall notify and support those targeted by the threatening behaviour(s).
- d. The principal or designate shall inform the school superintendent who will notify the superintendent who oversees VTRA and the Coordinator of Student Achievement and Supports of the threatening behaviour(s) and shall keep them informed through the various stages of the threat assessment process.
- e. The principal or designate shall work closely with the school superintendent and Director of Education regarding internal and external communications.

- f. The superintendent who oversees VTRA will contact Good Spirit School Division to inform them of any threat occurring in Yorkton, Melville, or surrounding areas that warrants notification of our partner school division.
- g. The principal or designate will activate the School Threat Assessment Team (TAT) and follow/complete the Stage 1 VTRA Report Form ([AP Form 354.1](#)) to assess the risk. The principal shall be the lead in conducting a Violence and Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA), but may delegate responsibilities to members of the TAT during the VTRA investigation to ensure a timely and collaborative assessment and response to a threat. **The RCMP must always be called immediately when a VTRA is activated to be involved in the threat assessment process as a member of the TAT 1 team.** The TAT 1 team will complete the Stage 1 VTRA Report Form within 24 hours of the incident and notify the school superintendent and superintendent who oversees VTRA of Stage 1 completion. The principal will ensure the VTRA signature page is printed, signed by team members, and uploaded to the X Drive VTRA Folder within a week of the incident.
- h. When conducting a VTRA, the TAT will strive to utilize an investigative mindset. This includes thoughtful probing, considering information gathered with healthy skepticism and professional objectivity, verification of facts for accuracy, and close attention to information gathered regarding whether there has been an increase in baseline behaviours.
- i. As assigned by the principal, the School Counsellor will assist in gathering data for VTRA completion, developing and monitoring student intervention and safety plans, completing Suicide Risk Assessments, and implement necessary support interventions if applicable. The School Counsellor will also support families and students throughout the process and connecting them with relevant outside agency support.
- j. The principal or designate shall notify the parents/guardians of the student making the threat at the earliest opportunity, as well as the parents of those students against whom the threat was made. Parents/guardians are an integral part of the assessment process as they have insight into the “bedroom dynamics”, “baseline increase/decreases”, and other contextual factors that may be risk-enhancing or risk-reducing. There may be unique situations where there are valid reasons to delay notification of parents/guardians to minimize potential risk. If parents or the threat maker refuse to participate in the investigation, the VTRA process will continue in order to ensure a safe learning environment for all.
- k. If necessary, the principal shall notify all school staff and parents within a reasonable time period when the VTRA protocol has been activated as a result of high risk behaviour.
- l. Depending on the data gathered, a Stage 1 VTRA investigation may evolve to a Stage 2 Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Risk Evaluation and a Stage 3 Multidisciplinary Intervention Plan as per the Yorkton and Area CTASP. At Stage 2, CTASP members work collaboratively with the Stage 1 School TAT to conduct the formal risk assessment and evaluation using formal, structured

professional instruments, concepts, tests and measures used by community partners. Stage 3 is the formal meeting of the Stage 1 School TAT and Stage 2 CTASP to develop, implement, and monitor a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary intervention and support plan.

- m.** The superintendent who oversees VTRA, the assigned school superintendent, and the Coordinator of Student Achievement and Supports will review the completed Stage 1 VTRA. If a Stage 2 VTRA is activated, they will work closely with the school and attend the Stage 2 intervention planning meeting when appropriate.
- n.** The principal is responsible for ensuring that FORM AP 354.2 Threat Assessment Notification is completed and filed in the student's cumulative file when a VTRA has been completed.
- o.** Completed VTRA's are stored in the Data X Drive – VTRA Folder. The school division may share a copy of the completed VTRA with involved partner agencies as outlined in the Yorkton and Area CTASP.
- p.** Threat assessments which have been started must be completed even if charges are laid or if the individual is no longer attending the school (ie. In custody, transferred to another school).
- q.** Threat assessments are not disciplinary strategies. In the case of high-risk student behaviours. Pre-suspension assessments are critical. Consider whether the suspension will be a "risk enhancer" or a "risk reducer". Where a suspension has occurred, the TAT will collaborate with partner agencies to implement responsive interventions to reduce the risk immediately and long term. The TAT and/or CTASP team may work with the student and their parents/guardians to develop a school re-entry plan which includes a signed contract by all participants.
- r.** When dealing with students under the age of 12 or students with exceptional needs, both cognitive ability and emotional maturity will be taken into consideration. When determining whether to activate a VTRA, it is critical to review behaviour documentation to consider whether the student's baseline behaviour has increased. Some students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Prenatal Substance Exposure may have histories of verbal threatening when they are frustrated or angry, and may make threatening statements such as "I'm going to kill you" as part of their typical baseline behaviour. This would not result in activation of the VTRA team, however; if the student moves beyond their typical baseline behaviour or begins to demonstrate actions consistent with their threat, a VTRA will be activated. Any time that a student requiring intensive support through student services exhibits behaviour indicating the need to activate the VTRA protocol, the Coordinator of Student Services and Supports will provide consultation to the TAT - I team.
- s.** School staff shall communicate all worrisome behaviours to the principal and school counsellor who will then inform the TAT-1 Team that a VTRA is required.

5. Cases Occurring Outside of School

- a. If division employees receive information regarding serious violence, weapons possession, or a threat that is “clear, direct, and plausible” during non-school hours, police shall be called immediately and parents/guardians must be contacted so that appropriate actions can be taken to notify and protect the target(s). This information must also be provided as soon as possible to the principal and/or vice-principal so the threat assessment process can be activated.

6. The Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol may be used when adults display worrisome or high risk behaviours. In these situations we also have a duty to report and a duty to respond. Consult the school superintendent or superintendent who oversees VTRA in these situations.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 108, 109, 150, 151, 175, 231 Education Act
Good Spirit School Division - Violence Threat Risk Assessment
Saskatoon Public School Division AP - Safe and Caring Schools: Violence and Threat/Risk Assessment
Yorkton and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol (CTASP) 2016

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