

North Providence School Department Threat Assessment Policy	Approved: 1/22/2020

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with G.L. 1956 § 16-21-23.2 *et. seq.* the North Providence School Committee hereby adopts the following Threat Assessment Teams and Oversight Committee Policy. The purpose of such policy is to establish a fact-based threat assessment process that provides appropriate preventive and corrective measure to maintain a safe and secure school environment, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed to the individual being assessed.

The purpose and rationale of the Threat Assessment Team is to aid and ultimately identify those students who engage in pre-attack behaviors that would have indicated an inclination toward or the potential for targeted violence prior to the student acting in a violent or harmful manner. The process shall rely on a fact-based approach to the appraisal of behaviors, rather than on stated threats or traits, as the basis for determining whether there is cause for concern.

This policy is written and adopted to be aligned with state law and applicable guidance as required by § 16-21-23.2(a).¹

II. DEFINITIONS

Threat. A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. This threat may be expressed/communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means. It is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party, or whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.

¹ “Each local school board or committee shall adopt written policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment and intervention with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students, consistent with the model policies developed by the School Safety Committee. Such policies shall include procedures for referrals to community services or health care providers for evaluation or treatment when appropriate.”

Aberrant or Worrisome Behavior. An individual's actions, statements, communications or responses that are usually for the person or situation; or actions which could lead to violence toward self or others; or are reasonably perceived as threatening or causing concern for the wellbeing of the person or others in the community. These behaviors can include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual social distancing or isolation of subjects from peers and family members
- Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person
- Out of context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration, and anger
- Confrontational, accusatory or blaming behavior
- An unusual interest in or fascination with weapons
- Fixation on violence as a means of addressing a grievance

Low Risk Threat. The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved easily.

Moderate Risk Threat. The person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence, or serious harm to self/others, at this time; but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.

High Risk Threat. 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; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.

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 or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.

III. THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM STRUCTURE

Departmentwide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee. The Superintendent of Schools shall establish a Departmentwide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams operating within the district.²

The Departmentwide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee shall:

- Provide oversight to School Based Behavior Threat Assessment Teams
- Maintain processes for effective information sharing between the several schools, community mental health organizations, law enforcement, and other public safety agencies

² § 16-21-23.2(b).

- Consult with law enforcement and public safety agencies, and community mental health providers as needed and in accordance with federal and state law and local policy
- Continually assess the effectiveness of the threat assessment process throughout the Department
- Recommend changes to regulations and procedures, as needed, to maintain an effective threat assessment process reflecting known best practices
- Assist school-based threat assessment teams when the school-based threat assessment team is not fully trained and/or not available to promptly and appropriately assess any concerning behavior

School Based Threat Assessment Teams. The Superintendent of Schools shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team (SBTAT) that shall include persons with expertise in guidance, counseling, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement.³ To be effective, SBTAT membership may differ based on the circumstances of the threat to be assessed, as such those individuals as listed below and any particular faculty or staff that may have specialized knowledge relevant to the assessment or management of the type of threat involved or may have a relationship with the student making the threat or exhibiting worrisome behavior shall be included on the SBTAT.

Threat Assessment Team Members should include:

- School administrator
- School guidance counselor
- School psychologist and/or social worker
- Instructional staff
- Special education teacher or staff (especially when involving a student with an IEP or 504 plan)
- Human resource professional (as needed)
- Para-professional school staff, e.g. a coach or school nurse
- A non-law enforcement personnel or employee who has expertise in law enforcement.
- Faculty and/or staff that have a relationship with the student
- Faculty and/or staff that has specialized knowledge relevant to the assessment or management of the threat

Department Threat Assessment Team Leader. The Superintendent shall designate a Departmentwide Threat Assessment Team Leader who should coordinate the threat assessment process, from the time of notification of a potential threat, through resolution of the threat including any necessary follow-up.

School Based Threat Assessment Team Leader. The Superintendent shall designate a School Based Threat Assessment Team Leader (SBTAT Leader) who should implement and coordinate the threat assessment process for that particular school, from the time of notification of a potential threat, through resolution of the threat including any necessary follow-up. The SBTAT Leader, in accordance with promulgated procedure, shall implement a triage process to assess and manage any initial reports of concern to determine if existing resources and

³ § 16-21-23.2(c).

mechanisms are sufficient to address those concerns and whether the full team should further assess and manage the situation. The SBTAT Leader shall also serve as the central point of contact for individuals who have information about students that is cause for concern.

IV. THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Threat Assessment process is a fact-based process emphasizing an appraisal of observed (or reasonably observable) behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations. This process involves the assessment of what the threat, or potential threat is, who has made the threat, if known, the likelihood of the threatening act occurring, and the development of response. The central question in this process is “does this student **pose** a threat”, not whether the student has **made** a threat.

The School Committee acknowledges that the Threat Assessment Process from identify actions or behaviors of concern, assessment, and management is an ever-ongoing process. The process follows the four steps upon a continuum.

1. Creating/maintaining a Safe/Connected School Climate
2. Identifying Actions or Behaviors of Concern
3. Assessing Those Concerns
4. Appropriately Managing Those Concerns

Creating/maintaining a Safe/Connected School Climate

The major components and tasks for creating a safe school climate include:

- Assessment of the school's emotional climate;
The Oversight Committee, in collaboration with the school-based Threat Assessment Teams, shall be responsible for developing metrics for measuring a school and Department's emotional climate. Metrics can include, but are not limited to, systematic surveying of students, faculty, and other important stakeholders such as parents, administrators, school board members, and representatives of community groups who interact with the school about the emotional climate of schools, anonymous surveys, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and psychological measures.
- Emphasis on the importance of listening in schools;
The Department shall encourage two-way listening among faculty, staff, and students. All should be encouraged to not only listen to words, but behavior, and how those behaviors may be an expression of one's unspoken problems and feelings.
- Adoption of a strong, but caring stance against the code of silence;
The Department shall encourage individuals to speak out in a strong, but caring way.
- Prevention of, and intervention in, bullying;⁴
- Involvement of all members of the school community in planning, creating, and sustaining a school culture of safety and respect;

⁴ See Anti-Bullying policy

The Department shall encourage an environment of collaboration among all school community members. The Department shall seek to help students engage in positive, productive activities or work in their local community to diminish isolation and enhance connection and safety.

- Development of trusting relationships between each student and at least one adult at school; and
Each school administration shall work to ensure that at least one adult at that school has a positive and ongoing relationship with each student at that school.
- Creation of mechanisms for developing and sustaining safe school climates.
The oversight committee, in collaboration with the school-based Threat Assessment Teams, shall be responsible for developing and finding ways to encourage and support climates of safety with an emphasis towards student's social/emotional learning needs.

Identifying Actions or Behaviors of Concern

A threat assessment and intervention protocol is activated (1) when threats of violence are reported or observed; (2) when violence against others is reported or observed; (3) when significant aberrant or worrisome behaviors are reported or observed.

Assessing Action or Behaviors of Concern

When a threat is reported, the school administrator and/or threat assessment team leader should initiate an inquiry/triage in accordance with promulgated procedure. In consultation with the threat assessment team, the team leader should make a determination of the seriousness of the threat as expeditiously as possible.

- If the individual appears to pose a clear and imminent threat of serious violence, the administrator shall notify local law enforcement in accordance with school district policies. Other administrative responses may include evacuation, reverse evacuation, school lockdown, and/or shelter in place for the student body.
- If there is no reasonably apparent imminent threat present, or once such an imminent threat is contained, the threat assessment team leader shall ensure that the situation is screened/triaged to determine if the full threat assessment team needs to be involved.

NOTHING IN THIS POLICY SHALL PRECLUDE ANY EMPLOYEE OF THE DEPARTMENT FROM ACTING IMMEDIATELY TO ADDRESS AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO LIFE OR SAFETY.

Appropriately Managing Identified Actions or Behaviors of Concern

The Threat Assessment Team's best judgment is required when making a determination as to how to proceed once an action or behavior of concern is identified and assessed. Generally, the following actions would be appropriate:

Low-Risk. The weight of the information is convincing that the student does not pose a threat of targeted school violence nor display any indicators of proactive violence, then the threat

assessment team may conclude the threat assessment inquiry at this time and continue monitoring.

Moderate Risk. The weight of the information demonstrates that the student does not appear to pose a threat of violence, or serious harm to self/others, at this time; but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention. An action and Support Plan shall be developed and documented. In this case, the team should work with school and district administrators, school district services, community partners, and others to ensure that these individuals receive assistance, continued support and monitoring.

High-Risk Threat. The weight of the information demonstrates that the student 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; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention. This intervention may include:

- An immediate report to law enforcement for a threat assessment investigation, or mental/behavioral professionals for evaluation and/or hold.
- A re-entry meeting must be conducted before the student returns to school to develop a school and community-based action and support plan.
- The plan should establish review dates, provide connection to district and community mental health professionals and provide monitoring measures.

Imminent Threat. The weight of the information demonstrates that the student poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence to self or others and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires immediate intervention. Teams should activate their school's emergency response procedures including lockdown, evacuations, or other methods to protect the life and safety of the students, faculty, and staff. These procedures should include:

- An immediate report to law enforcement for a response to the threat.
- A threat assessment conducted by mental/behavioral professionals for evaluation and/or hold.
- Re-admission to school based upon the results of the behavioral/mental health evaluation.

V. CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT INFORMATION

No member of a threat assessment team shall disclose any information obtained pursuant to this policy or the Health and Safety of Pupils statute or otherwise use any record of an individual beyond the purpose for which such disclosure was made to a threat assessment team.

First reading: 11/20/2019

Second reading: 12/18/2020

Approved: 1/22/2020