

Fidelity Evaluation for Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines¹

Instructions

Schools implement the student threat assessment guidelines by completing the following steps:

1. *Select and train their threat assessment team.* Each team consists of a school administrator, law enforcement representative, and two or more mental health professionals. The school administrator is typically a principal or assistant principal. The law enforcement representative is the school resource officer (SRO), if the school has an SRO. Elementary and middle schools might use the SRO for a high school in their feeder pattern or make some other arrangement to have a law enforcement officer accessible to the team. School security officers also may serve on the team. The mental health professionals on the team typically include a school counselor and a school psychologist, and a school social worker if the school has this position. Teams may include other staff members at the discretion of the school principal.

2. *Update the student code of conduct and other school policy documentation.* School documents should indicate that threats to harm others are a disciplinary violation and that the consequences will depend on the seriousness of the behavior. The code should indicate that student threats will be evaluated by a threat assessment team (alternative names for the team are permitted) and that in some cases students could be required to participate in a mental health assessment.

3. *Advise students, parents, and all school staff members of the new policy regarding student threats of violence.* They will be informed that the school has new procedures for evaluating student threats and that threats are to be reported to the school administration or team. Students, parents, and all school staff members are asked to report threats of violence. The school administrator should explain that the school will take problem-solving approach to student threats rather than a zero tolerance approach. This means that each case will be considered individually to determine how serious the threat is and what problem or concern stimulated the threat. Threats do not result in automatic suspension, but suspension is one possible outcome.

4. *Use the decision-tree and procedures described in the threat assessment manual, Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines.* Cases will be documented on a standard form and maintained in school records according to procedures established by the school system.

Fidelity evaluation

An evaluator from outside the school will assess the fidelity of the school's implementation of the threat assessment procedures. The evaluator will interview the school administrator in charge of the team and two other team members. Each team member will be asked to give his/her opinion on all questions. Scores in each section of the form will be used to measure implementation fidelity and identify areas for improvement.

¹ Also known as the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines.

Background information	
Name of school	School division
School contact person name, position at school	School contact person email
Date team trained in threat assessment	Person who trained the team
Date school implemented threat assessment model	Date of this evaluation interview
Person doing interviews and completing this form	Email

Threat Assessment Team members	
Administrator in charge of team	School role (e.g., principal, assistant principal)
Law enforcement team member	School role (e.g., school resource officer)
Team member	School role (e.g., counselor, psych, social worker)
Team member	School role (e.g., counselor, psych, social worker)
Team member	School role (e.g., counselor, psych, social worker)
Team member	School role (e.g., counselor, psych, social worker)

Team Member Interview/Online Form

Person being interviewed/completing form	School role
--	-------------

School Code of Conduct/ Written Policy	
School code of conduct states that...	Score 0 or 1
1. Threats to harm others are a disciplinary violation.	
2. Threats are subject to graduated disciplinary consequences.	
3. Threats may or may not result in school suspension.	
4. Students making threats are subject to threat assessment.	
5. A threat assessment can include some form of mental health assessment	
6. Code of conduct shared with students.	
7. Code of conduct shared with parents.	

Team Composition	
The school team includes...	Score 0 or 1
1. Principal or assistant principal/administrator leads the team.	
2. Law enforcement representative on team (usually an SRO, can be officer from another school).	
3. School counselor	
4. School psychologist (may split time across schools)	
5. School social worker (if available; if none on staff, do not penalize, score 1)	

Staff Awareness	
All or nearly all members of the school staff (teachers, support personnel, bus drivers, custodial and cafeteria staff) are aware that...	Score 0 or 1
1. School has threat assessment team.	
2. Threats are to be reported to administration or team.	
3. Threats do not result in immediate suspension; each case evaluated individually.	
4. The school takes a problem-solving approach to threats rather than a zero tolerance approach.	

Threat Assessment Documentation	
	Score 0 or 1
1. School maintains a written or digital record of threat cases.	
2. Team uses a standard form to document threat cases.	
3. The standard form was used in the most recent threat case known to this team member.	
4. The standard form was used in all threat cases this year (since team established) known to this team member.	

Team Process	
	Score 0 or 1
1. The school administrator leads the team.	
2. Team members confer with one another on threat cases.	
3. The evaluation of a threat begins the same day that the threat is reported.	
4. The law enforcement representative is informed about threat cases that warrant his/her attention.	
5. Substantive threat cases are not conducted by one team member.	
6. Team members use the <i>Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence</i> and its decision tree.	

In answering the questions below about transient and substantive threats, refer to the most recent cases at your school this year. If there has been no such case this school year, answer how you think your team would respond the next time such a case arises.

Transient Threats	
In cases involving transient threats....	Score 0 or 1
1. The student was expected to give an explanation or apology for the threat.	
2. The student was counseled about his or her threat behavior.	
3. The student was not suspended from school for making a transient threat.	

Serious Substantive Threats	
In cases involving serious substantive threats...	Score 0 or 1
1. The student threatened to fight or hit someone.	
2. The student did not threaten to use a weapon.	
3. The team took precautions to keep the threat from being carried out (such as increasing supervision of the student).	
4. The intended victim was notified (if already aware of the threat, score 1).	
5. The team notified the student's parents that he or she had made a threat.	
6. The student was referred for counseling, mediation, or another appropriate intervention.	

Very Serious Substantive Threats	
In cases involving very serious substantive threats...	Score 0 or 1
1. The student threatened to kill, rape, or severely injure someone (such as by using a weapon.)	
2. The team promptly notified its law enforcement representative.	
3. The team took precautions to keep the threat from being carried out (such as increasing supervision of the student).	
4. The intended victim was notified (if already aware of the threat, score 1).	
5. The team notified the student's parents that he or she had made a threat.	
6. The team inquired about the student's access to weapons.	
7. The student was referred for a mental health assessment (unless precluded by hospitalization, incarceration, or some other factor).	
8. Law enforcement conducted an investigation of the threat, as appropriate to the circumstances.	
9. The team developed a written safety plan for the student (unless precluded by the student not returning to school.)	

Knowledge of Threat Assessment Guidelines

Part of the fidelity evaluation is to assess team member knowledge of the threat assessment guidelines. Please answer the following ten questions.

What is the most likely threat classification?	
1.	An angry student says he is going to shoot a teacher. The student later apologizes and says he has no intention of harming the teacher. He says that he was upset and realizes that he deserves a disciplinary consequence for his behavior.
	a. No threat
	b. Transient threat
	c. Serious substantive threat
	d. Very serious substantive threat
2.	A student tells you that a student named Jason has bragged that he is going to beat up a classmate after school. Jason denies making the threat and says the student is just trying to get him in trouble. You are not sure who is telling the truth.
	a. No threat
	b. Transient threat
	c. Serious substantive threat
	d. Very serious substantive threat
3.	A student writes an essay for English class in which he describes a bloody scene from a battle. The student portrays himself as a soldier shooting several enemies.
	a. No threat
	b. Transient threat
	c. Serious substantive threat
	d. Very serious substantive threat
4.	A student gets in an argument with a classmate and begins shouting in the classroom. He uses profanity and makes an ethnic slur about the classmate. He is sent to the office, where he continues to disparage the classmate.
	a. No threat
	b. Transient threat
	c. Serious substantive threat
	d. Very serious substantive threat
5.	A student says he is going to stab another student. The two have a history of conflict. The student and his locker are searched and no knife is found. The student refuses to apologize, but says he does not mean what he said. The student refuses an offer to mediate the conflict.
	a. No threat
	b. Transient threat
	c. Serious substantive threat
	d. Very serious substantive threat

In responding to a student threat, choose the best answer.

What is the best answer?	
6.	In the case of a very serious substantive threat, the first priority is:
	a. Clarify that the student has no intention to carry out the threat.
	b. Contact the student’s parents.
	c. Suspend the student.
	d. Take precautions to protect potential victims.
7.	In the case of a possible transient threat, the first priority is:
	a. Clarify that the student has no intention to carry out the threat.
	b. Contact the student’s parents.
	c. Suspend the student.
	d. Take precautions to protect potential victims.
8.	In the case of a very serious substantive threat:
	a. School authorities should not reveal confidential student information under any circumstances.
	b. School authorities should warn potential victims, but not reveal names of any students.
	c. Safety trumps confidentiality, which means that any confidential student information can be revealed for safety purposes.
	d. School authorities can ignore FERPA restrictions in cases involving this kind of student threat.
9.	Because a threat to harm someone is a serious disciplinary violation:
	a. Students should be suspended for transient threats.
	b. Students should be suspended for substantive threats.
	c. Both a and b.
	d. Suspension is recommended only for very serious substantive threats.
10.	For a very serious substantive threat, one purpose of a mental health assessment is:
	a. Determine whether the student is dangerous or not dangerous.
	b. Protect the school from liability.
	c. Recommend actions that reduce the risk of violence.
	d. Determine appropriate disciplinary consequences.

Repeat pages 3-7 for each team member interviewed.

Scoring

	Administrator/ Team member 1	Team member 2	Team member 3	Total
Policy	x/7			/21
Team composition	x/5			/15
Staff awareness	x/4			/12
Documentation	x/4			/12
Team process	x/6			/18
Transient threats	x/3			/9
Serious substantive threats	x/6			/18
Very serious sub. threats	x/9			/27
Knowledge	x/10			/30
Total	xx/55			xxx/165