



Responding to Student Threats

POLICY STATEMENT 722

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)

Category: Health and Safety

EFFECTIVE: March, 2017

Statement:

Anglophone East School District and the District Education Council are committed to creating and maintaining an environment where students, staff, parents, and others feel safe. Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocols ensure that potentially high-risk behaviour is properly assessed and supportive interventions are put in place. Threat assessment is a means to comprehensively examine the potential and magnitude of threatening behaviour that would impact on the safety/health of individuals within the school or school community. To this end, ASD-E shall establish a protocol for responding to student threats/threat-related behaviour. All threatening behaviour will be taken seriously and assessed. A threat is defined as an expressed intention to harm someone or something. Examples of threats may include, but are not limited to: serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill, verbal/written threats to kill or harm others, internet (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and/or text messaging threats to kill or harm others, possession of weapons and/or replicas, bomb threats, fire setting, sexual intimidation or assault.

Purpose:

The primary purpose of the threat assessment protocol is to determine and identify the level of concern of a student who may be moving on a path of violence toward him/herself or others and to intervene to decrease the risk posed, prevent injury to self and others, and assist the student to receive the help he/she needs to address the issues contributing to the high-risk behaviour.

Procedures:

FAIR NOTICE

Prior to any violence threat/risk assessment protocol being implemented in ASD-E, all students, staff, and parents/guardians will be provided with information about the protocol so that "Fair Notice" is given that threats and threat making behaviours will not be tolerated. This will be sent home with every student at the beginning of each school year, and throughout the school year if a new student arrives, and will take the form of a letter, email, voicemail, or published within the school agenda. Each school is to publicize and review the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Policy with all staff, students (age-appropriate language) and parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year and with new students entering throughout the school year.

DUTY TO REPORT

Any person in a school community having knowledge of a threat/threat-related behaviour or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high-risk behaviour shall immediately report the information to the school principal. Staff and students should be taught to report worrisome behaviour and that it is a social responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of all. It is also important for all to understand that no action will be taken against a person who makes a report unless the report is

malicious and without reasonable ground. In that case, the reporter shall be dealt with accordingly by the appropriate level of authority.

DUTY TO RESPOND

A school (principal or designate) shall respond to all threat/threat-related behaviours. All threat/threat-related behaviours shall be taken seriously and assessed accordingly. When needed, school administration shall secure the school environment by detaining students involved in a threatening or violent situation, notifying parents/guardians, implementing the school discipline policy as appropriate to the situation or by taking any other action deemed necessary to ensure student and staff safety as per the District Violence Threat Risk Assessment Flow Chart. See Appendix A.

DUTY TO INFORM – RECIPIENT(S) OF THREATS AND OTHERS

The Violent Threat Risk Assessment School Team shall ensure that appropriate support is provided to those against whom the threats have been made, i.e. recipient(s) of the threat. If necessary, the school principal/designate shall notify all school staff, and parents, within a reasonable time period, when the protocol has been activated as a result of threat/threat related behaviours.

STUDENTS REQUIRING SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Multidisciplinary teams will consider maturation issues, accountability, and cognitive skills when assessing threat-related behaviour of students under the age of twelve and/or students with exceptionalities. The school principal shall always be consulted and provide disciplinary responses and/or ensure interventions and precautionary measures as deemed appropriate, according to the level of threat/threat-related behaviours. The school principal shall determine, in consultation with the District Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team, the necessity for the involvement of law enforcement.

RESPONDING TO A THREAT

The response to the threat/threat-related behaviour(s) shall be guided according to the level of concern, immediate- 911, low, medium, or high, as per the ASD-E Violence Threat Assessment Protocol. See Appendix B. The school principal/designate shall ensure interventions and precautionary measures are put in place, as deemed appropriate, according to the level of threat, the context of the threat/threat-related behaviours, and that the actions needed to resolve the threat/threat-related behaviour(s). The recording of the information shall be included in the Violence Threat Assessment Report Form. See Appendix B. Upon receiving a report of threat/threat-related behaviour(s), the school principal/designate shall take immediate precautions to ensure the safety of all, including the recipient(s) of the threat and other potential victims (i.e. witnesses). The principal/designate shall also provide immediate supervision of the student(s) at a level consistent to the nature and seriousness of the threat/threat-related behaviour(s). Every effort shall be made to gather information from all those involved immediately and before they are dismissed.

IMMEDIATE RISK SITUATION

An immediate risk situation is a threat that places the school population in imminent danger, requiring an evacuation or lockdown. The school principal/designate shall call 911 immediately and notify the Office of the Superintendent as per the Keeping Our School Safe Protocol. The school principal/designate shall take steps to ensure the safety of all those in the school by activating established procedures for school evacuation or lockdown.

HIGH RISK SITUATION

If the school-based Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team assesses the threat to be a medium or high-risk threat (the threat or situation of concern appears to pose serious danger to themselves or the safety of others), the school principal/designate shall immediately initiate the protocol for the response by

contacting the District Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team. In cases where it is believed that a Criminal Code violation has occurred, the Police Officer/Crown has the final decision as to whether or not an arrest will be made. All school-based Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team members are required to have Level 1 Violence Threat Risk Assessment training. The Multidisciplinary Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team will conduct an assessment and determine follow-up recommendations. When the Threat Assessment Protocol is activated, a designated school team member will notify parents/guardians. Whenever possible, parents/guardians shall be an integral part of the risk assessment process. All relevant information will be documented using the Anglophone East School District Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol Report Form. All completed assessments are sent to the Director of Schools.

INTERVENTION PLANNING

The Multidisciplinary Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team shall meet to review the information regarding the incident, determine and implement immediate risk reducing interventions, and create long-term supportive intervention plans.

THREAT ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION AND STORAGE

The school principal shall be responsible for submitting a completed copy of the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Report Form and intervention plan to the Director of Schools.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

Policy 712 Search and Seizure describes standards and procedures in New Brunswick public schools for the search of school property, the search of students and their property, the seizure of any materials as a result of a search, and access to students for the purpose of interviews conducted by law enforcement officials, by describing the reasonable limits set on the rights of school administration. The school administration has the authority to search student property (e.g. clothing not being worn, backpack, handbag, mobile devices or vehicles etc.) if there are reasonable grounds. Two members of school personnel must be present during the search of a student in a situation which may pose an immediate threat or may lead to the threat of the safety and security of students and/or school personnel.

MEDIA/COMMUNICATION

All media contacts will be redirected to the Office of the Superintendent.

Definitions:

High-risk behaviours: Any threat making behaviour that appears to pose serious danger to self or others. Situations may include but are not limited to possession of a weapon/replica, bomb threat plan, fire setting, and verbal/written threat to kill or injure.

Immediate risk situation: Any situation that requires immediate police intervention such as possession of a weapon that poses serious threat to others.

Reporter: Any individual (i.e. peer, staff member, community member, etc.) who has reported the threat or threat-related behaviour(s).

Student: Any student who poses a threat, has made a threat or engaged in threat making behaviour(s).

Threat: Any expressed intention to inflict harm or injure someone. Examples of threats may include, but are not limited to: verbal threats, physical gestures, drawings, notes, social media or email messages or any other means used to communicate intention to harm.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA): The process of determining if a threat maker actually poses a risk to the target or targets they have threatened.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team: A multidisciplinary trained team committed to the assessment, evaluation of risk and intervention planning to reduce those risks. It is composed of a principal, a vice-principal, a guidance counsellor, and the District Violence Threat Assessment Team. Members of this team are required to be trained at a minimum of Level 1 Violence Threat Risk Assessment.

Witness: Any individual (i.e. peer, staff member, community member, etc.) who has valuable information to share during the interview process of a threat assessment.

Worrisome behaviour: Any behaviour causing concern for members of the school or school community that may indicate that a student is moving on a pathway to violence. The majority of threat related behaviour can be categorized as worrisome behaviour including, but not limited to; drawing pictures, writing stories, or making vague statements that do not constitute “uttering threats” as defined by law but are causing concern because of their violent content. Worrisome behaviours are a “cry for help” and require a timely follow-up with the student, teachers, counsellors, other school staff, and the student’s parents/guardians.

References:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Policy 703: [Positive Learning and Working Environment](#)

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Policy 712: [Search and Seizure Education Act](#)

Cameron, J. Kevin. (2011). Violence Threat Risk Assessment: Level One Training Guide, fourth edition. Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Cameron, J. Kevin. (2011). Community Protocol for Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Intervention- 9 th ed., Lethbridge, AB.