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SUNSET RIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT 29
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*Cultivating an inclusive learning community that engages hearts and minds one child at a time.*

# THREAT ASSESSMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

## Purpose

The guiding principle in dealing with threats is the goal and duty of all school personnel to safeguard the physical welfare of students and colleagues. The purpose of this document is to outline the goals, components, and administrative procedures relative to evaluating and responding to potential threats as governed by Board Policy 477 (Violence Prevention and Threat Assessment).

## Definitions

- 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. The threat may be expressed/communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means; and 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; and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.
- A ***threat assessment*** is a fact-based process emphasizing an appraisal of observed (or reasonably observable) behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations, to assess them, and to manage/address them.
- ***Aberrant behavior*** is that which is atypical for the person or situation and causes concern for the safety or well-being of those involved. Aberrant behavior for an individual involves actions, statements, communications or responses that are unusual 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 well-being of the person. These 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; and/or
    - Fixation on violence as means of addressing a grievance.
- A ***low-risk threat*** is one in which 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.
- A ***moderate risk threat*** is one in which 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.
- A ***high-risk threat*** is one in which 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.
- An ***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.
- A ***direct threat*** is one in which the person poses a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of

auxiliary aids or services. The direct threat standard applies when the threat assessment team or school administration determines that a subject poses a direct threat, and the administration also determines that applicable disciplinary procedures are not available or sufficient to mitigate the threat. If the administration makes such a determination, the school division is not required to permit the student to participate in or benefit from the services, programs, or activities of the division. A determination that a person with a disability poses a direct threat may not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about the effects of a particular disability and must be based on an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment relying on current medical evidence or on the best available objective evidence, to determine: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will mitigate the risk.

**Threat Assessment Process**

Threat assessment is a systematic process that is designed to:

1) Identify individual(s)/situation(s) whose behavior causes concern for violence;
2) Gather additional relevant information in a lawful and ethical manner through interviews, consultations with others, and a review of records;
3) Assess the individual(s)/situation(s) in context based on the totality of the information available, and;
4) Manage the individual situation to prevent violence and mitigate impact of harm.

**Reporting Potential Threats**

All school division employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report immediately to the school administrator or designee any expression of intent to harm another person, concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest a student may intend to commit an act of targeted violence. The school threat assessment team shall strive to make the reporting process both understandable and highly accessible and to discourage a "code of silence" that may be a barrier to reporting. Faculty and staff, students, volunteers, and other members of the school community need to know:

· their role and responsibility to report concerns;
· what to report;
· where and how to report it;
· that reports are wanted and will be acted upon appropriately.

Members of the school community should be encouraged on an ongoing basis to report any threatening communication or troubling behavior and be reminded that reporting is an act of caring and not "snitching" or

When a threat is reported, the school administrator and/or threat assessment team leader shall initiate an initial inquiry/triage and, in consultation with the threat assessment team, make a determination of the seriousness of the threat as expeditiously as possible in accordance with these District 29 Student Threat Assessment Guidelines.

**Clear and Immediate Threats**

Upon notification of threatening behavior or communications, the school administrator or threat assessment team leader shall determine if an imminent threat is believed to exist. If the individual appears to pose a ***clear and immediate threat of serious violence***, the administrator shall notify law enforcement as soon as possible.

**Initiating Threat Assessment When No Clear and Immediate Threat**

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. This triage may include (as necessary and appropriate):

· Review of the threatening behavior or communication.
· Review of school and other records for any prior history or interventions with the individual(s) involved.

· Conducting timely and thorough interviews (as necessary) of the person(s) who reported the threat, the recipient(s) or target(s) of the threat, other witnesses who have knowledge of the threat, and where reasonable, the individual(s) who allegedly engaged in the threatening behavior or communication. The purpose of the interviews is to evaluate the individual's threat in context, so that the meaning of the threat and intent of the student can be determined. If it is determined that the threat is not identifiable or a low threat of violence or harm to self or others, and the threat assessment team determines that no further assessment, intervention, or monitoring is required at this time to prevent violence:
· The threat assessment team leader shall ensure that the incident and review is adequately documented.
· If the individual (about whom the report was made) does not pose a threat but could benefit from or is in need of some other need of assistance, the threat assessment team leader shall ensure that the individual is referred to the appropriate school or community-based resources. If it cannot be determined with a reasonable degree of confidence that the alleged threat is no/low threat, then a more in-depth assessment is to be undertaken by the threat assessment team to determine the nature and degree of any safety concerns and to develop strategies to prevent violence and reduce risk, as necessary. The assessment may include but not be limited to reviews of records; interview and consultation with staff, students or community who know the individual; and interviews of the individual and the target/recipient of the threat(s). Based on information collected, the school threat assessment team shall determine strategies to mitigate the threat and provide intervention and assistance to those involved, as needed.

**Classifying Threats**

The threat assessment is designed to identify and assess risks in a deliberate and thorough manner. In determining response strategies to mitigate the risk and to provide assistance, as needed, it is helpful to classify threats by level. Based on the information collected, the threat assessment team may classify threats using the following basic criteria:

| Threat Levels | Criteria |
|---|---|
| Low risk threat | 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 | 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 | A high risk threat is one in which 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 require intervention. |
| Imminent threat | 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. |

**Parent/Guardian Communication**

In instances where the threat is deemed ***moderate risk or high risk***, or requires further intervention to prevent violence or serious harm, the school administrator shall notify the parent and/or guardian of any student who is the target/recipient of a threat as well as the parent and/or guardian of any student who made the threat (when applicable). In cases involving no/low risk threats, the school administrator may notify the parent and/or guardian of any student who is the target/recipient of a threat and/or may notify the parent and/or guardian of any student who made the threat.

## THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS STEPS

### Step 1: Inform the Threat Assessment Team (TAT) Coordinator

1. The threat assessment process is initiated upon a school staff member becoming aware (e.g., reports, website postings, social media posts, written notes) of a threatening behavior. This expression may be spoken, written, or gestured. Threats can be expressed directly or indirectly to the victim or to others, and threats may be explicit or implied.
    1. Reports can be made directly to any staff member or reported anonymously via the online link on the District homepage.
    2. Once reported, the staff member shall immediately notify the TAT Coordinator.

### Step 2: Assemble the Threat Assessment Team

**1.** Once the TAT Coordinator is alerted of a potential threat, he/she will contact all TAT members to share the initial report.

**2.** The TAT Coordinator will direct specific members of the team to collect information related to the "Key Questions" provided in Appendix A below.

### Step 3: Conducting the Threat Assessment

1. A threat assessment will be conducted to classify the threat and evaluate the likelihood of the potential threat occurring based on the available evidence, facts, and circumstances.
3. Information gathered should facilitate reasonable judgments about whether the concern reflects movement along a path towards attack on an identifiable target.
4. Information will be gathered regarding what is known about the student and situation from records, interviews, searches, and direct assessments by TAT members. Out-of-school information, including data gathered from technology sources, parents/family, law enforcement, and mental health records, may be included. Data gathered should address the "Key Questions" provide in Appendix A below.
5. Based on an integration of all data gathered throughout the assessment process, the TAT will determine whether a potential perpetrator has the motivation, means, and intent to carry out a proclaimed threat an classify the threat as no threat, moderate threat, high threat, imminent threat, direct threat.
6. If the TAT believes that the weight of the information indicates that the potential threat is transient, and the student does not pose a substantive threat of targeted violence, the TAT may conclude the Threat Assessment process and monitor the student/behavior.
7. If the TAT determines that the threat is a low risk (i.e., threat is vague, indirect, implausible, inconsistent, lack detail, lacks realism, has content that indicates that the person will not likely carry it out), the TAT may conclude the Threat Assessment process and monitor the student/behavior.
8. If there is sufficient information for the TAT to be reasonably certain that the individual poses at least a moderate threat, he team shall immediately communicate all information to the appropriate law enforcement agency and mental/behavioral health agencies for investigation/evaluation. The District shall comply with the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and Duty To Warn provisions in this process.

### Step 4: Developing the Safety Plan:

1. The culmination of the threat assessment is the development of a safety plan designed to address the problem or conflict underlying the threat, prevent the act of violence from taking and address the safety of others.
2. For all confirmed threats, there is an emphasis on helping students to resolve conflicts and minimizing the use of zero-tolerance suspensions as a disciplinary response.
3. The plan should establish review dates, provide connections to available support resources, and provide monitoring measures.
4. If additional formal assessment is part of the plan, parent permission shall be obtained.

# THREAT ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM

**Date of Report:** _____
**Time of Report:** _____
**Completed By:** _____
**Reporting Party Name/Affiliation:** _____

**Description of Incident:**

**Date of Incident:** _____
**Location of Incident:** _____
**Description of Incident:**

**Threat Assessment Information:**

**Date/Time of Assessment:** _____
**Interviewers:** _____
**Interview Summary:**

**Additional Sources & Summary (e.g., Record Check, Additional Interviews)**

# THREAT ASSESSMENT: KEY QUESTIONS

***1. WHAT ARE THE STUDENT'S MOTIVES AND GOALS?***

a. What motivated the target's threatening statements or actions?
b. Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
c. Does the target have a major grievance or grudge? If so, against whom?
d. What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result?
e. Does the potential perpetrator feel that any part of the problem is resolved?
f. Has the target previously raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

***2. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY COMMUNICATIONS SUGGESTING IDEAS OR INTENT TO ATTACK?***

a. What has the target communicated concerning his or her ideas and/or intentions?
b. Do the communications provide insight about ideation, planning, preparation, timing, grievances,etc.?
c. Has anyone been alerted or "warned away"?

***3. HAS THE SUBJECT SHOWN INAPPROPRIATE INTEREST IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?***

a. Previous perpetrators of targeted violence?
b. Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon)?
c. Incidents of mass violence (e.g., terrorism, mass murderers)?
d. Rehearsing attacks or ambushes?
e. Effect or notoriety of perpetrators?

***4. DOES THE TARGET HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT AN ACT OF VIOLENCE?***

a. How organized is the target's thinking and behavior?
b. Does the target have the means (i.e., access to weapons) to carry out an attack?
c. Are they trying to get the means to carry out an attack?
d. Have they developed the will and ability to cause harm?
e. Are they practicing or rehearsing for the violence?
f. What is the "intensity of effort" expended in attempting to develop the capability?

***5. IS THE TARGET EXPERIENCING HOPELESSNESS, DESPERATION, AND/OR DESPAIR?***

a. Is there information to suggest the target is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
b. Has the target experienced a recent failure or loss?
c. Is the target known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
d. Is the target now, or has the target ever been, suicidal or "accident-prone"?
e. Has the target engaged in behavior that suggests that he/she has considered ending their life?

***6. DOES THE TARGET HAVE A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH AT LEAST ONE ADULT?***

a. Does this target have at least one relationship with an adult where the target feels that he or she can confide in and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions?
b. Is the target emotionally connected to – or disconnected from – other targets?
c. Has the target previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

***7. DOES THE TARGET SEE VIOLENCE AS AN ACCEPTABLE WAY TO SOLVE PROBLEMS?***

a. Does the social setting around the target support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
b. Has the target been "dared" by others to engage in an act of violence?

***8. IS THE TARGET'S "STORY" CONSISTENT WITH HIS OR HER ACTIONS?***

a. Does information from collateral interviews and from the target's behavior confirm/dispute the target's story?

***9. ARE OTHER PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE TARGET'S POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE?***

a. Are those who know the target concerned that he/she might take action based on violent ideas/plans?
b. Have those who know the target witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?

***10. WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT AFFECT THE LIKELIHOOD AN ESCALATION IN VIOLENT BEHAVIOR?***

a. What factors in the target's life and/or environment might impact the likelihood that the target will carry out a threat?

# THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM SUMMARY

**Date of Threat Assessment Team Meeting:** _____

**Members of Threat Assessment Team Present:**

**Assessment Summary:**

**Select One:** Imminent Threat High Risk Threat Moderate Threat Low Risk Threat

**Intervention Recommendation:**

**Review Date:** _____

# DISTRICT 29 THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS

**District-Level Coordinator**

Dr. James Eichmiller, Superintendent of Schools

**School-Based Administrative Representatives**

Ms. Jennifer Kiedaisch, Middlefork School Principal
Dr. Ivy Sukenik, Sunset Ridge School Principal

**Mental Health Representatives**

Susan George, School Counselor
Adelaide Allen, School Psychologist
Michelle LaPlante, School Social Worker
Dana Dorsey, Behavior Intervention Specialist

**Health Care Professionals**

Amy King, RN, Middlefork School Nurse
Andreea Balici, RN, Sunset Ridge School Nurse

**Technology Department Expert**

Ryan Czok, Network & Digital Security Manager

**Teacher's Union Representatives**

Monica Brouilette (SREA Co-President)
Susan George (SREA Co-President)

**Law Enforcement Representative**

Steve Gilmour, Commander, Northfield Police Department

**Partner Mental Health Agencies**

Haven Youth & Family Services
Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook

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