Threat Assessment Protocol

Threat assessment is a violence prevention strategy that involves: (a) identifying student threats to commit a violent act, (b) determining the seriousness of the threat, and (c) developing intervention plans that protect potential victims and address the underlying problem or conflict that stimulated the threatening behavior.

The goals of threat assessment are to keep schools safe and to help potential offenders overcome the underlying sources of their anger, hopelessness, or despair. Effective threat assessment provides school professionals with useful information about a student's risks and personal resources. Among the other potential student risks that can be identified and prevented are suicide, alcohol and drug use, physical abuse, dropping out, and criminal activity.

Adopted: June 11, 2018

Types of Threats

A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. It may be spoken, written, or symbolic. Threats can be expressed directly or indirectly to the victim or to others, and threats may be explicit or implied. Threats sometimes, but rarely, actually involve guns or explosive devices. Many students who make a threat will never carry it out. Conversely, others who pose a real danger may not make an explicit threat. Threats may be communicated to the intended victim or related to a third party. A threat to harm others can be **transient** (i.e., expression of anger or frustration that can be quickly or easily resolved) or **substantive** (i.e., serious intent to harm others that involves a detailed plan and means).

Examples of Transient Threat	Examples of Substantive Threat
Non-genuine expression	Specific and plausible details such as a specific victim, time, place, and method
Non-enduring intent to harm	Repeated over time or conveyed to differing individuals
Temporary feelings of anger	Involved planning, substantial thought or preparatory steps
Tactic in argument	Recruitment or involvement of accomplices
Intended as a joke or figure of speech	Invitation for an audience to observe threat being carried out
Resolved on scene or in office (time-limited)	Physical evidence of intent to carry out threat (e.g. lists, drawings, written plan)
Ends with apology, retraction or clarification	

Building Teams

Each building should have a Level One threat assessment team. This team will be required to attend a Level One threat assessment in-service training. Information should be shared among all members of the Building Team, as this is essential to the effectiveness of the Level One assessment and the development of a subsequent Support Plan for the student. The Building Team is directed by the administrator and should be consisted of the following:

- Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal)
- Student Needs Facilitator
- School counselor
- School nurse
- School Resource Officer
- Teacher or another person who knows the student

Level One Assessment

This protocol should be used by staff who have been trained for a Level One assessment. The results of the Level One assessment do not predict future violence nor is it a foolproof method of assessing an individual's risk of harm to others. There is no easy formula or profile of risk factors that accurately determines whether a student is going to commit a violent act. Most students who display multiple risk factors will never become violent offenders, and some who pose a real threat will not demonstrate a prescribed level of risk.

The purpose of the Level One assessment is to identify the circumstances and variables, which may increase risk for potential youth violence as well as to assist the school staff in developing an on-going intervention and support plan for the student.

Information for the Level One assessment should be gathered from the following sources:

- Interview with student using Level One assessment *(to be developed)*
- Current and previous school/discipline records
- Law enforcement, probation, *as applicable*
- Interviews with school staff, students, parents, target, *if applicable*

- Searches of the student's person, locker, and car
- Other agencies involved with the student: mental health, etc.
- Activities: internet searches, social media history, notebooks, etc.
- Parent interview: offer support, seek help in understanding, clarify interest in/access to weapons

The Level One assessment will assist in determining if the level of risk is:

Classification of Risk	Characteristics
Moderate	-Disruptive or concerning behavior - Student shows no sign of distress or low level of distress and disturbance - Possible threat made or present - Threat is vague and indirect - Information about threat or threat itself is inconsistent, implausible, or lacks detail - Threat lacks realism - Content of threat suggests student is unlikely to carry it out
Elevated	- Seriously disruptive incident - Threat made or present - Threat is vague and indirect, but may be repeated or shared with multiple reporters - Information about threat or threat itself is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail - Threat lacks realism, or is repeated with variations

	- Content of threat suggests student is unlikely to carry it out
Serious	- Student is disturbed or advancing to dysregulation - Threat made or present - Threat is vague, but direct, or specific but indirect - Likely to be repeated or shared with multiple reporters - Information about threat or threat itself is consistent, plausible or includes increasing detail of a plan (time, place, etc.) - Threat is accompanied by talk or efforts to obtain weapons or other methods for harm - Threat is likely to be repeated with consistency (may try to convince listener they are serious) - Content of threat suggests student may carry it out
Extreme	- Student is dysregulated (way off baseline) or medically disabled - Threat made or present - Threat is concrete (specific or direct) - Likely to be repeated or shared with multiple reporters - Information about threat or threat itself is consistent, plausible or includes specific detail of a plan (time, place, etc.) often with steps already taken - Threat is accompanied by evidence of efforts to obtain weapons or other methods for harm - Threat may be repeated with consistency - Content of threat suggests student will carry it out (reference to weapons, means, target) - Student may appear detached

The Building Team will also determine appropriate discipline actions based on the student's threat in accordance with DCSD Policy 5200: Student Behavior. The Building Team will consider whether the threat is transient or substantive in determining discipline and next course of action.

Level Two Assessment

Based on the Level One assessment, concerns about the student's level of risk may warrant a referral to a Level Two assessment to be completed by a licensed mental health practitioner. A classification of **Serious** or **Extreme** will automatically initiate a referral for a Level Two assessment. **Elevated** threats may be referred on and will be determined based on additional review of the information listed above.

If there is imminent danger, building staff will immediately notify law enforcement at 911.

If the student already has a therapist, the family will be given the option of using that therapist or another, independent mental health provider. A family may choose a different provider in order to avoid affecting existing therapeutic relationships. If the family lacks awareness of local licensed mental health practitioners, the district will supply a list of names from which to choose.

The Level Two assessment should include the following:

- Student's current diagnosis, if applicable
- Level of current or persistent additional stressors in the student's life that carry over to school
- Assessment of the student's ability to self-regulate
- Assessment of the student's impulsivity or potential for impulsivity when escalated
- Treatment indicated to help the student with general and school stability
- Whether the current level of care, if applicable, is sufficient to address the student's mental health needs
- The extent that the concerning behaviors are affected by or interacting with current mental health issues
- Prognosis for response to treatment

Student Support Plan

A threat assessment is most properly concerned with risk reduction and prevention efforts rather than statements of prediction. Therefore, ongoing support, placement, supervision needs, parental assistance and other risk reduction strategies should be identified which will contribute to the prevention of violence. The Building Team will develop an on-going plan to support the student which includes the following components:

- Interventions – steps the school will take to keep all students safe
- Emotional support – steps the school will take in collaboration with others to support student's mental health and emotional needs

Suggestions for interventions and emotional support will be developed, distributed to school personnel and re-evaluated regularly for relevance.