

FORT LA BOSSE SCHOOL DIVISION

TITLE –**STAGE 1 VIOLENCE THREAT RISK ASSESSMENT
OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR (VTRA)**

POLICY - JLDBB- E

Resolution # - 98/17

Cross Reference -

Legal Reference –

Last Reviewed - 08/05/17

STAGE I VTRA REPORT FORM Procedural Guidelines

If an immediate risk is identified, the administrator/designate will contact the police and take steps to ensure the safety of all students as denoted in established guidelines.

Violence/ThreatMaking Behaviours (Examples of high-risk behaviours addressed in this protocol include but are not limited to):

- **Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill**
- **Verbal/written threats to kill others (clear, direct, and plausible)**
- **Internet (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) text messaging, threats to kill others (refer to Appendix B of the National Training Protocol for abbreviations commonly used on the Internet and texting)**
- **Possession of weapons (including replicas)**
- **Bomb threats (making and/or detonating explosive devices)**
- **Fire Setting**
- **Sexual intimidation or assault**
- **Gang related intimidation and violence**

Student: _____ **School:** _____

DOB: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Age:** _____ **Date of Incident:** _____

Parents/Guardians Name(s): _____

Three Primary Hypotheses in VTRA:

One: is it a conscious or unconscious “Cry for Help”?

Two: Conspiracy of two or more? Who else knows about it? Who else is involved?

Three: Is there any evidence of fluidity?

Pre-interview Considerations

- i) When possible, interview the Threat Maker(s) or Student of Concern **after** initial data has been collected such as locker check, interviewing the individual who reported the threat as well as the police member doing an occurrence check for prior police contacts. This will help to avoid

the “uni-dimensional assessment” and provide the interviewer(s) with data to develop case specific hypotheses and verbatim questions that can be asked in a strategic VTRA interview to test those hypotheses.

ii) There should **never** be more than two people in the room interviewing the Threat Maker or Student of Concern.

iii) Remember to distinguish between **Assessing the Threat** versus **Assessing the Threat Maker**.

Step 1

School Administrators: make sure you know the whereabouts of the target(s) and threat maker(s) and address any immediate risk factors if they exist.

*If necessary, appropriately monitor and/or detain the student(s) of concern until the police member of the team is present.

*Do not allow “student(s) of interest access to coats, backpacks, desks, or lockers.

*Determine if the threat maker has immediate access to the means (knife, gun, etc.)

Step 2

School Administrators: If appropriate, check the locker, backpack, desk, etc.

Step 3

School Administrator will contact Divisional VTRA Team Leader(s) to activate Stage I Team Investigation

Step 4

Team Leader & Principal (V.P.) will determine who will strategically interview sources of data including all participants directly and indirectly involved as well as “hard” data collection as outlined below.

Immediate Data may be obtained from multiple sources including:

*Reporter(s)

*Target(s)

*Witnesses

*Teachers and other school staff (secretaries, teacher assistants, bus drivers, etc.)

*Friends, classmates, acquaintances

*Parents/caregivers (call both parents)

*current and previous school records (call sending school)

*Police record check

*check the student(s) locker, desk, backpack, recent textbooks/assignment binders, cars, etc for data consistent with the threat making or threat-related behaviour

*Check/Search or question parents/caregivers about the student(s), bedroom etc

*Activities: internet histories, diaries, notebooks

*Other

Step 5

Complete the semi structured interview

Step 5:

The Semi-Structured Interview Format

Series I Questions (The Incident)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Where did the incident happen & when?2. How did it come to the interviewee's attention?3. What was the specific language of the threat, detail of the weapon brandished, or gesture made?4. Was there stated:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○Justification for the threat?○Means to carry out the threat?○Consequences weighted out (I don't care if I live or die)?○Conditions that could lower the level of risk (unless you take that Facebook post down I will stick my knife in your throat?)5. Who was present & under what circumstance did the incident occur?6. What was the motivation or perceived cause of the incident?7. What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident? <i>Did he/she add to or detract from the Justification Process?</i>8. What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident? <i>Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?</i>
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Series II Questions (Attack-Related Behaviours)

1. Has the student (subject) sought out information consistent with his/her threat making or threat related behavior?
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past?
3. Has the student (subject) attempted to gain access to weapons or does he/she have access to the weapons she/he has threatened to use?
4. Has the student (subject) developed a plan & how general or specific is it (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal of justifications, maps & floor plans)?
5. Has the student (subject) been engaging in suspicious behavior such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, sprinkle systems, video surveillance in schools or elsewhere, schedules & locations of police or security patrol?
6. Has the student (subject) engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including packing or brandishing fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting (ie. Lighting fire to cardboard tubes cut & taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc.)?
7. Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in his/her locker (back pack, car trunk, etc.) at school or bedroom (shed, garage, etc.) at home?
8. Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because “something big is going to happen?”

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Series III Questions (Threat Maker Typology)

1. Does the threat maker (subject) appear to be more:
 - a) Traditional Predominately Behavioural Type?
 - b) Traditional Predominately Cognitive Type?
 - c) Mixed Type?
 - d) Non-Traditional?
2. Does the threat maker (subject) have a history of violence or threats of violence? If yes, what is his/her past?
 - a) (HTS) History of Human Target Selection
 - b) (SS) History of Site Selection
 - c) (F)requency of Violence or Threats
 - d) (I)ntensity of Violence or Threats
 - d) (R)ecency
3. In the case at hand, what is his/her current:
 - a) (HTS) Human Target Selection
 - b) (SSS) Site Selection
 - c) Does it denote a significant increase in **BASELINE** Behaviour?

NOTE: In Stage I VTRA, history of violence is a significant risk enhancer but the best predictor of future violent behavior is an **increase or shift in Baseline**. This may also include an individual who has become more withdrawn or quiet as opposed to acting out!

- Does the threat maker (subject) have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behavior?
- Is there evidence of fluidity in his/her writings, drawings or verbalizations?
- Does the threat maker (subject) use drugs or alcohol? Is there evidence it is a risk enhancing factor in the case at hand?
- Is there a mental health diagnosis or evidence of a mental health diagnosis that may be a risk enhancing factor in the case at hand?

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Series IV Questions (The Target Typology)

Remember that in some cases the target is higher risk for violence than the threat maker with the most common case being where the threat maker is the victim of bullying and the target is the bully.

1. Does the target have a history of violence or threats of violence? If yes, what is his/her past?
2. If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recency (FIR) of the violence?
3. What has been his/her past human target selection?
4. What has been his/her past site selection?
5. Is there evidence the target has instigated the current situation?

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Series V Questions (Peer Dynamics)

1. Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification process?
2. Who is the threat maker's (subject's) peer structure & where does the threat maker (subject) fit (ie. Leader, co-leader, and follower)?
3. Is there a difference between the threat maker's individual baseline & his/her peer group baseline behavior?
4. Who is the target's peer structure & where does the target fit (ie. Leader, co-leader, and follower)?
5. Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?

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Series VI Questions (Empty Vessel)

1. Does the student of concern (subject) have a healthy relationship with a mature adult?
2. Does the student have **inordinate knowledge** versus **general knowledge** or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school – based attacks?
3. How has he/she responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc.)?
4. What type of violent games, movies, books, music internet searches, does the student (subject) fill himself/herself with?
5. Is there evidence that he/she is filling himself/herself with is influencing his/her behavior? **Imitators vs. Innovators?**)
6. What related themes are present in his/her writings, drawings, etc?
7. Is there evidence of fluidity and/or religiosity?

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Series VI Questions (Contextual Factors)

1. Has the threat maker experienced a recent loss, such as a death of a family member or friend; a recent break-up; rejection by a peer or peer group; been cut from a sports team; received a rejection notice from a college, University, military etc?
2. Have his/her parents just divorced or separated?
3. Is he/she the victim of child abuse & has the abuse been dormant but resurfaced at this time?
4. Is he/she being initiated into a gang & is it voluntary or forced recruitment?
5. Has he/she recently had an argument or “fight” with a parent/caregiver or someone close to him/her?
6. Has he/she recently been charged with an offence or suspended or expelled from school?
7. Is the place where he/she has been suspended likely to increase or decrease his/her level of risk?

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Series VIII Questions (Family Dynamics)

1. How many homes does the student (subject) reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparent's home)?
2. Is the student (subject) connected to a healthy/mature adult in the home?
3. Who all lives in the family home (full-time and part-time)? Has anyone entered or left the home that may be influencing level of risk?
4. Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often is he/she around?
5. Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards his/her siblings or parent(s) caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom including Frequency, Intensity, Recency (FIR)?
6. What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home?
7. Are parent(s) or caregiver(s) concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children or others?
8. Does the student's level or risk (at home, school, or the community) cycle according to who is in the home (ie. The student is low risk for violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times his/her father travels away from home for work)?
9. Does the student have a history of trauma? Including car accidents, falls, exposure to violence, abuse, etc.
10. Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM IV diagnoses?
11. Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family?
12. Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse in the family?

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Step 6:

Notify the Threat Maker(s) and Target(s) or Guardian(s) at the earliest opportunity.

- Parents/guardians have been notified of the situation and this Stage I data collection phase.
- Parents/guardians have NOT been notified because:

Step 7:

Other Agencies:

As per the protocol, other agency partners may be involved in the STAGE I VTRA process as consultants or the school team and sources of initial data relevant to the case at hand such as past or current involvement by other agencies that once they are informed of the initial school data may release necessary information or physically join the team.

- Call CFS – local worker for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Child & Adolescent Mental Health Worker for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Youth Probation Worker for record check relevant to the case at hand

Upon receipt of the Stage I data, partner agencies check to see if the student in question is or was a client and then the agencies determine if they are in possession of information that in conjunction with the Stage I data requires them to “disclose”. Generally Stage II VTRA Team designates will report that a record check has been completed and:

- 1) There is nothing to report.
- 2) There is information relevant to the case that needs to be disclosed as per the VTRA Protocol (significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others is present).
3. The risk is not immediate but a Release of Information Form should be requested to allow for a full disclosure of the contents to the file relevant to the case at hand.

Note:

At this point of the Stage I process, some initial data may not be available to complete this form but enough information is usually available to determine if:

- 1) an immediate risk is posed and
- 2) If a Stage II evaluation is required.

Step 8:

VTRA Team Members collate the data and discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the question: “To what extent does the student pose a threat to school/student safety?” “Does the student pose a threat to himself/herself or someone outside the school (ie family?” The Stage I Assessment is an overall assessment of current level of risk and is a precursor to (if necessary) a more comprehensive Stage II Risk Evaluation.

➤ **Low Level of Concern**

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is minimal.

- Threat is vague and indirect.
- Categorization of low risk does not imply “no risk” but indicates *the individual* is at little risk for violence
- Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail; threat lacks realism.
- Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.
- Within the general range for typical baseline behavior for the student in question.
- Monitoring of the matter may be appropriate

➤ **Medium Level of Concern**

The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.

- Threat is more plausible and concrete than a low level threat. Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (eg. Possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (eg. Weapon seeking), although there may be an ambiguous or inconclusive reference pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: “I’m serious!”
- A moderate or lingering concern about the student’s potential to act violently.
- Increase in baseline behavior.
- Categorization of risk indicates *the individual* is at an elevated risk for violence, and those measures currently in place or further measures, including monitoring, are required in an effort to manage the individual’s future risk.

➤ **High Level of concern**

The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

- Threat is specific and *plausible*. There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.
- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on threat. For example, information indicates that the student has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had a victim under surveillance.
- Information suggests strong concern about the student's potential to act violently.
- Significant increase in baseline behaviour
- Categorization of risk indicates the individual is at a high or imminent risk for violence.
- Immediate intervention is required to prevent an act of violence from occurring.

Sources for the above categorizations represent the work of the FBI, Durham Regional Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police Threat Assessment Unit, and the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Step 9:

Decide on a Course of Action

Are there risk reducing interventions that need to be put in place immediately?

With the input of all Threat Assessment Team members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision.

➤ **Low to Medium Level of Concern**

Implement the Intervention Plan (*Most students can be managed at school with interventions.*)

➤ **Medium to High Level of Concern**

The Threat Assessment Team has determined that a Stage II Threat Assessment is needed.

- a) Where a suspension has been imposed, plans would be made to facilitate the student's re-entry to school
- b) An Initial Response Team designate will work with the student and his/her parents/guardian to implement the plan for re-entry. The plan should be a contract signed by all participants including the student and parents if circumstances warrant.
- c) The Division Team Leader/Designate shall be responsible to ensure that the recipient(s) victim(s) of the student threats/behaviours shall be assessed and services provided as necessary.
- d) The Administrator shall notify all school staff within a reasonable time period when the protocol has been activated as a result of high-risk student behavior.
- e) The Division Team Leader(s) or Designate will be responsible for circulating Assessment minutes to team members within one week of concluding the investigation. Please note at the top of the minutes page "Confidential". Copies of the minutes and student specific plans will be filed in the Student Service records at division office.

Key Point: There may be cases where the recipient of a threat has been engaged in high risk behavior themselves that may lead to the threats in the first instance. In those situations, the recipient of the threat(s) may need to be assessed for high-risk behavior as well.

Step 10:

Develop a State I Intervention Plan and Determine if Stage II Risk Evaluation and Longer Term Treatment Planning is required.

Use the following Intervention Plan to address all concerns identified during the Stage I Assessment.

Stage I Intervention Plan (attach additional pages as needed)
➤ Disciplinary action taken:
➤ Intended victim warned and/or parents or guardians notified.
➤ Suicide assessment initiated on: ➤ By:
➤ Contract not to harm self or others created (please attach).
➤ Alert staff and teachers on a need-to-know basis.
➤ Daily or Weekly check-in with (Title/Name):
➤ Travel card to hold accountable for whereabouts and on-time arrival to destinations.
➤ Backpack, coat, and other belongings check-in and check-out by:
➤ Late Arrival and/or Early Dismissal.
➤ Increased supervision in these settings:
➤ Modify daily schedule by:
➤ Behaviour plan (attach a copy to this Threat Assessment)
➤ Identify precipitating/aggravating circumstances, and intervene to alleviate tension. Describe:
➤ Drug and/or alcohol intervention with:
➤ Referral to Student Services personnel to consider additional learning assessment:
➤ If an IEP or BIP exists, what are goals & placement options?
➤ Review community based resources and interventions with parents or caregivers. ➤ Obtain permission to share information with community partners such as counselors and therapists (use release of information form)

Other Action:

Parents/Guardians (attach additional pages as needed)
➤ Parents will provide the following supervision and/or intervention
Parents will:

Monitor this Intervention Plan regularly and modify it as appropriate.

VTRA Team Members	Date:
	Signature:
Principal or Vice-Principal	Date:
	Signature:
Clinician	Date:
	Signature:
School Liaison Officer (Police)	Date:
	Signature:
Other:	Date:
	Signature:
Other:	Date:
	Signature:

