

FORT LA BOSSE SCHOOL DIVISION

TITLE – **ASSESSMENT OF THREATS/HIGH RISK
STUDENT BEHAVIOUR**

POLICY - **JLDBB**

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Cross Reference -

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Purpose:

Without formal procedures in schools and communities to assess threats, the likelihood of over-reacting or under-reacting to threat behaviour is possible. The general purpose of a student threat/risk assessment policy is to assist in creating and maintaining an environment where students, staff, parents/guardians and others feel safe. The primary objective will be the creation of a threat/risk assessment team. The team will identify indicators that suggest a student may be engaging in attack related behaviours against some target and intervene to decrease the risk, prevent injury to self and others. The team will assist the student to receive the help he or she needs to address the issues contributing to the high-risk student behaviour.

Although threatening or violent behaviours are considered serious, regardless of who is involved, the context of this policy will focus on students.

Threat Team membership

1. Initial Response Team

- * Division Team Leaders: as designated annually by Superintendent
- * School Administrator/Designate
- * Others as appointed by the Division Team Leader (All High-Risk Behaviours will include police representation)

2. Comprehensive Assessment Team: (As deemed appropriate by the Initial Response Team)

- * Guidance/Resource Teacher
- * Police
- * School Principal/Designate
- * Division Team Leaders
- * Physicians

- * Child and Family Services
- * Mental Health Counsellor
- * Divisional Personnel
- * Probation Services
- * Others as appointed by the divisional team leaders

It is expected that team members be certified with a minimum of Level I Threat Assessment Training or related training.

Team members will verify willingness to serve on the Threat Assessment Team on an Annual basis.

Team members will review the protocol annually.

Definition of high Risk Student Behaviours

The high-risk behaviours addressed in this policy include but are not limited to:

- * Possession of weapons/materials intended to harm
- * Verbal/written threats to kill or injure others or to do harm to themselves
- * Internet website threats to kill or injure others or to do harm to themselves
- * Threats may be written, verbal, drawn, posted on the Internet or made by gesture only, and may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Reporting:

Any person in the school division having knowledge of high-risk behaviour or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high-risk behaviour shall promptly report the information to the school principal/designate. No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless the report is made maliciously and without reasonable grounds. In such cases, the person shall be dealt with according to school division policy and law, where applicable.

There is no profile or checklist for the high-risk student. Some students who actually pose a threat display very few traditional traits of high-risk, while others seem to meet the general criteria. The key point is that assessment teams should not be deceived by stereotypes of the traditional student while failing to take seriously the threats of those who appear non-traditional.

Fluidity between homicidal and suicidal domains is common in many youth who commit serious acts of violence. Many threat makers do not pose a risk to others but may be thinking of killing themselves. General suicide risk assessment, independent of threats towards others, is outside of the specialized role of the threat assessment team: counsellors or others trained in suicide prevention would continue to handle these cases independent of the team. Where the team may become involved is when factors contributing to the suicidal behaviour of the student are identified and related to school dynamics (e.g. Student is the recipient of violence or threats of violence at school).

Teams are not just interested in the disposition or personality of the threat maker: they are also interested in the context within which threats occur. Contextual variables (e.g.: a student loses a friend from the basketball team who was just killed in a car accident: parents just separated and his girlfriend broke up their relationship and the student has just threatened to kill a classmate who has been bullying him for years) are examples of factors that may contribute to threat making behaviour at a certain point in time. The implication is that someone could be high risk under certain circumstances that when addressed may result in eliminating the risk.

Procedures

All high-risk behaviours will be taken seriously and high-risk students assessed accordingly. Students, staff and parents will be provided with information about the policy and procedures so that fair notice is given that threat behaviour will not be tolerated. The Team Leader and School Administrators will make available the policy and guidelines to students, parents and staff on an annual basis.

Three categories for action:

1. Immediate Risk Situations
2. High Risk Student Behaviours
3. Worrisome Behaviours

Immediate Risk Situations

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. (Student Discipline Policy, Emergency Preparedness Plan) (e.g. the student has a weapon in his/her possession and poses a serious threat to others). In these cases, a threat is posed and the matter is one of immediate police intervention: not risk assessment. The threat assessment team may be utilized following the immediate crisis to assist with a follow-up inquiry and recommendations.

High-Risk/Threat Making Behaviours:

All high-risk behaviours, as defined above, shall be reported to the administrator/designate who will then activate the Initial Response Team, which will include police representation, to assess the threat behaviour. In general, high-risk behaviours are those of students aged 12 or older who are believed to have contravened section 264.1 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that students “who in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat...to cause death or bodily harm” has committed an offence.

In these cases, the police working with the threat assessment team will determine whether or not charges will be laid. If the law enforcement team member chooses to not proceed legally at the time then the initial response of the team will continue by conducting a risk assessment and determining follow-up recommendations. When the protocol is activated, parents/guardians will be notified at the earliest opportunity by one of the initial threat assessment team members. Inasmuch as possible, parents should be an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.

When data is obtained that suggests a student who has made a threat actually poses a threat, the Comprehensive assessment phase will begin. Other members of the larger team may become involved to draw on the expertise and/or jurisdictional authority of the physicians, child welfare workers, criminal profilers, forensic psychologists, or psychiatrists.

Worrisome/Threat Related Behaviours

The majority of high-risk behaviour, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, falls into this category. In keeping with zero tolerance for not responding to high-risk behaviour, all worrisome behaviours will be communicated to the risk assessment Team Leader for consultation. Worrisome, threat related behaviours are those that cause concern for members of the school system that may indicate instances where a student may be engaging in behaviours such as drawing pictures, writing stories in class, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute uttering threats as defined by law, but are causing concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content. In these cases, the team is not activated formally. The principal/designate consults with the Team Leader as to whether or not there needs to be some formal action. The police may be consulted but it is not done as a formal complaint because there is not sufficient data/evidence to warrant that action. If information is obtained that suggests the student has uttered threats to kill or injure, the team is formally activated to deal with the new data.

Pre-suspension and Pre-expulsion Assessments and Interventions

Pre-suspension assessments are critical as this period is often viewed as the last straw for the high-risk student. It is in this stage that many threat makers decide to finalize a plan to terrorize their school. The suspension does not cause the violence to occur but creates the necessary context for the high-risk student who is already struggling with suicidal and homicidal ideation. The threat assessment team leader and the school administrator are responsible to determine when suspension is warranted. When suspension occurs a key question beyond “when to suspend” is “where to suspend to”. The isolation and disconnection felt by high-risk students during a suspension may be exacerbated if steps are not taken to keep the child connected to healthy supports. Therefore in-school suspension may be most recommended to ensure safety of those involved.

In the event of an extended suspension/expulsion every effort should be made to ensure that the student is connected with the appropriate community supports, so that the level of risk is minimized for all.

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.

1. Interventions will be planned to decrease the risk. School code of conduct and School Division Threat Assessment Policy & Procedures will be shared with students, staff and parents.
2. Once a threat has been reported, the principal calls the Threat Assessment Team Leaders.
3. The Team Leader forms an Initial Response Team.
4. The Initial Response Team determines the level of risk posed by the threatening behaviour and determines the next step.
5. Data should be collected from all parties involved. It is appropriate for the school principal or designate to collect objective data while other team members conduct interviews as necessary.
6. If the threat had been determined to be high risk, the comprehensive threat assessment would be called in after Step 4 or 5.
7. The team will outline in writing an action plan the student, family, school and others will follow to ensure the safety of the school community and the student.

8. Where a suspension has been imposed, plans would be made to facilitate the student's re-entry into school.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The Division Team Leader and the Administrator shall determine if crisis counselling or a crisis response team is needed to re-establish calm.
12. 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 behaviour.
13. The Division Team Leader 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 behaviours themselves that 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 behaviour as well.

