

Procedures

For Policy - EBBA Response to Threats of Harm

Approved by the North Hampton School Board – July 10, 2014

Guiding Principles

The procedures and decisions for implementing the Response to Threats of Harm Policy shall be guided by the simple rule of how do we stop, eliminate, or reduce the likelihood of harm to students and staff at North Hampton School. All other considerations are secondary and will be addressed after the response to the threat.

The successful response is comprised of three related functions:

1. **Controlling/containing** the situation and/or student in a way that will prevent the possibility of an attack;
2. **Protecting and aiding** possible targets to the extent possible; and
3. **Providing** support and guidance to help the student deal successfully with his or her problems.

If it is determined that the student poses a threat of violence, the SRT shall develop, implement, and monitor an individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat. The individualized plan is to be documented in the Student Threat Assessment and Response Report.

The procedures are organized into four sections: *1) Identifying and Reporting Threats; 2) Classifying and Assessing Threats; 3) Responding to Threats; and 4) Student Threat Assessment and Response Report.*

Identifying and Reporting Threats

All school employees are required to report immediately to a school administrator 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. Also, members of the school community are expected to report any threatening communication or troubling behavior and be reminded that reporting is an act of caring and not “snitching” or “tattling.” Reports may be verbal or in writing and should contain the basic information of the alleged threatener, the target of the threat, and the scope of the threat. This will assist in the assessment of the threat.

Classifying and Assessing Threats

Classifying Threats

Based on the information collected through the Student Threat Assessment and Response Report, the SRT will classify threats using the following basic criteria:

Level 3 Imminent Threat Risk: An *imminent threat risk* exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others or self that require immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s). This level of threat requires an immediate 911 call.

Level 2 Threat Risk: The designation of a *level 2 threat risk* is one in which the definition of threat has been met - intent to cause harm to others or self. The immediacy of the threat and the extent of the threat of harm are factors that are considered as the SRT develops its response plan.

Level 1 No Threat Risk: A *no threat risk* may include misunderstandings, poor decision making, false accusations, etc. If the definition of a threat has not been met and there is no intent to cause harm to others or self, no response is developed or implemented by the SRT.

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Assessing Threats

A. Imminent Threat Risk (Level 3)

1. When a report of a threat is received by a staff member the individual who allegedly made the threat shall be immediately removed from the situation. The intended victim(s) shall be immediately checked on to ensure their safety and may be removed if necessary. The principal shall be notified as soon as practical.
2. If the preliminary assessment is that the threat is imminent and there is a high likelihood of immediate violence and/or injury, the involved staff member shall immediately call 911 for emergency services. Appropriate emergency procedures shall be instituted to protect students and staff.

B. Threat Risk and No Threat Risk (Level 2 and Level 1)

1. If there is no immediate danger, the Social Response Team (SRT) shall be convened as soon as practical. The SRT shall make an initial determination if the incident requires the use of the Student Threat Assessment and Response Report.
2. A Student Threat Assessment and Response Report (HOTLINK to REPORT) shall be started and the protocols contained in the Report shall guide the assessment.
3. The parents/guardians of the threatener shall be notified of the report and assessment. They will be required to participate in a meeting with the SRT.
4. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
5. The SRT shall conduct its assessment and determine the threat level (*Threat Risk - Level 2 or No Threat - Risk and Level 1*). Appropriate responses to the threat shall be taken within three (3) school days. A member of the SRT shall be designated to monitor the status of the students and to notify the SRT of any change in status or additional information that would be cause for a reassessment.
6. There will be a designated staff/community liaison that communicates with staff, parents and the community about threats to the school community. The staff/community liaison shall be the official spokesperson on the threat. Communications will be timely and relevant facts will be shared, however confidential information regarding students shall not be shared. The SRT determines the relevancy of the facts necessary to protect the school community from harm and to quell rumors, while balancing the required confidentiality of student information.

Responding to Threats

Response strategies selected should be the ones with the greatest potential for long-term preventive power. While holding students accountable for their actions, school administrators must be fair and reasonable in disciplinary responses. A broad range of corrective disciplinary actions may be employed including admonition and counseling, student behavior contract, after-school or in-school detention, and suspension of student privileges for a specified period. These disciplinary responses may be combined with other actions such as parent conferences, modifications of student classroom assignment or schedule, and referrals to in-school and community-based programs such as mediation and community service.

It is important for the SRT to recognize that even fair and reasonable discipline can be perceived

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as another grievance to which the student may react. In such cases, the disciplinary response could lead to escalation in threatening behavior.

The most punitive responses may or may not prevent acts of violence. Suspension or expulsion of a student *can* create the risk of triggering either an immediate or a delayed violent response unless such actions are coupled with containment and support. A student who is expelled may conclude: "I have lost everything. I have only a short time to act. I will give them what they deserve." In addition, a student who is suspended or expelled is often under less supervision than if he or she were to remain in a school setting.

Although detaining a student may be necessary in a particular situation, without careful attention to the need for confinement, weapons removal, or interpersonal intervention, that action may be insufficient to prevent an eventual attack at school or otherwise protect a target. Similarly, referring a student to the mental health system, without seeing that referral in the context of an overall monitoring/management plan, may not be sufficient to prevent violence.

No Threat Risk (Level 1)

Take no action unless the individual who filed the threat did so falsely. If yes, then implement usual disciplinary measures.

Threat Risk (Level 2)

Once the SRT has determined that a threat has been made, it must assess the level of threat and devise an appropriate response. The discussion below is not intended and does not establish categories of threat. It is an assessment tool that is used by the SRT to establish the best response to a threat. This internal working SRT document does not constitute public information and will not be shared with the public because it contains confidential information regarding students. The SRT will assess each threat individually on a continuum of a low threat to a high threat. Imminent threats (level 3) are treated differently from threats (Level 2). An example of the continuum of threats that will guide the SRT in developing a threat assessment plan follows.

1. A **low risk threat** is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily. The response to such a threat depends on the context of the threat, whether the threat requires some form of disciplinary action, and what is necessary to resolve the situation. All low risk threats must end in an apology, retraction, or explanation that indicates that the threat is over. The SRT may consider the following:

- Since low risk threats by definition do not appear to pose a threat and can be easily resolved, action to protect the person(s) to whom the threat was directed may not be necessary. When the person to whom the threat was directed is a student, his/her parents or guardian may be notified, at the discretion of the SRT. If parents of a threatened student are notified, they should be contacted promptly and reassured that the threat has been resolved.
- All low risk threats are subject to disciplinary action based on school board policy. Regardless of disciplinary action, the parent or guardian of the student is to be notified of the incident and of the disciplinary action taken.
- When the SRT determines a threat to be low risk, the case may be resolved entirely with no further action or resolved with referral to appropriate school or community-based resources. When students are referred for services, a member of the SRT is designated case manager to monitor the student and the ongoing situation. At any time that new information is

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made available after the initial assessment, the team should review the new information and re-evaluate the threat accordingly.

2. A **moderate risk threat** will typically result in notifying the intended victim(s) of the threat and taking precautions to protect them, taking steps to monitor and supervise the student, and taking disciplinary action in accordance with existing discipline policy. The SRT will also work to address the conflict or problem that led to the threat. Examples of strategies that may be employed include but are not limited to:

- Taking precautions to protect potential victims. Precautions typically include:
 - Provide direct supervision so the student cannot carry out the threat while at school or on the bus.
 - Cautioning the student who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
 - Contacting the subject student's parents to assume responsibility for supervision of the student and to enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat.
 - Notifying the intended victim(s) and their parents. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
- Consulting with law enforcement to assist in monitoring and supervising the student as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.
- Following applicable disciplinary/conduct procedures.
- Where appropriate, referring the student for counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce the threat of violence and to address the underlying conflict or issues that led to the threat. The SRT should involve school-based professionals, such as the psychologist, counselor, or social worker, who can provide assistance in resolving the conflict and appropriate intervention.
- At the discretion of the SRT, a mental health evaluation may be conducted, following parameters for response to high risk threats below.
- If warranted by findings from the mental health evaluation, the SRT shall convene to complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment.

3. A **high risk threat** on the continuum of threats, which may involve threats to rape, kill, inflict severe injury, or use weapons, or other actions indicating intent to commit harm, requires the SRT to:

- Notify law enforcement per regulation to contain the threat.
- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims:
 - Provide direct supervision so the student cannot carry out the threat at school, on a school bus, or at a school sponsored event.
 - Caution the student who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
 - Contact the student's parents and enlist their support in preventing the student

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from carrying out the threat; either law enforcement or the student's parents should assume responsibility for supervising the student.

- Notify the intended victim(s) and their parents. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be fully notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
- Follow applicable disciplinary/conduct procedures.
- Direct the SRT to determine the conditions of readmission to school that may include the requirement to cooperate in a mental health evaluation. The parents are to be notified of all requirements. A re-admission meeting must be held prior to the student's return to school.
- Initiate a mental health evaluation to be conducted either by a clinically qualified team member or by someone contracted to provide the assessment. The clinician conducting the evaluation should not have a treatment relationship with the student. The written report must identify the problem or conflict that prompted the threat and recommend strategies to address the problem and to reduce the risk of violence.
- Make every effort to obtain any required signed permission for release and exchange of information with mental health provider(s), if any, and local law enforcement agencies.
- Reconvene after receiving the mental health evaluation report to complete and implement a written safety plan addressing the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment.

The safety plan should include:

- conditions under which the student may return to school;
- interventions, such as counseling or mediation, that are needed to reduce risk;
- scheduled follow-up contact with the subject student and parent to assess changes in risk and update the safety plan over time, until the perceived threat is resolved; and
- person(s) who are responsible for monitoring and verifying that the safety plan recommendations are being followed.

Imminent Threat Risk Responses (Level 3)

An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others. Such threats require immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s) and referral to law enforcement and consultation with school security.

Following immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s), these threats require the involvement of the SRT for the purpose of conducting/coordinating appropriate mental health assessment and developing a safety plan.

- Notify law enforcement per regulation to contain the threat.
- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims:
 - Provide direct supervision so the student cannot carry out the threat at school, on a school bus, or at a school sponsored event.
 - Caution the student who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.

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- Contact the student's parents and enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat; either law enforcement or the student's parents should assume responsibility for supervising the student.
- Notify the intended victim(s) and their parents. The intended victim(s) and their parents must be fully notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the student who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to ensure student safety. The intended victim and his/her parents should be notified before the student who made the threat leaves school grounds.
- Follow applicable disciplinary/conduct procedures.
- Direct the SRT to determine the conditions of readmission to school that may include the requirement to cooperate in a mental health evaluation. The parents are to be notified of all requirements. A re-admission meeting must be held prior to the student's return to school.
- Initiate a mental health evaluation to be conducted either by a clinically qualified team member or by someone contracted to provide the assessment. The clinician conducting the evaluation should not have a treatment relationship with the student. The written report must identify the problem or conflict that prompted the threat and recommend strategies to address the problem and to reduce the risk of violence.
- Make every effort to obtain any required signed permission for release and exchange of information with mental health provider(s), if any, and local law enforcement agencies.
- Reconvene after receiving the mental health evaluation report to complete and implement a written safety plan addressing the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the subject student is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment.

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