

# Threat Screening

A threat is an expression of an intention to harm someone. This expression may be spoken, written, or gestured. Threats can be expressed directly or indirectly to others, and threats may be explicitly stated or implied. When in doubt regarding a student's intent, treat the expression as a threat until the screening process proves otherwise.

A Threat Screening shall be initiated **when a student poses a threat, makes a threat, or if there is concern that a student has a plan for targeted violence.**

This following protocol, adapted from *Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence* (Cornell & Sheras, 2006), was developed and field tested based on findings from two long-term independent studies conducted by the FBI, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Department of Education. It was designed to prepare school-based teams to identify, evaluate, and effectively respond to student threats to harm others. Proper use of this protocol will maximize school safety by **identifying and referring individuals who need help.**

**If there is a concern about a student being at risk for self-harm**, complete the *Suicide Risk Screening*. In some cases, both the *Threat Screening* and the *Suicide Risk Screening* will need to be completed.

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Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 1: Address Immediate Safety Needs

**IF THERE IS IMMINENT THREAT, TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO MAINTAIN SAFETY**

- Notify SRO and call Hopkinsville Police Department at 911
- Remove others from harm's way
- Initiate lockdown procedures

**Examples of imminent risk are possession and/or use of firearm or other weapon, suicide threats or statements, detailed threat of lethal violence (time, place, method), or severe destruction of property.**

- Appropriately detain the student(s) being assessed until this protocol is completed
- Notify & consult with appropriate school personnel

## Step 2: Identify & Report Threat

In order to maintain a safe and orderly school environment, all school personnel and students have the responsibility to report student threats of violence to school administration.

Describe the incident as you observed or as it was reported. Be as complete as possible, using direct quotes when reporting statements made by others. Provide any documentation (i.e. writings, notes, drawings, printed email or social media) which may help to conduct a preliminary risk Screening.

Describe incident and explain your concern \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the target of the threat? \_\_\_\_\_

When and where did incident occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was present or has knowledge of the incident? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any other concerns you may have regarding this student:

Name of individual making report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3: Evaluate & Classify Threat

When a threat is reported, a school administrator promptly interviews all involved parties to obtain a specific account of the incident. The following interview questions may be used to begin the threat screening, and should be modified, as appropriate/necessary. The goal is to determine the student's intent and to evaluate whether the threat is transient or substantive based on the circumstances and context in which the threat was made.

Student Interview Intended to Assess Planning and Intent

- 1. Do you know why I wanted to talk with you?
2. What happened when you were [place of incident]?
3. What exactly did you say? And what exactly did you do?
4. What did you mean when you said/did that?
5. How do you think he/she feels about what you said/did?
6. What was the reason you said/did that?
7. What are you going to do now that you have made this threat?

Witness Interview Intended to Assess Witness/Victim Perspective

- 1. What exactly happened when you were [place of incident]?
2. What exactly did [student] say or do?
3. What do you think he/she meant when saying that?
4. How do you feel about what [student] said/did?
5. Why do you think [student] said/did that?

When evaluating a threat, the school administrator should also consider the age of the student, credibility of the information obtained from the inquiry, and the capacity of the student to carry out his/her threat.

Collateral Contacts: Seek information from collateral contacts (List name, contact information, and date(s) of services, if known).

- History of referral-related disciplinary incidents
Police, Juvenile Court (DJJ, CDW)
Social service agencies (DCBS)
Family Resource/Youth Service Center
Special Education, 504, or Under Consideration
Community mental health
School-based therapist
Social media

Notes:

Risk Factors: Historical/background conditions which may influence the potential for violence

- Social withdrawal or lacking interpersonal skills
Excessive feelings of isolation & being alone
Excessive feelings of rejection
Being a victim of violence, teasing, bullying
Feelings of being picked on
Low school interest, poor academic performance
Expressions of violence in writings & drawings
Preoccupation with real or fictional violence
Repeated exposure to violence (desensitization)
Uncontrolled anger
Patterns of impulsive & chronic, hitting & bullying
History of discipline problems
History of violent, aggressive & antisocial behavior across settings
Child abuse/neglect
Domestic violence of other family conflict
Intolerance of differences, prejudicial attitudes
Drug & alcohol use
Affiliation with gangs
Inappropriate access, possession, use of firearms
Threats of violence (direct or indirect)
Talking about weapons or bombs
Ruminating over perceived injustices
Seeing self as victim of a particular individual
General statements of distorted, bizarre thoughts
Feelings of being persecuted
Obsession with particular person
Depression or other mental illness
Marked change in appearance

Notes:

**Precipitating Events:** Recent triggers which may increase potential for violence

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recent public humiliation or embarrassment                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Highly publicized violent act (i.e. school shooting) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend/girlfriend relationship difficulties                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Family fight or conflict                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death, loss or other traumatic event  | <input type="checkbox"/> Recent victim of teasing, bullying or abuse          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deployment or incarceration of parent/guardian or other close family member | <input type="checkbox"/> Separation or divorce of parents                     |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stabilizing Factors:** Factors which may minimize or mitigate likelihood of violence

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Effective parental involvement  | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive, constructive peer group                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving mental health services (identify, if known)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate outlets for anger or other strong feelings    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social support (church, school, social organizations)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive focus on the future or appropriate future events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Close alliance with a supportive adult (counselor, mentor, teacher, pastor) |  |

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type/Level of Threat:** To what extent does this student pose a threat to school/student safety? **WHEN IN DOUBT**, consider threat as substantive and assess further.

Transient Threat	Substantive Threat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Heat-of-the-moment</li> <li>✓ No enduring intent to harm</li> <li>✓ Temporary feelings of anger</li> <li>✓ Tactic in argument</li> <li>✓ Intended as a joke or figure of speech</li> <li>✓ Can be resolved through school-based interventions</li> <li>✓ Typically ends with retraction or clarification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Specific, plausible details such as specific target, time, place and method</li> <li>✓ Threat has been repeated over time or related to several people</li> <li>✓ Threat is reported as a plan or there is evidence of planning</li> <li>✓ Student has recruited/attempted to recruit accomplices</li> <li>✓ Physical evidence of intent to carry out threat (i.e. lists, drawings, written plan)</li> </ul>	
Minimal Risk for Harm	Moderate Risk for Harm	High Risk for Harm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Few/no serious <i>Risk Factors</i> or history of dangerous behavior.</li> <li>✓ <i>Stabilizing Factors</i> appear reasonably well-established.</li> <li>✓ Information suggests that the student is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.</li> <li>✓ Heat-of-the-moment</li> </ul> <p>Example: In the heat of the moment, a student becomes angry and makes a statement such as, "I am going to blow you all up!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Some <i>Risk Factors</i> and evidence of emotional distress, but also may have some <i>Stabilizing Factors</i>.</li> <li>✓ Moderate or lingering concerns about the student's potential to act violently.</li> </ul> <p>Example: A student with history of inadequate anger management makes a statement to a peer that she is going to pull the fire alarm and shoot people as they come out of the building. A call to family indicates no weapons in the home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Significant <i>Risk Factors</i>, evidence of emotional distress or intentional infliction of distress on others.</li> <li>✓ Strong concern about the student's potential to act violently.</li> </ul> <p>Example: A student shares a plan with his friends to target specific students in their school. He has also thoroughly explained plans for targeted violence in a Language Arts essay. When family is contacted, it is discovered that there are handguns in the home.</p>

**Step 4: Respond to Threat**

In responding to any threat, the immediate concern is safety. Discipline is concerned with providing appropriate consequences for behavior and should be addressed independently. Both transient and substantive threats are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. After evaluating the seriousness of the threat, the context and meaning of the student's behavior, and the impact the threat has had on the school, the administrator will determine disciplinary consequences per the **Code of Acceptable Behavior & Discipline**.

**Transient Threat**

Transient threats should end in retraction, apology, or explanation indicating the threat is over. Protective action is not necessary. Conflict resolution or counseling may be appropriate to resolve problems on this level. Severe disciplinary consequences are appropriate as a response to some transient threats if the behavior is very disruptive or is a serious violation of school board policy (i.e. false bomb threat).

**Substantive Threat**

All threats judged as substantive are, by definition, serious. A substantive threat typically requires a **legal duty to warn** and to take protective action to prevent violence against a potential victim(s). The level of protective action to be taken depends largely on what the student has threatened. Severe disciplinary consequences are likely. Students who pose a high risk for harm will also typically require immediate hospitalization or arrest.

If a student is found to pose a substantive threat (Moderate or High Risk), a conference must be held with the parents and a referral must be made to a qualified mental health professional.

Reasonable steps should be immediately taken to avoid or mitigate any imminent threat of harm, including hospitalization if necessary.

Administrator shall request for parent to sign a **Parent Notification to Seek Assistance** and a **Release of Information form (EC-26)** for communication between the school and the mental health facility to which the student will be taken, the student's therapist, and other individuals as appropriate.

**If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted or if they refuse to come to the school**, the case will be treated as a medical emergency and arrangements will be made to transport the student to an area hospital emergency room or mental health facility. Administrator will notify parent/guardian that the school may be required to file a medical neglect report with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

If student is found to be at High Risk for Harm and it reasonably appears based on the factors present that hospitalization may be required to address the High Risk for Harm, and **if parent refuses to seek treatment for student**, the issue must be reported to the County Attorney's Office or to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services to determine whether an involuntary hospitalization should be pursued.

Under no circumstance should a student who is determined to pose a substantive threat (Moderate or High Risk) be allowed to go home alone. Instead, unless hospitalization is required, the student must be released only to a parent/guardian or other responsible adult.

**Re-Entry Procedure**

For student returning to school after a mental health crisis (i.e., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), an administrator will meet with the student and student's parent/guardian to discuss re-entry and the appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

- ✓ **Parent/guardian will provide documentation from a qualified mental health professional that the student has undergone examination and that the student is no longer a danger to self or others.**
- ✓ **If the parent/guardian refuses to provide such documentation**, the principal or ARC (as the case may be), with advice from the school-based therapist, will determine the appropriate placement for the student based on the information known at the time. If the principal or ARC determines on the information available that there is a substantial likelihood of an immediate and continuing threat to self or others, the principal may place the student in a placement that represents the least restrictive alternative for the student. The student may not be disciplined for the failure of the parent/guardian to provide the information.

The results of this screening do not predict specific episodes of violence, nor are they a foolproof method of assessing an individual's potential to harm others. The purpose of this screening is to identify circumstances that may increase the risk for potential violence and to assist school staff in developing a safety and intervention plan.

This Threat Assessment Screening is guided by findings and recommendations published in the *Safe Schools Initiative, Threat Assessment in Schools* (U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Secret Service, 2002), *Threat Assessment: An Approach to Prevent Targeted Violence* (National Institute of Justice, 1995), and *The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective* (Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, 1999) in addition to other sources.

# Intervention & Support Plan

### Initial Intervention:

#### \_\_\_ Transient Threat (Low or Minimal Risk for Harm)

- Discipline per **Code of Acceptable Behavior & Discipline** (attach copy)
- Explanation, apology, or making amends
- Resource Referral (<http://www.kycss.org>)
- Policy on Verbal Threats** (attach copy)
- Referral to School-Based Therapist - Appointment Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

#### \_\_\_ Substantive Threat (Moderate or High Risk for Harm)

- Direct supervision of the student
- Contact SRO to assess the need for law enforcement intervention
- Notify parent/guardian (Date/Time): \_\_\_\_\_ by (Name/Title): \_\_\_\_\_
- Notify intended victim and parent/guardian (Name/Title): \_\_\_\_\_ by (Name/Title): \_\_\_\_\_
- Schedule parent/guardian conference: (Name/Title): \_\_\_\_\_
- Suicide Screening** completed (attach copy)
- Student Safety Contract** completed (attach copy)
- Parent Notification to Seek Assistance** completed (attach copy)
- Release of Information (EC-26)** signed for communication with agency being referred to (attach copy).
- Contact then scan & email referral to:
  - Pennyroyal RESPOND - Phone (270) 881-9551 Email - [vwatkins@pennyroyalcenter.org](mailto:vwatkins@pennyroyalcenter.org)
  - Cumberland Hall Hospital - Phone (270) 886-1919 Email - [cumberlandhalladmissions@uhsinc.com](mailto:cumberlandhalladmissions@uhsinc.com)
- Call made by (Title/Name): \_\_\_\_\_ (Date/Time): \_\_\_\_\_
- Talked with: \_\_\_\_\_ Email sent (Date/Time): \_\_\_\_\_
- Discipline per **Code of Acceptable Behavior & Discipline**, if applicable (attach copy)

Team Member Completing Form: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Follow-Up:

- Evaluation - Agency/Result \_\_\_\_\_
- Hospitalization (Inpatient Treatment) - Agency/Discharge Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Outpatient Treatment - Agency/Assigned Therapist \_\_\_\_\_
- Medication Prescribed - Name/Dose/Prescribing Dr. \_\_\_\_\_
- DCBS Report - Date/Time/Report # \_\_\_\_\_
- DCBS Worker Assigned - Name/Contact Info \_\_\_\_\_
- Removed from Home/Placed in Foster Care - Name/Contact Info \_\_\_\_\_
- Arrested - Arresting Officer/Charge(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Detained/Sent to MRJDC \_\_\_\_\_
- Sent to Court Designated Worker - Name/Contact Info \_\_\_\_\_
- Placed in Diversion Program \_\_\_\_\_
- Assigned Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Worker- Name/Contact Info \_\_\_\_\_

Date Returning to School: \_\_\_\_\_

### Support Plan (Upon Return to School):

Created in collaboration with student, parent/guardian, and Crisis Team members.

- Return-to-school Conference: (Date/Time): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Release of Information (EC-26)** signed for communication with ALL service providers (attach copy)
  - Alert staff & teachers on a need-to-know basis
  - Daily or  Weekly check in with (Title/Name): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Staff & teachers that the student can talk to for support (from Safety Contract): \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- Identify precipitating/aggravating circumstances and intervene to alleviate tension. Describe: \_\_\_\_\_



# Student Safety Contract

I have made verbal comments, written statements, or displayed other behaviors which indicate that I could pose a danger to myself and/or others. School staff members are concerned and want to support me. I understand I have a responsibility to keep myself safe, and to maintain a safe learning environment at school. I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to abide by the following rules for school behavior (check all that apply):

- I promise not to hurt myself or others.
- I promise not to bring a weapon on school property.
- I promise not to use alcohol or drugs.
- I promise to express my anger in ways that will not be harmful to myself or others.
- I promise to seek out the assistance of an adult when a conflict arises with a peer.
- I promise I will actively participate in any counseling made available to me by my school or parents.
- I promise to attend all scheduled monitoring meetings with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I promise to \_\_\_\_\_.

**If I am having thoughts of harming myself or others, I will do the following until I receive help:**

At school, I will talk to: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

Outside school, I will talk to: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

I will tell my parent/guardian how I am feeling.

*Call 911 or a 24-Hour Crisis Hotline:*

- ✓ Pennyroyal RESPOND: (270) 881-9551
- ✓ Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255

**If I do not comply with these rules, I understand the following consequences will occur:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*It is not recommended that students 4<sup>th</sup> grade or below be requested to sign Safety Contract.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parent Notification to Seek Assistance

I have been notified my child has made verbal comments, written statements, or displayed other behaviors which indicate he/she may pose a danger to self and/or others. Due to the severity of these concerns, I acknowledge I am being advised to seek outside assistance for my child.

Outside assistance can be obtained through the following agencies:

Pennyroyal RESPOND  
607 Hammond Plaza  
Hopkinsville, KY 42240  
(270) 881-9551

Cumberland Hall Hospital  
270 Walton Way  
Hopkinsville, KY 42240  
(270) 886-1919

- I have been advised of the school's concerns.
- I have been advised to seek outside assistance for my child.

If student is found to be at High Risk for Harm and it reasonably appears based on the factors present that hospitalization may be required to address the High Risk for Harm, and **if parent refuses to seek treatment for student**, the issue must be reported to the County Attorney's Office or to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services to determine whether an involuntary hospitalization should be pursued.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

# Policy On Verbal Threats

In the interest of ensuring that Christian County Public Schools are a safe place for everyone, all threats will be taken seriously. The following information has been reviewed and discussed with your student. Your student has signed agreement to these terms and a copy of the document will remain in the student’s school file. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, feel free to contact a school administrator.

**1. The rules have changed. Threats are no joking matter!**

- The rules and expectations regarding language related to threats of violence have changed.
- In the past, if someone said something like, "I am going to shoot those teachers and students who gave me a hard time," it may have been treated as a joke or idle threat. Due to violent incidents that have taken place in schools, any statement of this type now will be taken seriously.
- Other types of statements which include references to bodily harm - kill, fight, hit, slap, punch, take you out, etc. - will be taken seriously as well.
- "I was only joking" is not a reasonable explanation of defense. This type of comment will be treated seriously in our school.

**2. The types of behavior that will be considered threatening include:**

- Stating you plan to cause physical harm to a student or staff member.
- Any written or verbal indication you intend to do damage to another person or another person’s property.
- Stating you have a weapon or bomb in your possession at school.
- Stating you plan to bring a weapon or bomb to school.
- Making a false statement there is a bomb or other destructive device at school.

**3. In addition to parental notification, outcomes and consequences that may be imposed for making a threat include:**

- Further investigation by school personnel
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Threat Screening
- Further investigation by law enforcement

**I have read and discussed the information in the “Policy on Verbal Threats.”**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_