

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 315

### THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

The Board is committed to creating and maintaining a Christ-centered environment in schools where students, staff, parents, and others feel safe. To this end, the Board shall establish a protocol for responding to student threats/high risk behaviors.

#### Definitions

High-risk behaviors include, but are not limited to, possession of weapons, bomb threats, and threats to kill or injure others. Threats may be written, verbal, posted on the Internet, or made by gesture. They may be direct, indirect, conditional, or veiled. High risk behaviors are those of students twelve years of age and older who are believed to have contravened Section 264.1 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that any student “who in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys, or causes any person to receive a threat ...to cause death or bodily harm” has committed an offense.

Immediate risk situations are those situations involving high-risk that require immediate police intervention, such as when a student is making a threat and is in possession of a weapon.

Worrisome behaviors are those that cause concern for members of the school system that may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behavior. This may include drawing pictures, writing stories, 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.

Threat Assessment Team (TAT) should be composed of the principal or designate, school counselor and a police officer, and may also include the Family-School wellness worker, and the classroom or resource teacher when involving a student with special needs. A Division-wide TAT may be used in very serious cases and this team may be expanded to include the Supervisor of Student Services, parish staff, physicians, psychologists or psychiatrists, child welfare workers, mental health professionals, or criminal profilers.

## **Procedures**

### **1. Reporting**

- a) Any person in a school having knowledge of high risk student behavior or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high risk behavior shall immediately report the information to the school TAT leader.
- b) No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds.
- c) In cases where a report is made maliciously, the person shall be dealt with according to school division policy and the law, where applicable.

### **2. Fair Notice**

- a) Prior to any threat assessment protocol being implemented, all students, staff, and parents shall be provided with information about the protocol and procedures so that "fair notice" is given that threat behavior will not be tolerated.
- b) The Supervisor of Student Services shall take the lead to ensure that students, staff, and parents are aware of the protocol and that a consistent message is given regarding the use of the protocol.

### **3. Duty to Respond**

- a) Schools shall respond to all high risk/threat related behaviors; all high-risk behaviors shall be taken seriously and assessed accordingly.
- b) Each school shall designate a threat assessment team leader, who should be either a school administrator or school counselor.
- c) Interviews shall be conducted with students involved in the incident. In scheduling the interviews, the procedure as outlined in "Series of Interviews" shall be used as a guideline (Appendix A). The interview questions will be organized along the protocol as outlined in "Interview Guiding Questions" (Appendix B).

### **4. Immediate Risk Procedures**

- a) These are those matters for immediate police intervention.

- b) The school principal shall contact the police immediately and take steps to ensure the safety of all those in the school by activating established procedures such as school evacuation or school security (lock down).
- c) The school principal shall notify the Supervisor of Student Services, as soon as possible, following initial police contact.

## 5. High Risk Behaviors

- a) Upon receiving a confirmed report of high-risk behavior, the principal shall initiate the protocol for the response of the TAT composed of the principal, counselor, and police in order to assess the high-risk behavior.
- b) In cases where it is believed a Criminal Code violation has occurred, the police officer assigned to the Threat Assessment Team has the “first call “ as to the course of action.
- c) The school principal shall notify the Supervisor of Student Services as soon as possible following initial police contact.
- d) If the police choose not to lay initial charges, the TAT shall continue to conduct a risk assessment and determine follow-up recommendations.
- e) Although there is ongoing collaboration among TAT members (Mental Health, FSW, other school personnel, RCMP), each team member has his/her own responsibilities as defined by their position, their professional duty, and /or their jurisdiction.
- f) The school principal shall notify the parent(s) of the student making the threat at the earliest opportunity, as well as the parents of those students against whom the threat was made. Parents become an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.
- g) When information suggests that a student who has displayed high-risk behavior poses a threat, other members of the Division TAT may become involved in the comprehensive assessment phase.
- h) In order to protect others and/or the threat maker, students may be suspended from school by the principal during the assessment period.

(A suspension may create the necessary context for the high-risk student who is already struggling with suicidal or homicidal ideation (fluidity). When a suspension occurs, a key question beyond “when to suspend” is “where to suspend”. The isolation and disconnection felt by high risk students during a

suspension may be exacerbated if steps are not taken to keep the student connected to healthy supports.)

- i) The TAT shall guide the process from initial assessment, to planning interventions to decrease risk, to plans for re-entry to school where a suspension has occurred.
- j) If circumstances warrant and following the completion of necessary assessments, team members may work with the student and their parent(s) to develop a re-entry plan for school that becomes a signed contract by all participants.

#### 6. Duty to Victims and Others

- a) The TAT shall ensure that appropriate support is provided to those against whom threats have been made.
- b) The principal shall notify all school staff, and parents, if necessary, within a reasonable time period, when the protocol has been activated as a result of high-risk behavior.

#### 7. Students Requiring Special Consideration

- a) When dealing with students under twelve years of age, students with special needs, or other exceptional students, accountability/maturation issues and cognitive abilities shall be taken into consideration.
- b) Since these students can still pose a risk, the TAT shall be consulted.
- c) The school principal and the TAT shall determine the level of police involvement. (Some of these students may benefit from police involvement as a way to provide a “teaching moment” for the child.)

#### 8. Worrisome Behaviors

- a) The school staff shall communicate all worrisome behaviors to the TAT leader for consultation.
- b) The school principal or school TAT leader shall consult with the school counselor and other appropriate staff as to whether or not a comprehensive threat assessment needs to be conducted.
- c) The police may be consulted, but it is generally not done as a formal complaint.

#### 9. Threat Assessment Incident Report

- a) The school TAT leader shall be responsible for completing a Threat Assessment Incident Report, which shall be kept on file. A copy shall be forwarded to the Supervisor of Student Services. The format of this report is contained in the Crisis Response Manual (Threat Incident Report, Form 38).
  
- b) The notification of a completed threat assessment incident report will be placed in the student's cumulative file (Threat Assessment File Report, Form 39).

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### APPENDIX 'A'

#### SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

The **first question** to be asked is an “overriding” one. **“How much time do we have?”** When threats are clear, detailed and denote a specific time that is imminent, (i.e. A student reports after lunch that his friend said at 2:15 p.m. today he is going to finally “bring a gun to school and blow away the freaks in math class”) action will need to be taken to ensure the safety of possible targets. In these situations police involvement is critical and lockdown procedures may need to be implemented. When the threat is not imminent, circumstance will help the team determine who and when to engage in the clinical interviewing process. In some instances the threat maker may be among the last people to be interviewed.

The **second question** to be asked is, **“Who will be interviewed?”** It is understood that those selected for initial interview often provide information that results in further interviews being conducted with more individuals. Teams need to decide whom the most credible and best-informed individuals and focus on them first.

The **third question** to be asked is, **“What order will we interview them in?”** If the threat is not imminent, the threat assessment team has the flexibility (based on circumstance) to decide what order to interview. For example, the threat maker may be one of the last individuals to be interviewed if initial data suggests the risk is low and the team wants to look at credible collateral information first (i.e. Talk with some of the threat makers’ teachers before interviewing the threat maker).

The **fourth question** to be asked is, **“Who will interview whom?”** The answer to this question will depend on circumstance and *“relationship”* between the team members and those to be interviewed. Some individuals may be interviewed one on one while the team may decide that two members should be present while interviewing others.

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### APPENDIX 'B' Interview Guiding Questions

1. What are the student's motive(s) and goals?
  - What motivated the student to make the statements or take the actions that caused him or her to come to attention?
  - Does the situation or circumstance that led to these statements or actions still exist?
  - Does the student have a major grievance or grudge? Against whom?
  - What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result? Does the potential attacker feel any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternative?
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?
  - What, if anything, has the student communicated to someone else (targets, friends, other students, teachers, family, others) or written in a diary, journal or Web site concerning his/her ideas and/or intentions?
  - Have friends been alerted or "warned away"?
3. Has the student shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?
  - School attacks or attackers;
  - Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
  - Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers).
4. Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviours? These behaviours might include:
  - Developing an attack idea or plan;
  - Making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons;
  - Casing, or checking out, possible sites and areas for attack;
  - Rehearsing attacks or ambushes.
5. Does the student have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?
  - How organized is the student's thinking and behaviour?
  - Does the student have the means, e.g., access to a weapon to carry out an attack?
6. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation and/or despair?
  - Is there information to suggest that the student is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
  - Has the student experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
  - Is the student known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?

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### APPENDIX 'B'

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- Is the student now, or has the student ever been, suicidal or “accident prone”? Has the student engaged in behaviour that suggests that he or she has considered ending their life?
7. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?
    - Does the student have at least one relationship with an adult where the student feels that he or she can confide in the adult and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions? (Students with trusting relationships with adults may be directed away from violence and despair and toward hope).
    - Is the student emotionally connected to or disconnected from other students?
    - Has the student previously come to someone’s attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or support services?
  1. Does the student see violence as acceptable or desirable or the only way to solve problems?
    - Does the setting around the student (friends, fellow students, parents, teachers, adults) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
    - Has the student been “dared” by others to engage in an act of violence?
  2. Is the student’s conversation and “story” consistent with his or her actions?
    - Does information from collateral interviews and from the student’s own behaviour confirm or dispute what the student says is going on?
  3. Are other people concerned about the student’s potential for violence?
    - Are those who know the student concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
    - Are those who know the student concerned about a specific target?
    - Have those who know the student witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behaviour?
  4. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?
    - What factors in the student’s life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the student will attempt to mount an attack at school?
    - What is the response of other persons who know about the student’s ideas or plan to mount an attack? (Do those who know the student’s ideas actively discourage the student from acting violently, encourage the student to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with an attack, etc.?)