



## AP 357 – SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS: VIOLENCE THREAT/RISK ASSESSMENT

### BACKGROUND

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“When members of a school system become aware that a threat has occurred but no protocol is in place to deal with the threat, the system anxiety increases. When steps are not taken, or perceived to not be taken to ensure safety, there is an increased risk for multiple threats to occur within the system until it is seen to be taking those necessary steps to ensure safety.” Cameron. K. Violence Threat Risk Assessment Training Guide (3rd Ed.), p. 51.

1. Violence prevention in our schools and neighbourhoods is a community responsibility. The Division and our community partners are committed to making our schools and community safer and this commitment is evident in the development of the *Division’s Community Threat Assessment and Support (CTASP) Protocol* which was signed in August, 2011 (The CTASP Protocol is available at <http://www.saskatoonpublicschools.ca>. Look under School and Programs/Safe and Caring Schools.)
2. The Division is committed to providing safe and caring learning and work environments for our students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers and members of our wider learning community who are guests in our facilities. In accordance with this administrative procedure, threats must be taken seriously, investigated, and include an appropriate response. All actions or statements suggesting intent to harm or act violently against someone or something will be considered a threat and will be assessed using Division procedures. The threat may be verbal, written, drawn, symbolic, posted on the Internet (MSN, Facebook) or made by gesture. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.
3. Saskatoon Public Schools will respond to student behaviours that may pose a potential risk for violence to students, staff and members of the community, or towards the school or other property. As per Saskatoon Public Schools’ *Violence/Threat Risk Assessment Protocol and Resource Guide* (posted on the Safe and Caring Schools portal), school threat assessment teams, and if deemed necessary community partners from the Community Threat Assessment and Support Team (Community TAST), will assess threatening behaviours and plan for appropriate interventions.
4. Student and staff safety is our first priority. Each school has a multi-disciplinary Threat Assessment Team (School TAT) that includes the school principal and/or vice principal, school counsellor(s), and school resource officer. Central Office support is provided through the Student Services department and administrative council members. Through our Safe and Caring Schools initiative, team members and support personnel received Violence Threat/Risk Assessment training and a protocol for investigating threatening behaviours.

### DEFINITIONS

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The following definitions apply for the purposes of this administrative procedure.

1. **Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol (CTASP):** A protocol developed collaboratively between the Division and community partners. The CTASP outlines a comprehensive and multidisciplinary response to assessing student threat making behaviours and provides a commitment to the appropriate and timely sharing of information and the development of intervention and support plans for children and youth.
2. **Fair Notice Letter:** This letter informs all students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers that a violence threat /risk assessment protocol is in place and that the Division will not accept a “no response” to a serious threat. This letter explains the division-wide protocol, provides a consistent message regarding its use, and invites parents/guardians/caregivers to contact their school principal if they have any questions.
3. **Immediate Risk Situations:** Those situations involving high-risk behaviours that require immediate police intervention (i.e. student is in possession of a weapon).



4. **High Risk Behaviours:** Behaviours which express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High risk behaviours include but are not limited to: possession of weapon/replica, bomb threat plan, verbal/written or Internet threats to kill/injure self or others, fire setting, threatening violence and hate motivated violence.
5. **Risk:** Level and frequency of thoughts or behaviours that suggest violence.
  - Low: Risk to target(s), students, staff and school safety is minimal.
  - Medium: The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear realistic. Violent action is possible.
  - High: The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.
6. **School Threat Assessment Team (School TAT):** The School TAT consists of the principal and/or vice principal, school counsellor and with the assigned school resource officer or another assigned investigator from the police agency with jurisdiction. School TAT members will respond after the immediate threat to student/staff safety has been contained. The School TAT will assess whether a risk to student/staff safety still exists and develop an intervention plan to support the students(s) involved, the greater student body, staff and the community.
7. **Threat:** A threat is any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, symbolic, posted on the Internet (MSN, Facebook, etc.) or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.
8. **Threat Assessment:** Threat assessment is the process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails, etc., threats to kill a target or targets) actually poses a risk to the target(s) being threatened
9. **Worrisome Behaviour:** Worrisome behavior is defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behavior.
10. **Violence:** Violence is a continuing process of thoughts and behaviours that is dependent on the interaction between a person who is include to violence; a stimulus that causes the violence; and a setting that allows for violence or does nothing to prevent a violent act from occurring. Violence is dynamic and multidimensional. It is a process that is developed over time.

## PROCEDURES

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1. Fair Notice
  - 1.1. The principal shall take the necessary steps to inform, on an annual basis, all students, staff, parents/caregivers of the information summarized in the brochure, [Student Violence Threat/Risk Assessment: Fair Notice and Process](#). This brochure will also be posted on the Safe and Caring Schools page of the Division's website. Parents/guardians will receive a letter informing them of the threat assessment protocol. Notification may include printed material in school and student handbooks and agendas, assembly presentations, postings on parent portals and discussions in advisory groups.
  - 1.2. As part of the fair notice process students, staff and parents/caregivers must be informed that our Division has a [Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol](#) in place, that the threat assessments will occur when warranted, and that the threat assessment and support process may involve multiple community partners.
2. Purpose and process
  - 2.1. The purpose of a Student Violence Threat/Risk Assessment is:
    - 2.1.1. To ensure the safety of students, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers and others;
    - 2.1.2. To ensure a full understanding of the context of the threat;
    - 2.1.3. To begin to understand the factors that contribute to the threat maker's behavior:



- 2.1.4. To be proactive in developing an intervention and support plan that addresses the emotional and physical safety of the threat maker; and
    - 2.1.5. To promote the emotional and physical safety of all.
  - 2.2. The process for a Student Violence Threat/Risk Assessment is as follows:
    - 2.2.1. Threat making behaviour(s) by students is reported to the principal/vice principal who activates the Saskatoon Public Schools' Violence Threat/Risk Assessment Protocol;
    - 2.2.2. Interviews are held with the student(s), the threat maker, parents/guardians/caregivers and staff;
    - 2.2.3. An investigation determines the level of risk and directs an appropriate response to the incident; and
    - 2.2.4. Intervention plans are developed and monitored.
3. Duty to Report
  - 3.1. Safe schools operate as open systems and promote the appropriate sharing of information. To keep school communities safe and caring, staff, parent/guardians, students and community members must report all threat related behaviours to the school principal or vice principal. Any person having knowledge of high risk student behavior or has reasonable ground to believe there is a potential risk to students, staff or division property shall immediately notify the principal or vice principal.
  - 3.2. Principals will ensure that students are made aware of their role in reporting violence and threats of violence to school authorities.
  - 3.3. Staff shall report all worrisome behaviours to the principal or vice principal. The principal or vice principal shall consult with members of the School TAT, Central Office personnel, and other appropriate staff as to the level of assessment that needs to be conducted.
4. Duty to Respond- Threat Assessment Summary Process
  - 4.1. The principal or vice principal will take immediate action to protect the safety of all students and staff.
  - 4.2. The principal or vice principal shall ensure that the appropriate notification and support has been provided for those targeted by the threatening behaviour(s).
  - 4.3. The principal or vice principal shall inform the school's superintendent of education of the threatening behavior(s) and shall keep him/her informed through the various stages of the threat assessment process.
  - 4.4. The principal or vice principal shall work closely with the school's superintendent of education and Division's communications officer regarding internal and external communications.
  - 4.5. The principal or vice principal will activate the School Threat Assessment Team (TAT) and follow the Stage 1 VTRA Report Form.
  - 4.6. The principal or vice principal shall share and store copies of the *Threat Assessment Report Form* as per the Division's protocol.
  - 4.7. The principal may also be involved in Stage 2 (multidisciplinary risk evaluation) or Stage 3 (multidisciplinary intervention) as per the Division's Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol.
  - 4.8. Appropriate notification must be provided, whenever possible, at all stages of the Threat Assessment process.



5. Non-school Hour Cases

5.1. If received Saskatoon Public School employees receives information regarding serious violence, weapons possession or a threat that is “clear, direct, and plausible” during non-school hours, police shall be called immediately and parents/guardians/caregivers must be contacted so that the appropriate actions can be taken to notify and protect the target(s). This information must then be provided as soon as possible to the principal or designate so the threat assessment process can be activated.

6. The Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol can be used when adults display worrisome or high risk behaviours. In these situations we have a duty to report and a duty to respond. Please involve your Superintendent of Education in these situations.

## TRAINING

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Ongoing training for new administrators, counsellors, designated central office personnel, administrative council members and community partners will be planned collaboratively by the superintendent with responsibility for Safe and Caring Schools and the Coordinator: Staff Development. All training will align with the work of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

“Ensuring safe schools requires far more than just threat/risk assessment procedures. It requires evidence-based, preventive Safe School Climate initiatives, strong student/staff relationships, ongoing training and refining of all policies, procedures and protocols that promote socially responsible behavior.”

Cameron, K. (2011). *Community Protocol for Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Intervention*. (p.37)

Reference: *The Education Act* (1995): Sections 141,150,151,152-155, 156-162, 175, 191,192, 193  
SPS Tragic Event Procedural Guidelines  
SPS Tragic Events: A Resource Guide for Schools  
SPS Emergency Response Plan  
Administrative Procedure 354: Discipline  
Administrative Procedure 355: Violence (Students)  
Administrative Procedure 356: Weapons  
Administrative Procedure 367: Student Bullying and Harassment  
Administrative Procedure 460: Violence (Employees)

Date Last Revised: December, 2014