



Lemont High School

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THREAT ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Purpose: The purpose of a threat assessment is to determine if a student poses a threat of violence to self, others, or the school community, and to intervene to avert the threat and maintain the safety of all students and staff.

School's Role:

- Recognize the presence of a threat
- Assess the severity of a threat
- Respond to a threat
- Ensure the safety of all affected

Employee's Role:

- Be aware of threats and behavioral changes
 - Written material
 - Conversations
 - Drawings/artwork
 - Gestures
 - Posts on social media/Internet
 - Conflicts with peers
 - Unusual responses
- Bring student concerns to the Threat Assessment Team
- Remain neutral
- Remain calm
- If there are concerns of imminent risk, contact the Threat Assessment Team in person immediately
- Provide objective information

Administrator's Role:

- Receive the report of a threat
- Activate the Threat Assessment Team when necessary
- Ensure the safety of students, staff, parents/guardians, and others
- Keep staff informed, if appropriate
- Contact parents/guardians, if appropriate
- Implement the appropriate response

Threat Assessment Team Members: The Threat Assessment Team includes at least one of the following members: an administrator, a teacher, a school counselor, a school psychologist, a school social worker, and at least one law enforcement official.

What Should Be Reported:

- Share your observations and concerns if someone's behavior makes you think, "It may be nothing, but...".
- Any behaviors that may indicate a person poses a threat to school safety.
- Any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something.

Faculty and staff have a duty to report all threat-related behaviors. All threats must be taken seriously, investigated, and responded to.

Types of Threats:

- **Transient Threat:** A statement that does not express a lasting intent to harm someone. It is intended either as a figure of speech or reflects feelings that dissipate in a short period. A transient threat does not require protective action because there is no sustained intent to carry out the threat.
- **Substantive Threat:** A statement that expresses a continuing intent to harm someone. It may express emotions like a transient threat, but also indicates a desire to harm someone extending beyond the immediate incident or argument.

The context and meaning of a threat are more important than the verbal context of a threat.

The District 210 Board of Education, or its designee, will conduct a minimum of one annual meeting to review its emergency and crisis response plans, protocols, and procedures, including procedures relating to the Threat Assessment Team.

THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

Follow the applicable flow chart:

- Threat of Harm to Self
 - Initial review generally managed by a school social worker or school psychologist
 - See “Threat of Harm to Self” form
 - See “Threat of Harm to Self” flow chart
- Threat of Harm to Others
 - Initial review generally managed by a school administrator
 - See “Threat of Harm to Others” form
 - See “Threat of Harm to Others” flow chart

Key Definitions:

- **Transient Threat**: A transient threat is a short-term behavior problem where feelings are expressed but subside quickly. This includes:
 - Non-genuine expression, or one indicated as a joke or figure of speech
 - Non-sustainable intent to harm or temporary anger that is resolved
 - Conflict that is resolved and ends with an apology, retraction or clarification

When in doubt, consider the threat as substantive and assess further.

- **Unfounded Threat**
 - Although a threat was reported, the investigation by the school social worker or school administrator does not find any credibility or evidence to support that a threat was made.
- **Substantive Threat**: A substantive threat raises concern of potential injury and involves enduring desires to harm one’s self or someone else. This includes:
 - Specific plausible details, such as a specific victim, time, place and method
 - Threat repeated over time or relating to multiple persons
 - Threat reported as a plan, or for which planning has taken place
 - Recruitment of accomplices or an invitation for an audience
 - Physical evidence of intent to carry out a threat (lists, drawings, written plan)
 - Student’s age and capability to carry out the threat
 - Student’s history of aggressive behavior
 - Credibility of student and witness accounts
 - Possible assault
 - Threat of serious injury, sexual assault, use of a weapon, or death. These are very serious threats, and responses must protect potential victims.

Very serious threats should involve law enforcement and include mental health assessments.

- **No Immediate Threat:** Mild to no risk
- **Immediate Threat:** Moderate to high risk
- **Imminent Threat:** Life threatening situation in progress
 - Suspected or in progress incident involving an active threat of harm to self, threat of harm to others, or danger to others requiring immediate action.
- Complete the applicable form and worksheet:
 - “Threat of Harm to Self” form and “Threat of Harm to Self” follow-up worksheet
 - “Threat of Harm to Others” form and “Four-Pronged Assessment” worksheet

IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE THREAT

A threat is an expression of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, gestured or communicated in some other form, such as via text messaging, email or other electronic means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended victim(s) and regardless of whether the intended victim is aware of the threat. This protocol does NOT address threats to damage property, threats made by non-students, fights with no threat, or verbiage such as slurs, insults or verbal abuse that does not constitute a threat. Threats may be implied or stated in an indirect manner if a recipient would reasonably regard the behavior as a threat. When in doubt, treat the expression as a threat and conduct a threat assessment. Student threats shall be reported to a school administrator (principal or a designee) if they cannot be easily and readily resolved by other staff. The administrator makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. The student, recipients of the threat, and other witnesses shall be interviewed to obtain a specific account of threat.

Follow the appropriate administrative actions to conduct a threat assessment. Contact the Assistant Principal for guidance with the threat assessment process and determine what additional resources are needed to complete the process.

All reports of threats must be entered in the Student Information System as a behavior event. If the evidence determines the threat is not credible, a student conference will be conducted and the resolution in the Student Information System should indicate the threat was “unfounded” in the action summary. Include the names of victims, witnesses and the student of concern.

Sharing of student record information in connection with these threat assessment procedures must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA), and their respective implementing regulations.

The initial stages of a threat assessment typically are handled by the team leader (principal or designee), and many cases can be readily resolved. In more complex or ambiguous cases, the Threat Assessment Team conducts the assessment.

Threat Assessment Team: The Threat Assessment Team includes all of the following members: an administrator, a teacher, a school counselor, a school psychologist, a school social worker, and at least one law enforcement official.

The District 210 Board of Education, or its designee, will conduct a minimum of one annual meeting to review its emergency and crisis response plans, protocols, and procedures, including procedures relating to the Threat Assessment Team.

Primary Purpose and Considerations: Threat assessment is a tool for responding to threatening situations in which there is concern about a particular student(s) who has come to the attention of school administrators or other authorities.

Primary Objective: The primary objective of both a threat assessment inquiry and an investigation is to determine whether a particular student poses a threat of targeted violence.

Priority considerations:

- Safety of the school community
- Safety of the community at large
- Safety of the suspect and any possible target/victim
- After care of the possible target/victim and suspect

Primary questions: The following questions must be answered to the investigative team's ability:

1. Is there information to suggest the student of concern is on the path to an attack?
2. What is the risk of targeted violence?
3. Has the student of concern violated school rules?
4. Has the student or concern violated the law?
5. Does the student of concern have access to a weapon?
6. What is the motive of the student of concern?

Reported threats: The methods by which a threat may come to the attention of authorities may include:

1. Student brings him/herself to the attention of authorities
2. Second or third parties report concerns
3. Anonymous sources
4. Threat discovered from an unknown source
5. Government agency or other person
6. Someone who monitors social media

Central Point of Contact: A school administrator is the central point of contact between the police department and district support staff, school safety personnel, and Student Services personnel (i.e., culture/discipline/specialized services).

Step 1 - Evaluate the threat

- Obtain a specific account of the threat by interviewing the student who made the threat, the recipient of the threat, and other witnesses.
- Write down the exact content of the threat and statements made by each party.
- Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions.

At Step 1, a member of the Threat Assessment team interviews the student who made the threat, using a standard set of questions. The recipient of the threat and any witnesses are also interviewed. The interviewer is not concerned simply with what the student said or did, but the context in which the threat was made and what the student intended by making the threat.

Threat Investigation Inquiry Interview

The Threat Assessment Team investigates to determine the following information:

1. Facts that drew attention to the student, the situation, and possibly the targets
2. Information about the student:
 - Identifying information
 - Background information
 - Current life information
 - Peer relationships
 - Social media statements
3. Information about the alleged threatening statements or threatening behaviors:
 - Motives
 - Target selection
 - Intent
 - Access to weapons
4. Sources of information for the inquiry:
 - Current and past school information (taken from the Student Information System) regarding the student of concern and witnesses
 - Interviews with the student making the report, witnesses and potential victims (if specifically identified); have them complete written statements
 - Inform and interview parents/guardians of the student making the report, witnesses and potential victims
 - Interview with the student of concern
 - i. Check social media if possible
 - ii. Notebooks, written papers, drawings
5. Interview with student of concern:
 - Open the interview with these possible questions:
 - i. I am here to help. I am concerned about you. How are you doing?
 - ii. How long have you been feeling like this?
 - iii. Have you spoken to anyone about this before?
 - Continue with more specific questions:
 - i. Do you know why I wanted to talk with you?
 - ii. What happened when you were at _____(place of incident)?
 - iii. What exactly did you say? What exactly did you do?

- iv. What did you mean when you said or did that?
 - v. How do you think he/she feels about what you said/did?
 - vi. What was the reason you said/did that?
 - vii. What are you going to do now that you have made this threat?
6. Interviews with the victim, possible target, or witnesses:
- What exactly happened when you were at _____(place of incident)?
 - What exactly did (student) say or do?
 - What exactly did you say? What exactly did you do?
 - How do you feel about what he/she said/did?
 - Why did he/she say/do that?
7. Collect, organize and analyze all information from the Threat Assessment Team and determine:
- What are the student's motive and goals?
 - Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or an intent to attack?
 - Has the subject shown inappropriate interest in engaging in attack-related behaviors?
 - Does the student have the means and/or intent to carry out an act or targeted violence?
 - Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?
 - Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?
 - Does the student see violence as acceptable, desirable, or the only way to solve his/her problems?
 - Are the student's conversations and "story" consistent with his/her actions?
 - Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?
 - What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?

Step 2 - Decide whether the threat is clearly transient or substantive

- Consider the criteria for transient versus substantive threats
- Consider the student's age, credibility, and previous discipline history
- If the threat is clearly transient, go to Step 3
- If the threat is substantive or the meaning of the threat is unclear, go to Step 4

Considerations: As the Threat Assessment Team is determining if the threat is transient or substantive:

1. Based on the reliable information gathered, does the student of concern pose a threat of targeted violence at school?
2. Based on the weight of the information gathered, is it convincing the student does or does not pose a threat for targeted school violence?
3. The Threat Assessment Team makes a recommendation, which may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Referral to social services
 - b. Mental health evaluation
 - c. Law enforcement referral
 - d. All of the above

The student must complete the recommendation of the Threat Assessment Team. If it is deemed the student's continued presence at school poses a threat to school safety; the student may be temporarily removed from school pending a complete assessment of the threat and determination of the most appropriate school placement. Students with an IEP who are temporarily removed from school will be

provided with appropriate and available support services during the period of removal as determined by their IEP team. All students will have the opportunity to complete all work and tests without penalty. During the period of temporary removal, the student may not be present at school, on grounds owned or controlled by the School District, or at any School District activity. Failure to comply with this directive constitutes a trespass and will be dealt with accordingly.

At Step 2, the administrator and/or Threat Assessment Team must make an important distinction between transient threats, which are easily resolved because they are not serious threats, and substantive threats, which are serious in the sense that they pose a continuing risk or danger to others.

- Transient threats can be readily identified as expressions of anger or frustration (or perhaps inappropriate attempts at humor) that dissipate quickly when the student reflects on the meaning of what he/she has said.
- Substantive threats, in contrast, represent a sustained intent to harm someone beyond the immediate incident. If there is doubt whether a threat is transient or substantive, the threat is regarded as substantive. One way to identify a threat as substantive is to look for the following characteristics derived from the FBI Bulletin, Addressing School Violence, that suggest a threat is likely to be serious:
 - The threat includes plausible details, such as a specific victim, time, place and method of assault;
 - The threat has been repeated over time or communicated to multiple persons;
 - The threat is reported as a plan, or planning has taken place;
 - The student has accomplices, or has attempted to recruit accomplices;
 - The student has invited an audience of peers to watch the threatened event; and
 - There is physical evidence of intent to carry out the threat, such as a weapon or bomb materials.

Step 3 - Respond to transient threat

- Typical responses may include a reprimand, parent/guardian notification, or other disciplinary action.
- The student may be required to make amends and attend mediation or counseling.

A transient threat can be resolved quickly at Step 3 without engaging the full Threat Assessment Team in a comprehensive threat assessment. The principal (or designee) may require the student to apologize or provide an explanation to those affected by the threat, or take other actions to make amends for the student's behavior. The principal (or designee) also may respond with a reprimand or other disciplinary consequences if the behavior was disruptive or violated the school's discipline code. If a transient threat was sparked by an argument or conflict, other team members may be involved in helping to address or resolve the problem.

Step 4 - Decide whether a substantive threat is serious or very serious

If the threat is substantive, the principal (or designee) skips Step 3 and proceeds to Step 4, where the threat is determined to be serious or very serious. This distinction is based on the intended severity of injury. A *serious* threat is a threat to assault, strike, or beat up someone (“I’m gonna beat that kid up”). A *very serious* threat involves the use of a weapon or is a threat to kill, sexually assault, or severely injure someone.

- If the threat is serious, proceed to Step 5
- If the threat is very serious, proceed to Step 6

Step 5 - Respond to a serious substantive threat

- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims, including notifying the intended victim and the victim’s parents/guardians
- Notify the student’s parents/guardians
- Consider contacting law enforcement
- Refer the student for counseling, dispute mediation, or other appropriate intervention
- Discipline the student as appropriate in consideration of the severity and chronicity of the situation

In the case of a serious substantive threat, the Threat Assessment Team moves to Step 5 and takes actions to protect potential victims. Protective actions depend on the circumstances of the threat, as well as how soon and where the threat might be carried out. Immediate protective actions include cautioning the student about the consequences of carrying out the threat and contacting the student’s parents/guardians. The team also has the responsibility of notifying the intended victim of the threat, as well as his/her parents/guardians.

Step 6 - Conduct safety evaluation

- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims, including notifying the intended victim and the victim’s parents/guardians
- Consult with law enforcement
- Notify the student’s parents/guardians
- Begin a mental health evaluation of the student
- Discipline the student as appropriate

Very serious threats require the most extensive action by the Threat Assessment Team, as it skips Step 5 and moves to Step 6. Again, the team takes immediate action to ensure the threat is not carried out. Additionally, the student should be suspended and/or temporarily removed from the school, pending a complete assessment of the threat and determination of the most appropriate school placement. The team conducts a more comprehensive safety evaluation that includes both a mental health and law enforcement component. The mental health assessment is conducted by suitably trained mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Licensed Clinical Social Worker), while the law enforcement investigation is conducted by the school resource officer. If the mental health assessment determines the student does not need additional services, the student may return to school following the mental health assessment. If the mental health assessment determines the student needs additional services and the student refuses the recommended services, Lemont High School may require the student to have a different mental health professional conduct a mental health

assessment. The second mental health assessment would need a revised treatment plan to be presented before the student can return to school. Lemont High School would initiate Child Find to determine if the student has significant needs that would require formal supports through a 504 Plan or IEP. If the student is placed in a hospital program or therapeutic setting, Lemont High School will work with the hospital to coordinate care.

Step 7 - Implement a safety plan

- Complete a written plan
- Maintain contact with the student
- Revise the plan as needed

At Step 7, the Threat Assessment Team integrates findings from the safety evaluation into a written safety plan. The safety plan is designed both to protect potential victims and to address the student's educational needs. At this point, the principal decides whether the student can return to school or should be placed in an alternative setting. If the student is permitted to return to school, the plan describes conditions that must be met and the procedures in place to monitor the student when he/she returns.

Follow up considerations:

1. Sharing information between schools, law enforcement, a mental health assessment agency, and the family to determine the next steps, safety plan and after care
2. Status of the student, safety plan and after care when returning to school
3. Sharing information with appropriate staff
4. Informing any and all persons named as possible targets of the threat
5. Safety plan for the suspected student's return to school, as well as any possible targets/victims
6. Mental health medical clearance to return to school

Lemont Township High School District 210 Threat Assessment Team Members

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