

# Policies

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## Westerly Public Schools Threats of Violence or Harm

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### **Purpose:**

Westerly Public Schools are committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all staff and students. Persons found to have made threats of violence or harm against district, students, staff, or property shall be subject to relevant district discipline policies and procedures and will be referred to the appropriate community agencies including law enforcement and mental health services if necessary.

### **Definitions:**

**Individual-directed threats of violence or harm** are communications that create fear of physical harm to a specific individual or individuals, communicated directly or indirectly by any means.

**Building directed threats of violence or harm** are direct or indirect communications by any means of the intent to cause damage to a school building or school property and or harm multiple students, staff, volunteers, or visitors to said school facility.

A **risk assessment** is a set of tools and a procedure to use when a member or members of the school staff determine a student may pose a risk to the safety of him/herself or others. The term risk assessment refers to both the process of gathering information and the written documents that are produced as a result of an assessment.

### **Reporting:**

All Westerly Public Schools staff, students, volunteers, and others involved in school activities have the responsibility to report any threats of violence or harm to the proper school officials immediately and/or without delay. Types of threats include, but are not limited to, verbal, written, or posted on social media and may be specific or broad in nature.

### **Response to threats:**

ALL threats shall be recorded and investigated. Once a report of a threat made by a student has been received by school officials the crisis response team shall be notified and an immediate risk assessment shall be completed following the WPS risk assessment guidelines to determine the threat level. The team shall follow their protocols as outlined in the WPS risk assessment guidelines and take all necessary steps to evaluate the threat and the person(s) who made the threat. Based on the significance and level of the threat it shall be reported to law enforcement for any action they determine as appropriate. Any and all school discipline that may take place shall be consistent with district policy, state and federal law.

### **Communication:**

Professional communications during any event is essential to properly manage the situation, reduce fear and anxiety, control false rumors, and keep staff, students, families, and others properly informed. To promote the safety of all concerned; staff and or students and their families who are the subject of threats of violence or harm shall be notified of the threat immediately and/or without delay following

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the completion of a risk assessment and in accordance with the WPS risk assessment guidelines. Relevant information that does not improperly identify a student shall be provided to the subject of a threat, and the subject shall be advised if law enforcement has been involved in the matter.

Building administrator will consult with the Superintendent of Schools and his/her designee to determine if further notifications will be made to staff, students, others involved in school activities, and families and the proper venue for these notifications to be made. Examples of such notifications would be conducting a staff meeting either before or after the school day, email or text messages to staff, automatic phone messaging systems, or any other appropriate delivery system. Specific details of any notification(s) will be as extensive as permitted by the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), other legal limitations and circumstances.

This policy shall be reviewed annually by all Westerly Public Schools staff.

**Legal Reference or Authorities:**

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)  
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)  
Westerly Public Schools – Risk Assessment Guidelines

Adopted: March 4, 2015