



Social Media and Threats of School Violence

Circulating school threats on social media can continue the cycle of fear throughout the community. These threats should be reported to the proper authorities so an investigation can take place. When a threatening social media post is shared over and over, it heightens the fear and chaos which can lead to undesirable consequences.

Here are some harmful effects of spreading threats on social media. Included in the document are the proper procedures that should be followed for threatening social media posts and some tips for talking to children and young adults about social media threats.

Harmful Effects

1. Spreading Panic and Fear

- School threats, whether credible or hoaxes, can cause widespread fear among students, parents, teachers, and the broader community. Even if the threat turns out to be false, the initial shock and anxiety can lead to real emotional distress.

2. Disrupting School Operations

- Schools may be forced to close or go into lockdown, causing disruptions to education. Resources are diverted to handle the threat, and class time is lost, negatively impacting students' learning.

3. Overburdening Law Enforcement

- Police and emergency services have to respond to every threat, even if it's just a rumor, diverting critical resources from other emergencies or investigations. This can cause delays in dealing with real issues that require immediate attention.

4. Legal Consequences for the Person Sharing the Threat

- Circulating false or exaggerated threats can lead to legal consequences. Individuals who post threats, even as a joke or in panic, may face criminal charges, including charges for inciting panic, terroristic threats, or cyberbullying.

5. Desensitization to Real Threats

- Repeated exposure to hoaxes or non-credible threats may desensitize people, making them less likely to take real threats seriously. This could lead to slower responses or increased danger if a legitimate threat arises.

6. Psychological Harm

- Continuous exposure to school threats on social media can contribute to long-term anxiety and trauma for students, staff, and parents, even when there is no actual danger. The sense of uncertainty and fear can deeply affect mental health.

7. Encouraging Copycat Behavior

- Publicizing threats can inspire others to mimic or escalate these threats, especially if they see the attention or disruption caused by the original post. This creates a vicious cycle of more threats and more panic.

8. Stigmatizing Schools and Communities

- Schools or communities associated with frequent threats can develop a negative reputation, potentially affecting local economies, real estate, and overall community well-being. Families may feel unsafe or consider relocating.

Proper Procedures for Reporting Threats on Social Media

Follow the proper procedures for reporting threats that are seen on social media or spreading throughout the community.

1. **Do Not Share Threats Publicly:** If you come across a potential school threat on social media, do not share it further. Sharing only amplifies the harm and spreads unnecessary fear.
2. **Report the Threat to Authorities:** Contact your school administration immediately, or call local law enforcement. Provide them with all relevant details, including screenshots, links, or other evidence. [Crimestoppers of Tangipahoa](#) has a tip line so the community is able to report threats of violence or other suspicious activity.
3. **Follow School Protocols:** Most schools have protocols for handling threats, including lockdown procedures and communication systems to notify parents and students. Familiarize yourself with these procedures and follow them closely.
4. **Inform the Social Media Platform:** Report the threatening post to the platform where it was shared. Most social media platforms have mechanisms to flag content that incites violence or poses a threat.

Have Meaningful Conversations with Children and Young Adults

Families should be diligent and aware of what is happening in the community and with children and their friends. Do not dismiss all threats but think before contributing to the fear and anxiety of the community. Always find opportunities to have meaningful conversations with those closest to you and discuss the severe consequences that could come with threats of violence. When speaking to children about social media threats, use clear and age-appropriate language:

1. **Explain the Impact:** Help them understand that even sharing or joking about threats can cause harm. It can create fear, disrupt learning, and lead to real consequences.
2. **Encourage Responsible Online Behavior:** Teach children to think critically about what they post or share online. They should know the difference between reporting concerns to an adult and spreading harmful information.
3. **Foster Open Communication:** Create a safe space where children feel comfortable reporting things that make them feel uneasy or scared. Let them know they won't get in trouble for reporting a concern, even if it turns out to be false.

4. **Reassure Their Safety:** Emphasize that school officials and law enforcement take threats seriously and have procedures in place to keep students safe. This can help reduce any anxiety they may feel after learning about a threat.

By promoting responsible reporting of threats and fostering healthy communication, we can minimize the negative effects and ensure that children feel safe and supported.