

THREATS ARE NO JOKE!

PARENT GUIDE

Threats Are No Joke! is a powerful public service announcement that highlights the serious consequences of making or sharing threats, even if they're meant as a joke. In this PSA, viewers see how a single text message shared among students quickly escalates into chaos, triggering fear, confusion, and a full law enforcement response.

This PSA serves as a critical reminder that in today's world, there's no such thing as "just a joke" when it comes to threats about school violence, school safety, or harm to others. Whether spoken out loud, posted online, or sent in a text, threats, real or fake, can lead to legal consequences, school discipline, and have lasting impacts on a student's future, including college and military eligibility.

What Parents/Guardians Should Know:

- Under Texas law, threats (even false ones) that cause fear, disrupt the school environment, or trigger an emergency response can be considered criminal offenses.
- A student can have consequences at school and with law enforcement, even if the threat was made from home.
- Jokes or offhand remarks like "I'm going to kill him" or "She's so annoying, I hope she dies," while sometimes are not technically threats, can still result in serious questioning and consequences.
- Sharing or reposting threats on social media, even without knowing if they're real, is dangerous and could lead to consequences.
- If a student overhears a threat or sees something online that concerns them, they should report it to a trusted adult or use their school's reporting tool. This is not being a "snitch," it's being responsible.



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How You Can Help as a Parent/Guardian:

- Talk to your child about the difference between joking and threatening language.
- Encourage them to think before they post, text, or say something that could be misinterpreted.
- Reinforce the message: **Don't do it. Don't share it. Report it.**
- Find out the process your child's school uses for anonymous reporting.

Together, we can create safer schools by helping our kids understand that threats, even the ones they think are harmless, are not a joke.



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PARENT GUIDE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Listed below are some frequently asked questions that you may get. While this isn't everything you could be asked, this is a starting point for you and your child.

Q: Even if it is a joke, and my child tells a friend, could they still have consequences?

A: Yes, even if it is just a joke, your child can still have consequences. If your child hears or sees something that sounds or looks like a threat, make sure they know to report it to an adult. You never know if it is really a joke.

Q: Can the police show up at your house or to the school?

A: Yes, police officers can show up at your house or school if they are investigating an issue or making an arrest.

Q: What is considered a threat? What are some examples?

A: Under Texas law, any threat of violence to a person or a place, with the intent to cause fear or serious bodily injury, cause police officers, firefighters, or EMS to respond, or if a threat prevents or interrupts the use of a building or room, like a school building, or school related event, can be considered a threat, which is a crime. A person also commits a crime if he or she knowingly communicates or circulates a report of a present, past, or future emergency that he or she knows is false. Some examples may include threatening a shooting on campus, threatening a bomb on campus, threatening a specific person, sharing a fake threat on social media, or reposting a threat.

Q: What if someone says, "She is so annoying, I hope she dies!"?

A: This is not a threat, just mean, and they could still have consequences for causing fear or questioned as to why they were saying that.



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Q: What if someone says, “Ugh! I’m going to kill him for telling her what I said.”?

A: This is probably not a threat, but it is not something that they should say. It can be misunderstood, or it may scare someone, and they could have consequences for causing fear in others.

Q: What if someone just overheard my child making a joke and it got taken out of context?

A: Your child should not make jokes about school harm or harm to others, but if a person feels like they were going to harm them or the school, your child could still have serious consequences.

Q: If my child makes a threat at school, do they only have consequences at school?

A: No, making a threat could affect your child’s entire life. It could show up on their permanent record or affect their future, like getting into college or enlisting in the military.

Q: If your child makes a threat from home, can they still have consequences at school?

A: Yes, if your child makes a threat from home against their school or another person, they could have severe consequences at school and with law enforcement.

Q: What should your child do if they hear or see someone making a threat?

A: Your child should tell a trusted adult. That could be a teacher, principal, police officer, school resource officer, parent, coach, etc. Their school also has procedures in place for a student to report concerning behaviors anonymously. If you or your child are unsure where or how to report, ask a teacher, principal, or school resource officer to show you.



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Q: What if my child doesn't want anyone to know it was them who reported a threat?

A: You or your child can talk to a teacher, principal, or school resource officer and find out how your child's school wants threats reported. Your child's school has ways to report anonymously.

Q: What should my child do if their friend has been saying or posting some things that seem concerning, but they don't want to be a snitch?

A: Report it to a trusted adult. If your child's friend is doing or saying something that scares them or makes them concerned, that doesn't make them a snitch. Your child is reporting it to keep their friend, them, and others safe.

