

Hellgate Elementary School District Threat Assessment Document

Updated Fall of 2025

Striving for a Safer Montana

Everyone should feel safe. Safer Montana gives kids, teens, parents, schools, and their communities a platform to report safety concerns or acts of violence. Together we'll give people the courage to speak out and enact change.

Report online: <https://app.safermt.com/> | **Call/Text:** 406-206-7431 | **Email:** tip@safermt.com

District Team Purpose:

The safety and well-being of our students and staff are our top priorities, and we must create a safe learning environment for everyone. Being proactive in addressing potential threats or concerns is crucial in today's world. Therefore, we have established a threat assessment team to better assess, identify, and address potential threats or safety concerns within our school community.

The primary goal of the threat assessment team is to prevent incidents before they occur, ensuring that our school remains a safe place for everyone. By having a dedicated team, we can effectively evaluate any concerning behaviors, statements, or situations and develop appropriate interventions as needed. This team consists of professionals from various backgrounds, such as administrators, teachers, counselors, and law enforcement officials, who will collaborate to conduct thorough assessments and implement necessary actions.

It is important to note that the threat assessment team operates under a strict protocol designed to protect the rights and privacy of all individuals involved. Every case is handled with sensitivity, due process, and utmost confidentiality. The purpose of this team is not to single out or stigmatize individuals but rather to ensure the safety and well-being of our entire school community.

We believe that by having a threat assessment team in place, we can proactively address any potential concerns and provide support to those who may need it. Early intervention and support are crucial in fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment and promoting academic success and personal growth.

The threat assessment team may be modified based on the district/building need and or the severity of the threat. Modified teams can determine in which situations to refer to the district team.

Types of Threats:

Concerning Behaviors

- Behavior that would initiate a threat assessment:
 - Behavior that indicates the subject poses a threat to themselves
 - Behavior that indicates the subject poses a threat to others
 - Behavior that creates a general concern for the well-being of the subject
- May or may not be a rule or law violation

Situations that should require a threat assessment

- Any expression, communication, or behavior that suggests an intent to commit violence
- Presence of immediate warning signs– e.g., severe fighting, destruction of property, evidence of planning to carry out violence, detailed threats of violence, etc.
- Evidence of targets, motives, intense violence-related interests, feelings of persecution
- Behaviors involving weapons, means, capability, and plans to harm

Behavioral Threat Assessment Team Roles and Responsibilities:

School Administrator

- Consult with team members to screen cases and determine when to conduct initial screening versus mobilize a full threat assessment inquiry.
- Assists in conducting interviews of subjects, targets, witnesses, teachers, staff, parents, and students.
- Assists in gathering additional information
- Determines and enforces disciplinary consequences, if appropriate
- Ensure that any threat management plan is followed and monitored
- Works closely with the public information officer

School Psychologist/Counselor

- Assists in conducting interviews of subjects, targets, witnesses, teachers, staff, parents, and students
- Creating a plan (safety, behavior, supervision, reinforcement) as necessary
- Serves as a liaison with any mental health providers
- When appropriate, advise the team on school-based and community interventions and supports, including possible mental health assessments.
- Assists with next steps and possible interventions

Occasionally Student Resource Officer

Common reasons for SRO involvement include:

- Threat or concerning behavior is determined to be imminent or high
- Threats or conduct involving weapons/explosives/fire
- Threat or false threats of serious violence, property damage, or that incite fear
- Conduct involving alcohol or controlled substances
- Conduct involving assault or sexual assault
- Suspected child abuse or neglect

District Team:

- **Administrators**
 - Julie McCarthy-McLavery (Building 2 Principal Prek-1)
 - Brent Heist (Building 1 Principal Grades 2-3)
 - Tiffany Hobbs (Building 3 Principal Grades 4-6)
 - Haley Patzner (Building 3 Dean of Students Grades 4-6)
 - Jamie Courville (Building 4 Principal Grades 4-6)
 - Brendan Brown (Director of Special Services)
 - Dr. Erin Ellis (Director of Curriculum and Assessment)
 - Dr. Molly Blakely (Superintendent)
- **School Psychologists**
 - Conley Doyle (Buildings 1/2)
 - Hannah Breeden (Buildings 3/4)
 - Lucas Bewley (Buildings 3/4)
- **Counselors**
 - Catie Cook (Building 2)
 - Lisa Birnbaum (Building 1)
 - Sara Schwarz (Building 3)
 - Teige Kolis (Building 3)
 - Brian Hall (Building 4)
- **Student Resource Officer**
 - Officer Tennison (District)

District Behavioral Threat Assessment Process:

[Link to flowchart](#)

Risk Management

Threat Management Plan

If one of our schools determines that an individual poses a threat of violence, a plan is developed that involves individual management, monitoring, and support. Three functions of threat management are:

- controlling and/ or containing the situation to prevent a possible attack,
- protecting potential targets of the threat, and
- providing support and guidance to aid the student who is at risk for violence in dealing with his or her problems appropriately and adaptively.

Options for Intervention

Some interventions might need to be staged immediately (e.g., bringing the student in question under adult supervision) while others require long-term planning and monitoring (e.g., conflict resolution efforts). Our teams consider whether the student can stay in school, what alternatives may be needed, how and when to notify families, if and when to involve law enforcement, and what mental health, social service, and school-based interventions are required to reduce the student's risk for violence. In cases where a criminal offense has been committed, law enforcement may choose to conduct a criminal investigation and pursue legal action against the presumed offender or offenders. We share information only about threats that are considered actionable, credible, and real. This ensures that our community does not experience undue stress or become complacent when too many incidents are reported that are low-level concerns.

Reporting Threats

A key component to keeping students safe is ensuring students, teachers, and community members report concerns or threats to school administrators or law enforcement. The Secret Service reports 81% of the time at least one person had prior knowledge of a planned attack, and 59% of the time, more than one person had knowledge. Alarming, only 4% with prior knowledge tried to dissuade the attacker, and many with prior knowledge did not believe it could happen. All members of the community, especially students, must understand the distinction between seeking help to prevent violence and "snitching," or informing on someone for personal gain.

Behavior Plan and or Follow-up Tracking

Universal Identified Levels of Concern (Low, Moderate, High)

Universal identified levels:

Low level concern– Individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved through problem-solving measures.

Moderate level concern– Person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or of serious harm to self/others currently, but exhibits some behaviors that indicate potential intent for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.

High level concern– Person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, is exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan; may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires immediate interventions to mitigate risk.

Imminent concern– Person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires immediate containment to protect self (law enforcement or mental health hold/admission) and actions to protect identifiable target.

Hellgate Comprehensive School Climate and Violence Prevention Strategies

At Hellgate Elementary, we want our students, families, and the community to understand the proactive steps we take to support our shared goal of preventing episodes of mass violence in our schools. Together, we prioritize safety and well-being through the following measures:

- Continuously improving the safety and security of our facilities.
- Training our staff in Active Resistance protocols.
- Conducting the eight mandated safety drills each year, including fire, earthquake, and evacuation drills.
- Addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of our students.
- Utilizing our threat assessment procedures to thoroughly evaluate all reported threats.
- Collaborating with law enforcement and mental health partners to take appropriate next steps based on threat assessment results.
- Maintaining strong partnerships with community mental health professionals who support students with high needs.
- Implementing the Signs of Suicide curriculum in middle school to identify students experiencing mental health challenges.
- Monitoring student email and Google G-Suite accounts for instances of bullying, threats, or other concerning content.
- Monitoring student and staff Internet access for unusual or concerning activity.
- Promoting tolerance and respect for diversity throughout our schools.

While we recognize that our staff and students cannot train for every possible scenario, we strive to equip them with the skills to respond effectively within established parameters. We encourage

our students and community members to "see something, say something," emphasizing the importance of speaking up to ensure everyone's safety.

By working together, we can become more vigilant observers and adopt a proactive mindset about the safety of our students, staff, and community.

We also encourage everyone to reach out to students, neighbors, and community members who need support or affirmation. At Hellgate Elementary, we believe in the collective power of our community to make a difference and create a safer, more connected Missoula.

Training

Conduct annual staff training.