



Palos School District 118

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THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES



Key portions of this document are drawn from the following recommended source:
Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines
(Second Edition, 2016)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Guiding Principles

The following principles form the foundation of the threat assessment process:

- Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and oftentimes discernible, process of thinking and behavior.
- Targeted violence stems from an interaction among the individual, the situation, the setting, and the target.
- An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment.
- Effective threat assessment is based upon facts rather than on characteristics or "traits."
- An "integrated systems approach" should guide threat assessment inquiries and investigations.
- The central question in a threat assessment inquiry or investigation is whether a student **poses** a threat, not whether the student has **made** a threat.
- The appraisal of risk in a threat assessment focuses on actions/behaviors, communications, and specific circumstances that might suggest that an individual intends to engage in violence and is planning or preparing for that event. The threat assessment process is centered upon an analysis of the known (or reasonably knowable) behavior(s) in a given situation.

In addition, three elements guide the development and operation of an effective school threat assessment program. These elements are:

- Authority to conduct an assessment;
- Capacity to conduct inquiries and investigations; and,
- Systems relationships

The threat assessment process—its nature and scope and the subsequent path of the investigation—will be determined based on the specifics of each situation. For example, a Threat Assessment Team's inquiry may find that (a) information about a student was false or unfounded or (b) the Student of Concern's behavior does not present a risk of targeted violence and can be managed by school administrators and other officials. The situations examined in these inquiries do not likely pose threats to the school, the student body, or the community, and, therefore, generally would not be referred to law enforcement agencies. By contrast, threat assessment inquiries that conclude a valid threat of targeted school violence exists will require referral to law enforcement officials for further investigation. For this reason, PALOS CCSD 118 utilizes a blended model of threat assessment inquiry involving both school and law enforcement parties when circumstances warrant.

B. School Threat Assessment Team

a. Members

- i. Superintendent or designee
- ii. Building Principal or designee
- iii. Director of Student Support Services
- iv. School Social Worker
- v. School Psychologist
- vi. Counselor
- vii. Others as assigned/deemed appropriate

b. Overarching Aims of Team

- i. Create and convey information relative to identifying, reporting, and responding to threats
- ii. Assess threats
- iii. Intervene/monitor/resolve threats and/or refer to outside entity or agency

C. Community Supports

The Threat Assessment Team may seek support, information, and/or expertise from one or more of the following:

- SWCCASE
- SASS
- Local Law Enforcement Agencies and Representatives
- DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services)
- School District Attorney

II. PRINCIPLES OF THREAT ASSESSMENT

Threat assessment is a systematic process that is designed to:

- a. Identify individual(s)/situation(s) whose behavior causes concern for violence
- b. Gather additional relevant information in a lawful and ethical manner
- c. Assess the individual(s)/situation(s) in context based on the totality of the information available
- d. Manage the individual situation to prevent violence and mitigate impact of harm

III. IDENTIFYING STUDENTS OF CONCERN

1. Students may bring themselves to the attention of school staff or the authorities by engaging in communications that cause concern (e.g., a student submits a story for an English assignment about a character who shoots other students in his school).

2. A Student of Concern may come to the attention of authorities through second or third parties (e.g., a 7th grader reports he has been threatened by another student and warned not to tell anybody about the threat).
3. In still other cases, students come to the attention of authorities through anonymous communications (e.g., a parent anonymously calls to report concerns about the behavior of a student). Information provided anonymously requires careful evaluation by the School Threat Assessment Team. Some information may be accurate, and some information may be partial or incomplete. Further, some or all of the information may be false and/or fabricated with malicious intent. In situations where a student is not easily identifiable from an anonymous communication, more sophisticated identification techniques may be required. These methods and techniques may necessitate involvement of law enforcement organizations, particularly in situations where there are anonymous warnings of imminent danger.
4. IMPORTANT NOTES FOR ALL STAFF
 - Anyone who believes a person or situation poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence that requires containment shall notify 911 and administration.
 - All school district employees, volunteers, and associates are required to report immediately to the principal, Director of Student Services, Superintendent, or other school administrator any expression of intent to harm another person concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest an individual may intent to commit an act of violence.

IV. INITIATING A THREAT ASSESSMENT INQUIRY

When information about a student's behavior and communications poses, or may pose, a threat to others, school officials will initiate a threat assessment inquiry. Upon receiving information concerning a potentially threatening situation, the Threat Assessment Team must first consider: "How much time do we have?" In **any** situation of concern, an inquiry will be initiated in a very timely manner--that is, within hours of notification. However, if information concerning a threatening situation suggests violence is or may be imminent (e.g., a student has acquired a weapon and is on his way to the school with the intention of shooting another student) the matter will be referred immediately to police. **When information is received concerning a potentially threatening situation, the safety of the school and the community is the priority consideration.** While an inquiry is being conducted, the Threat Assessment Team will address considerations relative to the student of concern (e.g., schooling). In making these decisions, care will be exercised to ensure the student of concern is treated appropriately, since the allegation(s) regarding the behavior or the student's perceived danger may be unfounded.

V. DEFINITIONS

- A **threat** is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff and/or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to others. The threat may be expressed/ communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means; and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party; and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.
- A **threat assessment** is a fact-based process emphasizing an appraisal of observed (or reasonably observable) behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations, to assess them, and to manage/address them.
- **Aberrant behavior** is that which is atypical for the person or situation and causes concern for the safety or well-being of those involved. Aberrant behavior for an individual involves actions, statements, communications or responses that are unusual for the person or situation; or actions which could lead to violence toward others; or are reasonably perceived as threatening or causing concern for the well-being of the person. These can include (but are not limited to):
 - Unusual social distancing or isolation by Student of Concern from peers and family members;
 - Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person;
 - Out of context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression;
 - Increased levels of agitation, frustration and anger;
 - Confrontational, accusatory or blaming behavior;
 - An unusual interest in or fascination with weapons; and/or
 - Fixation on violence as means of addressing a grievance.
- A **low risk threat** is one in which the individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved relatively easily.
- A **moderate risk threat** is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence, or serious harm to others, at this time; but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
- A **high risk threat** is one in which the person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
- An **imminent threat** exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.

- A **direct threat** is one in which the person poses a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. The direct threat standard applies when the threat assessment team or school administration determines that a Student of Concern poses a direct threat, and the administration also determines that applicable disciplinary procedures are not available or sufficient to mitigate the threat. If the administration makes such a determination, the school division is not required to permit the student to participate in or benefit from the services, programs, or activities of the division. A determination that a person with a disability poses a direct threat may not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about the effects of a particular disability and must be based on an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment relying on current medical evidence or on the best available objective evidence, to determine: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will mitigate the risk.

VI. POSSIBLE STRATEGIES/INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENT OF CONCERN

The Threat Assessment Team may utilize the following examples of interventions or strategies to address inappropriate behavior including, but not limited to, threatening behavior. The focus will be on interventions that de-escalate, contain, control, redirect the Student of Concern away from plans and preparation for violence; and toward engaging with others, problem solving, adapting, and improving their coping skills and well-being. Examples of Student of Concern-based strategies or interventions include, but are not limited to:

- Maintain channel of communication and engagement (with Student of Concern) to
 - Gather information,
 - Build rapport and relationship
 - Decrease isolation
 - De-escalate volatile reactions
 - Provide feedback and mentoring
 - Monitor reactions to grievances, interventions and precipitating events.
- Problem solving about legitimate grievances
- Referral for assistance or support services
 - Academic assistance or accommodations
 - Social skills training
 - Behavioral contracting
 - Modifications of student classroom assignment or schedule
 - Modification of work schedule or assignments
 - Alternative schooling/homeschooling
 - Involvement in extracurricular activities

- Performance improvement plans
- Peer coaching/mentoring
- Counseling/mental health services
 - Check-in/check-out with school counseling staff
 - Outpatient counseling/mental health care
 - Emergency psychiatric evaluation
- Disciplinary or Restorative Justice measures
 - Student of Concern confrontation or warning
 - Administrative orders for no contact or communication
 - Parental involvement
 - In school detention /after-school detention
 - Law enforcement involvement
 - Court issued protective orders
 - Diversion programs
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion

Intervention strategies selected should be those with the greatest potential for addressing short-term crises as well as longer-term preventive potential. While holding students and staff accountable for their actions, school administrators must be fair and reasonable in disciplinary responses. A broad range of corrective disciplinary actions may be employed including admonition and counseling, behavioral contracts, after-school or in-school detention, and suspension of student privileges for a specified period. These disciplinary responses may be combined with other actions such as parent conferences, modifications of student classroom assignment or schedule, and referrals to in-school and community-based programs such as mediation and community service.

VII. POSSIBLE STRATEGIES/INTERVENTIONS FOR TARGET

In addition to interventions focused on addressing the behavior of the individual(s) of concern, effective Threat Assessment Teams also attempt to minimize risk and negative impact on identified or identifiable targets and seek to maintain contact (where appropriate) to help monitor the actions and impact of the Student of Concern. Examples of target-based case management strategies include (but are not limited to):

- Provide counseling support
- Provide coaching regarding personal safety approaches in dealing with individual of concern, such as: Make clear statements to Student of Concern (e.g., Relationship/contact is unwanted; Stop all contact and/or communication); Avoid subsequent contact / response; Document all further contacts; Do not engage emotionally, monitor “buttons” getting pushed

- Minimize publicly available information (e.g., Scrub internet information; Check privacy settings on social media applications)
- Maintain awareness of surroundings
- Vary routine
- Develop contingency plans for escape, shelter, support
- Encourage use of support systems (e.g., Counseling/mental health services; Victim assistance programs)

VIII. EXAMPLES OF THREAT RESPONSES

Threat Assessment Teams will engage strategies that are deemed sufficient, fair, and reasonable to address the concerns identified. For each general threat level there is a level of response or case management that is appropriate. The information below provides general guidelines to prompt consideration of a starting point in developing a case management strategy. A given case may have a fact pattern that necessitates deviation from the general guidelines. Where that is the case, the Threat Assessment Team will determine the appropriate action steps. Following are *examples* of options and considerations for case management for the various levels of threat; the *actual* response made will be dictated by the specific facts of the situation and inquiry.

a. Examples of Low Risk Threat Responses

A low risk threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence and any underlying issues can be resolved easily. The response to such a threat depends on the context of the threat, whether the threat requires some form of disciplinary action, and what is necessary to resolve the situation. Some low threat cases are generated from a misunderstanding of what was communicated, something taken out of context, or a statement made in the heat of the moment but with not actions to indicate intent to cause harm. Many low risk threats are resolved with a clarification, explanation, retraction and or an apology--all of which (in conjunction with the absence of any other behaviors of concern) indicates that the threat is non-existent or minimal, and is over. A Threat Assessment Team should generally consider the following:

- Since low risk threats by definition do not appear to pose a threat and can be easily resolved, action to protect the person(s) to whom the threat was directed should not be necessary. When the person to whom the threat was directed is a student, his/her parents or guardian may be notified, at the discretion of the Threat Assessment Team or school administration. If parents of a threatened student are notified, they should be contacted promptly and reassured the threat has been resolved. Parents of the student engaging in the low risk threatening behavior may also be notified so they are aware of the situation and that it has been resolved.
- Some low risk threats may be subject to disciplinary action based on school board policy and/or Code of Conduct. The parent or guardian of the Student of Concern is to be notified of the incident and of the disciplinary action taken. All relevant disciplinary due processes should be followed.

- When the Threat Assessment Team determines a threat to be low risk, the case may be resolved entirely with no further action or resolved with referral to appropriate school or community-based resources. When Student of Concern is referred for resources or services, a member of the threat assessment team may be designated to monitor his/her reactions for a short period of time, to ensure the referral was made effectively and appropriately.
- If new information comes to the attention of the team, the assessment will be re-examined.

b. Examples of Moderate Risk Threat Responses

A moderate risk threat will typically result in notifying the intended target(s) of the threat and taking precautions to protect them, taking steps to monitor and supervise the Student of Concern, and taking disciplinary action in accordance with existing discipline policy and/or Code of Conduct. The Threat Assessment Team will also work to address the conflict or problem that led to the threat. *Examples* of strategies that may be employed include but are not limited to:

- Take precautions to protect potential victims. Precautions typically include:
 - Provide direct supervision so the Student of Concern cannot carry out the threat while on school premises, at school functions, or on the bus.
 - Caution the Student of Concern who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
 - Contact Student of Concern's parents to assume responsibility for supervision of the student and to enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat.
 - Notify the intended target(s) and, if they are students, the parents/guardians. The intended target(s) (and, where appropriate) their parents, must be notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the Student of Concern who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to support the safety of the target and the school as a whole.
- Consult with local law enforcement and/or School Crisis/Safety Team to assist in monitoring and supervising the Student of Concern as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.
- Follow applicable disciplinary procedures in accordance with Code of Conduct and/or district policy.
- Where appropriate, refer the Student of Concern for counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce the threat of violence and to address the underlying conflict or issues that led to the threat. Consider involving school-based professionals (e.g., school psychologist, counselor, or social worker) or community based professionals (e.g., Employee Assistance Program, community mental health services, etc.) who can provide assistance and appropriate intervention.
- Where mental health or disability issues are reasonably believed to be causing or contributing to violence risk, a mental health risk assessment *may* be conducted, following

parameters for the mental health risk assessment as outlined in the section below regarding high risk threats.

c. Examples of High Risk Threat Responses

Threatening behaviors indicating the intent, planning, or preparation to cause serious bodily injury or death (e.g., physically assault and inflict serious injury, kill, use weapons against others) require the immediate involvement of the Threat Assessment Team. When the threat is determined to be high risk, the Threat Assessment Team must:

- Notify law enforcement or appropriate agency per regulation to contain the threat and consult with School Safety and Security.
- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims:
 - Provide direct supervision so the Student of Concern cannot carry out the threat while at school, at school programs, or on the bus.
 - Caution the Student of Concern who made the threat about the consequences of carrying out the threat.
 - Contact Student of Concern's parent(s)/guardian(s) and enlist their support in preventing the student from carrying out the threat; either law enforcement or the student's parents should assume responsibility for supervising the student.
 - Notify the intended target(s) and (if they are students) their parents. The intended target(s) (and, where appropriate) their parents, must be notified of the seriousness of the threat, the identity of the Student of Concern who made the threat, and what actions are being taken to support the safety of the target and the school as a whole.
- Follow applicable disciplinary procedure in accordance with Code of Conduct and/or board policy.
- Where mental health or disability issues are reasonably believed to be causing or contributing to violence risk, a mental health risk assessment should be conducted by a qualified independent medical/psychological professional. The professional conducting the evaluation should not have a treatment relationship with the Student of Concern. The assessment should be based on a review of all available information including, but not limited to, an interview of the Student of Concern by the professional. The written report must identify the problem or conflict that prompted the threat and recommend strategies to address the problem and to reduce the risk of violence.
 - The school administrator or disciplinary hearing officer will determine the conditions of readmission to school that may include the requirement to cooperate in a mental health evaluation. The Student of Concern's parents are to be notified of all requirements and any failure to comply. A readmission meeting must be held prior to the student's return to school.

- Every effort will be made by Threat Assessment Team members to obtain any required signed permission for release and exchange of information with mental health provider(s), if any, and where appropriate, local law enforcement agencies.
- After receiving the mental health evaluation report, the Threat Assessment Team shall convene to complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the Student of Concern is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment. The safety plan should include:
 - conditions under which the Student of Concern may return to school;
 - interventions, such as counseling or medication, that are needed to reduce risk;
 - scheduled follow-up contact with the Student of Concern and parent(s)/guardian(s) to assess changes in risk and update the safety plan over time, until the perceived threat is resolved;
 - person(s) who are responsible for monitoring and verifying that the safety plan recommendations are being followed.
- In utilizing the direct threat standard where a Student of Concern has a disability, it is important to note: A determination that a person with a disability poses a direct threat may not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about the effects of a particular disability and must be based on an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment relying on current medical evidence or on the best available objective evidence, to determine: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will mitigate the risk.

d. Imminent Threat Responses

An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others. Such threats require immediate containment, action to protect identified target(s), and referral to law enforcement and consultation with school security. Following immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s), these threats require the involvement of the threat assessment team for the purpose of conducting/coordinating appropriate mental health assessment and developing a safety plan.

- Where mental health or disability issues are reasonably believed to be causing or contributing to violence risk, a mental health risk assessment should be conducted by a qualified independent medical/psychological professional. The professional conducting the evaluation should not have a treatment relationship with the Student of Concern. The assessment should be based on a review of all available information including but not

limited to interview of the Student of Concern by the professional. The written report must identify the problem or conflict that prompted the threat and recommend strategies to address the problem and to reduce the risk of violence.

- The school administrator or disciplinary hearing officer will determine the conditions of readmission to school/work that may include the requirement to cooperate in a mental health evaluation. The Student of Concern's parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be notified of all requirements and any failure to comply. A re-admission meeting must be held prior to the student's return to school/work.
 - Threat Assessment Team members will obtain any required signed permission for release and exchange of information with mental health provider(s), if any, and where appropriate, local law enforcement agencies.
 - After receiving the mental health evaluation report, the threat assessment team shall convene to complete and implement a written safety plan to address the immediate steps taken to prevent the threat from being carried out and a plan for further action before the Student of Concern is permitted to return to school or an alternative educational environment. The safety plan should include: (a) conditions under which the Student of Concern may return to school/work; (b) interventions, such as counseling or medication, that are needed to reduce risk; (c) scheduled follow-up contact with Student of Concern and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to assess changes in risk and update; (d) the safety plan over time, until the perceived threat is resolved; and (e) person(s) who are responsible for monitoring and verifying that the safety plan recommendations are being followed.
- In utilizing the direct threat standard where a Student of Concern has a disability, it is important to note that a determination that a person with a disability poses a direct threat may not be based on generalizations or stereotypes about the effects of a particular disability and must be based on an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment relying on current medical evidence or on the best available objective evidence, to determine: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will mitigate the risk.

IX. THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM'S AREAS OF INQUIRY

When conducting a Threat Assessment Inquiry, the Threat Assessment Team will consider the following types of information:

1. The facts that drew attention to the student, the situation, and/or possible target(s)
2. Information about Student of Concern:

A. Identifying information:

- Name
- Physical description
- Date of birth
- Identification numbers (e.g., Social Security number, student ID)

B. Background information:

- Residences
- Family/home situation
- Academic performance
- Social networks
- History of relationships and conflicts
- History of harassing others or of being harassed by others
- History of violence toward self and others
- History of having been a victim of violence or bullying
- Known attitudes regarding violence
- Criminal behavior
- Mental health/substance abuse history
- Access to and use of weapons
- History of grievances and grudges

C. Current life information:

- Present stability of living and home situations
- Nature and quality of current relationships and personal support
- Recent losses or losses of status (e.g., shame, humiliation, recent breakup or loss of significant relationship)
- Current grievances or grudges
- Perceptions of being treated unfairly
- Known difficulty coping with a stressful event
- Any "downward" progression in social, academic, behavioral, or psychological functioning
- Recent hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair, including suicidal thoughts, gestures, actions, or attempts
- Pending crises or change in circumstances
- School-based supports, academic and/or social emotional

3. Information about "attack-related" behaviors

- Behaviors that raise concern about potential violence include:
 - ideas or plans about injuring him/herself or attacking a school or persons at school, at home, or elsewhere;
 - communication or writing that suggest that the student has an unusual or worrisome interest in school attacks;

- comments that express or imply the student is considering mounting an attack at school;
- recent weapon-seeking behavior, especially if weapon-seeking is linked to ideas about attack or expressions about interest in attack;
- communications or writings suggesting the student condones or is considering violence to redress a grievance or solve a problem; and
- rehearsals of attacks or ambushes

4. Motives

Motives for actual school attacks may include:

- revenge for a perceived injury or grievance
- yearning for attention, recognition, or notoriety
- a wish to solve a problem otherwise seen as unbearable
- a desire to die or be killed

5. Target Selection

Information about a student's target(s) may provide clues to the student's motives, planning, and attack-related behaviors. Information about the student's motives also may inform the question of whether there are additional targets.

X. INFORMATION SOURCES

1. **School Information:** This information may include records and other information accessed at the school and from school officials. In utilizing information from school records in a Threat Assessment Inquiry, the School Threat Assessment Team will follow school policies and relevant information-sharing laws.
2. **Collateral Interviews:** Students, staff members, and other adults who know the Student of Concern will be asked about communications or other behaviors that may indicate the Student of Concern's ideas or intent. The focus of these interviews will be factual.
3. **Parent/Guardian Interview:** The parents or guardians of the Student of Concern will be interviewed.
4. **Potential Target(s) and/or Witness(s) Interview:** The individual(s) identified as the potential target(s) of the Student of Concern will be interviewed, where possible. Interviews with potential targets will be conducted with special sensitivity. Care will be taken to gather information without unduly alarming a potential target. If the Threat Assessment Team believes there may be a risk of violence to an identified target, the person will be offered assistance and support. Witness(es), where possible, will also be interviewed.

XI. GUIDING QUESTIONS TO AID THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM IN ORGANIZATION AND ANALYZATION OF INFORMATION

- What are the Student of Concern's motive(s), grievances, goals, and intent in the behavior?
- What efforts have been made to resolve the problem and what has been the result?
- Does Student of Concern feel that any part of the problem is resolved or see any alternatives?
- What, if anything, has the Student of Concern communicated to someone else (e.g., targets, friends, other students, teachers, family, others) or written (diary, journal, electronically, other) concerning his or her ideas and/or intentions?
- Has Student of Concern shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?
 - school attacks or attackers;
 - weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon); or
 - incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murderers)
- Has Student of Concern engaged in attack-related behaviors? These behaviors might include:
 - developing an attack idea or plan;
 - making efforts to acquire or practice with weapons;
 - casing, or checking out, possible sites and areas for attack; or
 - rehearsing attacks or ambushes.
- Does Student of Concern have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?
 - How organized is the student's thinking and behavior?
 - Does the student have the means, e.g., access to a weapon, to carry out an attack?
- Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?
 - Is there information to suggest that the student is experiencing desperation and/or despair?
 - Has the student experienced a recent failure, loss and/or loss of status?
 - Is the student known to be having difficulty coping with a stressful event?
 - Is the student now, or has the student ever been, suicidal or "accident-prone"?
 - Has the student engaged in behavior that suggests that he or she has considered ending his or her life?
- Does the student have a positive, trusting, sustained relationship with at least one responsible adult?
 - Does the student have at least one relationship with an adult where the student feels that he or she can confide in the adult and believes that the adult will listen without judging or jumping to conclusions? (Students with trusting relationships with adults may be directed away from violence and despair and toward hope.)
 - Is the student emotionally connected to—or disconnected from—other students?
 - Has the student previously come to someone's attention or raised concern in a way that suggested he or she needs intervention or supportive services?

- Does the student see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or the only way to solve a problem?
 - Does the setting around the student (e.g., friends, fellow students, parents, teachers, adults) explicitly or implicitly support or endorse violence as a way of resolving problems or disputes?
 - Has the student been "dared" by others to engage in an act of violence?
- Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?
 - Does information from collateral interviews and from the student's own behavior confirm or dispute what the student says is going on?
- Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?
 - Are those who know the student concerned that he or she might take action based on violent ideas or plans?
 - Are those who know the student concerned about a specific target?
 - Have those who know the student witnessed recent changes or escalations in mood and behavior?
- What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?
 - What factors in the student's life and/or environment might increase or decrease the likelihood that the student will attempt to mount an attack at school?
 - What is the response of other persons who know about the student's ideas or plan to mount an attack? (Do those who know about the student's ideas actively discourage the student from acting violently, encourage the student to attack, deny the possibility of violence, passively collude with an attack, etc.?)

XII. ASSESSING THE THREAT

Thoughtful consideration of the answers to the questions above will produce a sound foundation for the Threat Assessment Team's response to the overarching question in a threat assessment inquiry: **Does the Student of Concern's continued presence in school pose a threat to school safety?**

If the Threat Assessment Team concludes: a. there is enough reliable information to answer key questions and b. the weight of the information is convincing that the student does not pose a threat of targeted school violence; then c. the Threat Assessment Team may conclude the Threat Assessment Inquiry. The Threat Assessment Team may determine closure of the inquiry is warranted but determine the Student of Concern, or previously suggested targets, need assistance coping with the behavior or problems that initially brought the threatening situation to the attention of authorities. In such situations, the team will work with school administrators and others to ensure these individuals receive the assistance and continued support they may need.

If the Threat Assessment Team concludes a. there is insufficient information be reasonably certain the student does not pose a threat; or b. the student appears to be on a path to attack; then c. the

team will recommend the student be temporarily removed from school and the matter be referred to the appropriate law enforcement, mental health, or social service agency for a threat assessment investigation.