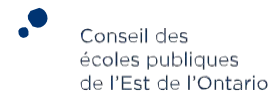




# Community-based Violence/ Threat Risk Assessment Protocol

## *A Collaborative Response to Student Threat Making Behaviours*



*The protocol reflects the work of J. Kevin Cameron, Director of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.*

## **Overall Rationale**

The Ottawa school boards, police and community partners are committed to making our schools safe for students and staff. As a result, the Ottawa school boards will respond to all student behaviours that are deemed to pose a potential risk to other students, staff and members of the community. It is hoped that support for early intervention measures by the school boards and community partners will prevent school violence.

The effective implementation of a community violence/threat risk assessment protocol will support collaborative planning to prevent school-based violence. As well, the timely sharing, with relevant partners, of information about students at risk for violence towards self and/or others will ensure that supportive plans are put in place.

The strength of this school board and community partnership lies in the multi-disciplinary composition of the response team. The response team will share and review student information and the details of the event in order to collaborate using a broad range of expertise. This collaborative process will respect the individual's rights to privacy while maintaining safety for all.

## Partners

The school boards, *Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est* are the lead partners in the Ottawa Community-based Violence/Threat Risk

Assessment Protocol.

Community Partners include:

*Ottawa Police Services*

*Youth Justice Services, Ministry of Children and Youth Services*

*Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario*

*The Royal*

*Youth Services Bureau*

*Crossroads Children's Centre*

*Children's Aid Society of Ottawa*

*Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services*

*Centre Roberts/Smart Centre*

*Youturn Youth Support Services/services d'appui a la jeunesse*

*Maison Fraternité*

*Centre Psycho-social*

*Centre Jules-Léger*

## Vision

All partners support the protocol and have a shared obligation to actively take steps to prevent school-based violence.

The partners agree to work together for the common goal of threat reduction and school/community safety by pro-actively sharing information, advice, and support that assists in the prevention of a potential traumatic event.

As partners we will work together for the benefit of children, youth, their families and the community by:

- Building working relationships based on mutual respect and trust;
- Involving children, youth and their families in planning for services and supports;
- Recognizing that each child and youth has unique strengths and needs that should be considered when developing a service plan to meet his/her needs;
- Realizing that working together successfully is a process of learning, listening, and understanding one another;
- Being patient and trusting and working together to help children and youth become happy, healthy, active, involved, and caring members of the community.

The goal of the protocol is to remove, or reduce as far as possible, any threats to the safety of students, parents, school staff, other persons, the school or other buildings or property, arising from any actions or physical or verbal behaviour engaged in by students or their peers on school property or elsewhere.

The protocol is designed to ensure communication and information sharing between school and community partners when the violence/threat risk assessment protocol is activated. The community partners are each governed by unique legislation that sets out their respective legal requirements relating to information sharing. The community partners recognize and are committed to complying with all applicable laws and regulations in considering and carrying out any information sharing.

As part of the protocol, school board, police, and community partners will commit to ongoing participation, staff development and program review.

## Key Approaches to Violence Threat/Risk Assessment

### 1. Investigative Mind-Set

Threat assessment involves a multi-disciplinary approach, which requires:

- Thoughtful probing;
- Seeking out of relevant information from all sources;
- Connecting and analyzing the information to ensure a comprehensive assessment;
- Attention to key points about baseline behaviour and reasons for increases in behaviour

### 2. Building Capacity

Training with the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response Level 1 in threat assessment will be provided to as many school personnel and community members as possible, so that ALL worrisome, violent and/or threat making behaviours receive a response. Moreover, all school personnel will be made aware of the components of the community protocol, so that it may be activated if needed in medium or high level threat situations.

### 3. Program Review

The Community-based Violence/Threat Risk Assessment Protocol will be reviewed bi-annually by the school boards, police and community partners.

### 4. Criminal Investigation and Education Act Investigation

In many cases, a criminal investigation and/or Education Act investigation will result from the actions of a student(s) that brings about a violence/threat risk assessment. While these are parallel processes and independent of each other, school boards, police and community partners will ensure an open line of communication during the criminal investigation and/or Education Act investigation process whenever possible and allowable.

The open line of communication will ensure that any resulting criminal investigation is not jeopardized by the actions of the school board(s) or community partners. Through experience, training and debriefing (violence/threat risk assessments), the school boards, community partners and police will effectively conduct violence/threat risk assessments respecting established agency mandates, roles and processes.

### 5. Information Sharing

The general intent of access to information and protection of privacy legislation is to limit the sharing of personal information without the consent of the person. Wherever possible and reasonable, informed consent should be obtained.

## **Activation of the School and Community Violence/Threat Risk Assessment Teams (VTRA)**

When a student engages in behaviours or threatens to engage in behaviours that may result in serious injury to a person(s), a VTRA will be initiated. The lead partner will be the school board. To ensure the timely activation of the VTRA, lead contact(s) will be identified by each of the school boards, police and community partner(s) and will be called as needed.

### **Immediate Risk Situations**

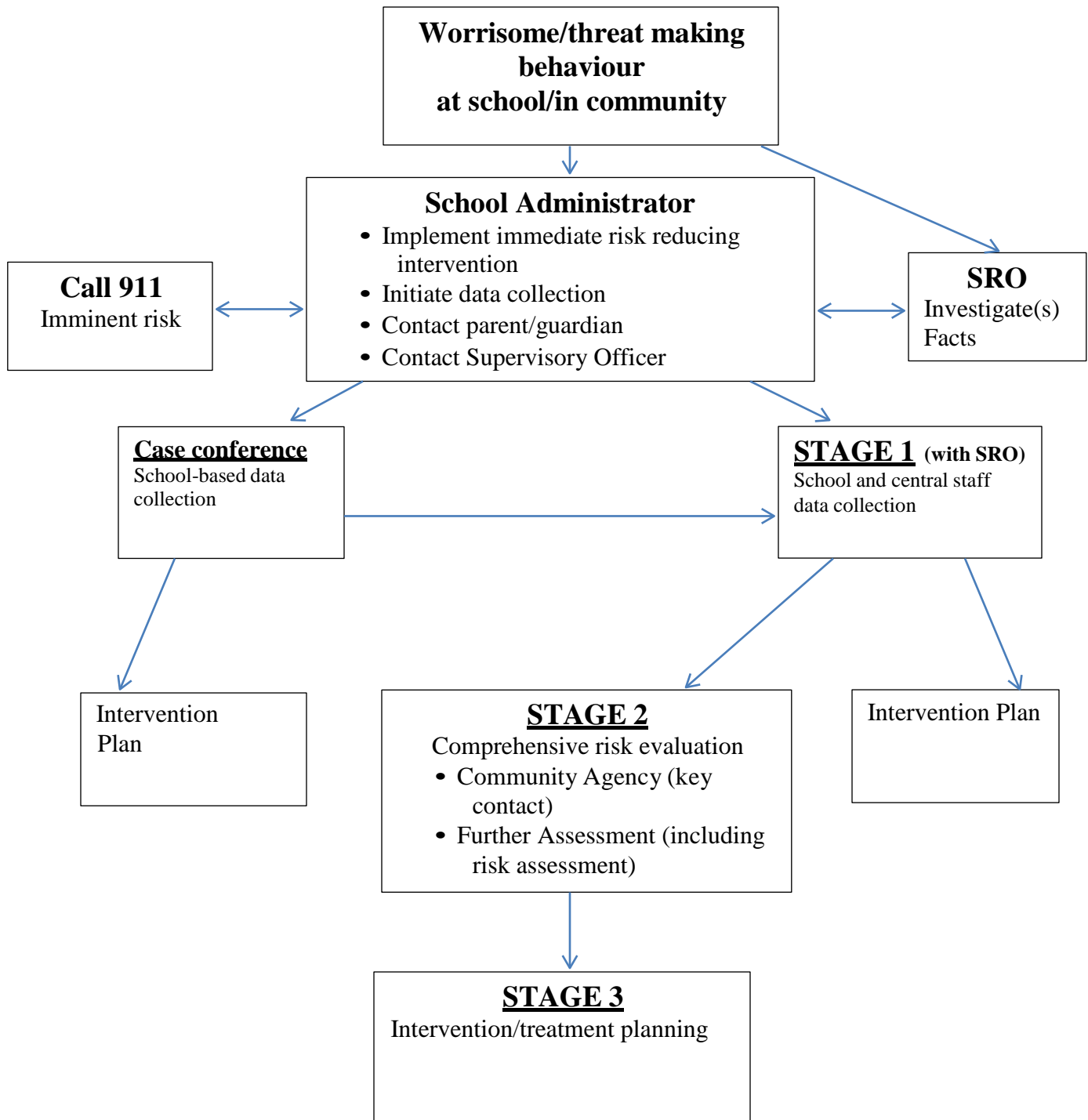
These situations require an immediate police response (life threatening emergency or crime in progress). The school lockdown plan is activated and 911 is called. The immediate response is to ensure safety for all (staff, students, parents, visitors).

### **Proceeding with the VTRA**

1. As a result, and in response to, all other worrisome/threat making behaviours (see Appendix A), the school administrator will implement immediate risk reducing strategies. The school administrator will initiate data collection and contact the parent(s)/guardian(s). (See Appendix B, Step 2)
2. If the initial data collection concludes that the behaviours are worrisome but not high risk, the next steps include continuing with data collection and holding a multi-disciplinary case conference as soon as possible.
3. Should the behaviours appear more high risk, a police incident report should be initiated, as outlined in the Protocols to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa. The school administrator should proceed to a Stage 1 VTRA with school and central staff and invite the SRO/designate. This needs to be held as soon as possible, within 24 to 48 hours.
4. If the VTRA concludes that further assessment is indicated, the community partner(s) may be contacted. Additionally, further assessment including a Stage 2 (Risk Assessment) may be requested.

Regardless of whether a 911 call is made due to imminent high risk, or a case conference or VTRA is completed, an intervention/treatment plan is always required.

# VTRA PROTOCOL



## **Anonymous Threats: Assessment and Intervention**

Anonymous threats are typically threats to commit a violent act against an individual(s), specific group, or site (i.e. the school). They may be found written on a wall, spray painted on the walls of schools, posted on the Internet, left in a conspicuous place (teacher's desk), etc. Generally, the anonymity of the threat denotes a lack of commitment. However, the following steps should be followed:

1. Assess the anonymous threat:
  - Analyse the language: amount of detail (where, when, target(s));
  - Method of delivery (who found/received the threat, where was it received; who knows about it);
  - Determine if the threat is clear, direct, plausible.
  
2. Attempt to identify the threat maker:
  - Handwriting analysis;
  - Word usage (grammar, spelling, expressions that may identify the author);
  - Some students will incorporate their own name on an anonymous 'hit list';
  - Some students who report having received a threat are either the author of the threat or know who the author is.
  
3. Avoid over-reaction.

## **Non-school Hour Threats**

If information is received by a VTRA member regarding a clear, direct and plausible threat outside of school hours, police will be called and appropriate steps will be taken to ensure safety. The school administrator will be contacted by police, as soon as practical and the VTRA protocol activated if the situation is deemed to pose an ongoing risk within the school climate.



## **Responding to Threat Making Behaviours**

### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

In accordance with the Education Act, a Principal must consider mitigating factors when considering whether to hold a student responsible for a violation of the board Code of Conduct. These include whether the student has the ability to control his or her behaviour and whether the student has the ability to see the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour.

The VTRA protocol will not be activated when students with special needs engage in threat making or aggressive behaviours that are typical of their “baseline”. For instance, some students who have been diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum or with behavioural exceptionalities may have histories of verbal threatening as part of their baseline behaviour. This would not result in a VTRA. If the student with special needs goes beyond their typical baseline behaviour, the VTRA process should be initiated.

### **STUDENTS IN SECTION 23 PROGRAMS**

Section 23, day treatment programs are often located within community schools. In situations, where a student in day treatment engages in threat making or aggressive behaviour that is beyond their “baseline”, and poses a plausible, significant risk to the host community school, the Principal of the Section 23 program (McHugh or Le Transit), with the treatment partner, will determine whether or not the VTRA process should be initiated. If necessary, the process will be initiated by the school board where the specific program is housed. For programs housed within agencies, the school board that has administrative responsibility and the partner agency would carry out the VTRA.

### **THREAT ASSESSMENT AND SUSPENSION**

A poorly timed out-of-school suspension may increase risk of violence, as it may be viewed by the student as the ‘last straw’. Although the suspension does not cause the violence, it may create a context for a high risk student to take the step from planning to action. Therefore, unless the threatmaker already poses an imminent or obvious safety concern (i.e. currently brandishing a weapon), it is recommended that the VTRA team be activated, where possible, before suspension is imposed. The principal may determine that, for reasons of safety, the student should work at home, with parental consent for 24-48 hours, pending the outcome of the VTRA, or consider an alternate process (e.g., exclusion).

### **INVOLVING PARENTS/GUARDIANS IN THE VTRA PROCESS**

**Parent/guardian permission is not required for a VTRA to occur.**

#### **Parent/guardian of the threat maker:**

Parents/guardians must be notified at the earliest opportunity. In accordance with the Education Act, administrators shall inform a student’s parent/legal guardian of an activity for which suspension or expulsion must be considered unless, in the opinion of the administrator, doing so would put the student at risk of harm from the parents. Notification of the parent should occur after sufficient data has been collected that determines that a threat or violent act has occurred.

Parents/guardians are also important to the VTRA process providing important information about the threat maker's behavior, increases in baseline behavior, mental health, and other contextual information that may increase or decrease level of risk.

Notification of parent/guardian and further involvement in the VTRA process is meant to be a collaborative process between home and school in order to fully assess the student and to develop a risk reduction plan.

Parent/guardian of the target:

In accordance with the Education Act, parents/guardians of the target of the threat must be notified at the earliest opportunity, when the threat has been investigated and sufficient data collected. If the threat is clear, direct and plausible, student safety must be addressed immediately. Parents/guardians of a targeted child may be worried, fearful or angry. Notification should be done with skill, caring and planning. This includes offering available emotional supports for the child and family.

In some cases, the target of the threat has also been engaged in high-risk behaviors, including threat making. In those situations, the target of the threat may also be considered for a VTRA.

**EXPECTATION OF RESPONSIBLE REPORTING**

In accordance with the Education Act, Section 300(2), an employee of a board who becomes aware that a student may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion shall be considered shall, as soon as reasonably possible, inform the school administrator. All staff members working directly with students must respond to incidents that will have a negative impact on school climate.

Students need to be taught and reminded that informing an adult about worrisome or threat making behavior is a social responsibility for the safety and well-being of all. It is not "snitching" or "ratting". It is important to remind students that such reporting will not result in disciplinary action, unless it is made maliciously and without reasonable grounds.

## **Violence Threat/Risk Assessment Intervention and Management**

Regardless of whether a 911 call is made, a case conference is held or a VTRA is completed, an intervention/management and re-entry plan is required.

### **GUIDELINES FOR RE-ENTRY TO SCHOOL**

When the data suggest that a student poses a threat to others and further comprehensive assessment is needed, the student may be suspended from school. The school administrator, with the VTRA team, guides the process from initial assessment, to planning for further assessment to decrease risk, to planning for the re-entry into school. The team determines what assessment will be recommended, who will complete the assessment(s), who contacts the family and also plans the case conference to discuss a re-entry plan including intervention and safety planning.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Members of the VTRA team need to have authority within their organizations to make decisions with regard to supportive services. For example, it may be necessary to conduct a psychological risk or a psychiatric assessment, to refer to a community agency for treatment, or to increase supervision or make accommodations in a school setting. It is important that intervention and supports offered to the student and family are culturally appropriate and accessible within the community.

### **SUPPORTING TARGETED STUDENTS OR STAFF**

The VTRA team must consider the impact of the threat making behaviour on targeted students or staff. The clinician (social worker or psychologist) on the VTRA team should be responsible for assessing the impact and recommending supports and services, as needed. If the threat is directed to a group, class or entire school, the VTRA team should discuss how best to provide support depending on the circumstances.

## ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The goal of threat/risk reduction and school/community safety is shared by all partners. The VTRA protocol is designed to facilitate communication and information sharing, when allowable.

The VTRA will be activated in situations which involve:

- serious violence or violence with the intent to harm or kill others or self;
- verbal/written threats to kill others or self (clear, direct, plausible);
- possession of weapons (including all replicas);
- bomb threats (including making and/or detonating explosive devices);
- fire setting;
- sexual intimidation or assault;
- gang related intimidation and violence.

Depending on the information received in the initial investigation, community partner(s) may be contacted for consultation and/or information through the identified VTRA designate of the community partner.

The partner will determine if and what information is to be shared, based on the legislation that sets out their respective legal requirements relating to information sharing. Depending on the level of concern the partner may have relevant information to be shared, information that is not relevant, or no information.

Additionally, even if the partner does not have relevant information, their area of expertise may mean that they can provide helpful guidance and assistance in order to assist with mitigating the threat.

## Information Sharing

The general intent of access to information and protection of privacy legislation is to limit the sharing of personal information without the consent of the person. **Wherever possible and reasonable, informed consent should be obtained.** The individual should know to what he/she is consenting, and understand the consequences of the intended disclosure. The individual should be made aware that he/she may withdraw consent at any time by giving written or verbal notice.

The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) provide exceptions for the release of information where there are imminent risks to health and safety. MFIPPA notes compelling circumstances affecting the health and safety of an individual..." (Part II,32(h), MFIPPA). PHIPA notes that "a health information custodian may disclose personal health information about an individual if the custodian believes on reasonable grounds that the disclosure is necessary for the purpose of eliminating or reducing a significant risk of serious bodily harm to a person or group of persons." (2004, c. 3, Sched. A, s. 40(1) PHIPA).

The Children's Aid Society will endeavour to obtain consent to release information from all of their clients involved in a school or community immediate threat assessment. Disclosure of information without consent may be considered if there is reasonable grounds to believe that: "failure to disclose the information relevant to the threat is likely to cause the person or another person physical harm, and the need to disclose is urgent." (CFSA 182, 1 (e), (F) s.125 (6))

Section 125(6), Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) enables information in a Youth Criminal Justice Act record to be shared, within the access period, with any professional or other person engaged in the supervision or care of a young person - including the representative of any school board, or school or any other educational or training institution only in limited circumstances. Information may be shared to ensure the safety of staff, child/youth or others, to facilitate rehabilitation/reintegration of the young person, or to ensure compliance with a youth justice court order or any order of the provincial director respecting reintegration leave. Such sharing of information does not require the young person's consent.

The recipient of youth justice information is responsible for ensuring compliance with legislated restrictions on its use and disposal under the YCJA s.125 (7). This provision requires that the information must be kept separate from any other record of the young person, that no other person must have access to the information except as authorized under the YCJA or for the purposes of ss.125 (6), and that it must be destroyed when it is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was disclosed.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) S.32.0.5(3) states, "an employer's duty to provide information to a worker under clause 25(2)(a) and a supervisor's duty to advise a worker under clause 27(2)(a) include the duty to provide information, including personal information, related to risk of workplace violence from a person with a history of violent behaviour if, (a) the worker can be expected to encounter that person in the course of his or her work; and (b) the risk of workplace violence is likely to expose the worker to physical injury."

<b>Green Light</b>	<b>Yellow Light</b>	<b>Red Light</b>
Generally speaking, pursuant to freedom of information and privacy acts, relevant personal information MAY be shared under one or more of the following circumstances:	In any of the following circumstances obtain more information and/or get advice from a supervisor, or the board lawyer,	Information may NEVER be shared under any of the following circumstances
- With written consent,	- When consent is not provided or is refused but where there may be a health or safety issue for any individual or group(s),	- When there is a legislative requirement barring disclosure,
- To avert or minimize imminent danger to the health and safety of any person, (see key points regarding informed sharing),	- To report criminal activity to the police,	- When no consent is given and there is no need to know or overriding health/safety concerns, or
- To report a child who may need protection under the Child and Family Services Act,	- To share YCJA records, under section 125(6) of the YCJA within the allowable access period,	- When consent is given but there is no need to know or overriding health/safety concerns.
- By order of the Court,	- When there is a demand or request to produce information for a legal proceeding, or	
- To ensure the safety of students and/or staff under section 125(6) YCJA within the allowable access period,	- When a professional code of ethics may limit disclosure.	
- To cooperate with a police and/or child protection investigation in accordance with all policies, procedures and protocols in place at the community partner agency.		

## **Communication:**

### **a. Parent/Staff/Student**

Communication with parents, staff, and students concerning the protocol will be developed by the school-based administration in collaboration with the Supervisory Officer who will consult with the school board designate for VTRA.

### **b. Intra-agency**

Internal school board and community partner communication regarding the protocol will be the responsibility of the school board/community partner designate.

### **c. Media**

In the event that a media release is required, school board or community partners involved will consult and advise each other where appropriate.

### **d. Documentation**

Each partner will be responsible for documenting, storing, retaining and destroying information as required by his/her agency.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: <i>Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour; School Board Protocol; A Staff Guide</i> .....	<b>17</b>
Appendix B: <i>Violence/Threat Risk Assessment Report Form</i> .....	<b>18</b>
Appendix C: <i>Definitions</i> .....	<b>32</b>



**Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: School Board Protocol**  
**A Staff Guide**

**Decide on a Course of Action**

With the input of *all* VTRA members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student may likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision and school-based/district supports.

Worrisome Behaviours	High Risk Behaviours	Imminent Risk Requiring Immediate Police Response (life threatening emergency or crime in progress) Call 911
Include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing violent pictures</li> <li>• Writing violent stories/journals</li> <li>• Making or writing vague threatening statements</li> <li>• Unusual interest in fire</li> <li>• Significant increase in anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>	Include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possession of weapon/ replica</li> <li>• Possession of a bomb threat plan</li> <li>• Making or writing a threat to kill or cause serious bodily harm</li> <li>• Internet or website threats to kill or cause serious bodily harm to self/others</li> <li>• Fire setting</li> <li>• Threatening violence</li> </ul>	Include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to others</li> <li>• Imminent plan for violence</li> <li>• Homicidal/suicidal behaviour that threatens safety</li> <li>• Fire Setting (danger to life)</li> </ul>

*In accordance with the Education Act, Section 300 (2) an employee of a board who becomes aware that a pupil of a school of the board may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion shall be considered shall, as soon as reasonably possible, report to the school principal about the matter. All staff members working directly with students must respond to incidents that will have a negative impact on school climate.*

**Violence/Threat Risk Assessment Guidelines:**  
**Data Collection and Immediate Risk Reducing Interventions**

(Adapted from the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response)

*Note: A Violence/Threat Risk Assessment may be as a result of an alleged criminal offence by a student(s). If there is an alleged criminal offence, the police must be consulted or involved after the school board staff has determined there is some information about a criminal offence to ensure a coordinated effort and that any criminal investigation is not jeopardized. Police and school board will be conducting a parallel investigation: criminal investigation and an Education Act investigation. Any threat or risk assessment must be conducted with this in mind.*

Student:	School:		
DOB:	Student Number:	Grade:	Age:
Parents Name:	Date of Incident:		

**Step 1: Make sure all staff and students are safe. In imminent risk situations requiring an immediate police response (life threatening emergency or a crime in progress) CALL 911. At the earliest opportunity and when safe to do so, the school administration will contact the school board designate who will then activate the VTRA. For other situations, follow police-school protocol with regards to police response.**

**Step 2: Initiate the Data Collection, including all witnesses and participants directly and immediately involved.**

The following warning signs are offered to guide the threat assessment process. The purpose of this process is to determine whether a student *poses* a risk/threat to the safety of others. Does the student appear to have the resources, intent, and motivation to carry out the threat? Is there evidence of attack-related behaviours that suggest movement from thought to violent action? Document and discuss all warning signs that apply.

**Immediate Data** may be obtained from multiple sources:

- Reporter(s) or Informant(s)
- Target(s)
- Witnesses
- Teachers and other school staff (secretaries, teacher assistants, bus drivers, etc.)
- Friends, classmates, acquaintances
- Parents/caregivers (call both parents)
- Current and *previous* school records
- Police record check
- Student(s), locker, desk, backpack, recent text books/assignment binders, cars, etc.
- Parents/caregivers of the student(s), bedroom, etc.
- Activities: such as internet histories, diaries, notebooks, etc.

**Other Agencies:** Agency partners may be involved in the VTRA process as consultants to the school/police team. They may be sources of initial data relevant to the case at hand e.g., past or current involvement by other agencies. Once they are informed of the initial school/police data they may release necessary information or physically join the team.

**Notify the student's parent(s) or guardian(s).**

- Parents/guardians have been notified of the situation and this assessment.
- Parents/guardians have NOT been notified because: \_\_\_\_\_

## Series I Questions (The Incident)

1. Where did the incident happen and when?
2. How did it come to the interviewee's attention?
3. What was the specific language of the threat, detail of the weapon brandished, or gesture made?
4. Was there stated:
  - Justification for the threat?
  - Means to carry out the threat?
  - Consequences weighed out (I don't care if I live or die!)?
  - Conditions that could lower the level of risk (unless you take that Facebook post down I will stick my knife in your throat!)
5. Who was present and under what circumstance did the incident occur?
6. What was the motivation or perceived cause of the incident?
7. What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident? *Did he/she add to or detract from the Justification Process?*
8. What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident? *Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?*

## Notes

## Series II Questions (The Incident) (Attack-Related Behaviours)

1. Has the student (subject) sought out information consistent with his/her threat making or threat-related behaviour?
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past?
3. Has the student (subject) attempted to gain access to weapons or does he/she have access to weapons he/she has threatened to use?
4. Has the student developed a plan and how general or specific is it (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal or justifications, maps and floor plans)?
5. Has the student (subject) been engaging in suspicious behaviour such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, video surveillance in schools or elsewhere, schedules, locations of police or security patrol?
6. Has the student engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including packing or brandishing fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting (e.g., lighting fire to cardboard tubes cut and taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc.)?
7. Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in his/her locker, (backpack, car, truck, etc.) at school or bedroom, (shed, garage, etc.) at home?
8. Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because “something big is going to happen”?

## Notes

### **Series III Questions (The Threat Maker/Subject)**

1. Does the threat maker (subject) have a history of violence or threats of violence?
2. If yes, what is the frequency, intensity and recency (FIR) of the violence?
3. What has been his/her past human target selection?
4. Does he/she have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behaviour?
5. Is there evidence of fluidity?
6. Does the threat maker (subject) use drugs or alcohol? (what are they using, level of use, any previous violence while using?)

### **Notes**

## Series IV Questions (The Target)

\*Remember that in some cases the target is higher risk for violence than the threat maker with the most common case being where the threat maker is the victim of bullying and the target is the bully.

1. Does the target have a history of violence or threats of violence?
2. If yes, what is the frequency, intensity and recency of the violence?
3. What has been his/her past human target selection?
4. What has been his/her past site selection? Is there evidence the target has instigated the current situation?

## Notes

### **Series V Questions (Peer Dynamics)**

1. Are others involved in the incident who may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification process?
2. Who is in the threat maker(s), subject(s), peer structure and where does the threat maker (subject) fit (e.g., leader, co-leader, and follower)?
3. Is there a difference between the threat maker's individual baseline and his/her peer group baseline behaviour?
4. Who is in the target(s) peer structure and where does the target fit (e.g. leader, co- leader, follower)?
5. Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?

### **Notes**



### **Series VI Questions (Empty Vessel)**

1. Does the student have inordinate knowledge or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school-based attacks?
2. How has the student responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc.)?
3. What type of violent games, movies, books, music, internet searches does the student fill him/herself with?
4. Is there evidence that what he/she is filling him/herself with is influencing his/her behaviour? (Imitators vs. Innovators)?
5. What related themes are present in his/her writings, drawings, etc.?
6. Is there evidence of fluidity and/or religiosity?

### **Notes**

### **Series VII-Contextual Factors (Triggers)**

1. Has the threat maker experienced a recent loss, such as a death of a family member or friend;
2. a recent break-up; rejection by a peer or peer group; been cut from a sports team; received a
3. rejection notice from a college, university, military etc.?
4. Have his/her parents just divorced or separated?
5. Is the student a victim of child abuse and has the abuse been dormant but resurfaced at this time?
6. Has the student been initiated into a gang? Is it voluntary or forced recruitment?
7. Has the student recently had an argument or 'fight' with a parent/caregiver or someone close to him/her?
8. Has the student recently been charged with an offence or suspended or expelled from school?

### **Notes**

### **Series VIII (Family Dynamics)**

1. How many homes does the student (subject) reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparent's home)?
2. Is the student (subject) connected to a healthy/mature adult in the home?
3. Who lives in the family home (full-time and part-time)? Has anyone entered or left the home who may be influencing level of risk?
4. Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often are they around?
5. Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards his/her siblings or parent(s), caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom including Frequency, Intensity, Recency (FIR)?
6. What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home?
7. Are parent(s) or caregiver(s) concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children or others?
8. Does the student's level or risk (at home, school or the community) cycle according to who is in the home (e.g., the student is low risk for violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times his/her father travels away from home for work)?
9. Does the student have a history of trauma? (e.g. car accidents, falls, exposed to violence, abuse, etc.).
10. Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM V diagnosis?
11. Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family?
12. Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse in the family?

### **Notes**

## **Review Findings with the VTRA**

Convene the VTRA to discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the question: “*To what extent does the student pose a threat to school/student safety?*” Does he/she pose a threat to him/herself or someone outside the school (e.g., family)?

### ***Low Level of Concern***

Risk to the target(s), students, staff and school safety is minimal.

- Threat is vague and indirect.
- Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail; threat lacks realism.
- Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.
- Typical baseline behaviour.

### ***Medium Level of Concern***

The threat could be carried out, although it does not appear realistic. Violent action is possible.

- Threat is more plausible and concrete than low level threat. Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (e.g., possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (e.g., weapon seeking), although there may be an ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: “I’m serious!”
- Moderate or lingering concerns about the student’s potential to act violently.
- Increase in baseline behaviour.

### ***High Level of Concern***

The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

- Threat is specific and *plausible*. There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.
- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on threat. For example, information indicates, for example, that the student has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had a victim under surveillance.
- Information suggests *strong* concern about the student’s potential to act violently.
- Significant increase in baseline behaviour.

## **Decide on a Course of Action**

With the input of *all* VTRA members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student may likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision and school-based/district supports.

***Low to Medium Level of Concern***

- Implement the Intervention Plan (*Most students can be managed at school or board program alternatives with supportive intervention*).

***Medium to High Level of Concern***

- The VTRA determines whether further assessment is needed.
- Principal notifies the board designate.

## Develop a Re-integration (Intervention) Plan

The following Intervention Plan could be used to address concerns identified during a Threat/Risk Assessment.

Re-integration (Intervention Plan) (attach additional pages as needed)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Disciplinary action taken: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Intended victim warned and/or parents or guardians notified.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Suicide assessment initiated on: _____	By: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Contract not to harm self or others created (please attach).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Alert staff and teachers on a need-to-know basis.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Daily or <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly check-in with (title/name): _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Travel card to hold accountable for whereabouts and on-time arrival to destinations.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Backpack, coat, and other belongings check-in and check-out by: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Late arrival and/or early dismissal.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Modify daily schedule by: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour Plan/Safety Plan	
<input type="checkbox"/> Intervention by support staff (e.g., Psychologist, Social Worker, Guidance).	

- Identify precipitating/aggravating circumstances, and intervene to alleviate tension.  
Describe:

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- Drug and/or alcohol intervention with: \_\_\_\_\_

- If a student with special needs, review IEP goals, strategies and options.

- Obtain consent/permission to share information with community partners such as counsellors and therapists (see Release/Exchange of Information Form).

Other action:

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**PARENT/GUARDIANS (attach additional pages as needed)**

- Parent(s) will provide the following supervision and/or intervention:

Parent(s) will:

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## **Definitions**

### **Imminent Risk/Immediate Response**

Refers to life threatening situations or crime in progress. Staff will call 911 and follow internal board procedures for such circumstances. The school may choose to activate the school board/police/community VTRA.

### **High Risk Behaviours (See Appendix A)**

Is defined as behaviours that express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High risk behaviours include but are not limited to: interest in violent content, unusual interest in fire/fire setting, escalation of physical aggression, significant change in anti-social behaviour, unusual interest in and/or possession of weapon/replica of a weapon, bomb threat, internet threat to kill and/or injury to self and/or others. The In-School team should be activated and, after consultation with the school staff and school board designate, the school board/police/community VTRA.

### **In-School Team**

Is a team of school based professionals (e.g. principals, vice principals, etc.) trained to assess a threat to student safety by a student or group of students. Professional support staff may be consulted and will participate in the school-based violence/ threat risk assessment process.

### **School Board/Police/Community Threat Assessment Team (VTRA)**

Is comprised of school board representatives, police and community partners as needed. When an in-school team has assessed that a student(s) poses a threat to student/staff safety, the principal calls the school superintendent who contacts the board designate to request that the School Board/Community Threat Assessment Team be activated.

### **Risk Assessment**

Is a process of determining if a student of concern, regardless of whether a threat was made, may, through his or her violent behaviour pose a risk to a known or unknown person(s), including him or herself.

### **Threat**

Is defined as any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, posted on the internet (MSN, Facebook) or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

### **Threat Assessment**

Is a process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails etc. a threat to kill a target or targets) actually poses a danger to the target he/she has threatened.



### **Threat Making Behaviours**

Are defined as any action that an individual who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys, or causes any person to receive a threat.

### **Worrisome Behaviour**

Is defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. The majority of behaviours from Kindergarten to Grade 12 fall into this category. Worrisome behaviours include but are not limited to: drawing pictures that contain violence, stories/journal writings that contain violence, making vague/generalized statements about violence towards others that do not constitute a threat. Worrisome behaviours may be an early warning sign of the development of more serious high risk behaviours. All worrisome behaviours should be addressed. These situations may involve activation of the VTRA and consultation with school board designate.

### **Fluidity**

Is the cognitive and affective interaction between the suicidal and homicidal domains. High risk individual who at times struggle with fluidity vacillate between a desire to kill themselves and at other times a desire to kill others. In some cases the fluid individual swings back and forth between the domains for long periods of time so that engaging in an act that will accomplish both homicide and suicide is the outcome. School shootings, workplace shootings and family based murder-suicide are classic examples of realized fluidity.

### **Empty Vessels**

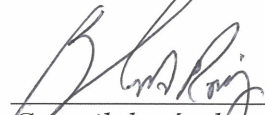
Are individuals who are not connected to healthy and mature adult supports. In VTRA cases, if the individual in question is viewed as a possible empty vessel, the next question by the team becomes: with what are they filling themselves? In other words what is drawing their attention that could be influencing their current behaviour and level of risk? This includes negative peer groups, internet activity, violent video games, music, drugs and alcohol, etc.

# Community Threat Assessment Protocol Signing Partners

  
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

  
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

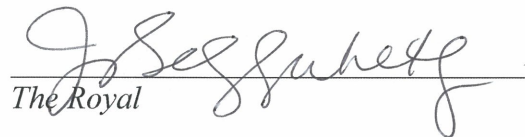
  
Ottawa Catholic School Board

  
Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est

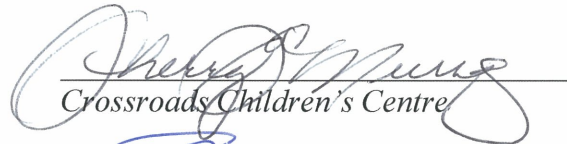
  
Ottawa Police Service

  
Youth Justice Services, Ministry of Children  
and Youth Services

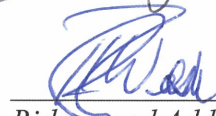
  
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario

  
The Royal

  
Youth Services Bureau

  
Crossroads Children's Centre

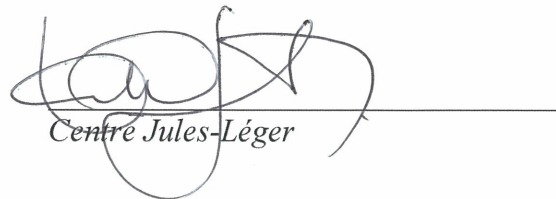
  
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

  
Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services

  
Centre Roberts/Smart Centre

  
Maison Fraternité

  
Centre Psycho-social

  
Centre Jules-Léger

  
Youturn Youth Support Services/services d'appui à la jeunesse

11, 12, 2014  
Day, Month, Year