

R8468 Crisis Response Haddon Township School District Threat Assessment Procedure

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide the Haddon Township School District with an effective and efficient process to address concerns that are raised when a student may pose a threat to the safety of others. The procedure establishes a process for identifying, assessing, and managing students who may pose a threat of violence.

Purpose

A threat assessment is a process of evaluating a threat, and the circumstances surrounding the threat, to uncover any facts or evidence that indicate that the threat is likely to be carried out. The primary purpose of a threat assessment is to prevent acts of violence from occurring. A threat assessment is conducted when a person (or persons) threatens to commit a violent act or engages in behavior that appears to threaten an act of violence. A threat assessment is ultimately concerned with whether an individual poses a threat, not whether he or she has made a threat. A threat assessment goes beyond the determination that an individual poses a threat to include efforts to prevent the threat from being carried out through appropriate intervention.

Other District Policies

This procedure is one component of a comprehensive approach toward maintaining a safe and orderly school community. Therefore this procedure is intended to supplement and not to replace existing district policies regarding student discipline and behavior, such as Policy #8461 Reporting Violence, Vandalism, Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, Policy # 8467 Prohibiting Deadly Weapons and Dangerous Instruments, Policy # 8465 Reporting Hate Crimes and Bias Related Acts and the Standards of Student Conduct. It is expected that actions or behaviors prohibited by those policies will be addressed in compliance with the procedures set forth therein. This procedure aligns with the Haddon Township Board Policy # P5600 and #R5600, #P5512 and # R5512 and is designed to provide specific guidance in the case of a threat that may or may not be defined in the HIB procedure #P5512 and #R5512.

Definitions

Threat: A threat is defined as any behavior, which suggests intent to harm someone. Threats may be spoken, written, or expressed in some other way, such as through gestures, electronic communication or social media. Threats can be made directly to the intended victim, communicated through third parties, or expressed in private writings. Possession of a weapon such as a firearm or knife on school grounds would be presumed to indicate a threat, unless determined otherwise by a subsequent investigation.

Transient Threat: A transient threat does not express a lasting intent to harm someone and can be readily resolved. Transient threats can be rhetorical statements or reflect feelings that dissipate in a short period of time when the student thinks reflectively about the meaning of what he or she has done or said. A most important feature of a transient threat is that the student does not have a sustained intention to harm someone. Transient threats may merit disciplinary action in accordance with

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other school policies, but there is no need to take proactive action to prevent an imminent act of violence.

Substantive Threat: A substantive threat is serious in the sense that it represents a continued risk of harm to someone beyond the circumstances, which precipitated the report. If there is doubt whether a threat is transient or substantive, the threat shall be treated as substantive under this procedure.

Threat Assessment Team Coordinator

A Threat Assessment Team Coordinator (TAC) shall be appointed by the Superintendent as the lead point of contact. The TAC will usually be the school principal or assistant principal. The TAC will gather and analyze information needed for threat assessment.

Threat Assessment Team

A Threat Assessment Team (TAT) shall be appointed by the Superintendent to conduct threat assessments and make recommendations about the appropriate course of action to the Superintendent.

The three major functions of the TAT are:

- identification of a student(s) who may pose a threat;
- assessment of the risks of violence posed by the student(s) at a given time; and
- management of both the student(s) and the risks that he/she/they may present to the school community.

A standing Threat Assessment Team shall be appointed by the Superintendent to include:

- Threat Assessment Team Coordinator (TAC) (principal or designee) *
- School Psychologist*
and/or
- Director of Special Services*
- County Mental Health Specialist (if appropriate)
- School Counselor*
- School Resource Officer (if available) – Police may not be present without parent/guardian for students under 18 years of age.

* required for a Threat Assessment

Each member of the TAT shall recommend for approval by the Superintendent a designee who shall serve in their place in the event that the member is unavailable. All members of the TAT shall participate in Threat Assessment designated training.

Threat Assessment Reporting Process and Protocol

1. Members of the school community are encouraged to report any behaviors that raise concerns regarding an individual's propensity to harm others. The conduct giving rise to the concern need not be witnessed by the individual making the report. Faculty and staff who receive reports of

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threatening conduct shall notify the TAC. (If an incident occurs that results in physical harm to an individual, damage to property, involves the possession of a weapon, or poses an imminent danger to person or property, employees should remove themselves and students from the immediate danger and immediately contact Public Safety or call 911 in accordance with school procedure.)

2. The TAC will conduct a preliminary inquiry to determine whether a transient or substantive threat exists. The Student Threat Documentation Form will be used. The TAC will consult with school staff as needed to complete the form, which will establish whether the threat is transient or substantive. In the event of a transient threat the TAC will take steps to bring it to a resolution, ex. student apology, conflict resolution session, code of conduct, on-going monitoring or intervention (s).

3. If it is determined through the initial inquiry that a substantive threat may exist, the TAC will activate the entire TAT. The TAT will conduct a threat assessment inquiry which may include a mental health evaluation and determine an appropriate course of action including developing and implementing crisis management and intervention protocols. The TAT shall report the findings and recommendations to the Superintendent.

4. Individuals who have been charged with a criminal offense that raises a concern for individual and/or school safety may be subject to a TAT inquiry as a condition of resuming or continuing participation in school activities. This shall apply regardless of whether or not the alleged offense occurred on campus, off campus or at a school sponsored activity.

Threat Assessment Recommendations and Consequences

The TAT may also make other recommendations, which may include, but are not limited to, a plan to:

- provide support, guidance and/or monitoring of the student(s) accused of making a threat;
- provide support, guidance and/or monitoring to students and employees who may be or feel at risk;
- control and contain the situation to prevent danger;
- follow-up to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of all reports and of student and staff information will be preserved to the greatest extent possible, understanding that the district has an obligation to conduct an inquiry and, in appropriate cases, to share information to protect the safety of the school community and others. All members of the school community involved in an inquiry are also expected to maintain confidentiality, understanding that they may impair the inquiry by divulging information to persons outside of the process. All inquiries and reporting of findings will be conducted in compliance with state and federal confidentiality laws and in accordance with the procedures set forth by the Camden County Prosecutor's Office.

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FERPA

Individuals who serve on the Threat Assessment Team shall be considered school officials with a legitimate educational interest in accessing a student's educational records in connection with a threat assessment inquiry. All faculty and staff shall fully and promptly cooperate with a threat assessment inquiry and shall provide any information requested by members of the Threat Assessment Team.