STUDENTS

Threat Assessment Procedures

I. Purpose

The purpose of this regulation is to establish procedures for the assessment and intervention with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students.

II. Definitions

A. A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or 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.

B. 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.

C. 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 self or 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):

1. Unusual social distancing or isolation of subjects from peers and family members;
2. Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person;
3. Out of context outburst of verbal or physical aggression;
4. Increased levels of agitation, frustration, and anger;
5. Confrontational, accusatory, or blaming behavior;
6. An unusual interest in or fascination with weapons; and/or
7. Fixation on violence as means of addressing a grievance.

D. An **unsubstantiated threat** is one in which insufficient proof of the potential threat was identified.

E. 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.

F. A **moderate risk** threat is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent to harm and potential for future violence.

G. 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.

H. 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 target(s).

I. 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 subject 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.
III. Threat Assessment Team

A. The threat assessment team will include a school administrator (principal or designee), school psychologist, school counselor, and school social worker. The threat assessment team will also include a school resource officer and safety and security specialist when assigned to the school. Other school staff may serve as regular members on the team, or be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate, and as determined by the team.

B. The school administrator will report to the Office of Risk Management and Security Services when a school resource officer and school security officer are not assigned to the school.

C. The school administrator is responsible for leading the threat assessment team.

D. Team members shall communicate and work collaboratively with each other, with other school staff and (as appropriate) with community resources to support the purposes of the team and the safety of the school and its students and staff.

E. The school threat assessment team, will meet at least quarterly for case management, needs identification, and consultation. Other school and Division level staff may participate, as appropriate, or as determined by the principal.

F. The school threat assessment team members will attend formal training at least every three years and will participate in yearly training updates.

G. In fulfilling statutory responsibilities, school threat assessment teams shall:

1. Provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self;

2. Identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported; and

3. Implement School Board policies for the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.
IV. Procedures

A. Identifying and Reporting Threats

1. All threats to the safety of school staff or students made by any individual shall be immediately reported to the school administrator (or designee) if they cannot be easily and readily resolved by other staff members.

2. Threats of self harm require compliance with Virginia Code § 22.1-272.1, and with applicable School Board policies and regulations. When threats of self harm are accompanied by threats to harm others, or investigation suggests the existence of a threat to others, the threat assessment team shall be notified and take appropriate action to prevent acts of violence.

3. All School Division employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to immediately report to the designated school administrator an expression of intent to harm another person, concerning communications, or concerning behaviors that suggest a student may intend to commit an act of violence.

4. Anyone who believes that a person or situation poses a clear and immediate threat of serious violence that requires containment should notify school security and law enforcement in accordance with the School Board policies on crisis management.

5. Regardless of threat assessment activities, disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement are to occur when required by the School Board policy or the Virginia Code.

6. In accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-279.3:1, certain types of threats require immediate notification to law enforcement. The school administrator shall immediately report to the local law enforcement agency:

   a. Assault and battery that results in bodily injury, sexual assault, death, shooting, stabbing, cutting, or wounding of any person or stalking of any person on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;

   b. Threats against school personnel while on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;

   c. Illegal carrying of a firearm (see § 22.1-277.07) onto school property;
d. Illegal conduct involving firebombs, explosive materials or devices, or hoax explosive devices, or explosive or incendiary devices, or chemical bombs, on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity; and

e. Threats or false threats to bomb (see § 18.2-83) made against school personnel or involving school property or school buses.

B. Assessing Student Threats

1. Upon notification of threatening behavior or communications, the school administrator will determine if the individual or situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence, the administrator shall notify law enforcement in accordance with School Board policies on Critical Incident Response.

2. If there is no reasonably apparent imminent threat present, or once such an imminent threat is contained, the school administrator will notify the threat assessment team and initiate the threat assessment process with at least one other member of the team. This may include (as necessary and appropriate):

   a. Review of the threatening behavior or communication;

   b. Review of educational and other available records; and

   c. Interviewing the person(s) who reported or have knowledge of the threat, targets or intended victims of the threat, persons who observed the threat or have knowledge of the individual or situation and the individual who allegedly engaged in the threatening behavior or communication.

3. If it cannot be determined with a reasonable degree of confidence that the threat is low risk, then a more in-depth investigation is to be undertaken by the full threat assessment team to determine the nature and degree of any safety concerns and to develop strategies to reduce risk, as necessary. The student shall be excluded from school until the threat assessment process is complete.

4. Based on information collected, the school threat assessment team will classify the level of risk associated with the behavior or communication of concern and respond in accordance with the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) Threat Assessment Guidelines.
5. In instances where the threat is deemed of moderate risk or high risk, or requires further action, the school administrator shall notify the parent and/or guardian of the student who is the recipient of the threat and the parent and/or guardian of the student who made the threat. In cases involving low risk threats, the parent or guardian of the threat recipient may be notified at the discretion of the threat assessment team.

6. Findings from assessment and classification of the threat are to be documented in writing within 72 hours of the initial receipt of the threat. Documentation of the threat assessment is documented per PWCS Threat Assessment Guidelines and the summary report is maintained in the student’s discipline file.

C. Responding to Student Threats

1. Threat assessment and disciplinary procedures are separate processes. Regardless of the classification of the threat, appropriate disciplinary procedures should be followed.

2. If it is determined that the student poses a threat of violence, the threat assessment team shall develop, implement, and monitor an individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat.

3. The student who made the threat and any impacted students are to be assisted in accessing appropriate school and community-based resources for support and/or assistance.

4. A member of the threat assessment team shall be designated case manager to monitor the status of the student and to notify the threat assessment team of any change in status or additional information that would be cause for a re-assessment. Documentation of case monitoring and resolution is to be maintained according to the PWCS Threat Assessment Guidelines.
D. Responding to Non-Student Threats

1. Employees

In response to threats made by employees, the school administrator will contact their Level Associate, the Office of Risk Management and Security Services, law enforcement, and the Office of Human Resources and implement other actions to intervene with, address, and reduce the threat.

2. Non-Employees

In response to threats made by a non-employee (individuals who are neither students nor employees), the school administrator will contact the Office of Risk Management and Security Services and law enforcement and implement other actions to intervene with, address, and reduce the threat.

The Associate Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.

Legal reference: Virginia Code § 22.1-79.4
Regulation 701-1, “Code of Behavior”
Regulation 744-1, “Short- and Long-Term Suspensions”
Regulation 745-1, “Student Expulsions, Readmissions, and Exclusions”

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS