

I. Establishment of the Team(s)

The superintendent shall establish a threat assessment team or teams. The assessment teams shall coordinate among school officials and law enforcement, mental health, and other appropriate entities to monitor and respond to information about behavior, statements, or plans that may pose a threat of violence at a school or a school function, or that indicate mental and behavioral health intervention is needed.

A threat assessment team must include individuals with expertise in student counseling (e.g., a school counselor, a school psychologist and/or school social worker), education instruction (e.g., a teacher or administrator with instructional experience), school administration (e.g., a principal or other senior administrator from the school(s) covered by the team and human resources professionals), and law enforcement (typically a school resource officer). Although not required by statute, a best practice should include consulting with an individual with expertise in human resources, or other staff when applicable. Other school staff (or community resources) may serve as regular members on the team, or be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate, in conformity with the statutory requirement for team composition. Specifically, if the student to be assessed has an Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, receives English Language services, or other therapeutic services, at least one individual providing those services directly to the student should be included in the behavioral threat assessment process. Members of the assessment team may interview other students and/or parents as a part of the evaluation, but those other individuals must not be included in the assessment team itself with respect to the evaluation and decision making.

II. Structure of the Team(s)

Threat assessment team(s) should have a designated team leader, typically a principal for the school(s) team or senior administrator for the school system team. The team leader will be responsible for ensuring that the threat assessment process is conducted properly, and that all appropriate documentation is completed and maintained according to local school system policies, as well as State and federal laws. Team members shall 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. The threat assessment team leader may designate a subset of team members to triage cases reported to the team. If a subset of the team is designated to triage a case, at least one member of this group must be the mental health staff member. All team members shall be trained to effectively triage cases. This triage process serves to screen cases and determine their appropriateness for review and/or action by the full team. If the team elects to implement a triage process, at least two members of the team will review initial reports of concern to determine if existing resources and mechanisms are sufficient to address those concerns, or whether the full team should further assess and manage the situation. School administrators and/or school security employees may not make decisions on a threat assessment without the input of the school mental health member. All triaged cases must be shared with all members of the assessment team once completed for a full review.

Team members shall actively, lawfully, and ethically communicate with each other; with school administrators; and with other school staff who have a need to know particular information to support the safety and well-being of the school, its students and its staff. At all times communications from the individual school or local school system regarding a more serious threat or widespread misinformation of greater impact to the community must adhere strictly to State and federal privacy provision.

In fulfilling statutory responsibilities the responsibilities set forth in the Safe to Learn Act, threat assessment teams shall:

1. Provide guidance to students and staff regarding recognition of behavior that may represent a threat to individuals within the school community or to the facility as a whole, or for recognizing behaviors of concern and other opportunities for intervention;
2. Clearly identify members of the school community to whom students and staff should report behaviors of concern or other threatening behavior; and
3. Implement local school system policies in an effective manner for the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses (or may pose) a threat to the safety of school staff or students, or for whom mental and behavioral health intervention is indicated, including (where appropriate) referrals to community services boards or health care providers for evaluation or treatment.

III. School System-Level Oversight Team

Within the central office there shall be a team, including the designated Behavioral Health Services Coordinator for the system to oversee and provide support for individual and school-based assessment teams. The central office team may consult with local law enforcement, community mental health providers, and the department of social services as needed to provide services and support necessary to maintain a safe school environment. The central office oversight team shall (1) maintain processes for effective information sharing between the school system and community partners, (2) convene regularly to assess the effectiveness of the assessment process throughout the school system using data metrics appropriate to that geographic region, and (3) identify resource gaps and needs to support individual school communities within the system. The central office oversight team shall also maintain responsibility for disseminating best practices for mental and behavioral health supports, and interventions with behaviors of concerns to stakeholders within the system (staff, parents and students).

IV. Other Duties of Assessment Team

Each assessment team shall:

1. Provide guidance to students and staff regarding recognition of threatening behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self;
2. Communicate to stakeholders how to report threatening or concerning behavior for evaluation and intervention;
3. Implement local school system policies for the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students, or who exhibit behaviors of concern, including self-harm.

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