

RESPONDING TO STUDENT THREATS OF VIOLENCE

Background

HPSD is committed to ensuring the rights of each student to attend school in a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environment that is conducive to their learning. Part of this commitment involves being prepared to handle crisis situations appropriately and efficiently.

All threats against people and/or facilities shall be taken seriously. The purpose of threat assessment is to determine whether a person poses a threat, not to determine if a person made a threat. When investigating and responding to a threat to commit violence, schools will use the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG). CSTAG is a problem-solving approach to violence prevention that involves both assessment and intervention with individuals who have threatened violence toward others. Following the CSTAG assessment, other administrative procedures dealing with the safety of the school and student discipline may apply.

Definitions:

Threat to harm others – A threat to harm others is defined as any spoken, written, or behavioural communication of intent to physically injure or harm someone else. A threat may be communicated directly to the intended victim or communicated to a third party. Threats may be spoken, written, graphic, or expressed in others ways, such as gestures. Threats may be direct, indirect, or implied. Possession of a weapon will be investigated as a possible threat.

Threat categories:

- *Transient – the threat is not a serious one and may have been an expression of humour, anger or frustration with no intent to harm.*
- *Substantive – there is some ongoing intent to harm someone.*
- *Serious Substantive – a threat to hit, assault, or beat up someone*
- *Very Serious Substantive – a threat to kill, rape, or use a weapon*

Procedures:

1. HPSPD will provide training annually, and as needed, to ensure each school has a trained Threat Assessment Team. At a minimum, the school-based threat assessment team will include:
 - 1.1. An administrator - leads the team and makes the final decision about what to do in response to the student's threat;
 - 1.2. Learning Support Teacher – provides information and recommendations; and
 - 1.3. Wellness Coach – provides information and recommendations.
2. In addition to the core team, other representation may be required from agencies such as RCMP, Child & Family Services, Mental Health and Addictions.
3. Any staff member, student or parent who becomes aware of a threat, or has reasonable grounds to believe that there is a potential risk to students or staff, shall notify the principal.
 - 3.1. Principals have a duty to respond to all threat related behaviours.
4. All threats shall be taken seriously and assessed by the school Threat Assessment Team using the CSTAG School Threat Assessment Decision Tree to guide the response to the threat (Administrative Form 343A).
 - 4.1. The threat shall be evaluated to determine if it is transient, substantive, serious substantive, or very serious substantive threat.
 - 4.2. Disciplinary actions are applied as appropriate to the circumstances.
 - 4.3. A member of the Threat Assessment Team shall take the lead in completing the Threat Report (Administrative Form 343B).
5. Very Serious Substantive Threats require immediate protective action.
 - 5.1. In cases where the threat is determined to be a very serious substantive threat, the principal shall:
 - 5.1.1. ensure appropriate measures are taken to protect potential victims;

- 5.1.1.1. Notify parents/guardians of the student who is the target of the threat.
 - 5.1.2. notify the appropriate authorities (Superintendent, RCMP); and
 - 5.1.3. suspend the student responsible for the threat.
 - 5.1.3.1. Notify the student's parents.
- 5.2. Initiate a Mental Health Assessment as soon as possible after the threat is reported.
 - 5.2.1. Refer to a HPSD Counselling Consultant or the Division Psychologist to complete the Mental Health Assessment (Administrative Form 343C).
- 5.3. Develop a safety plan inclusive of supports and services needed to address the student's needs when the student returns.
 - 5.3.1. The Threat Assessment Team shall:
 - 5.3.2. implement the safety plan when the student returns;
 - 5.3.3. maintain contact with the student; and
 - 5.3.4. revise the plan as needed.
- 6. The principal is responsible to ensure that documentation resulting from the response to threats of violence shall be completed and uploaded to HPSD DocuShare.

HPSD Forms

[Administrative Form 343A - Threat Assessment and Response Protocol \(CSTAG\)](#)

[Administrative Form 343B - Threat Report \(CSTAG\)](#)

[Administrative Form 343C - Mental Health Assessment \(CSTAG\)](#)

Reference

Education Act, Sections 11, 31, 33, 36, 37, 196, 197, 222

Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines: Intervention and Support to Prevent Violence – Dewey G. Cornell, Ph.D.

Cross Reference

[Administrative Procedure 209 – Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, and Safe Learning Environments](#)

[Administrative Procedure 340 – Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Administrative Procedure 345 – Student Interrogations and Searches](#)

[Administrative Procedure 347 – Suspension and/or Expulsion of a Student](#)