

II. Administration

E. Risk Management

4. School Safety, Emergency, and Crisis Response Plans

d. Threat Assessment Teams

I. PURPOSE

The Narragansett School System supports a culture of safety, respect, and emotional support that will diminish the possibility of violence in its schools. To that end, this policy establishes Threat Assessment Teams and a Threat Assessment Oversight Committee pursuant to [R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-21-23.2](#). R.I.G.L. §16-21-23.2. specifies that:

Each local school board or committee shall adopt written policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment and intervention with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students, consistent with the model policies developed by the School Safety Committee. Such policies shall include procedures for referrals to community services or health care providers for evaluation or treatment when appropriate.

The purpose of this policy is to diminish the possibility of school violence by identifying and assessing potential threats, and developing threat management plans to manage and address the underlying causes of threatening behavior in students. This policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and shall be automatically amended to conform to amendments and changes in applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. For purposes of this policy, the term "threat assessment" shall also include risk assessments (i.e., the assessment of the risk that a student poses to their own safety).

II. DEFINITION

A. **Threat.** A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual may reasonably pose a danger to the safety of school staff, students, or community members through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. This threat may be expressed/communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means. Such behavior 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, or whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.

B. **Aberrant or Worrisome Behavior.** An individual's 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 wellbeing of the person or others in the community. These behaviors can include, but are not limited to:

- Uncharacteristically sullen or depressed behavior.
- Out of context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression.
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration, and/or anger.
- Confrontational, accusatory or blaming behavior.
- An unusual interest in or fascination with weapons.
- Fixation on violence as a means of addressing a grievance.
- Unusual social distancing or isolation of subjects from peers and family members.

- C. **Threat Assessment.** A threat assessment is not a disciplinary tool. The tool allows professionals to reasonably answer the question “does this student pose a threat”, not whether they “made a threat”.
- D. **Transient Threat.** The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved easily, as determined by the assessment.
- E. **Substantive Threat.** The person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence, or serious harm to self/others, at this time; but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
- F. **Serious Substantive Threat.** The person/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm self/others and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
- G. **Very Serious Substantive Threat.** The person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward self/others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that require intervention.

III. THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM STRUCTURE

- A. **System-wide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee.** The Superintendent shall establish a

System-Wide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee, which shall include individuals with expertise in guidance, counseling, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement, charged with oversight of the threat assessment teams operating within all Narragansett Schools. The System-wide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee shall:

1. Develop procedures and/or protocols, as necessary, to implement the intent of this Policy
2. Provide oversight to school-based Threat Assessment Team
3. Maintain processes for effective information sharing among schools, community mental health organizations, law enforcement, and other public safety agencies.
4. Consult with law enforcement and public safety agencies, and community mental health providers as needed and in accordance with federal and state law and local policy.
5. Continually assess the effectiveness of the threat assessment process throughout the System
6. Recommend changes to regulations and procedures, as needed, to maintain an effective threat assessment process reflecting known best practices.
7. Assist school-based threat assessment teams when the school-based threat assessment team is not fully trained and/or not available to promptly and appropriately assess any concerning behavior.

B. School Threat Assessment Teams. The Superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team that shall include persons with expertise in guidance, counseling, school administration, mental health, and law enforcement. To be effective, School Threat Assessment Teams members who actively participate in a specific threat assessment may change based on the circumstances of the threat to be assessed. Those individuals listed below, and any particular faculty or staff that may have specialized knowledge relevant to the assessment or management of the type of threat involved, or who may have a relationship with the student making the threat or exhibiting worrisome behavior, shall be included on the School Threat Assessment Teams.

C. Threat Assessment Team Membership on the School Team and Narragansett School System Oversight Committee may include, notwithstanding members required under R.I. Gen Laws § 16-21-23.2(b) and (c):

1. School administrator.

2. School guidance counselor.
3. School psychologist and/or social worker.
4. Instructional staff.
5. Special education teacher or staff
6. Human resource professional (as needed).
7. School support staff, e.g. a coach or school nurse.
8. A non-law enforcement employee who has expertise in law enforcement.
9. Faculty and/or staff that have specialized knowledge relevant to the assessment or management of the threat.
10. Faculty and/or staff that have a relationship with the student (School-Level Only).

IV. FUNCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM

1. Maintain processes for effective information sharing between the team and community mental health organizations, law enforcement, and other public safety agencies.
2. Consult with law enforcement and public safety agencies, and community mental health providers as needed and in accordance with federal and state law and local policy.
3. Continually assess the effectiveness of the threat assessment process throughout the Narragansett School System and regularly conduct training of the Threat Assessment Team.
4. Recommend changes to regulations and procedures, as needed, to maintain an effective threat assessment process reflecting known best practices.
5. Meet whenever there is a concern regarding a student or situation that has been brought to the Team's attention.
6. Meet on a regular basis to engage in discussion, role-play scenarios, and professional learning.
7. Adhere to ethical and confidentiality requirements.
8. Assign responsibilities for conducting and reporting on the results of threat assessments following Narragansett School System (NSS) Threat Assessment Protocols.
9. Develop procedures and/or protocols, as necessary, to implement the intent of this Policy.

V. THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

1. Investigation of a reported/observed threat should be conducted by a school administrator or designee.
2. Screening of a student must be conducted by a school psychologist or social worker.
3. Team gathers data from other/multiple sources as noted above.
4. Team determines level of risk
5. Team develops an action plan based on assessment.
6. A Serious Substantive or Very Serious Substantive threat requires immediate action and will involve assessment/evaluation once the threat has been contained and the emergency addressed.
7. Schools will work with individual families to ensure that evaluation and treatment options are known. In most instances, the team will notify a parent or legal guardian before a threat assessment is conducted. If the threat is identified as Serious Substantive or Very Serious Substantive the Team may call emergency services at the same time or prior to parent or legal guardian notification.
8. The team will notify the Superintendent upon preliminary determination of a threat. The building administrator or designee will notify the student's parent or legal guardian if appropriate. The team will make no disclosures beyond the purpose for which the disclosure was made to the Team.
9. Risk and Threat assessments will be maintained in a secure and locked file separate from the student records file.
10. Both the System Wide Threat Assessment Oversight Committee and the School Threat Assessment Team may develop additional procedures and/or protocols, as necessary to implement the intent of this Policy.

References:

[RIGL §16-21/16-21-23.2](#)

"Rhode Island Threat Assessment Teams Implementation Guidance," Rhode Island School Safety Committee (July 2019)

"Threat Assessment for School Administrators & Crisis Teams, National Association of School Psychologists (2015)

"Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines," Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (August 2016)