

VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

TITLE: Student Threat Assessment	POLICY NUMBER: G039
---	----------------------------

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) shall maintain a Threat Assessment Team (*The Team*) for the purpose investigating, assessing, and managing any threats to the safety of students, staff, the public at the VSDB campus, and the facilities. The threat assessment process shall include any acts or threats committed or uttered by any individual, adult, employee, or student, including but not limited to workplace violence and students behavior that pose a threat to the safety of themselves or others.

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and guidelines for the assessment and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of themselves or others. The Workplace Violence Policy, HR09, shall govern investigation and response to all acts or threats against or towards the facilities, staff, the public, visitors, or parents that are not directly initiated by or against a student.

This policy will govern the process for managing all aspects of the Student Threat Assessment, including in the classroom, after school, and residential life.

This policy, guidelines, and procedures outlined below are consistent with the requirements of *Code of Virginia 22.1-79 and §9.1-184*, and reflect guidance set forth in the United States Department of Education's *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*.

DEFINITIONS

- **A threat** is a concerning communication or behavior that suggests a person may intend to harm someone else. The threat may be spoken, written, or gestured and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed 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 existing in any fashion, whether orally, visually, in writing, or electronically.
- **A threat assessment** is a fact-based process relying primarily on an appraisal of behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations and address them.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

- **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).

GUIDELINES

- When a student makes a threat or engages in concerning communications or behaviors that suggest the likelihood of a threatening situation, the VSDB Student Threat Assessment Procedures shall be followed. The goal of the threat assessment process is to take appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain a safe and secure school environment, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed, to the student being assessed.
- The Director of Public Safety shall function as the lead administrator over this policy and the assessment and protection functions described herein.
- The Superintendent shall appoint Threat Assessment Team Members to include at minimum, but not limited to:
 - Guidance Counselors
 - Faculty
 - School Administration
 - Residential Program Management
 - Title IX Coordinators
 - Contract Support Specialists
 - Campus Police
 - Student Health
 - Interpreting Services
- Threat Assessment Team Duties shall include:
 - Providing guidance to students, faculty and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school or self;
 - Identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported;
 - Implementing VSDB policies for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of themselves or others;
 - Provide process and role specific training to new Threat Assessment Team members and provide annual awareness training to all employees.
- In cases determined to be appropriate, the Team shall follow established procedures for referrals to the Valley Community Services Board or health care providers for evaluation or treatment.
- Regardless of threat assessment activities, disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement are to occur as required by Board of Visitors (BOV) policy and §22.1-272.1 and §22.1-279.3:1 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Procedures for Conducting Student Threat Assessments

1. All VSDB employees, volunteers, and contractors are required to report to the Principal or designee and expressed threats or behaviors that may represent a threat to the safety of the community, school or self that occur during the school day. The senior member of management present from the Residential Program shall be the first contact for all threats discovered or communicated during all other times outside of the normal school day. The Principal or senior management of the Residential Program shall immediately notify the Director of Public Safety. The Director of Public Safety shall assemble Team members to address the threat as presented. The Director of Public Safety shall make additional notifications.
2. The Team shall initiate an investigative process and make a determination of the seriousness of the threat as expeditiously as possible in accordance with VSDB Student Threat Assessment Guidelines.
The initial phase of threat assessment process typically follows a standard discipline investigation process. As soon as the threat is reported to The Team, designated team members shall conduct timely interviews of the student who made the threat, the recipients of the threat, and other witnesses who have knowledge of the threat. The purpose of the interviews is to evaluate the student's threat in context, so that the meaning of the threat and intent of the student be determined.

Low or Moderate risk threat: If the Team determines that the threat is a low risk threat and no further assessment or monitoring is required at this time, the Team shall complete a **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** form and retain a copy with the student's disciplinary records in accordance with School Board policy. The Team shall notify the Director of Public Safety and the Principal or Residential manager who initially reported the incident.

Any event where a student is referred to the VSDB Infirmary and agrees to sign a "Safety Contract" shall be considered a low risk threat and documented as such.

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 Team to determine the nature and degree of any safety concerns and to develop strategies to reduce risk, as necessary. The investigation may include but not limited to reviews of records, consultation with staff who know the student, and interviews of the subject student and threat recipient(s).

Based on information collected, the Team is to determine strategies to mitigate the threat and provide assistance, as needed. As a step in the process, the Team is to classify threats and respond to the level of threat in accordance with Student Threat Assessment Guidelines.

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.

If the Team determines that the threat is a moderate risk threat, the Team shall notify the Director of Public Safety. The student shall be referred to the VCSB or his or her home locality for evaluation. If the student appears to be in need of additional medical or therapeutic assistance, the Team shall refer the student for assistance from the appropriate school or community-based resources and assign a case manager to monitor progress.

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

In instances where the threat is deemed moderate risk, or requires further action, the Director of Public Safety shall notify the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee 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.

Imminent or high risk threat

Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a high or imminent threat of violence or physical harm to self or others, the Team shall immediately report its determination to Director of Public Safety. The Director of Public Safety shall notify the Superintendent or designee and law enforcement. The Superintendent or designee shall immediately 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. Nothing in this policy shall preclude VSDB personnel from acting immediately to address and immediate threat.

Threats of self-harm (risk of suicide) require compliance with §22.1-272.1 of the *Code of Virginia* and with applicable school board policies and regulations. When threats of self-harm are accompanied by threats of harm to 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. In accordance with §22.1-279.3:1 *Code of Virginia* certain types of threats require immediate notification to law enforcement. The Director of Public Safety shall immediately report to VSDB Campus Police:
 - Threats the involves stalking of any person on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;
 - Threats to bomb, burn, kill, or harm school personnel; or
 - Threats of death or bodily injury to a person or members of his or her family; and/or threats to commit serious bodily harm to persons on school property;

The Director of Public Safety shall also immediately report any act noted above that may constitute a criminal offense to the parents and/or guardians of any minor student who is alleged to have committed the act and shall report that the incident has been reported to local law enforcement, as required by law. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the parents and/or guardians that they may contact local law enforcement for further information, if they so desire. In addition, the Director of Public Safety, Superintendent or designee may report other threats to the local law enforcement agency, as necessary and appropriate.

4. Findings from assessment and classification of the threat are to be documented in writing by submitting the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** form to the Director of Public Safety within 72 hours of the initial receipt of the threat. Low risk documentation will normally begin with the “Observation Form” and all information therein shall be transferred to the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** form for submittal to the Director of Public Safety.

If it is determined the student poses a threat of violence, the threat assessment team shall

develop, implement, and monitor individualized plan to intervene and reduce the threat. The individualized plan is to be documented in the **Student Threat Assessment Response Report** form.

A member of the 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. Additional information from monitoring and any re-assessment are to be documented in updates to the **Student Threat Assessment and Response Report** form. These updates are to be submitted at least every 30 days until the case is resolved.

Resolution of the case is to be documented in the Verification of Case Closed portion of the **Student Threat Assessment Response Report** form.

5. The Team shall report quantitative data on its activities according to guidance developed by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

Rescission: Effective Date: December 2017 BOV Approved: 12/13/17
--