

BARRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BPS DISTRICT RISK SCREENING/THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

The BPS RISK SCREENING/THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL is used when there is an indication that an individual is at risk for self-harm, suicide, or for harming others

Examples include:

- When a student has been identified by a peer, community member, or staff member as demonstrating signs that they may be at risk.
- When a student self refers for feeling at risk.
- When a student displays behaviors that indicate they may be at risk.

The following BPS RISK SCREENING/THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL contains procedures for risk assessments involving risk of suicidality or self-harm (see I. Risk Screening Protocol) as well as threat assessment involving threats against others (see II. Threat Assessment Protocol)

RISK SCREENING PROTOCOL

This **Risk Screening Protocol** is characteristically used when there is some indication that an individual is at risk for self-harm or suicide.

Examples include:

- When a student has been identified by a peer, community member, or staff member as demonstrating some signs that they may be at risk of self-harm or suicide.
- When a student self refers for feeling at risk for self-harm or suicide.
- When a student displays behaviors that indicate they may be at risk for self-harm or suicide.

A risk screening is a process for assessing, intervening, and managing a risk to self. The screening utilizes information from actions, communications, and specific circumstances that may suggest an intent to harm oneself. This process will also include developing an intervention plan for the student considered to be at risk for self-harm or suicide.

1. **Identify potential risk** - A school psychologist or school social worker will:
 - a. Screen the identified student in a confidential location
 - b. Employ district risk screening tools/forms
 - c. Use professional discretion to determine if the level of risk warrants an emergency response
2. **Determine the level of risk of self-harm or suicide** - The school psychologist or school social worker will determine level of risk based on risk screening and obtained information/data.

At the completion of the screening, the school professional will make a determination of the level of risk based on the following options:

- a. **Low risk:** The student does not pose an imminent danger to self. Low-risk indicators may include thoughts of suicide only in the past, history of mental health issues, no previous attempts or actions, no plan, no access to weapons or means, no recent losses, strong support system in place, no alcohol/substance abuse, and demonstrates evidence of positive coping skills.
- b. **Moderate risk:** The student presents with a questionable or non-viable plan of harm to self (i.e., lacks clear or viable intent, ideation, and/or plan), but is deemed to be at elevated risk of harming self due to current stressors, and/or lack of protective factors.
- c. **High risk:** The student poses an imminent danger to self with a viable plan to do harm. High risk indicators may include: current thoughts of suicide, current sense of hopelessness, previous attempts, self-injurious behavior, trauma/abuse, sexual identity issues, access to weapons or means, weak support system, alcohol/substance abuse, mental health history, and precipitating events, such as loss, trauma, victimization

1. **Develop an action plan and provide and document safety precautions and recommendations** - This will be based on the level of risk of the student. The following steps should be included in the plan:

- a. Parent/guardian contact
- b. Based on the determined level of risk and recommendations (i.e., emergency room or outside mental health provider evaluation), the parent may be asked to provide a release of information from the physician or mental health professional indicating so that we may provide wrap around services for the student and school safety
- c. Review safety precautions with the student and parent.
- d. If necessary, emergency services will be called.
- e. If the team recommends that the parent follow through with outside support, provide the parent with a *Risk Screening/Threat Assessment Parent Notification Form* and obtain a signature, if the parent agrees to sign.
- f. Evaluate and document parent response (i.e., make appropriate reports to DCYF or police department if parent refuses to comply with safety recommendations).

2. **Document the risk screening** – The following information must be documented on the *Barrington Risk Screening/Threat Assessment Documentation Form*:

- a. The behavior of concern
- b. Obtained information from the screening process
- c. Parent contact and response; *Risk Screening/Threat Assessment Parent Notification Form*
- d. Action plan and recommendations
- e. Follow-up/re-entry information and plan

A member of the risk team will provide the completed copy of the Risk Screening/Threat Assessment documentation form to the building administrator. The building administrator will provide necessary notification to the superintendent in accordance with district protocols.

3. **Monitor student and support plan** - Based on the level of determined risk:
 - a. The student should be monitored upon re-entry to the school community.
 - b. If new information is obtained, revise plan as needed
 - c. Meet with student for follow-up
 - d. Communicate with parents for follow-up

THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

1. Threat assessment is a violence prevention strategy that involves:
 - a. identifying student threats to commit a violent act
 - b. determining the seriousness of the threat
 - c. developing intervention plans that protect potential victims and address the underlying problem or conflict that stimulated the threatening behavior.
2. A threat assessment is not a crisis response. If there is indication that violence is imminent (e.g., person has a firearm at school or is on the way to school to attack someone), a crisis response is appropriate. Take immediate action such as calling 911 and follow the school crisis response plan.
3. BPS Threat Assessment Guidelines provide procedures based on the Rhode Island Threat Assessment Teams Implementation Guidance (7/2019). It is a flexible and efficient process to deal with threats by a school-based team to facilitate a threat assessment.
4. Definition: A threat is a communication of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or expressed in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other digital means.
 - a. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended target(s)

- and regardless of whether the intended target is aware of the threat.
 - b. Threats may be implied by behavior that an observer would reasonably regard as threatening, planning, or preparing to commit a violent act.
 - c. When in doubt, treat the communication or behavior as a threat and conduct a threat assessment.
5. Threats that are not easily recognized as harmless (e.g., an obvious joke that worries no one) should be reported to the school administrator.

PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW:

- A. The administrator makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. The student, targets of the threat, and other witnesses should be interviewed to obtain information using this protocol. A *transient* threat means there is no sustained intent to harm and a *substantive* threat means the intent is present (or not clear) and therefore requires protective action.
- B. The following **School Threat Assessment Decision Tree** is used by the Threat Assessment Team, led by the building administrator, to evaluate the threat, resolve the threat as transient, respond to a substantive threat, conduct a safety evaluation for a very serious substantive threat and implement and monitor a safety plan.

School Threat Assessment Decision Tree

Step 1. Evaluate the threat.

Obtain a detailed account of the threat, usually by interviewing the person who made the threat, the intended victim, and other witnesses. Write the exact content of the threat and key observations by each party. Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions. Is there communication of intent to harm someone or behavior suggesting intent to harm?

No

Not a threat. Might be an expression of anger that needs attention.

Yes

Step 2. Attempt to resolve the threat as transient.

Is the threat an expression of humor, rhetoric, anger, or frustration that can be easily resolved so that there is no intent to harm? Does the person retract the threat or offer an explanation and/or apology that indicates no future intent to harm anyone?

Yes

Case resolved as transient threat; provide services as needed.

No

Step 3. Respond to a substantive threat.

For all substantive threats:

- a. Take precautions to protect potential victims.
- b. Warn intended victim and parents.
- c. Look for ways to resolve conflict.
- d. Discipline student, when appropriate.

Serious

Case resolved as serious substantive threat; add security as needed.

Serious means a threat to hit, fight, or beat up whereas very serious means a threat to kill, rape, or cause very serious injury with a weapon.

Very Serious

Step 4. Conduct a safety evaluation for a very serious substantive threat.

In addition to a-d above, the student may be briefly placed elsewhere or suspended pending completion of the following:

- a. Screen student for mental health services and counseling; refer as needed.
- b. Law enforcement investigation for evidence of planning and preparation, criminal activity.
- c. Develop safety plan that reduces risk and addresses student needs. Plan should include review of Individual Educational Plan if already receiving special education services and further assessment, if possible, disability.

Step 5. Implement and monitor the safety plan.

Document the plan.
Maintain contact with the student.
Monitor whether plan is working and revise as needed.

A. Document the threat assessment employing district tools/forms