Community Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Agreement

Wetaskiwin Regional Public and Saint Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Schools in Collaboration with Community Partners

Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools

Alberta Human Services

Alberta Health Services

Community Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol

This Community Violent Threat and Risk Assessment Protocol is informed by and reflects the work of J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Appreciation is expressed to Wolf Creek Public Schools for sharing their expertise and resources in the development of this document. Thanks are expressed for the work of Barb Reaney, District Social Worker, and Amber Hester, Assistant Superintendent, Wolf Creek Public Schools.

Community Violent Threat and Risk Assessment Protocol signed on (DATE).

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Community Violent Threat and Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol

Vision

Violence prevention in our schools and community is a shared responsibility. All community partners work together to promote and maintain safety, and to strive to prevent violence.

Rationale

Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools, STAR Catholic Schools, and its community partners are committed to making their schools and communities safe through the timely sharing of information about students who pose a risk for violence towards themselves or others. This protocol supports collaborative planning among community partners to prevent and reduce violence and reflects safe, caring and respectful approaches.

The strength of this School Division/Community Partnership lies in the multidisciplinary composition of the Comprehensive Threat Assessment Team (C-TAT). The C-TAT will strive to share the details of the threatening situation or evidence promptly, to collaborate effectively, and to make use of a broad range of expertise.

This collaborative process will ensure the safety of all and respect individual's rights to privacy to the fullest extent possible.

A Community Partnership

The terms "partner and partnership" in this document are not intended to mean a legal partnership, but rather, a collaborative agreement. School partners are the lead team members in the C-TAT. Community partners include the following organizations:

Human Services

- Wetaskiwin
- Drayton Valley

Police Services:

- Wetaskiwin RCMP Detachment
- Thorsby/Breton RCMP Detachment

Alberta Health Services (AHS):

- Addictions and Mental Health

Statement of Principles

All partners will undertake to follow the protocol as a shared obligation to take proactive steps to prevent and reduce violence in our schools and community. Partners will do so by proactively sharing information, advice, supports and resources to prevent and/or reduce violence.

Proactive collaboration means that, in any instance that School and/or Community Partners are aware that a "high risk" (or previously threatening) student is coming into the school division/school, a meeting between partners will take place as a pro-active measure.

Partners will work together for the benefit of children, youth, and their parents/caregivers by:

- Building working relationships based on mutual respect and trust;
- Working in ways that promote safe, caring and respectful school environments and practices;
- Involving children, youth and their families in planning for services and supports;
- Recognizing that each child and youth has unique strengths and needs that should be considered when developing an appropriate support plan;
- Realizing that working together successfully is a process of learning, listening, and understanding one another; and
- Being patient, trusting and working together to help children and youth become happy, healthy, active, involved, and caring members of the community.
- Making a commitment to ongoing staff development in threat assessment training and program review.

Key Concepts in Violent Threat Risk Assessment Agreement

(Informed by J. Kevin Cameron, M.Sc., Executive director Canadian Centre for threat Assessment and Trauma Response)

1. Activating Protocols

Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocols are activated to determine level of risk. A **Threat** is any specific, concrete and plausible expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. **Worrisome** behaviour is defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour.

If a community partner (Fire, Police, Health, Human Services or others) - have knowledge of worrisome student behaviour that could pose a risk of harm to others, they should directly contact the student's school principal. The principal may determine to take this information further than the school or to address the matter internally. If the behaviour is deemed to be of a medium or high risk, the principal will immediately call their division's Director of Support Services to determine the appropriate course of action.

When determining if a threat maker actually poses a risk to the person/target, consideration should be given to the following:

- Is the threat plausible?
- Is the threat an emotionally charged threat?
- What are the precipitating factors?

2. Investigative Mind-Set

Threat assessment requires thoughtful probing, viewing information with professional objectivity, and paying attention to key points from data collected. Kevin Cameron's VTRA training outlines these components of an investigative mind-set:

- Open ended probing questions;
- Healthy skepticism;
- Attention to baseline;
- Verification of facts, actions corroborated;
- Common sense; and
- Ensuring that information makes sense; is factual and follows protocols.

3. Building Capacity

Threat Assessment Teams (TAT) in each school will receive threat assessment training. Appropriate school division personnel will also be trained and spaces will be made available for community partners to receive training as well.

4. Protocol Review

This protocol will be reviewed regularly by representatives from school and community partners.

5. Contact List

As the lead agencies, the school partners will maintain an up-to-date contact list of the lead team members and will distribute a copy of the list to all community partners. As well, school division summer contacts for July and August of each year will be determined and provided to community partners.

6. Sharing Information

It is vital to note that legislation allows the release of personal information if there is imminent threat to health and safety. (Note: When the term "personal information" is used in this document, this includes personal health information.)

To make parents/guardians/caregivers and students aware of the protocol to be followed in such cases, school partners will provide Fair Notice Letters (see Appendix C) to students and their parents/guardians/caregivers at the beginning of every school year. This notification will be posted permanently on school district's websites.

School and community partners are committed to the sharing of relevant information to the fullest extent authorized by law. The presumption is that all information shared by partners about individual students and families is personal information and should be treated with a high level of confidentiality. Once sharing of information has occurred, each partner who receives the information will be responsible for ensuring appropriate storage, use and disclosure of such information in accordance with the laws, regulations, policies and procedures applying to that partner. Each partner will be responsible for the education of their own staff in this regard.

Requests to amend information or requests for access to information made by parents, students, or third parties will be addressed in accordance with the legislation applying to the agency to whom the request is made.

7. Documentation

The Threat Assessment Report and Intervention Forms (See Appendix D and E) is completed by the school principal or alternate and serves as the official written record of the school/community meeting called to discuss student behaviour and to determine follow up plans or interventions. The original report will be added to the student's confidential file.

If the plan requires further action outside of the school, the appropriate community VTRA partner may receive a copy of the plan. In such instances, it is essential that all partners make efforts to ensure that their protocols for the sharing, storage and retention of this information and this report are consistent with the following principles:

- At minimum, partner organizations should ensure their personnel follow all requirements of any privacy legislation which may pertain to their agency;
- Information written and reported must be kept confidential and is intended to be shared with others on a "need to know" basis only;
- Information is shared only for the purpose for which it was created; and
- The written plan is stored securely.

8. External Communication

As part of the threat assessment process, the school's Superintendent and R.C.M.P/Police will consult with one another to coordinate any public messages that may become necessary through the media.

Guidelines to Completing a Violent Threat Risk Assessment

(Informed by J. Kevin Cameron, M.Sc., Executive director Canadian Centre for threat Assessment and Trauma Response)

Definitions

Community Threat and Risk Assessment Categorizations

Low level of concern:	Risk to the target(s), students, staff and school safety appears minimal.
Medium level of concern:	The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear realistic. Violent action is possible.
High level of concern:	The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

High risk behaviours

High risk behaviours express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High risk behaviours include but are not limited to: possession of weapon/replica, bomb threat plan, verbal/written or Internet threats to kill/injure self or others, fire setting, threatening violence and hate motivated violence.

Note: Partners should not be deceived when traditional risk behaviours do not exist. There is no profile or checklist for the high risk student. Some students who actually pose a threat display very few traits of the traditional high risk student. It is critical to identify when homicidal and suicidal domains exist together. This is critical to the development of a response to the incident, including the creation of an intervention/support plan.

Immediate Threat

In the case of immediate threat, staff will **CALL 911** and take the appropriate emergency response measures. The principal will contact his/her TAT Leader (Director of Support Services) who will contact the Superintendency Team. The Superintendency Team will coordinate and communicate with RCMP and media.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is typically a more lengthy process that involves a number of standardized tests and measures that go beyond the scope of the school-based multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team (TAT) assessment. After the "initial level of risk" is assessed and "immediate risk reducing intervention" has occurred, a further risk assessment may be required. Therefore, risk assessment is the process of determining if a student of concern may pose a further risk to some known or unknown target(s) at some unknown period in time. The student may be evidencing increasing violent ideation or behaviours that suggest that the frequency or intensity of his/her violence or violence potential may be escalating. Unlike the immediate intervention, the risk assessment is meant to be a more comprehensive evaluation of all risk reducing and risk enhancing factors affecting the student's functioning and to use that data to guide longer term intervention and treatment goals. Completing a risk assessment is a shared responsibility among the Comprehensive Threat Assessment Team.

Threat

A threat is any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, symbolic, posted on the internet (MSN, Facebook, etc.) or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Threat Assessment

Threat assessment is the process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails, etc., a threat to harm a target or targets) actually poses a risk to the target(s) being threatened. Although many students, and others, engage in threat-making behaviour, research indicates that few actually pose a risk to harm the target being threatened. Multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Teams (TATs) engage in a data collection process, through semi-structured interviews, to determine "initial levels of risk" that may be posed and plan necessary risk- reducing interventions. Although a student of concern may be assessed as low risk, there may be data that indicates that a more comprehensive risk assessment is required.

Violence

Violence is a continuing process of thoughts and behaviours that is dependent on the interaction between **a person** who is inclined to violence; **a stimulus** that causes the violence; and **a setting** that allows for violence or does nothing to prevent a violent act from occurring. Violence is dynamic and multidimensional. It is a process that is developed over time.

Worrisome Behaviour

Worrisome behaviour is defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. (The majority of behaviours from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 fall into this category.) Worrisome behaviours include but are not limited to violent content in drawings and stories/journals, making vague threatening statements, unusual interest in fire, significant change in anti-social behaviour and significant change in baseline behaviour. Worrisome behaviours may be an early warning sign of the development of more serious high risk behaviours. All worrisome behaviours should be addressed in a timely manner. These situations may involve activation of the TAT and consultation with division staff.

Roles of VTRA Partners

School principal or designate

The school principal or designate will:

- act firstly to ensure the immediate safety of the school
- Contact the Director of Support Services to inform of VTRA activation and discuss possible activation of the C-TAT;
- NOTE: **it is critical for the principal to ensure that the threat maker has been strategically interviewed and risks are understood prior to suspending the student out of the school;**
- Ensure Stage I: Data collection and immediate risk reducing intervention is completed (Appendix D);
- Follow up and coordinate intervention plans developed by the team;
- Store the intervention plan securely in student record.
- Shred working copies once final copy has been scanned.

Guidance Counsellor/FSLW and other staff involved; at the Principal's request

The school staff will:

- Assist in data gathering as assigned by the principal / Director of Support Services;
- Assist the principal in Steps 6 – 10 of the Threat Assessment Report Form (See Appendix D)
- Be available for consultation on general issues regarding threat assessment procedures relating to mental health;
- Assist in developing plans or other interventions (i.e., behaviour plans, safety plans), and in facilitating access to programs or resources to reduce the risk of violence and respond to the student's educational needs if consent has been obtained; and
- Help families obtain needed assistance.

Central Office

Director of Support Services will:

- Consult with the Initial TAT;
- Contact C-TAT members to facilitate consultations, and conduct interviews as required, except in criminal investigations;
- Assist (when appropriate) in completing the Threat Assessment Report Form questions Steps 1-11 (See Appendix D);
- Follow up on recommended intervention plans as outlined in Step 11 (See Appendix D); and
- Coordinate with Director of Education Services if special needs/placement concerns arise;
- Alert Associate Superintendent or Superintendent as needed.

Community Partners

The community partners may:

- participate in the C-TAT;
- Participate in completion of the Threat Assessment Report Form (See Appendix D);
- Participate in a review of TAT findings; and
- Participate in developing any recommended intervention plans as outlined in Step 12 (See Appendix D).

School Resource Officer (SRO) / Investigating Police Officer

The Police Officer may:

- Be involved in TATs or C-TATs;
- Investigate and determine whether a crime has been committed, and if charges are

appropriate or warranted;
- Conduct a police investigation;
- Generate a police occurrence report; and
- Interview the threat maker and witnesses when a criminal offence has occurred.

Human Services

- Be involved in C-TATs;
- Screen with possibility of Assessment; file closed unless further involvement is warranted

In most cases, the student behavior that activates the C-TAT will be observed in, or affect, the school. Therefore, whenever possible, C-TAT meetings will occur on school premises. C–TAT members will be strategic in determining the best location to hold the meeting if the school is not clearly the most appropriate. If partners are unable to attend in person, all efforts will be made to attend via video or phone conference.

Activation of the Violent Threat and Risk (VTRA) Assessment Teams

To facilitate timely activation of the school based Threat Assessment Team (TAT) or Comprehensive Team (C-TAT), each community partner will identify its lead C-TAT member(s), and provide contact information to school partners. The school division's VTRA Lead will activate the C-TAT and will be responsible for calling lead C-TAT members who may have information specific to that threat situation. When staff members of a partner agency determine the need to activate the C-TAT, they will notify their designated lead C-TAT member who will activate the C-TAT. C-TAT members will, at all times, take any actions necessary to facilitate immediate safety, without delay, regardless of the involvement or availability of other C-TAT members.

1. Activation of the Initial (School Based) Threat Assessment Team (TAT): Stage 1

The TAT will consist of the principal and/or vice principal, school guidance counsellor or FSLW, Director of Support Services and either the assigned school resource officer or another assigned police investigator from the police agency having jurisdiction. TAT members will respond after the immediate threat to student/staff safety has been contained. The TAT will assess whether a risk to student/staff safety still exists, and develop an intervention plan to support student(s) involved, the greater student body, staff and the community.

Stage One

The school administrators (and police, if involved) will:

- Take immediate action to reduce risk and ensure safety;
- Consult with Director of Support Services
- Follow the *Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A School Staff Guide*. (See Appendix A)
- Complete the Threat Assessment Report (See Appendix D)

2. Activation of the C - TAT: School and/or Protocol Partner Initiated: Stage 2

Stage Two

When it has been determined that a C-TAT will be convened, the Director of Support Services will:

- Determine the appropriate community partners and contact the agencies' lead staff to determine the date, time and location of the C-TAT meeting;

All C-TAT members will share pertinent information, review all data, including data obtained from other sources.

1. Collect data and use the C-TAT report form format;
2. Evaluate level of risk to the safety of students, staff, community; and
3. Make recommendations that reduce risk and provide student support.

Stage Three

As a result of the school division and community partners' evaluation of risk, the school division and partners will develop a risk management/student intervention plan (See Appendix F). The risk management/student intervention plan will be developed collaboratively and responsibility for the implementation of the plan will be assigned by the C-TAT.

A follow up meeting date may be determined by all the partners in order to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the risk management/student intervention and support plan.

Unauthored Threats: Duty and Intervention

Unauthored threats are typically threats to commit a violent act against an individual(s), specific group, or site (i.e. the school). They may be found written on bathroom walls or stalls, spray painted on the side of schools, posted on the Internet or in letters left in a conspicuous place (teacher's desk) etc.

In the field of school-based child and adolescent violence threat/risk assessment, the lack of ownership (authorship) of the threat generally denotes a lack of commitment. Nevertheless, there are steps that should be followed to:

a. Assess the unauthored threat;
b. Attempt to identify the threat maker; and
c. Avoid or minimize the crisis/trauma response.

C-TAT teams should consider the following in determining the initial level of risk based on the current data (i.e. the language of threat):

Language of Commitment

- Amount of detail (location where the violence is to occur, target(s), date and time the violence is to occur, justifications, etc.);
- Threatened to do what with what ("kill", "murder", "ruin your lives", "shank", "shoot", etc.);
- Method of delivery of the threat (who found/received the threat, when did he/she receive it, where did he/she receive it, who else did he/she tell and who else knows about it?); and
- Is the threat clear, direct, plausible, and consistent?

Identifying the Threat Maker

In many cases the author is never found but steps that can be taken to identify the author(s) are:

- Handwriting analysis;
- Word usage (phrases and expressions that may be unique to a particular person or group of people [street gang, club, sport team, etc.]); and
- Spelling (unique errors or modifications).

Contra-indicators:

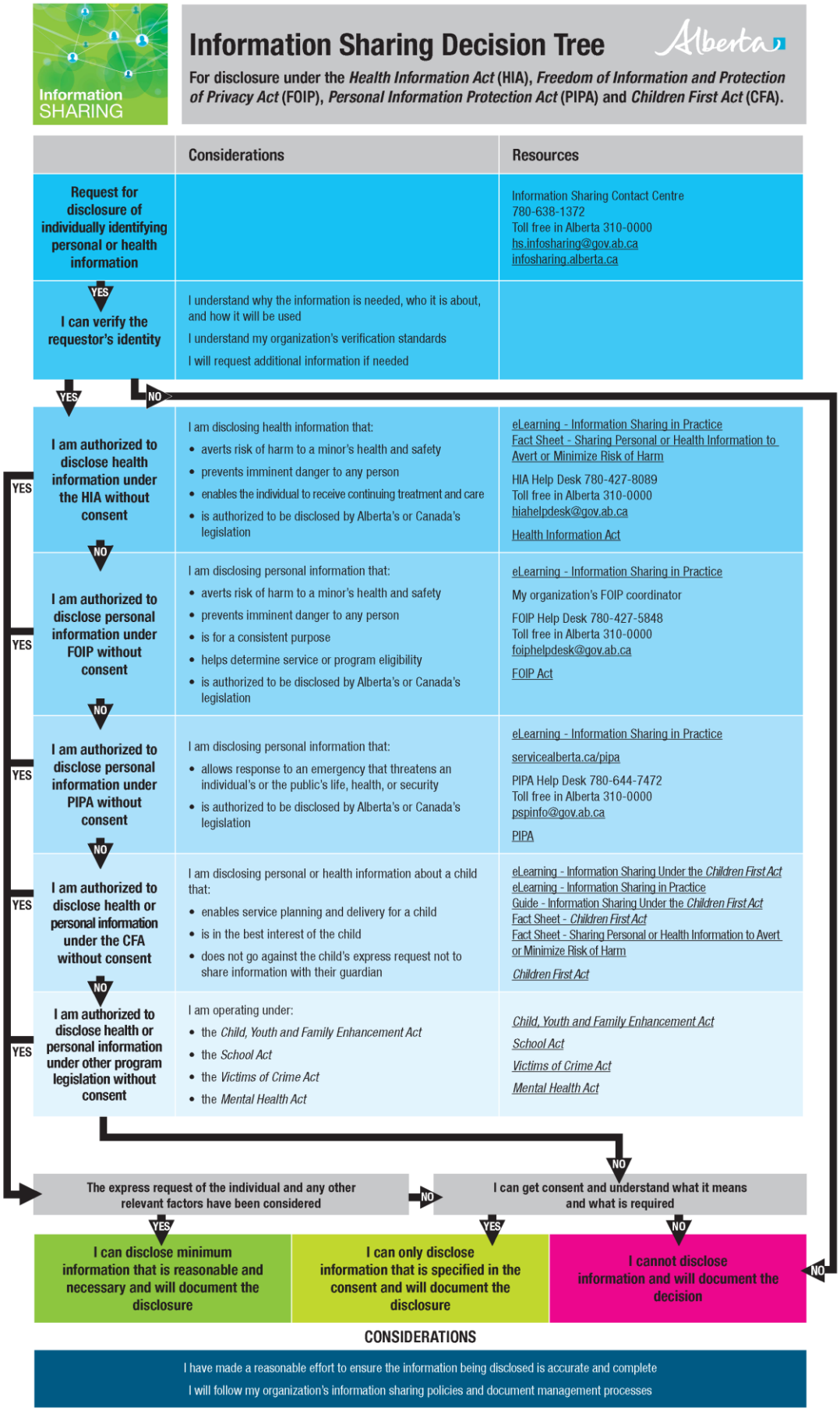
Some authors will switch gender and try to lead the reader to believe they are a boy (or girl) when they are not or pretend to be someone else as a setup.

Some individuals who write unauthored "hit lists" embed their names in the list of identified targets.

Depending on the severity of the threat, some or all staff members may be asked to assist in analyzing the unauthored threat.

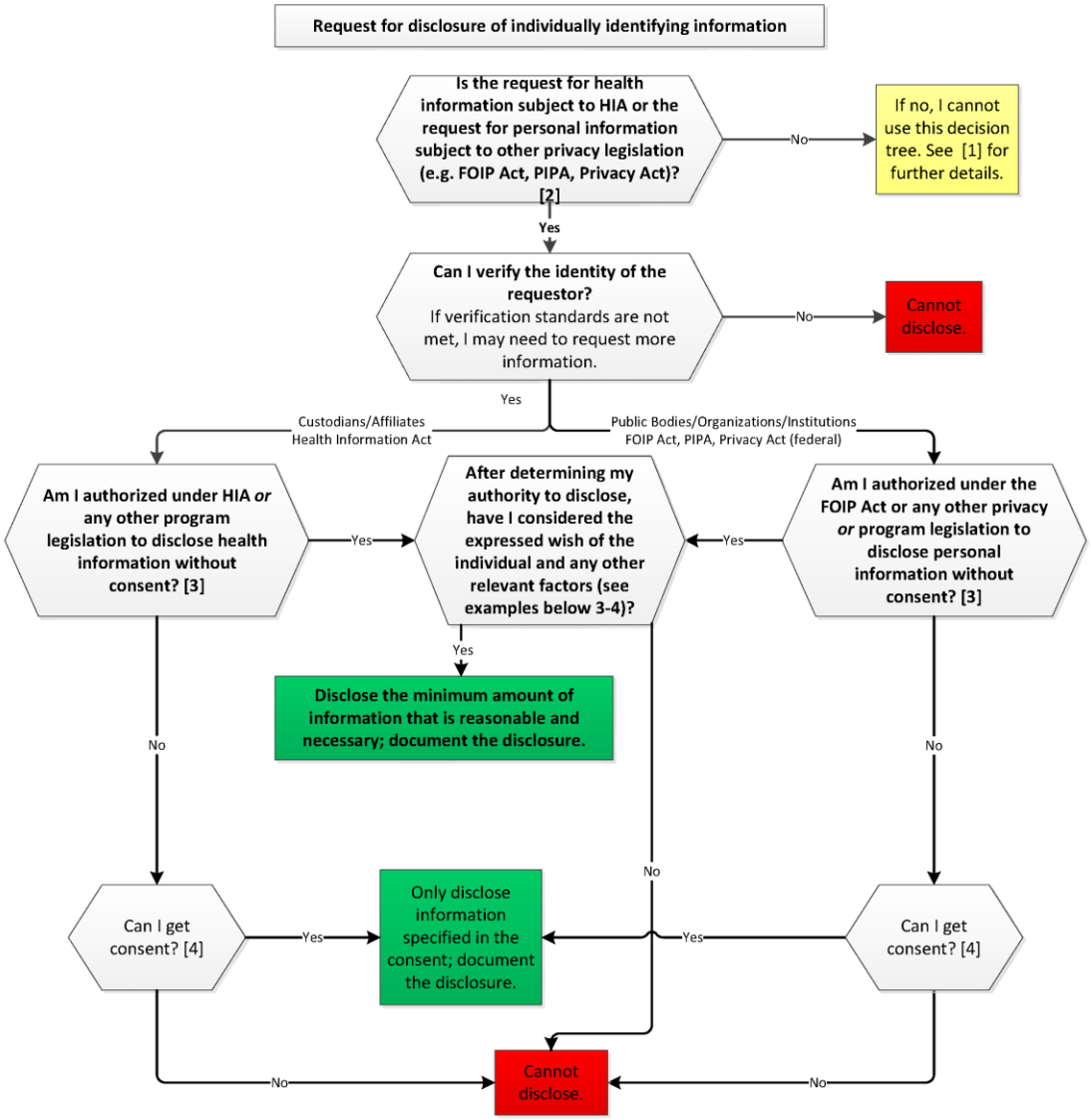
Depending on the severity of the threat, some students may be asked to give their opinion regarding the origin and authorship of threat.

Information Sharing



Information SHARING

Decision Tree
Information Sharing under Existing Legislation



CONSIDERATIONS:

[1] If I am not subject to any legislation, am I aware of other ways that I am able to disclose?
(e.g., contract or agreement, verified security measures to protect disclosed information)
[2] Do I understand the difference between health information and personal information?
[3] Do I understand my program legislation's disclosure and confidentiality provisions?
Does my organization have delegated authorities in place.
Is there any other legislation that permits disclosure?
(e.g. *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*; *Victims of Crime Act*; *Mental Health Act*; *School Act*)
Is there any other legislation that prohibits disclosure?
(e.g. *Youth Criminal Justice Act*; *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*)
Have I considered all of the available disclosure provisions?
(e.g. FOIP Act, s.40, HIA, s.35)
Have I made a reasonable effort to ensure that the information being disclosed is accurate and complete (HIA s.61).
Do I know enough about why the requester needs the information? While not obligated to verify that the individual receiving the information has the authority to collect, the question will help to inform the least amount of information necessary to be disclosed based on the need to know.
[4] Do I know what consent means and its legal requirements under the FOIP Act or the HIA?

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Sharing Information: Legislation (other Provinces / Federal) and Case Law

Each partner involved in an assessment will be responsible for determining their own threshold for sharing information with other partners. Each partner will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the legislation that applies to them.

The following are examples from Canadian Center of Trauma that show how partners in other jurisdictions have shared information under existing legislation.

Legislation - Other Provinces

Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (LAFOIP)
"Disclosure of personal information: Subject to any other Act or regulation, personal information in the possession or under the control of a local authority may be disclosed: where necessary to protect the mental or physical health or safety of any individual." (L-28 (2) (l)).

Mental Health Act
Section 38 requires that no person shall disclose any information concerning a patient except when consented to by the patient; when required by law; when ordered by the Minister; in the course of administrating the Act; or "when required to assist a person who is receiving services pursuant to the Act to receive services which are necessary to maintain or restore the mental health of that person."

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)
FOIP applies to all provincial government ministries and agencies in Alberta including Child and Family Services and the Ministry of Justice. Its terms are similar to LAFOIPP and allow disclosure of information when the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy or when disclosure would clearly benefit the individual to whom the information relates.

Legislation - Federal

Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA)
Section 125(6), YCJA enables information in a Youth Criminal Justice Act record to be shared,
within the access period, with any professional or other person engaged in the supervision or care of a young person – including the representative of any school division, or school or any other educational or training institution only in limited circumstances. Information may be shared to ensure the safety of staff, students or others, to facilitate rehabilitation/reintegration of the young person, or to ensure compliance with a youth justice court order or any order of the provincial director respecting reintegration leave. Such sharing of information does not require the young person's consent.

The recipient of youth justice information is responsible for ensuring compliance with legislated restrictions on its use, storage and disposal under the YCJA ss.126 (7). This provision requires that the information must be kept separate from any other record of the young person, that no other person must have access to the information except as authorized under the YCJA or for the purposes of ss.125 (6), and that it must be destroyed when it is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was disclosed.

Alberta Legislation (in addition to HIA, FOIP and CYFEA referenced in green/yellow/red light chart)

Children's First Act
A custodian may disclose health information about a child, without consent, to a service provider for the purposes of enabling or planning for the provision of services, if, in the opinion of the custodian, it is in the best interest of the child.

Cases

Supreme Court Decision: R. V. M. (M. R.), (1998) 35. C. R. 398

"The Supreme Court of Canada (1998) has established legal precedent by ruling (in R. vs M (M. R)) that in certain situations, the need to protect the greater student population supersedes the individual rights of the students. The ruling explicitly acknowledges that school officials must be able to act quickly and effectively to ensure the safety of the students and to prevent serious violations of the school rules." (p. 15)

Reference: Cameron, K. (2011) Community Protocol for Violence Threat Risk Assessment (TRA) and Intervention (9th Edition).

Appendices

Appendix A: Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A School Staff Guide
Appendix B: Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A Protocol Partner Guide
Appendix C: Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools' Threat/Risk Assessment Notification
Appendix D: Initial TAT Data Collection Form/Immediate Risk Reducing Intervention Plan
Appendix E: Immediate Risk Reducing Intervention Plan
Appendix F: Comprehensive Stage 2 TAT Intervention and Recommendation Plan
Appendix G: Responding to Suicidal Risk in Students: A Staff Guide

Appendix A

Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A School Staff Guide

Any person who is concerned will report behaviours to the school principal/designate that may pose a risk or threat to others.

Worrisome Behaviours	**High Risk Behaviours**	**Immediate Threat-<u>Call 911</u>**
Include but are not limited to: ▪ Violent content • Drawings and pictures • Stories/journals • Vague threatening statements • Unusual interest in fire • Significant change in anti-social behaviour • Significant change in baseline behaviour ****Does not typically lead to activating the protocol but because it is a 'cry for help' it does involve timely follow-up with the student, his/her teachers, the school Family School Liaison and the student's parents/guardians/caregivers.****	Include but are not limited to: • Possession of weapon/replica • Bomb threat plan • Verbal/written threat to kill/injure • Internet website threats to kill or injure self/others • Fire setting • Threatens violence • Hate motivated violence targeting a particular student/group ****Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.****	Include but are not limited to: • Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to others • Plan for serious assault • Homicidal/suicidal behaviour that threatens safety • Fire setting resulting in harm ****Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.****

Principal informed	**Principal informed and decision made to activate the protocol.**	
Stage 1 **Data collection and immediate risk reducing intervention** **Within hours**	• Make sure all students are safe. • Determine if threat maker has access to a weapon. • Interview threat maker and all witnesses. • Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) of the students involved in the incident and the WRPS TRA Lead (District Family School Liaison). (Remember to call both parents/guardians/caregivers). • Initiate Stage 1 Threat Assessment Report Form. • Review findings with the TAT. • Decide course of action. • Develop an Immediate Risk Reducing intervention plan.	**<u>TAT</u>** • **Principal (lead)** • **Vice principal** • **School Family School Liaison (recorder)** • **Police (if required)**
Stage 2: Activated by Director of Support Services		
Stage 2 **Comprehensive multidisciplinary risk evaluation** **As soon as possible**	• Conduct interviews as required. • Meet with appropriate protocol partners and complete Threat Assessment Report Form.	**<u>C-TAT</u>** • **Initial TAT (as appropriate)** • **District Family School Liaison** • **Superintendents (lead)** • **Police** • **Community partners**
If activated by Director of Support Services proceed to Stage 3		
Stage 3 **Comprehensive/ Multidisciplinary Intervention**	• Meet with expanded C-TAT. • Comprehensive Team C-TAT develops implements and monitors a comprehensive multidisciplinary intervention plan and modifies it as appropriate.	**<u>C-TAT</u>** • **Initial TAT (as appropriate)** • **District Family School Liaison** • **Superintendents (Lead)** • **Police** • **Community partners**

Note: When a community partner determines the need to activate the C-TAT, that person will notify his/her designated lead team member who will follow the procedure as outlined in Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A Protocol Partner Guide." (see Appendix D)

Appendix B

Responding to Student Threat Making Behaviour: A Protocol Partner Guide

Note: When a community partner determines the need to activate the C-TAT, that person will notify his/her designated lead team member who will follow the procedure outlined below.

All protocol partners will report behaviours that may pose a risk or threat to others.

Worrisome Behaviours	**High Risk Behaviours**	**Immediate Threat Call 911**
Include but are not limited to: ▪ Violent content • Drawings and pictures • Stories/journals • Vague threatening statements • Unusual interest in fire • Significant change in anti-social behaviour • Significant change in baseline behaviour ****Does not typically lead to activating the protocol but because it is a 'cry for help' it does involve timely follow-up with the student, his/her teachers, the school counsellor and the student's parents/guardians/caregivers.****	Include but are not limited to: • Possession of weapon/replica • Bomb threat plan • Verbal/written threat to kill/injure • Internet website threats to kill or injure self/others • Fire setting • Threatens violence • Hate motivated violence targeting a particular student/group ****Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.****	Include but are not limited to: • Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to others • Plan for serious assault • Homicidal/suicidal behaviour that threatens safety • Fire setting resulting in harm ****Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.****

Principal informed if known. If unknown, contact WRPS Director of Support Services

Principal/Reporting community partner will consult the Director of Support Services to decide course of action.

Initial Team (TAT)	Comprehensive Team	Comprehensive Team
Stage 1 **Data collection and immediate risk reducing interventions** are performed by the Initial Team (TAT), which must, at minimum, include the school principal and/or vice principal, school Family School Liaison, and the police of jurisdiction, if needed. The initial data collection is often accomplished in one to two hours. It focuses on gathering case specific data using the Threat Assessment Report Form (see Form 106 F).	**Stage 2** **Comprehensive multidisciplinary risk evaluation** is focused on further data collection beyond the initial data set obtained by the Stage I TAT. The Stage 2 Comprehensive Team (C-TAT) may involve some or all of the following: additional police-based resources, psychology, psychiatry, mental health, child protection, young offender worker, and others. At Stage 2, the Comprehensive Team C-TAT members work in collaboration with the Stage 1 TAT to conduct the formal risk assessment and evaluation. Stage 2 may include the use of formal, structured professional instruments, concepts, tests, and measures.	**Stage 3** **Multidisciplinary intervention** is the formal meeting of the Stage 1 TAT and Stage 2 Comprehensive Team C-TAT members following a formal threat/risk assessment. The purpose of Stage 3 is to develop and implement a comprehensive, multidisciplinary intervention plan.

Appendix C

School's Threat Risk Assessment
Notification and Process

SAMPLE 'Fair Notice' Letter

Date:

Dear Parents:

Re: Fair Notice

The safety of our children is a top priority for us all. We, as a school system, have been involved in intensive safety training with our community partners - the police, Mental Health and Child and Family Authority. Together we have developed a plan for responding to all situations in which students may be posing a threat to themselves or others.

This letter is to inform you that we, as a school system, now have a policy that requires principals to complete a "risk assessment" in all cases of students making significant threats to harm themselves or others. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the level of risk the student poses, and how best to support high-risk students so that their behavior does not become hurtful or destructive. In all cases where staff know that a student has behaved in a threatening way please be assured that your principal will be taking measures to deal with the situation in a positive and proactive manner. If your principal invites you to a meeting to discuss safety concerns about your own child, please understand that policy is being followed and that the goal is safety, not punishment.

This letter is intended to serve our community with fair notice that we, as a school community, will not accept "no response" to a serious threat or high-risk behavior. Our goal is to respond to all high-risk situations in a professional manner that provides for a healthy and caring learning environment.

We are proud to be able to provide this level of support to our school communities and are most fortunate to have our community partners at our side.

Sincerely,

Appendix D

Stage 1 Threat Assessment Data Collection Process & Form

****THIS FORM IS FOR TAT DATA COLLECTION ONLY**
***This document is to be completed by the Initial Team**
***This page is NOT filed in the student's school cumulative file**

Sources of Data may be obtained from multiple sources including teachers and other school staff, students, target(s), threat maker(s), parents/caregivers and others.

- Current and previous school/discipline records
- Law Enforcement, Probation, Diversion, etc.
- Understanding, clarify interest in/access to weapons
- Searches of the student(s), lockers, and cars
- Searches of the student(s), bedroom, etc.
- Other agencies: mental health, probation, etc.
- Activities: Internet histories, diaries, notebooks, school assignments, drawings.

Examples of Violent/Threat making Behaviours include but are not limited to:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Verbal/written threats to kill others ("clear, direct, and plausible")
- Internet (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) text messaging, threats to kill others (refer to Form 106 B of the National Training Protocol for abbreviations commonly used on the Internet and texting)
- Possession of weapons (including replicas)
- Bomb Threats (making and/or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire Setting
- Sexual intimidation or assault
- Gang related intimidation and violence

Student:				School:			
DOB:				Grade:		Age:	
Parents/Guardians Name:				Date of incident:			
Victim(s) Name:				Witness(s)Name:			

NOTE: Please be aware while this document appears to be linear, based on contextual information gathered, the team may decide it is appropriate to modify the numerical progression of the steps.

Three Primary Hypothesis:

1. Is it a conscious or unconscious "cry for help"?
2. Conspiracy of two or more. Who else knows about it: Who else is involved?
3. Is there any evidence of fluidity?

Pre-interview Considerations

1. When possible, interview the Threat Maker(s) or Student of Concern **after** initial data had been collected such as locker check, interviewing the individual who reported the threat as well as the police member doing an occurrence check for prior police contacts. This will help to avoid the "uni-dimensional assessment" and provide the interviewer(s) with data to develop case specific hypotheses and verbatim questions that can be asked tin a strategic TRA interview to test those hypotheses.
2. There should **never** be more than two people in the room interviewing the Threat Maker or Student of Concern.
3. Remember to distinguish between **Assessing the Threat** versus **Assessing the Threat Maker.**

Step 1:

School administrators need to make sure they know the whereabouts of the target(s) and threat maker(s) and address any immediate risk factors if they exist. They will not suspend the threat maker out of the school until after VTRA interviews are completed and immediate safety has been established.

- If necessary, appropriately monitor and/or detain the student(s) of concern until the police member of the team is present.
- Do not allow "student(s) of interest" access to coats, backpacks, desks, or lockers.
- Determine if the threat maker has immediate access to the means (knife, gun, etc.)

Step 2:

School Administrator will notify the Director of Support Services regarding of the Stage 1 Team activation.

Step 3:

School administrators: if appropriate, will check the threat maker's locker, backpack, desk, etc.

Step 4:

Coordinate with the school based TAT Team and then, if necessary, the "trained" VTRA SRO/Police member; share initial data and police will determine if a history of weapons possession, use, or violence is noted in police accessible records.

Step 5:

Principal (or Assistant Principal), in collaboration with the Family School Liaison Worker/Guidance Counsellor will determine who will strategically interview sources of data including all participants directly and indirectly involved as well as "hard" data collection as outlined below:

Immediate Data may be obtained from multiple sources including:

- Reporter(s)
- Target(s)
- Witnesses
- Teachers and other school staff (secretaries, teacher assistants, bus drivers, etc.)
- Friends, classmates, acquaintances
- Parents/caregivers (call both parents)
- Current and previous school records (Call the sending school)
- Police record check
- student(s), locker, desk, backpack, recent text books/assignment binders, and cards etc. for data consistent with the threat making or threat-related behaviour.
- Check/Search or question parents/caregivers about the student(s), bedroom etc.
- Activities: Internet histories, electronic footprint, diaries, notebooks
- Other

Step 6:

The Semi-Structured Interview: needs to be undertaken by various VTRA trained personnel; it is assumed that not all questions can be answered.

Series I Questions **(The Incident)**	**Notes**
1. Where did the incident happen & when?	
2. How did it come to the interviewee's attention?	
3. What was the specific language of the threat, detail of the weapon, or gesture made?	
4. Was there stated: • Justification for the threat? • Means to carry out the threat? • Consequences weighed out (I don't care if I live or die!)? • Conditions that could lower the level of risk (unless you take that Facebook post down I will stick my knife in your throat.)?	
5. Who was present & under what circumstance did the incident occur?	
6. What was the motivation or perceived cause of the incident?	
7. What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident?	
8. What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident?	

Series II Questions **(Attack-Related Behaviours)**	**Notes:**
1. Has the student sought out information consistent with their threat making or threat-related behaviour (have they accessed websites or gathered information)	
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past?	
3. Has the student attempted to gain access to weapons or do they have access to the weapons they have threatened to use?	
4. Has the student developed a plan & how general or specific is it (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal of justifications, maps & floor plans)?	
5. Has the student been engaging in suspicious behaviour such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, sprinkle systems, video surveillance in schools or elsewhere, schedules & locations of police or security patrol?	
6. Has the student engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including carrying and/or showing a fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting (i.e.: lighting fire to card board tubes cut & taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc.)?	
7. Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in their locker (back pack, car trunk, etc.) at school or bedroom (shed, garage, etc.) at home?	
8. Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because "something big is going to happen?"	

Series III Questions **(The Threat Maker)**	**Notes:**
1. Does the threat maker have a history of violence or threats of violence?	
2. If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recentness (FIR) of the violence?	
3. What has been their past human target selection?	
4. What has been their past site selection?	
5. Do they have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behaviour? Or other mental health concerns?	
6. Is there evidence of fluidity in their writings, drawings or verbalizations? (thoughts of suicidal and homicidal ideation)	
7. To your knowledge does the threat maker use drugs or alcohol?	
8. What is the student's baseline?	

Series IV Questions **(The Target)**	**Notes:**
1. Does the target have a history of violence or threats of violence?	
2. If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recentness (FIR) of the violence?	
3. What has been their past human target selection?	
4. What has been their past site selection?	
5. Is there evidence the target has instigated the current situation?	

Series V Questions **(Peer Dynamics)**	**Notes:**
1. Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification (believe they are justified in hurting others) process?	
2. Who is in the threat makers peer structure & where does the threat maker fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader, and follower)?	
3. Is there a difference between the threat maker's individual baseline & their peer group baseline behaviour?	
4. Who is in the targets peer structure & where does the target fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader, and follower)?	
5. Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?	

Series VI Questions **(Empty Vessel)**	**Notes:**
1. Does the student of concern have a healthy relationship with a mature adult?	
2. Does the student have inordinate knowledge or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school–based attacks?	
3. How has the student responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc.)?	
4. What type, if any, of violent games, movies, books, music, Internet searches, does the student fill themselves with?	
5. Is there evidence that what they are filling themselves with is influencing their behaviour? e.g. movies, TV, websites, games etc.) **Note**: Imitators refer to students who imitate what they have seen while innovators	

create situations that are new or different.	
6. What related themes are present in their writings, drawings, etc?	
7. Is there evidence religiosity? Religiosity refers to a strong fluidity or connection between the student's belief system and the threat making behaviour.	

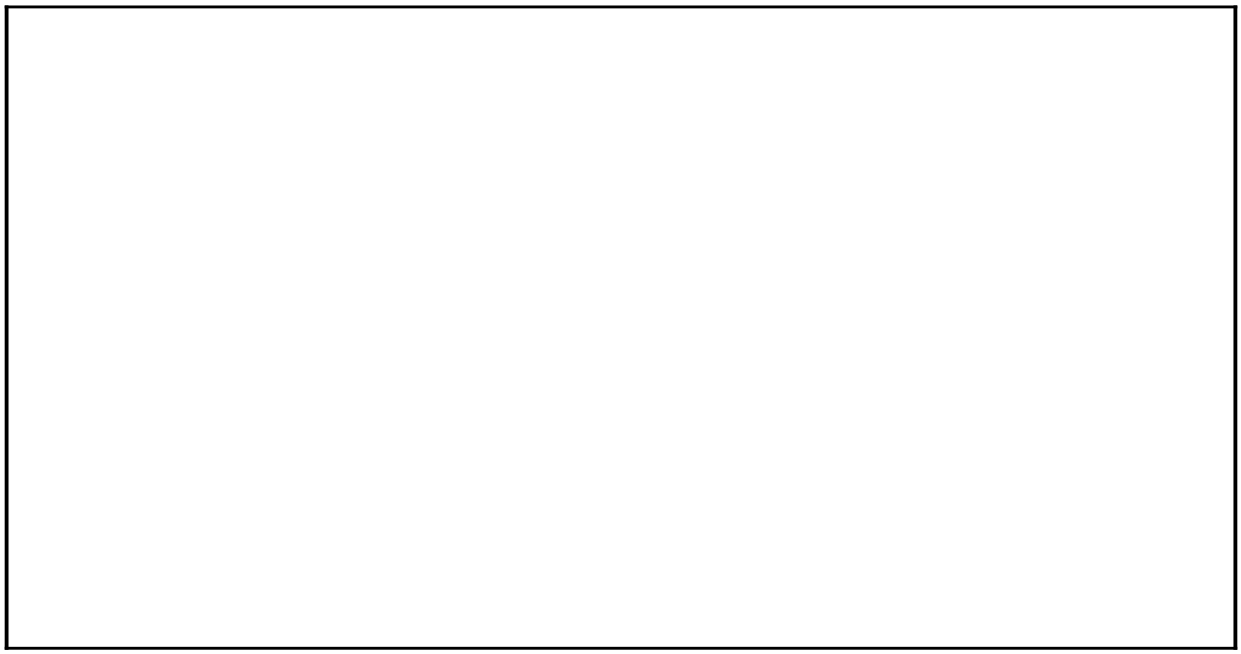
Series VII Questions **(Contextual Factors)**	**Notes:**
1. Has the threat maker experienced a recent loss, such as a death of a family member or friend; a recent break-up; rejection by a peer or a peer group; been cut from a sports team; received a rejection notice from a college, university, military, etc?	
2. Have their parents just divorced or separated?	
3. Are they victims of child abuse and has the abuse been dormant but resurfaced at this time?	
4. Are they being initiated into a gang and is it voluntary or forced recruitment?	
5. Have they recently had an argument or "fight" with a parent/caregiver or someone close to them?	
6. Have they recently been charged with an offence or suspended or expelled from school?	
7. Is the place where they have been suspended to likely to increase or decrease their level of risk?	

Series VIII Questions **(School Dynamics)**	**Notes:**
1. What is the student's academic performance?	
2. Has a recent educational/psychological assessment been completed?	
3. Is there specialized programming planning in place for this student (IPP)?	
4. Has the baseline behaviour at school changed? How has it changed?	
5. Is the student connected to the school? (e.g. are they involved in school activities?) Are they connected to a staff member? If so, who?	
6. Has there been any concerning drawings, poems or stories produced by the student?	
7. What is the culture/climate of the school? (e.g.: is the school willing to access external resources?)	

Series IX Questions **(Family Dynamics)**	**Notes:**
1. How many homes does the student reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparents home)?	
2. Is the student connected to a healthy/mature adult in the home?	
3. Who all lives in the family home (full-time and part-time)?	
4. Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often are they around?	

5. Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards their siblings or parent(s) caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom including Frequency, Intensity, and Recentness (FIR)?	
6. What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home? Are parent(s) or caregiver(s) concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children or others?	
7. Does the student's level or risk (at home, school, or the community) cycle according to who is in the home (i.e. the student is low risk to violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times their father travels away from home for work)?	
8. Does the student have a history of trauma? Including car accidents, falls, exposed to violence, abuse, etc.	
9. Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM IV diagnoses?	
10. Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family?	
11. Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse in the family?	

Genogram



Step 7:

Notify the Threat Maker's Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

☐ Parents/guardians have been notified of the situation and this assessment.

☐ Parents/guardians have NOT been notified because:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Step 8:

When a Comprehensive -TAT is required, the Director of Support Services will contact other agencies:

As per this protocol, other community partners may be involved in the Stage 1 VTRA process as consultants to the school/police team and sources of initial data relevant to the case such as past or current involvement with the student /family. Once they are informed of the initial school/police data, the community partner may release further necessary information or physically join the team.

- Call Human Services VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Mental Health VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Youth Probation VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Others

Upon receipt of the Stage 1 data, partner agencies check to see if the student in question is or was a client and then the agencies determine if they are in possession of information that, in **conjunction with** the Stage 1 data, requires them to "disclose". Generally Stage 2 VTRA community partner designates will report that a record check has been completed and:

1) There is nothing to report
2) There is information relevant to the case that needs to be disclosed as per the VTRA Protocol (significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others is present).
3) The risk is not immediate but a Release of Information Form should be requested to allow for a full disclosure of the contents of the file relevant to the case at hand.

Step 9:

Review Findings with the Threat Assessment Team

Convene the Threat Assessment Team and discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the questions: "To what extent does the student pose a threat to school/student safety?" "Do they pose a threat to themselves or someone outside the school (i.e. family)?" The Stage I Assessment is an overall assessment of current level of risk and is a precursor to (if necessary) a more comprehensive Stage II Risk Evaluation.

Low Level of Concern Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is minimal.	**Medium Level of Concern** The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.	**High Level of Concern** The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.
☐ Threat is vague and indirect.	☐ Threat is more plausible and concrete than a low level threat.	☐ Threat is specific and plausible.
☐ Categorization of low risk does not imply "no risk" but indicates the individual is at little risk for violence.	☐ Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (i.e. possible place and time).	☐ There is an identified target. Student has the capacity to act on the threat.
☐ Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail; threat lacks realism.	☐ No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (i.e. weapon, seeking), although there may be ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: "I'm serious!"	☐ Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on a threat. For example, information indicates that the student has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had a victim under surveillance.
☐ Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.	☐ A moderate or lingering concern about the student's potential to act violently.	☐ Information suggests strong concern about the student's potential to act violently.
☐ Within the general range for typical baseline behaviour for the student in question.	☐ Increase in baseline behaviour.	☐ Significant increase in baseline behaviour.
☐ Monitoring of the matter may be appropriate.	☐ Categorization of risk indicates the individual is at an elevated risk for violence, and those measures currently in place or further measures, including monitoring, are required in an effort to manage the individual's future risk.	☐ Categorization of risk indicates the individual is at a high or imminent risk for violence. Immediate intervention is required to prevent an act of violence from occurring.

Sources for the above categorizations represent the work of the FBI, Durham Regional Police Service, Ontario Provincial Police Threat Assessment Unit, and the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Step 10:

Decide on a Course of Action

Are there risk reducing interventions that need to be put in place immediately?

With the input of all Threat Assessment Team members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision.

- **Low to Medium Level of Concern**
  - Implement the Immediate Risk Reducing Intervention Plan (Most students can be managed at school with interventions.)

- **Medium to High Level of Concern**
  - The Threat Assessment Team has determined that a Stage II Threat Assessment is needed.

Appendix E

Stage 1 TAT Risk Reducing Intervention Plan

Student Name:
School:
Date:

Stage I Intervention Plan: Low – Medium Risk (attach additional pages as needed) **This Intervention Plan will be monitored and modified as necessary**	
➢ Disciplinary action taken:	
➢ Intended victim warned and/or parents or guardians notified	
➢ Suicide assessment initiated on:	By
➢ Contract not to harm self or others created (please attach).	
➢ Alert staff and teachers on a need-to-know basis	
➢ Daily or Weekly check-in with (Title/Name):	
➢ Hall Pass to hold accountable for whereabouts and on-time arrival to destinations	
➢ Backpack, coat, and other belongings check-in and check-out by:	
➢ Late Arrival and /or Early Dismissal	

➢ Increased supervision in these settings:
➢ Modify daily schedule by:
➢ Identify antecedents, triggers and plan to alleviate tension. Describe:
➢ Behaviour plan (attach a copy to this Threat Assessment) if no Behaviour Plan, create one
➢ Drug and/or alcohol intervention with:
➢ Referral to Learning Support Team to consider possible interventions.
➢ If Special Needs identified, review diagnosis and IPP goals. Identify the impact on the VTRA?
➢ Review community-based resources and interventions with parents or caretakers.
➢ Obtain permission to share information with community partners such as counsellors and therapists (See Release of information From)
Other actions:

PARENTS/GUARDIANS (attach additional pages as needed)
➢ Parents will provide the following supervision and/or intervention:

Team Members:

Principal:
Family School Liaison Worker:
Guidance Counsellor:
School Resource Office/RCMP:
School Central Office:
Other:

Appendix F

Stage 3 Comprehensive TAT Risk Intervention/ Recommendation Plan

- **This plan is to be filed in the student's confidential file**
- **This plan is discussed and shared with guardians**

Use the following Intervention Plan to address all concerns identified during the Stage 2 Comprehensive Risk Assessment.

Incident: Date of Incident:	Comprehensive Threat Assessment Team Members:
Name of Student:	
School:	
Nature of Threat:	

1. Others involved in incident and nature of their involvement (staff, students, others but no personal identifying information)
2. Summary of the incident (when and where it occurred, behavior and specific language of the threat-maker, immediate action taken)
3. Resources and strategies currently in place:
4. C-TAT intervention and recommendations:
5. Conditions to return to and/or remain in school:

*Release of Information: The parent/guardian agrees that the Threat Assessment Intervention and Recommendations can be shared with other agencies as advisable.

Appendix G

Responding to Suicidal Risk in Students: A Staff Guide

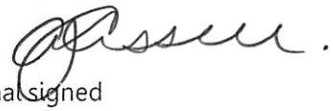
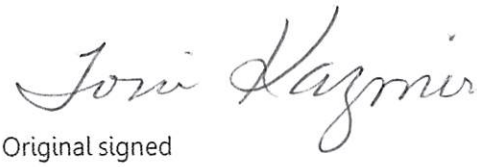
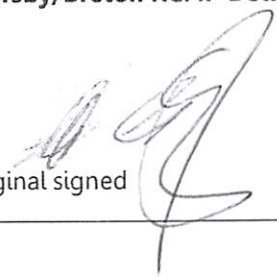
Please DO the following:	
• Remain calm. • Take the situation seriously. • Use language that supports disclosure. • Reinforce the need to involve others who can help. • Seek support from supervisor. • Remain with student.	• Ensure the student is accompanied to the hospital by a responsible adult. • If escort is not parent/guardian/caregiver, ensure parent/guardian/caregiver is informed student has gone to hospital. • Ensure student is with an adult at all times. • Document the event afterward.

Steps to Take When		
Attempt: A student makes an attempt at school or returns to school having made an attempt	**Disclosure:** A student discloses suicidal thoughts/recent self-injury	**Concern:** A student's behaviour suggests suicidal risk, or concern is expressed for a student's safety
• Principal/Designate will 911 if an emergency. • Principal/Designate will contact the parent/guardian/caregiver immediately. • Principal/Designate will determine who will accompany the student to the hospital when it is safe to do so and when the parent/guardian/caregiver is unavailable.	• Notify Family School Liaison(FSL) or Guidance Counsellor (GC) who will consult with principal/ designate. • FSW/GC will contact the student and assess the situation. • FSW/GC/Principal will contact the parent/guardian/ caregiver immediately. If necessary: • Principal/Designate will contact 911 and request on- site assistance, when the safety of the student indicates this is necessary. • Principal/Designate will determine who will accompany the student to hospital when safe to do so and parent/guardian/ caregiver is unavailable. • Stay with the student until a parent/guardian/caregiver arrives.	• Notify FSL/GC who will consult with principal/designate • FSW/GC will contact the student and assess the situation. • FSW/GC/Principal will contact parent/guardian/ caregiver to discuss concern and develop plan for support.

Community Threat /Risk Assessment Protocol: Signing Members

School and community partners are committed to making our schools safe for students, staff, volunteers and visitors.

Signed on: June 6, 2016

Terry Pearson, Superintendent **Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools** Original signed	Dwight Hunks Executive Director **Addiction and Mental Health** **Alberta Health Services Central Zone** Per Alana Cissell  Original signed
Toni Kazmir Associate Director, Child Intervention **Central Alberta Human Services**  Original signed	Inspector Fran Bethell **RCMP** Wetaskiwin Detachment Original signed
Dr. Troy Davies, Superintendent **St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Schools (STAR)** Original signed	Mr. John Tomkinson, Board Chair & Trustee **St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Schools (STAR)** Original signed
Sgt Corey Kyle, Detachment Commander **Thorsby/Breton RCMP Detachment**  Original signed	