

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



Human Services



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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

- 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.

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.

- 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.

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.

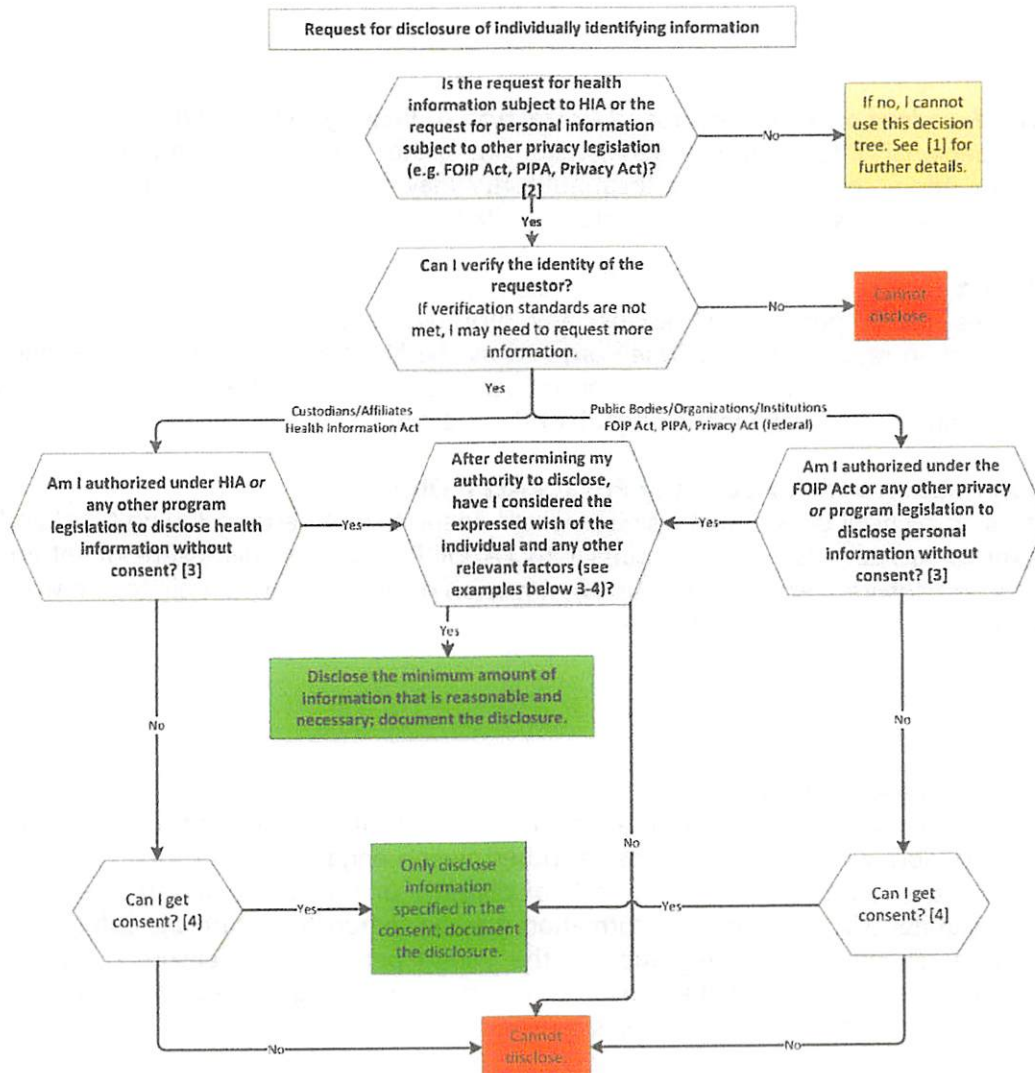
Some individuals who write unauthored "hit lists" embed their names in the list of identified targets.

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

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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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).

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.		
↓	↓	↓
<p>Worrisome Behaviours</p> <p>Include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>**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.**</p>	<p>High Risk Behaviours</p> <p>Include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>**Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.**</p>	<p>Immediate Threat-Call 911</p> <p>Include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to others Plan for serious assault Homicidal/suicidal behaviour that threatens safety Fire setting resulting in harm <p>**Activate protocol when safe to do so. Complete Stage 1.**</p>
Principal informed		
<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Data collection and immediate risk reducing intervention</p> <p>Within hours</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>TAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal (lead) Vice principal School Family School Liaison (recorder) Police (if required)
Stage 2: Activated by Director of Support Services		
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Comprehensive multidisciplinary risk evaluation</p> <p>As soon as possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct interviews as required. Meet with appropriate protocol partners and complete Threat Assessment Report Form. 	<p>C-TAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial TAT (as appropriate) District Family School Liaison Superintendents (lead) Police Community partners
If activated by Director of Support Services proceed to Stage 3		
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Comprehensive/ Multidisciplinary Intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with expanded C-TAT. Comprehensive Team C-TAT develops implements and monitors a comprehensive multidisciplinary intervention plan and modifies it as appropriate. 	<p>C-TAT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Form 106 B)

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,

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

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 cardboard 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?"	

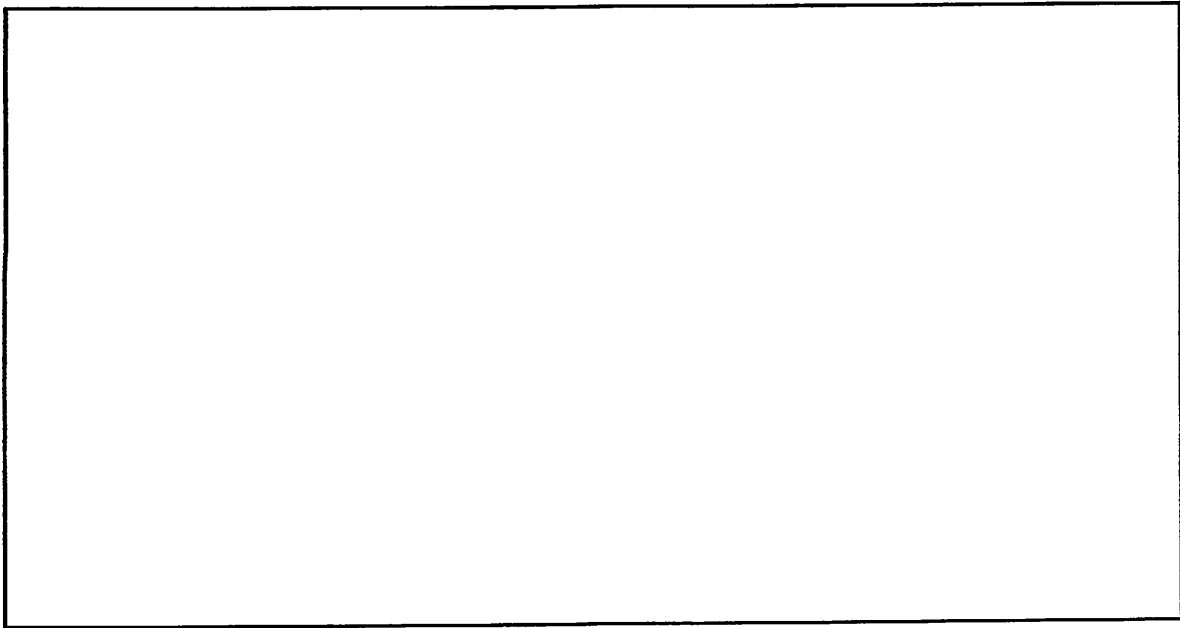
Series V Questions		Notes:
(Peer Dynamics)		
1. Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification (believe they are justified in hurting others) process?		
2. Who is in the threat makers peer structure & where does the threat maker fit (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		Notes:
(Empty Vessel)		
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		

Series VIII Questions		Notes:
(School Dynamics)		
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		Notes:
(Family Dynamics)		
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?		

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:

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.
-

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

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:	Comprehensive Threat Assessment Team Members:
Date of Incident:	
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.

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: _____

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