

## STUDENTS AT RISK

### Risk/Threat Protocol

#### Background

The Division is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, secure and caring learning environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and feel safe. When students and staff are placed 'at risk' due to dangerous physical, emotional or psychological situations, administration shall follow a protocol for responding to these potential crises.

#### DEFINITIONS:

Immediate risk situations are those situations involving high-risk that requires immediate police intervention or a protective school response. An example would be when there is an armed intruder or an armed student is making a threat and in possession of a weapon.

High-risk behaviors include, but are not limited to, possession of weapons, bomb threats, and threats to kill or injure others. A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be written, verbal, posted on the Internet, or made by gesture. They may be direct, indirect, conditional, or veiled. High-risk behaviors are those of students twelve years of age and older who are believed to have contravened Section 264.1 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that a student "who in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys, or causes any person to receive a threat...to cause death or bodily harm" has committed an offense.

Worrisome behaviors are those that cause concern for members of the school system that indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behavior. This may include drawing pictures, writing stories, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute "uttering threats" as defined by the law but are causing concern because of their violent content.

Risk/Threat Assessment Team (TAT) is composed of the Principal, School Consultant, FSRW, RCMP contact, Mental Health contact, Child and Family Services contact, and Associate Superintendent/ Division office contact. There are two levels of response to R/T situations:

1. Level 1 TAT is composed of the principal, school consultant, family school resource worker, and/or school counselor, and may also include the classroom teacher when involving a student with special needs. Primary purpose of Level 1 TAT is data collection and immediate interventions to reduce risk.
2. Level 2 TAT is recommended when a more comprehensive response including risk evaluation, long-term intervention and treatment planning are needed. The Associate Superintendent will be informed of the need to include mental health services professionals, physicians, child protection staff and/or criminal profilers.

## REGULATIONS:

### 1. Reporting

- a. Any person having knowledge of high-risk behavior, or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high-risk behavior, shall immediately report the information to the principal and/or designate.
- b. No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds.
- c. In cases where a report is made maliciously, the person shall be dealt with according to division procedure and applicable law.

### 2. Fair Notice

Prior to any threat assessment protocol being implemented, all students, staff, and parents shall be provided with information about the protocol and procedures. This information, called 'fair notice,' states threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Principals will provide parents with the 'Fair Notice' letter at the beginning of each school year. (Appendix 340A Fair Notice Letter).

### 3. Duty to Respond

Schools shall respond to all high risk/threat related behaviors. All high-risk behaviors shall be taken seriously and assessed accordingly. A clear, vigorous response is essential for three reasons: first, to make sure students, teachers, and staff are safe; second, to assure that they will feel safe; and third, to assure that the person making the threat will be supervised and given the treatment that is appropriate and necessary to avoid future danger to others or to self. (See Appendix 340B Risk/Threat Assessment Protocol).

*"It is especially important that a school not deal with threats by simply kicking the problem out the door. Expelling or suspending a student for making a threat must not be a substitute for careful threat assessment and a consistent policy of intervention. Disciplinary action alone, unaccompanied by any effort to evaluate the threat or the student's intent, may actually exacerbate the danger- for example, if a student feels unfairly or arbitrarily treated, he becomes even angrier and more bent on carrying out a violent act." Threat assessment Training Guide -2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*

### 4. Immediate Risk Procedures

- a. These are matters requiring immediate police intervention.
- b. The principal or designate shall contact the police immediately and take steps to ensure the safety of all those in the school by activating established procedures such as school evacuation or school security (lockdown). Refer to school 'Crisis Response Manual' (AP 170A) for Communication procedures. School Response Team activated.
- c. School principal shall notify Division office as soon as possible, following initial police contact.
- d. Principal shall complete an 'Incident Report' in preparation for debriefing.

## **5. High-Risk Behaviors**

- a. Upon receiving a report of high-risk behavior, the principal or designate shall initiate the protocol for the response of the Level 1 TAT. A 'Risk/Threat Incident Report is completed and provided to the School Consultant. See Appendix 340C.
- b. In cases where it is believed a Criminal Code violation has occurred, the police officer assigned to the TAT has the 'first call' as to whether or not charges will be laid.
- c. If the police choose not to lay initial charges, the TAT shall continue to conduct a risk assessment and determine follow-up recommendations.
- d. The school principal shall notify the parent(s) of the student making the threat at the earliest opportunity as well as the parents of those students against whom the threat was made. Parents thus become an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.
- e. When information collected as part of the Level 1 TAT response suggests that a student who has displayed high-risk behavior poses a significant risk/threat, a Level 2 TAT is requested and the office of the Associate Superintendent consulted.
- f. In order to protect others and/or the threat maker, students may be suspended from school by the principal during the assessment period. (Note: A suspension may create the necessary context for the high-risk student who is already struggling with suicidal or homicidal ideation. When a suspension occurs, a key question beyond 'when to suspend' is 'where to suspend'. The isolation and disconnection felt by high-risk students during a suspension may be exacerbated if steps are not taken to keep the student connected to healthy supports.)
- g. The TAT (Level 1 or 2) shall guide the process from initial assessment, to planning interventions to decrease risk, and to plans for readmission to school where a suspension has occurred.
- h. If circumstances warrant, and following the completion of necessary assessments, team members may work with the student and their parent(s) to develop a re-entry plan for school that becomes a signed contract by all participants.

## **6. Duty to Victims and Others**

- a. The TAT leader shall ensure that appropriate support is provided to those against whom threats have been made.
- b. The principal shall notify all school staff and parents, if necessary, within a reasonable time period when the protocol has been activated as a result of high-risk behavior.

## **7. Students Requiring Special Consideration**

- a. When dealing with students under 12 years of age, students with special needs or other exceptional students, accountability/maturation issues and cognitive abilities shall be taken into consideration.
- b. Since these students can still pose a risk, the Associate Superintendent (Instructional Services) shall be consulted.
- c. The principal and the Associate Superintendent (Instructional Services) shall determine police involvement. Some of these students may benefit from police involvement as an important 'teaching moment' for the child.

## **8. Worrisome Behaviors**

- a. School staff shall communicate all worrisome behavior to the Principal.
- b. The Principal shall contact the School Consultant to determine if the behavior warrants a formal assessment.
- c. The incident should be documented using regular school procedures and kept on file. The Principal informs the parents of the school's concerns.
- d. Supportive recommendations are made including counseling and consultation with police, if warranted.

Reference: Policy 170 Crisis Response Manual, ghsd75 website  
Criminal Code of Canada, Section 264.1 (1)  
Alberta Education, Supporting Safe, Secure & Caring Schools

## Appendix 340A

### FAIR NOTICE LETTER

Dear Parents:

The Golden Hills School Division #75 is anxious to continue to ensure a safe and caring environment in each of its schools. This letter is intended to serve as a fair notice that we, as a school community, will not accept 'no response' to incidents that intend to do harm against someone or something (ie.Zero tolerance for not responding).

The Student Services Team has developed a protocol to deal with immediate risk, high-risk and worrisome incidents. These are incidents that may involve weapons, threats to harm (spoken, written or symbolic) or assaults. **When a potentially high-risk incident occurs, the Principal contacts the School Consultant who assesses the level of concern and determines what level of intervention is warranted.** The assessment may include a data collection process through structured interviews with staff, students and parents; consultation with other community partners (Mental Health, RCMP, Family School Resource Worker, etc); possible use of a behavior checklist (such as the BASC) and an intervention plan. Findings are reviewed with the student and parents by the Consultant or Assessment Team.

The Division wants to respond in an appropriate and timely manner that ensures the safety of students and staff, while at the same time respects the rights of those involved in the incident. Should you wish to review Administrative Procedure 340 & 350, please check out our website and [www.ghsd75.com](http://www.ghsd75.com).

Please review this Administrative Procedure with your child early in the school year and discuss any concerns with your school administration.

Thank you for helping us keep our schools safer,

Student Services Team, GHSD#75

## Appendix 340B

### Risk/Threat Assessment Protocol

#### **A. Incident Variable**

Administrators gather all the facts related to the incident and complete 'Critical Incident Fact Sheet' and/or 'Risk/Threat Incident Report'. Referral to School Consultant.

#### **B. Student Variables**

School Consultant uses cumulative file review, interviews and rating scales to assess the student's protective factors, risk factors and mental health status to determine the level of risk and make recommendations for interventions.

#### **C. Assessment**

Students deemed to be a High-Risk are referred to the Risk-Threat Assessment Team (TAT). Incident Variables and Student Variables are reviewed by the Team. An interview is held with the parents and student to gather any further information. The TAT formulates a Risk Prediction Summary and makes formal recommendations to the family. (Ideally a summary sheet would be sent to the members of TAT prior to the interview).

**Appendix 340C**

**RISK/THREAT INCIDENT REPORT  
(Completed by Principal or designate)**

1. Name of threat-maker and his/her relationship to the school and to the recipient.
2. Name(s) of the victims or potential victims.
3. When and where the incident occurred.
4. What happened immediately prior to the incident?
5. What was the specific language of the threat?
6. Physical conduct that would substantiate intent to follow through on the threat.
7. How did the threat-maker appear -physically and emotionally?
8. Names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took.
9. How did the incident end?
10. What were the names of the witnesses?
11. What happened to the threat-maker after the incident?
12. What happened to the other students or employees directly involved after the incident?
13. Names of any administrators, teachers, or staff and how they responded?
14. What was the history leading up to the incident?
15. What steps have been taken to ensure the threat will not be carried out?