

Operational Services

Exhibit – Targeted School Violence Prevention and Threat Assessment Education



FOUR RIVERS SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT

936 West Michigan Avenue
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650-3113

Date: December 18, 2019

To: District Staff and Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

From: Christiane Pennell, Director

RE: Targeted School Violence Prevention Program

Student safety is our District's top priority. To maximize safety, the District uses a threat assessment process to identify *threats* and prevent *targeted school violence*. This process is part of the Targeted School Violence Prevention Program (Program). For more information, see Board policy 4:190, *Targeted School Violence Prevention Program*. The Program is part of the preparedness and response phases of the School Emergency Operations and Crisis Response Plan, which in turn is part of the District's Comprehensive Safety and Security Plan.

The District wishes to create a climate that encourages sharing *any* information about a safety concern with a trusted adult who can help. **Sharing information about threats and safety concerns is everyone's responsibility: students, parents/guardians, staff, and community members.** The question-and-answer section below is designed to help students, parents/guardians, and staff understand when school officials want individuals to share information about a safety concern.

What Is a Threat?

A threat is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that could cause harm to self or others. It may be expressed/communicated orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or in another way. Threats may be direct ("I'm going to beat you up" or "I'm going to blow this place up!") or indirect ("Come and watch what I am going to do to her."). A threat can be vague ("I'm going to hurt him.") or implied ("You better watch out."). Any possession of a weapon or mention of one is a possible threat.

A threat is a threat *regardless* of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or is observed by or communicated to a third party; and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.

Sometimes students make threats that may seem funny or “just kidding,” but sometimes a threat is very serious and/or criminal. **When you are in doubt as to whether the statement is kidding or serious, the responsible thing to do is to tell the Principal or other responsible staff member.**

What is Targeted School Violence?

Targeted School Violence includes school shootings and other school-based attacks where the school was deliberately selected as the location for the attack and was not simply a random site of opportunity. Individuals who have committed targeted violence did not “just snap,” but engaged in a process of thought and escalation of action over days, weeks, months, and even years.

In the majority of incidents of targeted violence, perpetrators did not directly threaten their targets, but they *did* communicate their intent and/or plans to others before the violence. This indirect expression or third party communication of intent to cause harm is often referred to as *leakage*. Reporting *leakage* is key to preventing targeted school violence.

Who Is Required to Report Threats?

All District staff, volunteers, and contractors are required to report any expressed threats or behaviors that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self to the Building Principal. Parents/guardians and students are also encouraged to report any such threats to the Building Principal.

Reported threats are assessed by the school’s Threat Assessment Team (TAT). Each TAT includes people with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement. The goal of the threat assessment process is to take appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain a safe and secure school environment, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed, to the individual being assessed.

The threat assessment process does not preclude anyone from acting immediately to address an imminent threat.

What Can Staff and Parents/Guardians Do?

The TAT will provide guidance to students and staff regarding recognizing threatening or unusual behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self. Staff and parent/guardians can reinforce this guidance by discussing with students what a threat is, encouraging students not to make threats or “just kidding” statements in the first place, and reiterating that seeking help to prevent someone from getting hurt or hurting another by reporting threats is appropriate.