

# ROLLING RIVER SCHOOL DIVISION POLICY

## Assessing Violence Potential: Policy for Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviours

JGA/P

### Purpose

Without formal procedures in schools and communities to assess threats that are common in the aftermath of high profile traumatic events, the likelihood of over-reacting or under-reacting to threat behaviour is now increased. The general purpose of a student threat/risk assessment team in school jurisdictions is to assist in creating and maintaining an environment where students, staff, parents and others feel safe. The primary purpose of the team is to identify indicators that suggest a student may be engaging in attack related behaviours against some target and intervene to decrease the risk, prevent injury to self or others, and assist the student to receive the help he or she needs to address the issues contributing to the high-risk student behaviour.

### Threat Assessment Team

- Team Leader - School Administration and/or their designate
- Guidance Counsellor
- Student Support Facilitators (if applicable)
- Police

### Additional Resources

- Divisional Administration
- Divisional Social Worker/Behavioural Specialist
- Probation Services
- Child and Family Services

### Definition of High-Risk Behaviours (Violence Potential)

The high-risk behaviours addressed in this policy include but are not limited to:

- Possession of weapons
- Bomb Threats
- Verbal/written threats to kill or injure others or to do harm to themselves
- Internet website threats to kill or injure others or to do harm to themselves

- \* Threats may be written, verbal, drawn, posted on the Internet or made by gesture only, and as noted by Canadian Law, may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

### Reporting

Any person in a school having knowledge of high-risk student behaviour or having reasonable grounds to believe there is a potential for high-risk behaviour shall promptly report the information to the school principal and/or designates. No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless the report is made maliciously and without reasonable grounds. In such cases the person shall be dealt with according to school division policy and law, where applicable.

### Index Regulation

**Date Adopted:** December 12, 2002

**Date Revised:** November 16, 2006

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### Procedures

Staff, students and parents will be provided with information about the policy and procedures so that “**fair notice**” is given that threat behaviour will not be tolerated. The Threat Assessment Training Team Leader and other appropriate school division personnel will take the lead in presenting the protocol to ensure that students, parents and staff are all aware that the new protocol is a division policy and that a consistent message is given regarding the use of the protocol. Standard “zero tolerance” policies are too difficult to apply to the endless complexities confronting school systems. As noted earlier, under-reacting and over-reacting to threats is a concern. An alternative standard then, is that schools have “**zero tolerance for not responding to threat-related behaviours**”. In other words, all high-risk behaviours will be taken seriously and high-risk students assessed accordingly.

Three categories for action:

1. Immediate Risk Situations
2. High-Risk Student Behaviours
3. Worrisome Behaviours

### Immediate Risk Situations

When immediate risk is identified, the principal will contact the police and take steps to ensure the safety of all school members, as denoted in established protocols (e.g. the student has a weapon in their possession and poses a serious threat to others).

### High-Risk Student Behaviours

All high-risk student behaviours, as defined above, shall be reported to the principal (and/or their designate) who will then activate the protocol for the initial response of the Threat Assessment Training Team, to assess the threat behaviour. In general, high-risk behaviours are those of students age twelve or older who are believed to have contravened Section 264.1 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada which states that students “who in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat ... to cause death or bodily harm” has committed an offence.

When the protocol is activated, parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity by one of the initial Threat Assessment Training team members. In as much as possible, parents should be an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.

In some cases students will be suspended from school during an assessment period to protect others from potential harm; to protect the threat maker, or both.

### Worrisome Behaviours

All Worrisome Behaviours will be communicated to the risk assessment team leader for consultation. Worrisome behaviours are those that cause concern for members of the school systems that may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour.

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This would include instances where a student may be engaging in behaviours such as drawing pictures, writing stories in class, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute “uttering threats” as defined by law but are causing concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content. In these cases, the team is not activated formally. The principal with the team determines whether or not there needs to be some formal action (assessment). The police may be consulted with but it is not done as a formal “complaint” because there is not sufficient data/evidence to warrant that action. If data is obtained that suggests the student has uttered threats to kill or injure, then the team is formally activated to deal with the new data.

### **Guidelines for Re-entry into School**

When data suggests a student poses a threat to others or self they may be suspended from school until a more comprehensive assessment can be conducted. Following the completion of necessary assessments, the initial Threat Assessment Training team members may work with the student and their parent(s) (caregiver) to develop a plan for re-entry that becomes a signed contract by all participants including the student and parent(s), if circumstances warrant.

### **In Situations of Disaster Aftermath**

Threat Assessment Training team will be put on alert. The Threat Assessment Training team leader shall be responsible to complete a Threat Assessment Training report and keep records on file (See “Threat/Risk Assessment Incident Report”) according to their governing professional standards.

The administrator shall notify all school staff, within a reasonable time period, when the protocol has been activated as a result of high-risk student behaviour.

### **High Profile Threat Related Behaviour**

Our schools are located within the impact zones of any potential school related disasters in North America (media saturation). Elevated sensitivity by some students, staff, and parents to high-risk student behaviour and worrisome situations where students engage in threat-related behaviour that would be assessed as “worrisome behaviour” but, due to the context of the threat, formal activation of the Threat Assessment Training team may be required.

In these exceptional cases, the “worrisome behaviour” occurs in a setting where, by circumstance or design, there is an audience that may be traumatized and their reactions to the incident may trigger a broader trauma response in the school and community system. In these cases, failure to recognize the traumatizing impact of high profile “worrisome behaviour” (under-reacting) may result in dramatic over-reacting by members of the school and community system. To avoid over-reactions, formal activation of the Threat Assessment Training team will take place.

### **Index** **Policy**

**Date Adopted:** December 12, 2002

**Date Revised:** November 30, 2006

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## Threat Assessment Background...Information

Question 1: What motivated the student to make the statements, or take the action that caused him/her to come to attention?

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Question 2: What has the student communicated to anyone concerning his/her intentions?

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Question 3: Has the student shown an interest in targeted violence, perpetrators of targeted violence, weapons, extremist groups, or murder?

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Question 4: Has the student engaged in attack-related behaviour, including any menacing, harassing, and/or stalking-type behaviour?

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Question 5: Does the student have a history of mental illness involving command hallucinations, delusional ideas, feelings of persecution, etc., with indications that the student has acted on those beliefs?

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Question 6: How organized is the student? Is he/she capable of developing and carrying out a plan?

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Question 7: Has the student experienced a recent loss and or loss of status and has this led to feelings of desperation and despair?

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Question 8: Corroboration. What is the student saying and is it consistent with his/her actions?

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## Assessing Violence Potential: Regulation for Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviours - Continued

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Question 9: Is there concern among those that know the student that he/she might take action based on inappropriate ideas?

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Question 10: What factors in the student's life and/or environment might increase/decrease the likelihood of the student attempting to attack a target?

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### Threat/Risk Assessment Incident Report

- Name of the threat-maker and his/her relationship to the school and to the recipient.

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- Name(s) of the victims or potential victims.

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- When and where the incident occurred.

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- What happened immediately prior to the incident.

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- The specific language of the threat.

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JGA/R

- Physical conduct that would substantiate intent to follow through on the threat.

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- How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally).

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- Names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took.

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- How the incident ended.

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- Names of witnesses.

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## Assessing Violence Potential: Regulation for Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviours - Continued

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- What happened to the threat-maker after the incident.

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- What happened to the other students or employees directly involved after the incident.

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- Names of any administrators, teachers, or staff and how they responded.

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- What event(s) triggered the incident.

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- Any history leading up to the incident

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- The steps that have been taken to ensure the threat will not be carried out.

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- Suggestions for preventing school violence in the future.

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