



Suicide Risk Assessment and Behavioral Threat Assessment

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Agenda

Greetings and Introductions
Suicide Risk Assessment (SRA)
Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA)
Differences between SRA and BTA
District Share Out – St. Johns County and Palm Beach County
Questions and Answers



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Suicide Risk Assessment

Section [1012.583](#), Florida Statutes (F.S.)
Rule [6A-4.0010](#), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)

Continuing Education and Inservice Training for
Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention
and Criteria for Suicide Prevention Certified Schools

Section 1012.583, F.S.

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE), in consultation with the Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention and suicide prevention experts –

- ... shall develop a list of approved youth suicide awareness and prevention training materials and suicide screening instruments ...
- ... that may be used for training in youth suicide awareness, suicide prevention and suicide screening for instructional personnel ...

Section 1012.583, F.S. – continued

FDOE must identify available standardized suicide screening instruments –

- ... appropriate for use with a school-aged population
- ... be valid and reliable measures of assessing suicide risk
- ... have instructional information about the administration and use of the instrument itself

The State Board of Education may adopt rules to implement this section – Rule [6A-4.0010](#), F.A.C.

Rule 6A-4.0010(1), F.A.C. – Definitions

- Suicide Risk Assessment
 - means an assessment conducted by a school-based mental health services provider or other licensed mental health professional to determine the level of suicide risk and plan of action for a student expressing suicidal ideation or suicidal intent
- School-based Mental Health Services Provider (SBMHSP)
 - means a certified school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor or a licensed mental health professional who is employed or contracted by a district to provide mental health services in schools

Suicide Risk Screening vs. Assessment

According to the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#):

- A Suicide Screening –
 - usually refers to a procedure in which a standardized instrument or protocol is used to identify individuals who may be at risk for suicide
- A Suicide Assessment –
 - usually refers to a more comprehensive evaluation done by a clinician (e.g., SBMHSP) to confirm suspected suicide risk, estimate the immediate danger to the patient and decide on a course of treatment

Essential Elements of a Suicide Risk Assessment

To confirm suspected suicide risk, estimate the immediate danger to the patient and decide on a course of treatment, the tool should:

- address the full range of suicidal thoughts and behaviors
 - past and present (recent and lifetime)
 - ideation to attempt (wishes, thoughts, intent, plan, prep, act)
- collect information pertaining to:
 - warning signs (past and present symptoms, diagnoses)
 - risk factors (individual, family, community)
 - protective factors (individual, family, community)
 - rationale for the behavior

Sample of Assessment/Screening Tools

FDOE-approved (as posted on the [Office of Safe Schools](#) website):

- [Columbia – Suicide Severity Rating Scale \(C-SSRS\): Lifetime-Recent](#)
- [Suicide Assessment Five-Step Evaluation and Triage \(SAFE-T\)](#)
- [SAFE-T Protocol with C-SSRS](#)

Other tools available:

- [Patient Health Questionnaire \(PHQ-9\)](#)
- [Ask Suicide-Screening Questions \(ASQ\)](#)
- [The Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation](#)
- [The Tool for Assessment of Suicide Risk \(TASR\)](#)

Suicide Risk Assessment/Screening Resources

- The Joint Commission – [Compendium of instruments and resources](#)
- The Mental Health Commission of Canada – [Suicide Risk Assessment Toolkit](#)
- The Columbia Lighthouse Project – [Toolkit of Columbia Protocol Scales](#)
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) – Suicide Prevention Resource Center ([SPRC](#))
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#) – ASQ Toolkit
- [MedlinePlus](#) – Suicide Risk Screening
- [Stanford Medicine](#) – The F.A.S.T. Lab – Assessment Measures

Rule 6A-4.0010(3), F.A.C. – Suicide Prevention Certification

Suicide Prevention Certified School – a designation

- All instructional personnel are required to complete two hours of an FDOE-approved youth suicide awareness and prevention training every three years (**11 approved trainings**)
 - ✓ As per [DPS Memo 2020-52](#): A district may request approval of district-developed or -adopted youth suicide awareness and prevention training materials that meet the criteria in Rule 6A-4.0010, F.A.C., by completing the Review of Suicide Awareness Training form, [RSAT-2020](#).
- The youth suicide awareness and prevention training must be included in the district's continuing education or master inservice plan

Rule 6A-4.0010(3), F.A.C. – continued

Suicide Prevention Certified School

- The school has at least two school-based mental health services providers who are qualified to conduct a suicide risk assessment using an FDOE-approved screening instrument **(3 approved instruments)**
 - ✓ By a certified school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor or a licensed mental health professional
- The school or district has a policy requiring the use of an approved suicide risk assessment instrument administered by a school-based mental health services provider prior to requesting or initiating an involuntary examination due to concerns about a student's suicide risk



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Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA)

Section 1001.212, F.S.
Office of Safe Schools



#NEVERFORGET



What is BTA?

Threat assessment involves **determining whether a student poses a threat of violence** (do they have intent and means to carry out the threat).

National Association of School Psychologists – *Threat Assessment at School*

- Not intended to be used to impose discipline
- Also known as Care Assessment (focused on how to provide support for those involved)

Why do we conduct Threat Assessments?

- Section 1006.07(7), F.S. – Each district school board shall adopt policies for the **establishment of threat assessment teams at each school ...**
- Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Report (and other similar after action committees) recommend multidisciplinary school threat assessment teams

6 Principles of the Threat Assessment Process

U.S. Secret Service – *Threat Assessment in Schools Guide*

1. Targeted violence is the result of an understandable process, not a random or spontaneous act.
2. Consider person, situation, setting and target.
3. Maintain an investigative, skeptical mindset.
4. Focus on facts and behaviors, not traits.
5. Use information from all possible sources.
6. Making a threat is not the same as posing a threat. Ask “Is this student on a path toward an attack?”

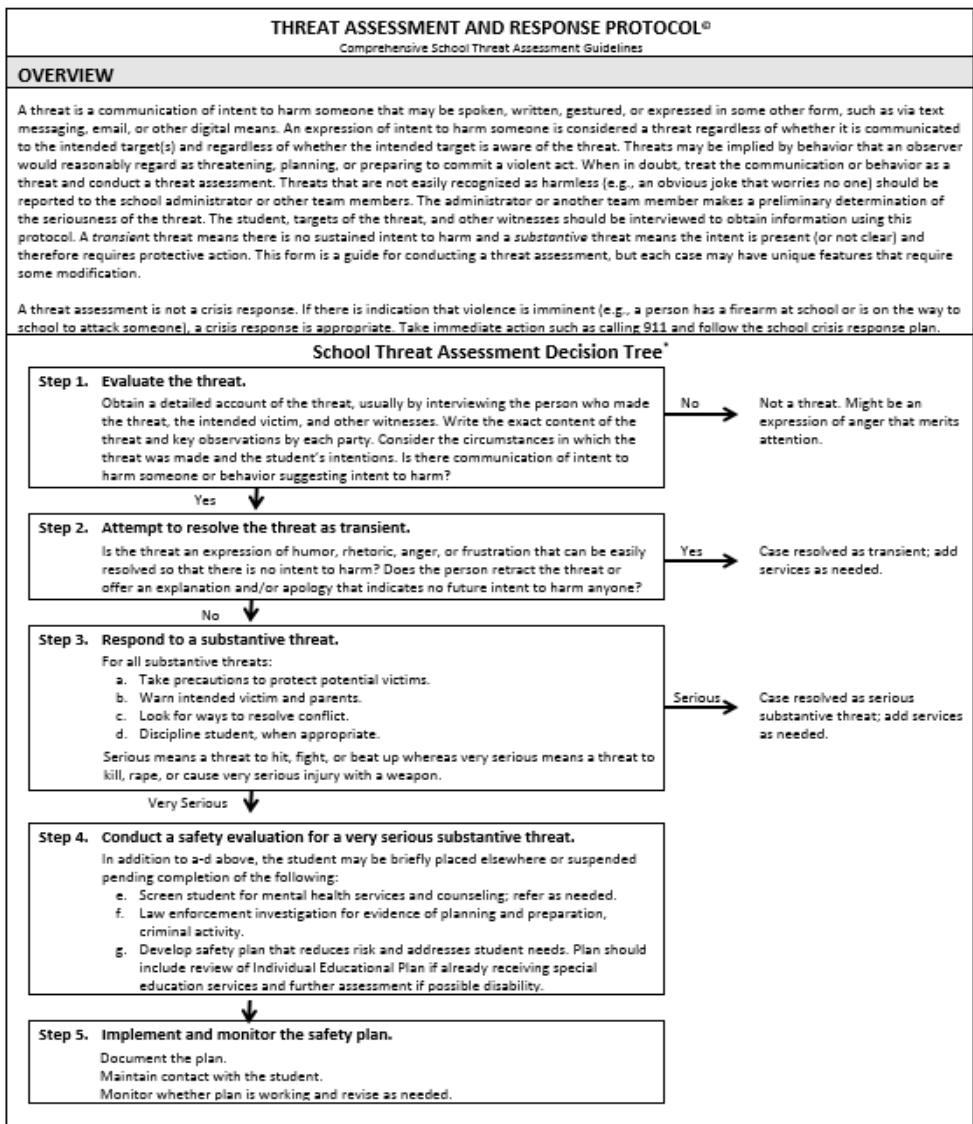
In a threat assessment, we try to determine *why* a student made a threat, and therefore how we can *prevent* the threat from being carried out.

How do we conduct Threat Assessments?

- Florida schools use the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guide (CSTAG) tool
- Threat Assessment teams meet monthly
- Look at contributing factors:
 - Interview student, parents, teachers, friends, etc.
 - Social media, video gaming influences, human trafficking, etc.

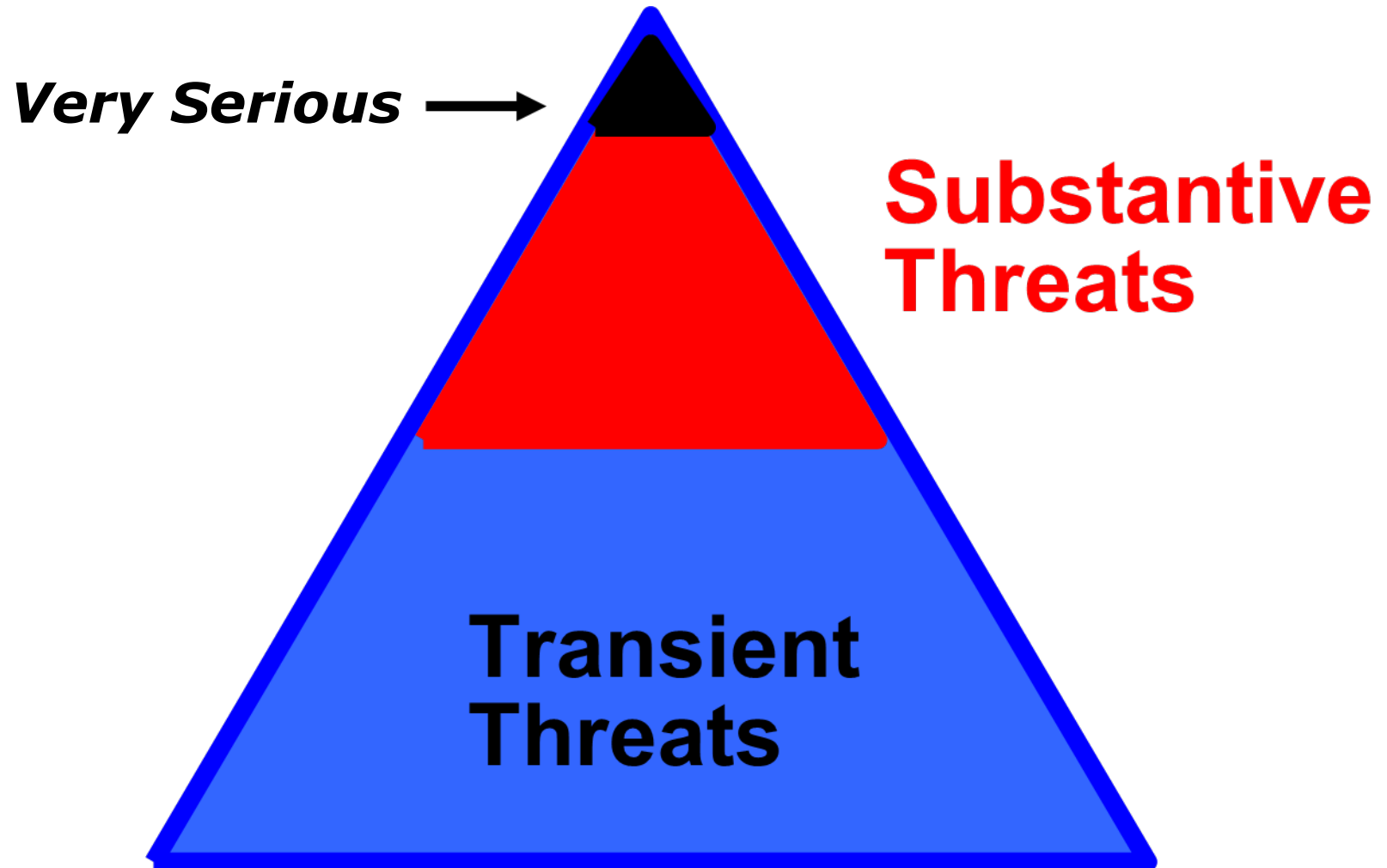


CSTAG Decision Tree



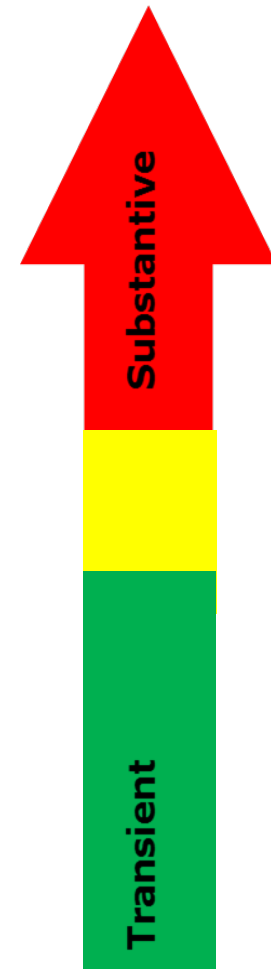
*This 5-step decision tree is a revision of the original 7-step decision tree for the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines that retains the same information and procedures in a more condensed format.

Transient Threats vs. Substantive Threats



Continuum of Threats

- Warning of impending violence
- Attempts to intimidate or frighten
- Thrill of causing a disruption
- Attention-seeking, boasting
- Fleeting expressions of anger
- Jokes
- Figures of speech



Who is involved in the Threat Assessment Process?

School Administration	Leads team.
Law Enforcement	Advises team, responds to illegal actions and emergencies.
Mental Health Staff (School counselors, psychologists, social workers)	Team member to conduct mental health assessments.
	Team member to take lead role in follow-up interventions.
Instructional Staff Teachers, aides, other staff	Report threats, provide input to team.

School districts may further specify team roles and include other staff to meet local needs.

Documenting Threat Assessments

1. Maintain quality of threat evaluation process
2. Document incidents and responses
3. Liability protection
4. Evaluate threat rates and trends
5. Consistency for sharing threat assessment information when needed

THREAT ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE PROTOCOL® <small>Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines</small>		
OVERVIEW		
<p>A threat is a communication of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or expressed in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other digital means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended target(s) and regardless of whether the intended target is aware of the threat. Threats may be implied by behavior that an observer would reasonably regard as threatening, planning, or preparing to commit a violent act. When in doubt, treat the communication or behavior as a threat and conduct a threat assessment. Threats that are not easily recognized as harmless (e.g., an obvious joke that worries no one) should be reported to the school administrator or other team members. The administrator or another team member makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. The student, targets of the threat, and other witnesses should be interviewed to obtain information using this protocol. A transient threat means there is no sustained intent to harm and a substantive threat means the intent is present (or not clear) and therefore requires protective action. This form is a guide for conducting a threat assessment, but each case may have unique features that require some modification.</p> <p>A threat assessment is not a crisis response. If there is indication that violence is imminent (e.g., a person has a firearm at school or is on the way to school to attack someone), a crisis response is appropriate. Take immediate action such as calling 911 and follow the school crisis response plan.</p>		
School Threat Assessment Decision Tree*		
<p>Step 1. Evaluate the threat. Obtain a detailed account of the threat, usually by interviewing the person who made the threat, the intended victim, and other witnesses. Write the exact content of the threat and key observations by each party. Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions. Is there communication of intent to harm someone or behavior suggesting intent to harm?</p>	<p>Yes →</p> <p>No →</p>	<p>Not a threat. Might be an expression of anger that merits attention.</p>
<p>Step 2. Attempt to resolve the threat as transient. Is the threat an expression of humor, rhetoric, anger, or frustration that can be easily resolved so that there is no intent to harm? Does the person retract the threat or offer an explanation and/or apology that indicates no future intent to harm anyone?</p>	<p>Yes →</p> <p>No ↓</p>	<p>Case resolved as transient; add services as needed.</p>
<p>Step 3. Respond to a substantive threat. For all substantive threats: a. Take precautions to protect potential victims. b. Warn intended victim and parents. c. Look for ways to resolve conflict. d. Discipline student, when appropriate. Serious means a threat to hit, kick, or beat up whereas very serious means a threat to kill, rape, or cause very serious injury with a weapon. Very Serious ↓</p>	<p>Serious →</p>	<p>Case resolved as serious substantive threat; add services as needed.</p>
<p>Step 4. Conduct a safety evaluation for a very serious substantive threat. In addition to a-d above, the student may be briefly placed elsewhere or suspended pending completion of the following: e. Screen student for mental health services and counseling; refer as needed. f. Law enforcement investigation for evidence of planning and preparation, criminal activity. g. Develop safety plan that reduces risk and addresses student needs. Plan should include review of individual Educational Plan if already receiving special education services and further assessment if possible disability.</p>	<p>↓</p>	
<p>Step 5. Implement and monitor the safety plan. Document the plan. Maintain contact with the student. Monitor whether plan is working and revise as needed.</p>		

*This 5-step decision tree is a revision of the original 7-step decision tree for the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines that retains the same information and procedures in a more condensed format.

Implement a Threat Assessment Approach

- Educate ALL staff on what to report and where to report.
- Select and train your team.
- Update student code of conduct.
- Inform students and parents.
- Conduct yearly threat assessment refreshers for your team.



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Differences between SRA and BTA

Suicide Risk Assessment

- Confirm suspected suicide risk
- Estimate the immediate danger to the patient – low, moderate, high
- Decide on appropriate course of action

Behavioral Threat Assessment

- Confirm suspected intent to harm another
- Determine seriousness of threat – transient or substantive
- Decide on appropriate course of action

CSTAG – Mental Health Assessment

- Not meant to take the place of an SRA.
- Not a prediction model.
- Identify any mental health needs.
- Identify reasons why threat was made.
- Propose strategies for reducing risk.

CSTAG – Mental Health Assessment

Who –

- School staff mental health professional

When –

- As soon as possible after a very serious threat

How –

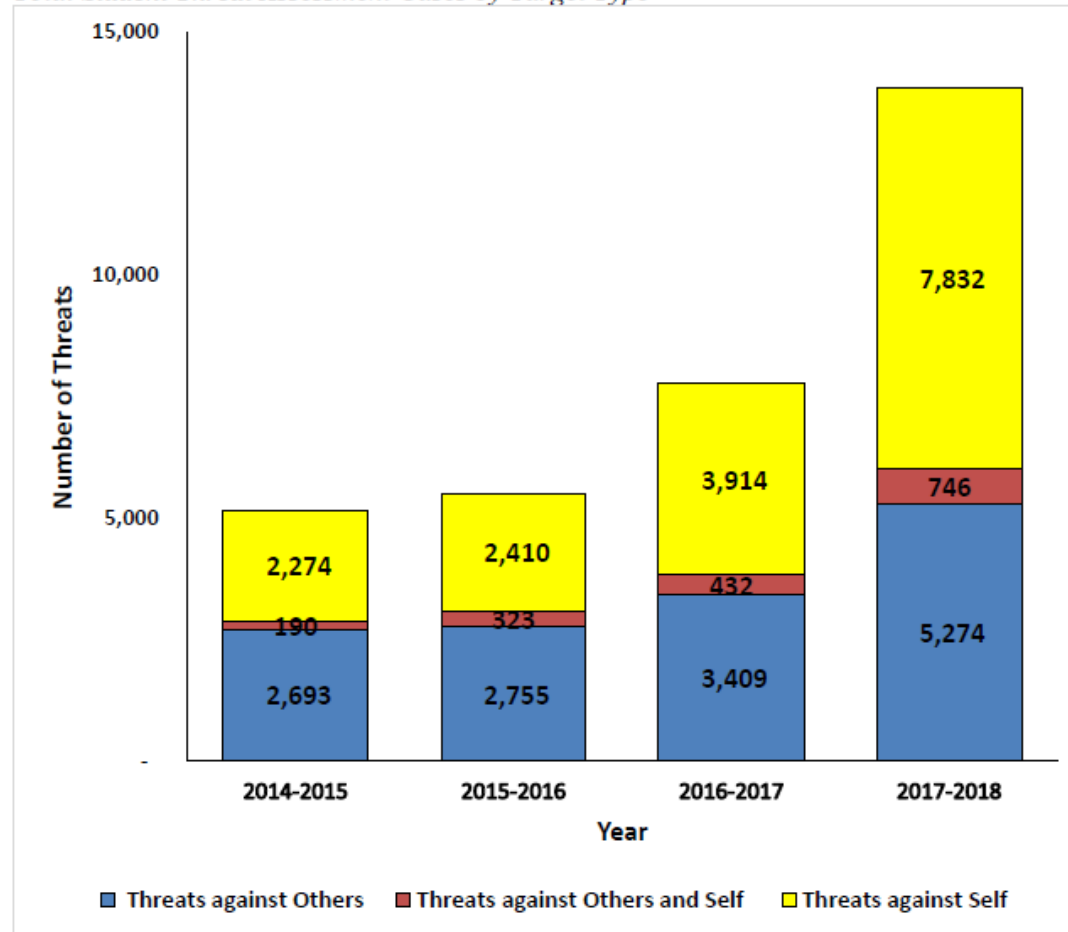
- Modify questions as clinically appropriate
- Use as much existing information as possible
- Concentrate on risk of violence

MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT <i>Victim Student Threat Assessment Guidelines</i>		
<p>A mental health assessment is usually conducted in cases involving a very serious substantive threat. The purpose of the mental health assessment is to maintain the safety and well-being of the student and others. Therefore, the assessment has two objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treatment and referral needs. Assess the student's present mental state and determine whether there are urgent mental health needs that require attention, such as risk of suicide, psychosis, or rage. Beyond these immediate needs, consider whether there are other treatment, referral, or support needs. 2. Threat reduction. Gather information on the student's motives and intentions in making the threat in order to understand why the threat was made and identify relevant strategies or interventions that have the potential to reduce the risk of violence. 		
Subject Interview (Person who made threat or engaged in threatening behavior)		
Subject Name		See records and additional information obtained by threat assessment team to supplement this assessment.
Person(s) Conducting Interview		Location, Date of Interview
<p>Usually the interview can begin by asking "Do you know why I want to talk to you?" and after the subject has responded, "Let me explain the purpose of our meeting today." Use these questions as a guide to interview the person making the threat. Ask other questions as appropriate. Try to use open-ended questions other than leading questions. Adjust spacing below as needed.</p>		
Review of threat		
1. What happened that made others worried that you wanted to harm someone? What exactly did you say or do that made them worried? What did you mean by that?		
2. I know you must have had reasons to say (or do) that; can you explain what led up to it?		
3. How would you do it? (carry out the threat) (Probe for details of any planning or preparation.) Where did the idea come from?		
4. What could happen that would make you want to do it? (carry out the threat)		
5. What would happen if you did do it? (review both effects on intended victims and consequences for student)		
6. What do you think the school should do in a situation in which a person makes a threat like this?		
7. What were you feeling then? How do you feel now?		
8. How do you think (the person threatened) felt?		
Relationship with intended victim(s)		
1. How long have you known this person?		
2. What has happened in the past between you and this person?		
3. What do you think this person deserves?		
4. Do you see any way that things could be improved between you and this person?		

CSTAG Data Results – 2020

DOJ Grant-Funded
Research of
CSTAG
Implementation
and Results
2-20-2020

Figure 2
Total Student Threat Assessment Cases by Target Type



Threat Assessment/Suicide Assessment Crossover

- One assessment may result in information that leads into the need for the other.
- A multidisciplinary team approach is imperative to the process.
- Consider the possibility for utilizing an “information vortex” as part of your team.



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District Share Out #1

Suicide Prevention Certified Schools

St. Johns County School District

Kyle Dresback, Associate Superintendent for Student Support Services



District Share Out #2

Behavioral Threat Assessment

The School District of Palm Beach County

William Durgin, Manager, Department of Safe Schools

Kelly Mullen, Manager, Department of Safe Schools



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Questions and Answers

Please feel free to ask whatever question you like tied to the information shared.



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