

STUDENT THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM COMPANION TO LEVEL I PROTOCOL (EXPLANATION OF QUESTIONS)

The following are explanations for the questions listed in **Step 3** of the [Level I Screening Protocol](#). It is intended to clarify the intentions of questions #1-16 and assist the Level I Screening team in assessing risk factors for violence and aggression. Remember that the Level I Screening should examine the situation and context involving a student or students, not isolating the student or students outside of the situation/context.

Level 1 Screening Protocol, Step 3, Item numbers 1-16:

1. Define threats or dangerous situation using the following continuum.

This question asks for a clarification of the threat. Place the threat on the continuum illustrated within the question and define your concerns. Note that there is a change within the continuum from aggression (non-serious or non-lethal injury) to violence (serious or lethal injury).

Circle the threat or dangerous situation using the continuum below:



2. Were there threats or intimidation communicated? How were they expressed? (Direct threats, specific references, veiled threats or vague warnings)

This question addresses the type of communication indicating a threat. Threats are sometimes made directly in verbal communication, art, email, internet use, written language exercises, and any other medium of communication. They can also be made by indirect, veiled, or casual references to possible harmful events, ominous warnings, or references to previously occurring violent events such as school shootings. A threat does not have to be specifically stated to be of concern, nor does it have to be stated or implied within the school setting.

3. Are there indications of a plan to harm others?

This question addresses attack-related behavior. Threatening language is just language without related behavior or intent. Many threats are not stated with language but are indicated by attack-related behavior. Attack-related behavior may be, but is not limited to, the following:

- A plan (complex or simple) to carry out a targeted act of violence or aggression against a specific individual, group or student body. Such a plan would have a sequence of actions necessary for its success and almost always requires a motive. The more plausible and detailed the plan, the greater the risk.
- **If a student is making a fairly exaggerated or complex threat but is unable to organize due to supervision, cognitive ability, or overall functioning, then the feasibility drops.**
- The acquisition of a weapon, attempted acquisition of a weapon, or research about how to acquire a weapon. (If the threat is the use of physical force to the point of serious or lethal injury, then the physical force is the weapon.)
- The rehearsal of the event or a similar event. Rehearsal or simulation is often necessary before a targeted event can be completely planned and carried out. Rehearsal can be indicated through art, fantasy games, writing or film projects, the use of movies, or internet

sites that have themes and sequences of violence that allow the simulation of targeted and violent acts or through first-person shooter video games that also allow for simulation of sequential and violent acts (examples of such games are Grand Theft Auto, Doom, Call of Duty). However, the use of such games or movies as entertainment does not lead students to act out violently. Their use is only attack-related behavior when it becomes rehearsal or simulation and practice.

- **Scheduling an attack.** Scheduling the act is sometimes indicated through communication or actually noted in clear detail. Sometimes the schedule is flexible, awaiting a triggering event (teasing, rejection, loss) that further justifies the violence and locks it in as the only solution.

Are there indications of suicidal ideation, intent, or planning? **

This question examines the presence or history of suicidal ideas, gestures, references and intent. The wish to die, be killed or commit suicide combined with a threat to harm others increases risk, especially if the self-destructive behavior is the last part of a plan to harm others and carry out revenge or justice.

**** If this incident includes self-harm, consider completing a Self-Harm Screening.**

4. Are there indications of a specific target?

This question examines the focus of the aggression or violent ideation or behavior. Is there an ongoing consideration or focus on a particular person, group or student body? If the situation is absent of a notable target, it is likely a situation that revolves around reactive aggression, used as a means to bully, intimidate, confront or defend interests and wants.

5. Indications of motives or goal for harmful lethal behavior.

Describe the student's explanation for the threats or ideation that led to the screening?

This question pairs with #4. If there is a focus on a specific target or targets, then there is very likely a motive. While there can certainly be many motives for acting out violently or aggressively, the most common seem to be revenge or vendetta, lost love, humiliation, and the desire to prove bravery after making a threat or taking a dare. If the situation is absent of a motive then it may be a situation that revolves around reactive aggression or the affectation of rage. Reactive aggressive and violent talk often have triggers that agitate the situation rapidly. Such triggers are usually not motives but should still be identified in order to avoid or eliminate them in the future.

6. Is the student's "story" consistent with the student's actions?

This question examines the relationship between communicated threats or implications of threat and the behavior that accompanies the communication. If threats are made but there are not attack-related behaviors, motives, or a specific target(s) consistent with that threat, then risk decreases. Many threats that lack attack-related behavior are likely to be a means of communicating dissatisfaction, attention seeking, releasing anger, and stress or even an affectation of strength or power (bravado).

7. What agitates the potential for threatening, aggressive or violent behavior?

What might inhibit or reduce the potential?

This question examines what are known triggers and what are possible intervention which can be Implemented, immediately. Identifying the situations that agitate or trigger violent thinking and/or action you can intervene and decrease the chance of a violent or aggressive incident.

8. Are firearms accessible to the student?

This question examines the obvious; however, it is important to remember that even if weapons are not available within the home, they are usually available within the community. It is also important to consider if the student has expressed the intent or desire to acquire a specific kind of fire arm or weapon.

9. Does the student have private space such as bedroom, car, shed, etc. that the parent does not access due to agreement, past practice or locks?

This question relates to acquisition and storage of a weapon in a space that is not typically monitored by adults in the home. Access, acquisition and storage of a weapon may indicate preparation and planning for a violent act. It could also indicate that the student feels the need for protection and may feel the need to “stash” a weapon and may be more of a “reactive” response. It is important to note that a reactive response with access to a weapon increases the potential for an aggressive or violent act.

10. Does the student see violence as an acceptable or justifiable method of problem-solving?

This question examines the ideas and beliefs within the threat to determine if they can be linked to attack-related behavior (see question #3), targeted behavior (see question #4) or motive (see question #5).

This question also relates to the student’s attitude and expressed values, and should not simply be defined based on behavior. For example, there may be a student who does not act out whose expression of that violence is an acceptable response under certain circumstances (i.e., if someone is bullied or harassed at school). There may be a student who acts out aggressively and actively seeks help to manage his/her anger. Both students pose a risk and the interventions may need to be different in each case. Consider both behavior and attitudes when answering this question.

11. Fascination or excessive interest with: weapons school attacks acts of mass violence

This question is somewhat complicated. What may be excessive to some, may still be within the normal scope of age, cultural or developmental range for others. The question examines whether the interest is a curiosity or a fascination beyond curiosity.

12. Identification with antisocial characters, notorious criminals, or murderers (historical or fictional)?

This question is somewhat similar to #11. You may hear a student describe admiration for Hitler or make favorable statements about the events of Columbine, Virginia Tech., Sandy Hook, etc. The question also examines whether the interest is a curiosity, a fascination as a sort of admiration for the anti-social character as role-model and example of how to justify violence as problem solving.

13. Does the student express hopelessness, view life as stressful or overwhelming?

Experienced within past 3-6 months (from the student’s perspective): rejection, humiliation change in status, victimization by peer(s) loss of significant friend, loss of family member, disciplinary action, other?

As students lose hope of resolving stressful or overwhelming situations through acceptable coping skills, they are more likely to engage in desperate solutions and last-ditch efforts to take control. It is important to note that the point of this question is to examine the perception of the student you are concerned with, not necessarily what is realistically observed or known by others (staff,

parents, other students, or the community). It is important to note that this question also refers to possible risk factors for depression and suicide.

14. Does the Student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?

This question examines the depth of relationships with pro-social adults. The greater and healthier the connection with teachers, coaches, parents, administrators, church leaders, etc., the less chance there is of wanting to disappoint or hurt them. The situation that lacks any connection to adults is the one of greater risk, as there is little to lose by acting out. This is one of the most important questions and indicators of need on the Level 1 protocol. If a student or group of students lack connection to pro-social adults and are also marginalized within the student population, then intervention and connection is strongly indicated!

Remember to consider this question from the student's point of view. Would the student say there is a trusted adult in their life? There may be a different perspective on this from the student's point of view vs. a parent or teacher.

15. Are other people concerned about potential for violence or aggression?

This question examines the concerns and opinions of others regarding the person(s) of concern and the concerning situation that exists. Concerns may range from an odd discomfort to a complete list of reasons why caution should be taken. If violence is being considered or planned, it is difficult to hide the indicators. In fact, sometimes little care is actually taken to hide the intentions and, while there may be little to no documentation of past behavioral issues, there may likely be several people who have been or are currently concerned.

16. Has the student been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior? **

This question is designed to address sexual behaviors that are inappropriate for a school setting and need further discussion about the context of the behavior. Context should include discussion of age, level of development, cognitive ability, frequency, intensity and/or duration of the behavior.

**** (If this incident includes sexual behavior, consider completing a Sexual Incident Screening.)**

Continue Answering Items #17-35.