2015

SOUTHWEST ALBERTA REGIONAL VIOLENCE THREAT RISK ASSESSMENT (VTRA) & INTERVENTION PROTOCOL

A collaborative response to keeping our children and community safe through the assessment of potential violence.

Formerly known as:
Chinook Country Regional VTRA Protocol (September 2012)

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The SW Alberta Regional VTRA protocol is based upon the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response (CCTATR) model of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and the work of J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director.

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Background

The Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol is the result of commitment and cooperation between school jurisdictions and community agencies, all of whom are committed to making our schools and communities safe.

All SW Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol partners[1] have agreed to respond to all behaviours that may pose a potential risk for violence to children/youth, staff and members of the community. The goal will be to intervene as early as possible when a child/youth may be moving on a pathway towards violence.

In developing this protocol, consideration was given to the uniqueness and diversity of the rural and urban communities represented in our collaboration. The protocol will ensure common understanding of the Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) process, and encourage the development of common responses, emphasizing a multidisciplinary approach. A multidisciplinary team affords a more complete understanding of the dynamics involved in the lives of those individuals making the threats and presenting the risks. This approach also better reflects consideration of the contexts in which threats occur and the impact upon those identified. The strength of the multidisciplinary team is the access it provides to a broad range of expertise and perspective.

This protocol supports collaborative planning among children/youth, families, schools and community agencies to reduce violence and to reflect safe, caring and restorative approaches. It fosters timely sharing of information about children/youth who pose a risk for violence towards themselves or others while respecting an individual's right to privacy to the fullest extent possible. The protocol celebrates the process of deliberately trying to "connect the dots" that may suggest a child/youth is moving on a path towards serious violence before a violent act occurs. Finally, the protocol promotes supportive interventions and preventative plans being put into place.

[1] The term "partner" in this document is not intended to infer a legal relationship, but rather a collaborative arrangement.

Rationale

The Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Threat and Risk Assessment (VTRA) partners are committed to making schools safe for students and staff. Each school jurisdiction and partner agency shall respond to all student behaviours that pose a potential risk to other students, staff and members of the community. Reflected in the protocol is the belief that support for early intervention measures by the school jurisdictions and community partners will reduce school violence.

The effective implementation of this protocol will support collaborative planning to reduce school violence and ensure safe and caring school communities. The timely sharing of information with partners regarding students at risk for violence towards self and/ or others will ensure that supportive plans are put in place. Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) is not a disciplinary process but rather an avenue to reduce risk. The strength of the school jurisdictions/community partnership lies in the multidisciplinary composition of the response team and the ability to activate protocols and/or collaborate with partners without delay.

Need for Training

This protocol is not a substitute for training in the field of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA.) The protocol is intended for use by multidisciplinary teams trained in the theory and practice of child/youth threat-risk assessment.

Importance of School Culture

School culture and/or climate is widely acknowledged to be a key to creating a safe environment. By placing a strong emphasis on safety, tolerance, communication and programming designed to facilitate social responsibility, we can create an environment where violence is less likely to occur. Environments such as these are characterized by systems that allow for early identification of potential problems. It is critical for children/youth and parents to be actively involved in the development of School initiatives and programming.

Vision

All partners are accountable to the protocol purpose and have a shared obligation to actively take steps to prevent violence.

In situations where a child/youth poses an imminent risk to themselves or others, the partners agree to work together for the common goal of threat reduction and safety by sharing information, advice, and support that assists in the reduction of risk.

The partners will work together for the benefit of children/youth and their parents/guardians to:

- Build working relationships based on mutual respect and trust;
- Work in ways that promote safe, caring and restorative school environments and practices;
- Prioritize the need for promotion, prevention and intervention strategies that demonstrate effectiveness in providing coordinated and integrated supports and services for children/youth and their families;
- Involve children, youth and their families in planning for services and supports;
- Recognize that each child/youth has unique strengths and needs that should be considered when developing supports, interventions, services;
- Realize that working together successfully requires persistence and is a process of learning, listening, and understanding one another;
- Ensure that fair notice of policies and procedures regarding Violence, Threat and Risk Assessment (VTRA) is provided to staff members, children/youth and parents/guardians.

The protocol is designed to enhance communication between schools and community partners. It is incumbent upon the partners to share necessary information that may initiate or facilitate a threat assessment process.

Key Approaches in Threat/Risk Assessment

Sharing of Relevant Information:
All partners will share relevant information to avert or minimize violence that affects the health and safety of any person.

Building Capacity:
The jurisdiction lead will take responsibility for new personnel to receive training, and keeping existing staff current. Working in conjunction with the Southwest Alberta Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (SWRCSD), these individuals will ensure that regular training opportunities are provided.

Program Review:
In order to keep the protocol current and relevant, on-going program review is critical. SWRCSD will hold an annual meeting to examine the protocol and address emerging issues. This meeting will involve school jurisdiction personnel, representatives from community organizations, lead contacts, and key decision-makers.

Contact List:
The regional school jurisdictions will be the lead agencies in application of the protocol. The SWRCSD will maintain an up-to date contact list of the protocol partners and will distribute a copy of the list to all protocol partners annually.

Community Partners

The geographical area covered by this protocol generally encompasses Southwest Alberta. The school jurisdictions are the lead partners in the Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol. Partner signatures and original document are maintained at the Southwest Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (SWRCSD) office at 3305 – 18 Avenue North, Lethbridge. Current community partners are summarized in the table below:

Alberta Health Services	**AHS Addiction and Mental Health South Zone** Trevor Inaba, Executive Director South Zone Tom Mountain, Director, South Zone
Alberta Human Services	**Alberta Human Services** Southern Alberta Child and Family Services Lonnie Slezina, Regional Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge and District	**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge and District** Jen Visser, Executive Director
	Calvin Christian School Marc Slingerland, Principal
	Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director Darwin Skretting, Director of Training
Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta South	**Canadian Mental Health Association** Deb Chenery, Executive Director of CMHA, South Region
Barons-Eureka-Warner Family & Community Support Services	**Family and Community Support Services FCSS Barons Eureka Warner** Brett Drewery, Director Milton Iwassa, Program Manager
	Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division #4 Terry O'Donnell, Chair, Board of Trustees Christopher Smeaton, Superintendent

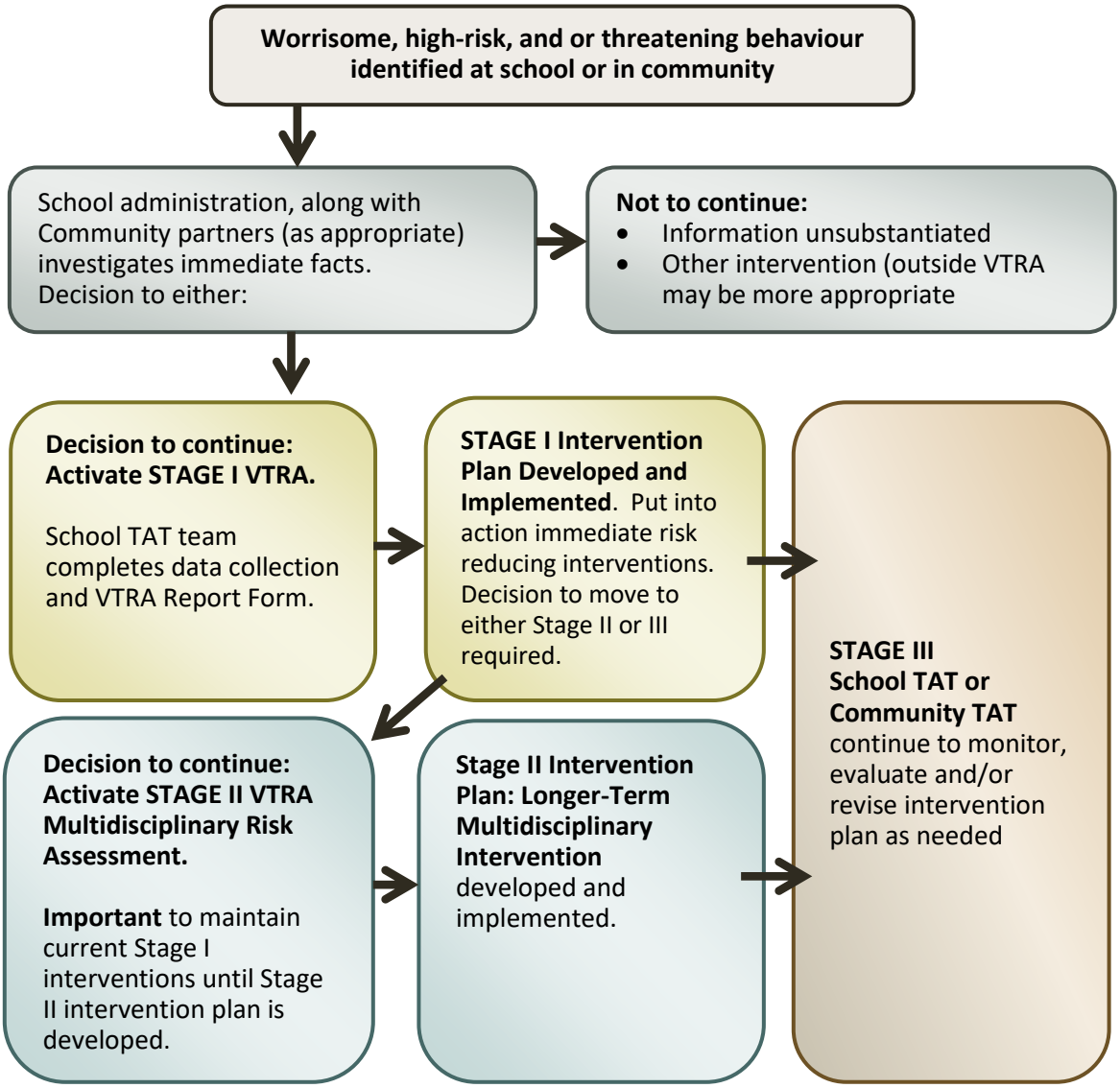
	Horizon School Division Wilco Tymensen, Superintendent
	Immanuel Christian Schools Rob Van Spronsen, Principal Jay (Jason) Visser, Principal
	Lethbridge College Simon Griffiths, Vice President Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer
	Lethbridge Montessori School Zahra Foroud, Director/Principal
	Lethbridge Regional Police Service Robert A. Davis, Chief of Police
	Lethbridge School District #51 Mich Forster, Chair, Board of Trustees Cheryl Gilmore, CEO/Superintendent of Schools
	Livingstone Range School Division # 68 Dave Driscoll, Superintendent
	Palliser Regional Schools Colleen Deitz, Chair, Board of Trustees Don Zech, Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees Kevin Gietz, Superintendent
	Providence Christian School of Monarch Tim Meinen, Chair, Board of Trustees Hugo VanderHoek, Principal
	Royal Canadian Mounted Police Inspector Tony Hamori Assistant District Commander, Southern Alberta RCMP

	Taber Fire and Emergency Services Steve Munshaw, Fire Chief
	Taber Police Service Alf Rudd, Chief of Police
	University of Lethbridge John O'Keeffe, Executive Director Campus Safety Judith Lapadat, Associate Vice President
	Westwind School Division #74 Ron Fromm, Chair, Board of Trustees Ken Sommerfeldt, Superintendent Rick Gilson, Assistant Superintendent

Threat Assessment Response Overview

When a child/youth engages in behaviours or makes threatening comments or gestures that may result in serious injury to self and/or others, the School Threat Assessment Team (STAT) and Community Threat Assessment Team (CTAT) will respond in a manner identified in: **Appendix A: Responding to Threat Making Behaviour: A Staff Guide**

This protocol is based on the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response's Canadian model of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA). The VTRA combines early Secret Service research around school-based threat assessment, and general violence risk assessment practice and protocol. The work reflects scientific research conducted by a number of disciplines including medical and mental health professionals, law enforcement, and specialists in the field of threat management. The diagram below summarizes the process:



Stage I: Data Collection and Immediate Risk Reducing Interventions

Stage 1 VTRA multidisciplinary teams should, when and where possible, include the following three professionals and others as the School Threat Assessment Team deems appropriate.

- School Principal and/or designate
- Clinician (School /Board designate)
- Police of Jurisdiction

The initial data collection can often be accomplished in one or two hours. The Southwest Alberta Regional Threat Assessment Report Form (Appendix B) provides a guide that can help to focus that data collection on the gathering of specific information that will be useful for all stages of the VTRA process.

VTRA cases may be resolved at the Stage 1 level when the incident proves to be:

(1) simply a moment in time, a bad judgment call by the child/youth under investigation that is deemed low risk,
(2) information that resulted in the activation of the Stage 1 protocol proves to be unsubstantiated, or
(3) adequate interventions are able to be put in place under the direction of the multidisciplinary team that address the need of the child/youth, school or community, etc.

Stage II: Comprehensive Risk Evaluation

Stage 2 may expand the multidisciplinary team to allow for a more comprehensive risk evaluation. This team may involve some or all of the following:

- Jurisdictional VTRA Leads and/or Jurisdictional leadership,
- Police of jurisdiction,
- Psychology, psychiatry, mental health and developmental pediatricians,
- Child protection, youth probation and other provincial personnel,
- Trained school system-based clinicians

This second stage is focused on further data collection beyond the initial data set obtained by the Stage 1 Team and as such, the Stage 2 multidisciplinary team members are charged with a further risk assessment and evaluation which may include the use of standardized tests and measures.

Stage III: Intervention Review

This stage requires reconvening all the Stage I and/or Stage II team members who are involved in the case at hand. The purpose is to monitor, evaluate, and when necessary, revise the intervention plan. The organization that will take the lead at this point is the one that is most appropriate at the time. In complex cases, one organization may take the initial lead but after stabilization another may assume the leadership/coordinating role.

The three stages of VTRA combine appropriate threat assessment concepts and risk assessment factors. This protocol allows for a comprehensive determination of violence risk posed, and the identification of appropriate interventions. It prevents under-reaction by professionals who may have used unilateral measures to determine the risk of violence. The three stages promote understanding that some individuals may not pose a risk for general violence, yet they may be moving rapidly on a pathway of violence towards a particular target they consider justifiable.

Threats

Threats may be written, verbal, drawn, internet-based, digital, gestured and may be:

- Direct
- Indirect
- Conditional
- Veiled

Some threats may not meet the standard of law for criminal charges but do warrant assessment. Prior knowledge may justify VTRA Team members in responding to pre-incident indicators that the threat may be a part of a clear and discernible pattern, which indicates that the individual is moving along a pathway to violence.

Anonymous Threats

Anonymous threats are typically threats to commit a violent act against an individual(s), specific group, or site (i.e. the school). They may be found to be written on bathroom walls or stalls, spray painted on the side of schools, posted on the internet, letters left in a conspicuous place (teacher's desk), etc. However, there are presently no known North American cases where an anonymous threat to kill was issued and a homicide occurred on the day the threat stated. (Cameron, Kevin: *Community Protocol for Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Intervention*, Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, April 2011, Page 34.)

It would appear that although anonymous threats may be credible in the world of global terrorism, in the field of school-based child/youth violence threat/risk assessment, the lack of ownership (authorship) of the threat generally denotes a lack of commitment. Nevertheless, there are steps that should be followed to:

1) assess the anonymous threat;
2) attempt to identify the threat maker;
3) avoid or minimize the crisis/trauma response.

Assessing a Threat

VTRA teams should consider the following in determining the initial level of risk based on the current data (i.e. the language of the threat):

Language of Commitment

1) Amount of detail (location where violence is to occur, target(s), date and time the violence is to occur, justifications, etc.)
2) Threatened to do what with what (kill, murder, ruin your life, shank, shoot, etc.)
3) Method of delivery of the threat (who found/received the threat, when and where did they receive it, who else did they tell and who else knows about it?)
4) Is the threat, clear, direct, plausible and consistent?

An Investigative Mindset

An investigative mindset is central to successful application of the threat assessment process. Threat assessment requires thoughtful probing, viewing information, with healthy scepticism and paying attention to key points about pre-attack behaviours. Persons who carry out threat assessments must strive to be both accurate and fair.

Threat assessors should continuously question the information in front of them. Ideally, there should be credible verification of all essential facts. Information about a potential attacker's interests, statements and actions should be corroborated, when possible.

The investigative mindset and perspective also rely on common sense. Threat assessors working to understand a given situation should step back periodically from the individual details of any inquiry or investigation and ask whether information gathered makes sense and supports any hypothesis developed concerning the risk posed by the subject of the threat assessment enquiry. (V. Fein, B. Pollack, R. Modzeleski, 2000)

Responding To Threat Making Behaviors

Consult with a trained VTRA Clinician if:	Activate Violence Threat/Risk Assessment protocol if:
• Change in baseline appears unprovoked. • There is evidence of a clear victim and perpetrator dyad. • If the frequency, intensity, recentcy (FIR) of the violence denotes an increase in the behavioural baseline of the perpetrators.	• Serious violence occurs. • There is evidence of intent to seriously injure the target(s) • When illegal weapons (knives, guns, replicas, machetes, etc.) are brandished or used in the commission of an offense. • Direct, clear and plausible threats to kill or seriously injure are communicated.

Staff Response Guide

Worrisome Behaviours	High Risk Behaviours	Immediate Threat, Call 911
Include but are not limited to: • Violent content • Drawing pictures • Writing stories/journals • Vague threatening statements • Unusual interest in fire • Significant change in anti-social behaviour	**Include but are not limited to:** • Possession of a weapon/ replica • Bomb threat plan • Verbal/written threat to kill/ injure • Internet website threat to kill or injure self/others • Fire setting behaviours • Threatens violence • Sexual intimidation or assault • Gang related intimidation and violence	**Include but are not limited to:** • Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to self or others • Plan for serious assault • Homicidal/suicidal behaviours that threatens safety • Fire setting • Bomb threat • Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill

Any person who is concerned shall report any behaviour that may pose a risk or threat to others to the school principal, designate or agency lead.

Principal (or Designate) informed, Team activated

Stage I	Team tasks in data collection phase:	Team tasks in intervention phase:
Data Collection and Immediate Risk Reducing Intervention • Within 1-2 hours **School Threat Assessment Teams (TAT)** generally include: • School Administrator • School Clinician / Counsellor • School District Lead • Police Service Lead • Agency Lead (as needed or if initiated by Agency)	• Make sure all children/youth are safe. • Determine if threat maker has access to weapon. • Inform Superintendent (or Designate) / Agency Director • Interview all witnesses. • Notify the child/youth's parent(s) or guardian(s). • Complete VTRA Stage 1 Threat Assessment Report Form. • Family will be interviewed/ engaged in process.	• Review findings with the School TAT. • Decide course of action. • Develop and implement an intervention plan. • Retain Stage I VTRA report form according to school division policy. If concern **is addressed** at Stage I then move to long-term monitoring in Stage III. If concern **is not addressed**, activate Stage II process.

Stage II	Team tasks in risk assessment phase:	Team tasks in intervention phase:
Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Risk Evaluation: • Referral within hours if Stage II is deemed necessary **Community TAT** generally includes: • Superintendent (Designate) • Police • School District Lead • Agency Lead (as needed) • School TAT	• Consult with Superintendent (or Designate) and/or Agency Director • Insure Release of Information / Consent is signed • Agencies / Partners / Professionals conduct assessments and share findings. • Conduct interviews as required.	• CTAT reviews findings. • CTAT decides on course of action. • CTAT develops and implements a comprehensive multidisciplinary intervention plan. • Retain Stage I VTRA report form according to school division policy.

Stage III

School TAT or Community TAT continues to monitor, evaluate and revise intervention plan as needed

Note: When a community team member determines the need to activate the Community TAT, that person will notify his/her designated lead team member, school principal or Superintendent of Schools. CFS will be contacted and participate when legal guardian. In addition, AHS and CFS will be advised, consulted and where possible will be involved in the COMMUNITY TAT.

Violence, Threat, Risk, Assessment Reminders

Threat Assessment Trumps Suspension

Unless the individual of concern already poses an imminent or obvious safety concern in which case he/she will be the responsibility of the police, the Stage 1 team should be activated and Stage 1 Report Form data collected before a suspension is even considered. The individual of concern should be supervised by a trusted adult in an area where he/she feels safe and secure while the Stage 1 data collection proceeds.

Experience has shown that a poorly timed out-of-school suspension is high risk as this intervention may be viewed by a "primed" student as the final straw. It is in this stage that many threat makers decide to finalize a plan to terrorize a school or attack a specific target. Fluidity between the suicidal and homicidal domains is also a concern. To be clear: the suspension does not cause the violence to occur but creates the necessary context for a high risk student, who is already struggling with suicidal and/or homicidal ideation, to take the final step from planning to action.

Violence, threat/risk assessment is not a disciplinary measure. But suspension may be recommended by the VTRA team as an intervention strategy. If so, the VTRA Team is advised to carefully consider where the environment in which the child/youth will serve the suspension. If parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to provide the level of supervision or support deemed to be appropriate to reduce risk and ensure the safety of the school, a Stage 2 VTRA may be needed. Members of the Stage 2 team may be able to mobilize community resources to provide the level of support a child/youth needs.

Fair Notice

Prior to any VTRA protocol being implemented, all students, staff and parents/guardians should be provided with information about the protocol and procedures so fair notice is given that violence and threats of violence will not be tolerated. Senior school division and community agency personnel should take the lead in promoting the protocol to ensure that all constituents are aware that the Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA protocol is a jurisdiction-wide policy and that a consistent message is given regarding its use.

Under-reacting or over-reacting to threats of violence is a concern. All high-risk behaviours will be taken seriously and high-risk students will be assessed accordingly. Determining what actions will be taken in any case (legal, disciplinary, mental health evaluation, etc.) will depend on the context of the incident.

Clarification: Threat or Risk

Threat Assessment is a process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails etc., a threat to injure or kill a target or targets) actually poses a risk to the target(s) being threatened.

Although many children/youth and others engage in threat making behaviour, research indicates that few actually pose a risk to harm the target being threatened. Multidisciplinary Stage 1 VTRA Teams engage in a data collection process to determine levels of risk that may be posed and plan necessary risk reducing interventions. Although a child/youth of concern may be assessed as low risk, there may be data that indicates a more comprehensive risk assessment is required.

Risk Assessment is a process of determining if a child/youth of concern may pose a risk to self or some unknown target(s) at some unknown period of time. The child/youth may be evidencing worrisome behaviour and/or increasing violent ideation and/or behaviours, which suggest violence potential, is escalating.

A risk assessment may be a more lengthy process that can involve standardized tests and measures that go beyond the scope of the school-based multidisciplinary VTRA process. After the Stage 1 initial level of risk is assessed and immediate risk reducing intervention has occurred, the School TAT may determine that further risk assessment is required. Unlike the immediate intervention, the risk assessment is meant to be a more comprehensive evaluation of all risk reducing and risk enhancing factors affecting the child/youths functioning. The goal of a Risk Assessment is to use that data to guide longer term intervention and treatment planning.

Automatic Stage 1 VTRA Activation

When a School Administrator becomes aware of any of the following behaviour:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Verbal/written threats to kill self or others (clear, direct and plausible)
- Digital threats to harm self or others
- Possession of weapons (including replicas)
- Bomb threats (making and/or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire setting
- Sexual intimidation or assault
- Gang related intimidation and violence

They will inform the Clinician and Police Member of the Stage 1 team who will then collect initial data as per the Stage 1 Report form. School administration may also choose to notify the Superintendent or designate of any behaviour that activates, or should activate, the VTRA protocol. Other team members (counsellors, community mental health professionals, psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, police, etc.) must promptly notify their direct supervisor of any behaviour that activates, or should activate, the protocol.

Stage 1 VTRA Team Leadership

In school-based VTRA cases the Principal and/or their designate is the team leader in that it is their responsibility to maintain a safe and caring learning environment and therefore their responsibility to activate the protocol when others provide them with information that suggests a child/youth has engaged in worrisome, violent or threat making behaviours. However, once the Stage 1 Team is activated, leadership is shared and collaborative as the multidisciplinary team decides the initial steps that need to be taken for immediate risk reducing intervention(s) and data collection.

Threat assessment trumps suspension. Therefore team members should be prepared to ensure that the child/youth under investigation is safe and under the supervision of a trusted adult or community partner until the immediate data collection and a level of risk is determined. In addition to contributing to the Stage 1 data collection the police member of the team, in conjunction with superior officers, is responsible for determining if a parallel investigation focusing on the criminal aspect of the case will go forward. When time permits the school Principal should inform the Superintendent or designate of the circumstances which activated the protocol.

Criminal Charges

Public safety is the primary mandate for police services. The police officer assigned to the VTRA Team has “first call” as to whether or not charges will be laid. If the law enforcement team member chooses not to proceed legally at the time then the officer will continue with

the Stage 1 VTRA Team and assist in data collection. When charges are laid, the police member of the Team will refer the case for investigation to another school resource officer or to a general duty member and then continue to participate as an active member of the VTRA Team. A police investigation does not prevent the remaining VTRA members from continuing on with data collection relative to the threat assessment. Good communication between police and VTRA Team is important so as not to compromise an investigation/prosecution or place unnecessary strain on a victim. It is understood that collaboration with VTRA Team members will be ongoing, notwithstanding the fact that each team member has his/her own jurisdiction.

Activating Threat Assessment Teams

When violence occurs in a school setting, the following general guidelines may be helpful to administrators who must determine if a case should be dealt with as a disciplinary matter or as violence threat/risk assessment case. The guidelines are intended to help school and community personnel make the determination of **when** to activate the VTRA process. It is important to carefully consider each and every individual case to ensure the most appropriate response.

To facilitate timely activation of the School Threat Assessment Team (TAT) or Community Threat Assessment Team (CTAT), each school jurisdiction or community partner will identify its lead TAT member(s), and provide appropriate contact information to the Program Administrator for Southwest Alberta Regional Collaborative Service Delivery. This individual will circulate this list to all protocol partners. It will be the responsibility of the Jurisdictional VTRA Lead or supervisor to activate the CTAT and/or contact CTAT organizational leads for assistance at any point in the VTRA process. For example, a mental health therapist may have information specific to the immediate threat situation or expertise which may be needed in Stage 2. Initial contact in these circumstances should be made by the Jurisdictional VTRA Lead.

Immediate Risk Situations

These situations include armed (weapons/device capable of causing serious injury or death) persons inside or outside of a building who pose a risk to some target(s) or active shooter scenarios. When immediate risk is identified, **the school lockdown protocol must be activated immediately, and 911 called.** In these cases police intervention and protection of students and staff is the immediate response.

As these situations are often over within minutes it is critical that all schools have a lockdown protocol that everyone understands, is practiced regularly, and identifies what to do if such an event were to occur. A solid lockdown plan in and of itself may serve as a deterrent to an individual who may be contemplating an act of violence in a school setting.

Early Elementary Students

Generally most threat-related behaviour exhibited by an elementary-aged student would fall into the category of **"worrisome behaviour"**. If there is a significant increase in baseline behaviour, weapons possession or **clear, direct and plausible** threats the VTRA protocol will be activated. Simply because a child/youth is of elementary age does not mean that they cannot pose a risk.

Non-School Hour Cases

If information is received by a VTRA member regarding a threat that is **"clear, direct and plausible"** before or after school hours, police will be called, parent(s) or caregiver(s) will be notified immediately so that they can take steps to inform and protect the target(s). The VTRA team will be activated if the situation is deemed to have potential to pose an ongoing risk to member(s) of the school community. Open communication between the school, community and police is essential. So is information sharing between patrol officers and school resource officers regarding non-school hour cases. Incidents occurring in the evenings or on weekends have the potential to continue into the next school day.

Child/Youth with Complex or Special Needs and VTRA

The multidisciplinary VTRA protocol will not be activated when child/youth with complex needs engage in threat-making or aggressive behaviours that are typical to their baseline. In other words, if their conduct is consistent with their diagnosis and how it has been known to manifest itself in them then the VTRA Team is not likely to be called upon to conduct an assessment. For example, some children/youth diagnosed along the Autism Spectrum or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum may have histories of verbal threatening when frustrated and make statements such as "I'm going to take a knife and kill you" as part of their typical baseline behaviour. This would not result in activation of the VTRA Team. However, if the child/youth with complex needs moves beyond their typical baseline and for the first time is caught with a knife in their possession or threatens a target with a knife in their hand then the VTRA Team would be activated. The Team would assist in determining the reason for the increase in baseline and whether or not the child/youth poses a risk to self or others.

Once the VTRA Team is activated the process of data collection and assessment is not modified other than to ensure appropriate interviewing strategies with the child/youth with special needs. Staff members from the school and district level responsible for program planning and service delivery to children/youth with complex needs should be included as consultants to the VTRA Team in these cases.

Good case management practice for children/youth with special needs means that school officials should already know more about these children/youth than others because program planning requires comprehensive assessment, collaboration and frequent communication between stakeholders. This foundational knowledge about the child/youth suggests that any significant shift in baseline that meets the criteria for the VTRA protocol activation will be easily identified: the purpose of the VTRA Team would be to assist in determining why the behaviour has increased and then contribute to intervention planning.

There are times when a child with complex needs has had a slow but steady increase in the frequency and intensity of their violent acting out behaviours. In these cases there may not be a single incident prompting a Stage 1 Threat Assessment. However, information and/or challenges may emerge that require the benefit of insight and information from Stage 2 VTRA members in order to reduce risk and plan appropriate interventions.

A note of caution: Sometimes school and community members may under react to a serious threat posed by a child/youth with complex needs assuming that all of their behaviours are caused by or are a result of their diagnosis. We need to be cognizant that a child/youth with complex needs can move along a pathway towards violence through justification like a typically developing student. The same dynamics that can increase the risk of violence in the general student population can also be factors in contributing to the violence potential of the child/youth with complex needs, independent of their diagnosis.

Threat Assessment Team Composition and Roles

School Threat Assessment Team (School TAT - Stage 1)

Typically the **School Threat Assessment Team** will consist of trained individuals. The team should include a member of the administration, a clinician (psychologist, jurisdictional VTRA lead, counsellor), and either an assigned school resource officer or a representative of the police services of jurisdiction. When the police services of jurisdiction are unavailable it may be possible to consult via video or telephone conference until such time as an officer can be assigned. The School TAT may be joined at this stage by a community partner if appropriate. All School TAT participants should have threat assessment training**. After immediate threat/risk to a child/youth/staff has been contained** this team will assess whether a risk/threat still exists and develop an intervention plan to support the child/youth(s) involved, the greater school population, and the community. The Jurisdictional VTRA Lead will be consulted and participate in the VTRA process as required.

Community Threat Assessment Team (CTAT –Stage 2)

The CTAT will consist of trained individuals that include the School TAT members, as well as jurisdictional VTRA leads, central office staff (if appropriate) and may involve community partners. When a School TAT has determined that a child/youth poses a medium or high level of concern to child/youth/staff safety, the Principal of the school in conjunction with the jurisdictional VTRA Lead may request that a CTAT be activated.

To ensure the timely activation of a CTAT, each school jurisdiction and community partner will establish a lead individual for their organization, the name and contact information for that person to be shared with the other collaborating organizations on an annual basis.

When a threat occurs the principal/designate will activate the School TAT and contact the jurisdiction lead as soon as prudently possible. If a CTAT is warranted, the jurisdiction lead will contact immediately the lead representatives of agencies relevant to the specific threat situation. In general, protocol partners will be expected to endeavour to cooperate with CTAT requests in a timely fashion and support any actions seen as necessary to ensure immediate safety.

When a community partner determines the need to activate a CTAT he/she will contact the jurisdictional lead of the school district in which the child/youth is enrolled. When a CTAT has been activated, the police service of jurisdiction will be consulted and invited to participate in the process. In most cases the child/youth behaviour that activates the community partnership will be observed in the school. Therefore, the lead partner will be the school board/school administration.

Involving Parents in Threat/Risk Assessments

Parent/Caregiver Notification – Student of Concern

Parent(s) or caregiver(s) of the threat maker should be notified at the earliest opportunity. Specifically, notification should occur after the Stage 1 VTRA team has collected enough initial data to confirm that a threat or violent incident has occurred and has determined the level of violence potential.

Parent(s) or caregiver(s) are a vital part of the assessment process as they are necessary sources of insight and data regarding the bedroom dynamic, increases or decreases in baseline and other contextual factors that may be either risk-reducing or risk-enhancing. Notification of parents is meant to activate a collaborative process between home and school, which will serve to more fully assess the child/youth and plan for appropriate intervention when necessary.

Notification guidelines follow that of standard practice. For example, in the case of a fistfight between two children/youth at school, before school administration call home, they would collect some initial data; talk with the child/youth involved. They then would notify the parent(s) or caregiver(s) of the situation and the circumstances surrounding it.

Parent/Caregiver Notification – Victim or Target

The parent(s) or caregiver(s) of the target(s) should be notified at the earliest opportunity. Often the target and his/her parent(s) or caregiver(s) are fearful or traumatized by the situation. Therefore, notification should be done with tact, skill and planning. A plan should be made for possible emotional supports the family may need. As such, if the threat is clear, direct and plausible or the VTRA Team feels violence may be imminent, notification will occur after the target is secure and protected from potential harm. If the initial threat does not meet the above criteria the VTRA Team will collect data to determine the level of risk before the parent(s) or caregiver(s) are notified, thereby preventing unnecessarily traumatizing individuals when no risk is present.

Supporting the Targeted or Victimized Child/Youth or Staff Member

The VTRA clinician (psychologist, district VTRA lead, counsellor) is responsible for ensuring that the recipient(s), victim(s) or target(s) of the threats are assessed and that services are provided as necessary. As the threat may be directed towards one or more child/youth, an entire class, or the school population, the circumstances will dictate how far-reaching an intervention may be. The VTRA clinician and the school administration, with consultation from the Jurisdictional Lead or his/her Supervisor, should determine if crisis counselling or a crisis response team is needed to re-establish calm.

There may be cases where the recipient of a threat has been engaged in high-risk behaviours that may have led to the threat(s) in the first instance. In those situations, the recipient of the threat(s) may need to also be assessed following the VTRA model.

Create an Expectation for Responsible Reporting

All staff and students need to be advised that any person in a school community having knowledge of high-risk student behaviour or having reasonable grounds to believe there is potential for high-risk or violent behaviour should promptly report the information to the school administration or agency lead (outside of school hours.) Students should be taught that seeking adult support for worrisome behaviour is not ratting or snitching, but rather a social responsibility for the wellbeing of all. School staffs need to actively counter the code of silence.

Guidelines for Re-Entry

When the data suggests that a child/youth poses a threat to others, he/she may be suspended from school. VTRA Teams guide the process from initial assessment, to planning interventions, to decrease risk (which may include a more comprehensive risk assessment), to planning for re-entry into the school where a suspension has occurred. This is best accomplished when the VTRA Team outlines, in writing, the steps the child/youth, family, school and others need to follow prior to re-entry into the school. Following the completion of the necessary steps the VTRA Team may want to work with the student and parent(s)/caregivers(s) to develop a plan for re-entry that becomes a signed contract by all participants.

Supportive Services

Careful consideration needs to be given to the types of supportive services, which may be helpful in individual cases. For example, it may be necessary to access a medical opinion, involve Alberta Human Services, or increase the level of supervision in the school setting. These decisions may involve a level of authority beyond that of the multidisciplinary team.

However, the collaborative efforts invested in the development of the Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Threat/Risk Assessment Protocol have led to considerable progress in the area of setting collective priorities and incorporating different perspectives. This has been reflected in the way people have committed to working together to meet shared goals. Ideally it will allow for the blending of perspectives, expertise, resources and responsibility needed to consider requests from VTRA Teams.

Supporting Targeted or Victimized Students or Staff

The VTRA Clinician (psychologist, therapist, counsellor) should be responsible to ensure that the recipient(s)/victim(s) of the threats/behaviours are assessed and that services are provided as necessary. As the threat may be directed towards one or more individuals, an entire class, or the school population in general, the circumstances will dictate how far-reaching an intervention may be. The VTRA Clinician and the school administrator should determine if crisis counselling or a crisis response team is needed to re-establish calm.

Key Point: There may be cases where the recipient of a threat him/herself has been engaged in high-risk behaviours that lead to the threat(s) in the first instance. In those situations, the recipient of the threat(s) may need to be assessed for high-risk behaviour as well.

Information Sharing

The general intent of access to information and protection of privacy legislation is to regulate the collections, use and disclosure of personal information. Wherever, possible and reasonable, consent to disclose personal information should be obtained. Valid consent does not exist unless the individual knows what he/she is consenting to, and understands the consequences of the intended disclosure. The individual must be made aware that he/she can withdraw consent at any time by giving written or verbal notice. A brief guide for information sharing is provided below:

The school jurisdictions and community partners collaborating on the Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol are committed to the sharing of relevant information to the extent authorized by law. In so doing, the collaborative process will balance the individual's rights to privacy and the safety of all. This collaborative process will operate within the framework provided by:

- The Alberta Information Sharing Strategy
- The Alberta Children First Act
- The Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- The Alberta Health Information Act

Note: *Jurisdiction leads are responsible for ensuring that the information sharing practices follow the most current guidelines, references above are hyperlinked to the most current versions. Also refer to* **APPENDIX I: Information Sharing Quick Reference**

It should be noted that Section 126(6) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) enables information in a Youth Criminal Justice Act record to be shared, within the access period, with any professional or other person engaged in the supervision or care of a young person – including the representative of any school board, or school or any other educational or training institution only in limited circumstances**.** Information may be shared to ensure the safety of staff, students or others, to facilitate rehabilitation of the young person or to ensure compliance with a youth justice court order or any order of the provincial director respecting reintegration leave. Such sharing of information does not require the young person's consent.

Information Sharing Decision Tree

Alberta

For disclosure under the *Health Information Act* (HIA), *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP), *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) and *Children First Act* (CFA).

	Considerations	Resources
Request for disclosure of individually identifying personal or health information		Information Sharing Contact Centre 780-638-1372 Toll free in Alberta 310-0000 hs.infosharing@gov.ab.ca infosharing.alberta.ca
I can verify the requestor's identity	I understand why the information is needed, who it is about, and how it will be used I understand my organization's verification standards I will request additional information if needed	
I am authorized to disclose health information under the HIA without consent	I am disclosing health information that: • averts risk of harm to a minor's health and safety • prevents imminent danger to any person • enables the individual to receive continuing treatment and care • is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta's or Canada's legislation	eLearning - Information Sharing in Practice Fact Sheet - Sharing Personal or Health Information to Avert or Minimize Risk of Harm HIA Help Desk 780-427-8089 Toll free in Alberta 310-0000 hiahelpdesk@gov.ab.ca Health Information Act
I am authorized to disclose personal information under FOIP without consent	I am disclosing personal information that: • averts risk of harm to a minor's health and safety • prevents imminent danger to any person • is for a consistent purpose • helps determine service or program eligibility • is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta's or Canada's legislation	eLearning - Information Sharing in Practice My organization's FOIP coordinator FOIP Help Desk 780-427-5848 Toll free in Alberta 310-0000 foiphelpdesk@gov.ab.ca FOIP Act
I am authorized to disclose personal information under PIPA without consent	I am disclosing personal information that: • allows response to an emergency that threatens an individual's or the public's life, health, or security • is authorized to be disclosed by Alberta's or Canada's legislation	eLearning - Information Sharing in Practice servicealberta.ca/pipa PIPA Help Desk 780-644-7472 Toll free in Alberta 310-0000 pspinfo@gov.ab.ca PIPA
I am authorized to disclose health or personal information under the CFA without consent	I am disclosing personal or health information about a child that: • enables service planning and delivery for a child • is in the best interest of the child • does not go against the child's express request not to share information with their guardian	eLearning - Information Sharing Under the *Children First Act* eLearning - Information Sharing in Practice Guide - Information Sharing Under the *Children First Act* Fact Sheet - *Children First Act* Fact Sheet - Sharing Personal or Health Information to Avert or Minimize Risk of Harm *Children First Act*
I am authorized to disclose health or personal information under other program legislation without consent	I am operating under: • the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* • the *School Act* • the *Victims of Crime Act* • the *Mental Health Act*	*Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* *School Act* *Victims of Crime Act* *Mental Health Act*

YES / NO

The express request of the individual and any other relevant factors have been considered

NO

I can get consent and understand what it means and what is required

YES	YES	NO
I can disclose minimum information that is reasonable and necessary and will document the disclosure	**I can only disclose information that is specified in the consent and will document the disclosure**	**I cannot disclose information and will document the decision**

CONSIDERATIONS

I have made a reasonable effort to ensure the information being disclosed is accurate and complete

I will follow my organization's information sharing policies and document management processes

15.01.29

Communications

Media

As part of the threat assessment process, the school jurisdiction and community partners involved in the threat assessment may decide to develop a joint press release. This should be done with consultation from the district leadership team, specifically the Superintendent of School. In all other cases, the school jurisdiction will take the lead role in managing media relations.

Parent/Staff/Student

Communication with parents, staff, and students will be managed by the school personnel. Full disclosure of the threat assessment process should be outlined in a "fair notice" letter to parents, guardians and students at the beginning of the school year. Communication of fair notice could be achieved through communication strategies such as system-wide publications, student agendas and school newsletters, just to name a few.

To make parents, guardians and child/youth aware of the protocol to be followed in such cases, it is the recommendation of the Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Threat/Risk Assessment Protocol that all partner school jurisdictions send a ***Risk/Threat Assessment Notification*** letter home with all child/youth at the beginning of every school year. This notification should also be posted permanently on the jurisdictions websites

Intra-Agency

Internal school jurisdiction and agency communication regarding the process will be the responsibility of each party to the protocol.

Documentation

Each partner will document and store information as required by the school jurisdiction/agency to which they are responsible.

Also refer to:

APPENDIX H: VTRA – Parent Notification Letter

APPENDIX L: Fair Notice Brochure

Appendix A: Staff Response Guide

Worrisome Behaviours	High Risk Behaviours	Immediate Threat, Call 911
Include but are not limited to: • Violent content • Drawing pictures • Writing stories/journals • Vague threatening statements • Unusual interest in fire • Significant change in anti-social behaviour	**Include but are not limited to:** • Possession of a weapon/ replica • Bomb threat plan • Verbal/written threat to kill/ injure • Internet website threat to kill or injure self/others • Fire setting behaviours • Threatens violence • Sexual intimidation or assault • Gang related intimidation and violence	**Include but are not limited to:** • Weapon in possession that poses serious threat to self or others • Plan for serious assault • Homicidal/suicidal behaviours that threatens safety • Fire setting • Bomb threat • Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill

Any person who is concerned shall report any behaviour that may pose a risk or threat to others to the school principal, designate or agency lead.

Principal (or Designate) informed, Team activated

Stage I	Team tasks in data collection phase:	Team tasks in intervention phase:
Data Collection and Immediate Risk Reducing Intervention • Within 1-2 hours **School Threat Assessment Teams (TAT)** generally include: • School Administrator • School Clinician / Counsellor • School District Lead • Police Service Lead • Agency Lead (as needed or if initiated by Agency)	• Make sure all children/youth are safe. • Determine if threat maker has access to weapon. • Inform Superintendent (or Designate) / Agency Director • Interview all witnesses. • Notify the child/youth's parent(s) or guardian(s). • Complete VTRA Stage 1 Threat Assessment Report Form. • Family will be interviewed/ engaged in process.	• Review findings with the School TAT. • Decide course of action. • Develop and implement an intervention plan. • Retain Stage I VTRA report form according to school division policy. If concern **is addressed** at Stage I then move to long-term monitoring in Stage III. If concern **is not addressed**, activate Stage II process.

Stage II	Team tasks in risk assessment phase:	Team tasks in intervention phase:
Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Risk Evaluation: • Referral within hours if Stage II is deemed necessary **Community TAT** generally includes: • Superintendent (Designate) • Police • School District Lead • Agency Lead (as needed) School TAT	• Consult with Superintendent (or Designate) and/or Agency Director • Insure Release of Information / Consent is signed • Agencies / Partners / Professionals conduct assessments and share findings. • Conduct interviews as required.	• CTAT reviews findings. • CTAT decides on course of action. • CTAT develops and implements a comprehensive multidisciplinary intervention plan. • Retain Stage I VTRA report form according to school division policy.

Stage III

School TAT or Community TAT continues to monitor, evaluate and revise intervention plan as needed

Note: When a community team member determines the need to activate the Community TAT, that person will notify his/her designated lead team member, school principal or Superintendent of Schools. CFS will be contacted and participate when legal guardian. In addition, AHS and CFS will be advised, consulted and where possible will be involved in the COMMUNITY TAT.

Appendix B: Administrative Checklist

Step / Action	***Assigned*** ✓	***Completed*** ✓
Step 1: Concerning Behaviour / Potential Threat Identified		
• Make sure all students are safe		
• If there is imminent danger, the police/call 911		
• Detain the student/s involved separately		
• Do not allow access to coats, backpacks, lockers, cell phones, etc.		
• Assess worrisome behaviour to determine further action		
• Consult police of jurisdiction (if appropriate)		
Step 2: Review protocol document		
Step 3: Decision to activate Stage I Team		
• **NO**: information is unsubstantiated or other intervention (outside VTRA) may be more appropriate		
• **YES**: Continue to Step 4 o Contact School Superintendent (or Designate)		
Step 4: Determine if the threat maker has access to the means		
• Check: o Locker, Backpack**,** Desk, Clothing / Belongings		
• Secure: o Access to vehicle, all electronic devices		
• Investigate social media profile (example: Facebook)		
Step 5: Parent / Guardian Notification		
• Notify the student's parent/s or guardian/s		
• Notify the victim's parent/s or guardian/s		
• Reason parent/guardian have not been notified		
Step 6: Collect data and document using Threat Risk Assessment form		
• Interview witnesses (those direct and indirectly involved)		
• Interview student in question		
• Interview Target/Victim		
• Interview witnesses		
• Interview staff		
• Gather additional information		
• Review Principal/Administrator's file, discipline records, behaviour logs, suspension letters, etc.		
• Contact previous school/teacher		
• Contact Board/School Staff involved with the student/s		
Step 7: Retain Stage I VTRA report form according to school division policy.		

At any point in the process, if an immediate threat is confirmed, call 911

Appendix C: Stage I VTRA Report Form Guide

Note: The following Stage I report form is only for the use of professionals trained in the Level I and Level II Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response Violence Threat / Risk Assessment (VTRA) model**.**

***It is *not* a Stage I VTRA if there is imminent danger or the threat is time sensitive (e.g. "they said they were coming back to get her with a knife").**

In these types of cases, Call 911

Automatic Stage I VTRA Activation in the following cases:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Verbal/written threats to kill others ("clear, direct, and plausible")
- Internet (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) text messaging, threats to kill others (refer to Appendix B of the National Training Protocol for abbreviations commonly used on the Internet and texting)
- Possession of weapons (including replicas)
- Bomb threats (making and/or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire Setting
- Sexual intimidation or assault
- Gang related intimidation and violence

Note: the above are examples of high-risk behaviours addressed in this protocol; other behaviours not listed may also be considered for Stage I VTRA activation

Three Primary Hypotheses in VTRA:

One: Is it a conscious or unconscious "**Cry for Help**"?
Two: **Conspiracy of two or more**! Who else knows about it? Who else is involved?
Three: Is there any evidence of **fluidity**?

Quotes/Jingles to keep in mind during the VTRA process:

- The quote that Kills – Good kid with no history of violence.
- "The person being interviewed knows the truth. They do not know how much we know of the truth".
- An investigative, sceptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful VTRA's.
- No case should be thought of as a Simple case.
- The final act may not be the primary objective.
- Serious violence is not just a painful and evolutionary process, but is also contextually based or influenced.
- The better the **data collection** – the better the **assessment**; the better the **assessment** – the better the **intervention**.

Pre-interview Considerations

I. When possible, interview the Threat Maker(s) or Student of Concern **after** initial data has been collected such as locker check, interviewing the individual who reported the threat as well as the police member doing an occurrence check for prior police contacts. This will help to avoid the one-dimensional assessment and provide the interviewer(s) with data to develop case specific hypotheses and verbatim questions that can be asked in a strategic VTRA interview to test those hypotheses.

II. There should **never** be more than two people in the room interviewing the Threat Maker or Student of Concern.

III. All VTRAs are in essence a two-pronged assessment. You will be collecting data on both, but it is crucial to remember to distinguish between **Assessing the Threat** versus **Assessing the Threat Maker.**

IV. Identify the Team Lead

Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1:

Make sure all children/youth are safe and call a police member of the VTRA Team

- Appropriately monitor and / or detain the child/youth or concern until the police member of the team is present
- Do not allow access to coats, backpacks, desks, vehicles, lockers, or any digital device (Cellphone, etc., supported by the user agreements for technology of your district.).
- Determine if threat maker has access to the means (knife, gun etc.)

Note: have signed copies of Jurisdiction's information release form available

Step 2: School Administrators: If appropriate, check the locker, backpack, desk, etc.

Step 3: Call the "trained" VTRA police member; share initial data and police will determine if a history of weapons possession, use, or violence is noted in police accessible records.

Step 4: School Administrator will notify the District/Divisional VTRA Team contact of the Stage I Team activation.

Note: Steps 5 - 11 refer to information required in Stage I VTRA Report Form (Appendix D)

Step 5: Principal (or Designate) and VTRA Police member, in collaboration with the counselling member will determine who will strategically Interview sources of data including all participants directly and indirectly involved as well as "hard" data collection as outlined below.

The four basic questions that guide the strategic process of the interviews are:

1) How much time do we have,
2) Who will be interviewed,
3) Who will conduct the interviews,
4) In what order will the interviews occur

Immediate Data may be obtained from multiple sources including:

- People: reporter(s), target(s), witnesses, teachers and other school staff (secretaries, teacher assistants, bus drivers, etc.), friends, classmates, acquaintances, parents/caregivers (call both parents)
- Documents: current and *previous* school records (call the sending school), police record check, diaries, notebooks
- Places: check the student(s), locker, desk, backpack, recent text books/assignment binders, cars, etc. for data consistent with the threat making or threat-related behaviour, check/search or question parents/caregivers about the student(s), bedroom etc.
- Activities: internet histories, other digital accounts

Step 6: Notify the Threat Maker(s) and Target(s) Parent(s) or Guardian(s) at the earliest opportunity.

Step 7: The Semi-Structured Interview Format

Step 8: Other Agencies:

As per the formal signed protocol, other agency partners may be involved in the Stage I VTRA process as consultants to the school/police team and sources of initial data relevant to the case at hand such as past or current involvement by other agencies that once they are informed of the initial school/police data may release necessary information or physically join the team.

- Call Children's Services (Child Protection) VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Mental Health VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Call Youth Probation VTRA Member for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Others

Upon receipt of the Stage I data, partner agencies check to see if the student in question is or was a client and then the agency determines if they are in possession of information that in conjunction with the Stage I data requires them to "disclose". Generally Stage II VTRA Team designates will report that a record check has been completed and:

1) There is nothing to report.
2) There is information relevant to the case that needs to be disclosed as per the VTRA Protocol (significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others is present).
3) The risk is not immediate but a Release of Information Form should be requested to allow for a full disclosure of the contents of the file relevant to the case at hand**.**

Step 9: Identify Risk Enhancing Factors:

Are there factors unique to the current case that may be contributing to level of risk?

Key Point – *Every identified Risk Enhancer also identifies an entry point for Risk Reduction, either immediately or more long term.*

General Examples (may include but not limited to):

- **Individual Dynamics**: Undiagnosed/unmanaged/mismanaged mental health issues (Child and/or Parent/Guardian).
- **Peer Dynamics:** recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, influences.
- **Family Dynamics:** recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, disclosures.
- **School Dynamics**: recent changes within the school or moving from other schools, recent changes in, or ongoing academic struggles/difficulties, relationships with staff.

Step 10: VTRA Team members collate the data and discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the question: "*To what extent does the student pose a concern to school/student safety*?" "*Do they pose a threat to themselves or someone outside the school (i.e. family)?*" The Stage I Assessment is an overall assessment of current level of risk and is a precursor to (if necessary) a more comprehensive Stage II Risk Evaluation

Low Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is minimal.

- Within the general range for typical baseline behaviour for the student in question.
- Low risk does not imply "no risk" but indicates *the individual* is at little risk for violence.
- Data collected suggests threat is:
  - Vague or
  - Indirect or
  - Implausible or
  - Lacking detail or
  - Lacking realism.
- Monitoring of the matter may be appropriate

Medium Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is credible, violent action is possible.

The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.

- Increase in baseline behaviour.
- Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (e.g., possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (e.g., weapon, seeking), although there may be an ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: "I'm serious!"
- *The individual* is at an elevated risk for violence, and those measures currently in place or further measures, including monitoring, are required in an effort to manage the individual's future risk.

High Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is specific and plausible; the student or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

- Significant increase in baseline behaviour.
- There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.
- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on threat.
- Information suggests strong concern about the student's potential to act violently.
- Immediate intervention is required to prevent an act of violence from occurring

Sources for the above categorizations represent the work of the FBI, and the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Step 11: Decide on a Course of Action

Are there risk reducing interventions that need to be put in place immediately?

With the input of *all* Threat Assessment Team members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision.

Low to Medium Level of Concern • Implement the Intervention Plan (*Most students can be managed at school with interventions)*
Medium to High Level of Concern • The Threat Assessment Team has determined that a Stage II Threat Assessment is needed. • School Threat Assessment lead will notify the Superintendent (or Designate) to discuss next steps • If there is **imminent danger** call 911 (i.e. A gun is found)

Step 12: *(See Appendix E)*

Develop an **Intervention Plan**, and Determine if Stage II Risk Evaluation and Longer Term Treatment Planning is required.

NOTE: An Intervention Plan should be developed after any VTRA (Stage I or II).

Appendix D: Stage I VTRA Report Form

The following Stage I Report Form is only for the use of Level I and Level II trained professionals in the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response *Violence Threat/Risk Assessment* (VTRA) Model.

Date of Incident:		Date of VTRA:	
Location of Incident:		VTRA Team Lead:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Phone:		Age:	
Address:		Gender:	____ Male ____ Female
School:		Grade:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Address:		Other Address:	
Previous VTRAs	____ YES ____ NO		
Previous incident type(s)			

Step 5: Data Gathering		
Identify names of individuals, agencies, and locations in which information is, or will be, gathered. Data may be obtained from multiple sources including:	Identified ✓	Completed ✓
Reporter(s):		
Target(s):		
Witness(es):		
Teacher(s):		
Other school staff (secretaries, assistants, bus drivers, etc.):		
Friends, classmates, acquaintances:		
Parents/caregivers (call both parents):		
Current *and* previous school records (call the sending school):		
Police record check:		
Check the student(s), locker, desk, backpack, social media/cyber activity, recent text books/assignment binders, cars, etc. for data consistent with the threat making or threat-related behaviour		
Check/search or question parents/caregivers about the student(s), bedroom etc.		
Activities: internet histories, diaries, notebooks, etc.		
Other: (explain)		

Step 6: Parent/Guardian Notification				
Threat maker's parents/guardians have been notified of the situation and this assessment:	YES	Date: Time:		NO
If no, or delayed, reason:				
Target(s) parents/guardians of have been notified of the situation and this assessment:	YES	Date: Time:		NO
If no, or delayed, reason:				

Step 7: The Semi-Structured Interview - Series I Questions (The Incident)

- Where did the incident happen & when?
- How did it come to the interviewee's attention?
- What was the specific language of the threat, detail of the weapon brandished, or gesture made?
- Was there stated:
  - **J**ustification for the threat?
  - **M**eans to carry out the threat?
  - **C**onsequences weighed out (I don't care if I live or die!)?
  - **C**onditions that could lower the level of risk (unless you take that Facebook post down I will stick my knife in your throat!)?
- Who was present & under what circumstance did the incident occur?
- What was the motivation or perceived cause of the incident?
- What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident? ***Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?***
- What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident? ***Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?***

Notes:

Series II Questions (Attack-Related Behaviours)
• Has the student (subject) sought out information consistent with their threat making or threat-related behaviour? • Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past? • Has the student (subject) attempted to gain access to weapons or do they have access to the weapons they have threatened to use? • Have they developed a plan & how general or specific is it (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal of justifications, maps & floor plans)? • Has the student (subject) been engaging in suspicious behaviour such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, sprinkle systems, video surveillance in schools or elsewhere, schedules & locations of police or security patrol? • Have they engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including packing or brandishing fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting (i.e.: lighting fire to card board tubes cut & taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc.)? • Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in their locker (back pack, car trunk, etc.) at school or bedroom (shed, garage, etc.) at home? • Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because “something big is going to happen?”
Notes

Series III Questions (Threat Maker Typology)

- Does the threat maker appear to be more:
  a) Traditional Predominately Behavioural Type?
  b) Traditional Predominately Cognitive Type?
  c) Mixed Type?
  d) Non-Traditional?
- Does the threat maker (subject) have a history of violence or threats of violence? If yes, what is their past:
  a) **(HTS)** History of Human Target Selection
  b) **(SS)** History of Site Selection
  c) **(F)**requency of Violence or Threats
  d) **(I)**intensity of Violence or Threats
  e) **(R)**ecency
- In the case at hand, what is their current:
  a) **(HTS)** Human Target Selection
  b) **(SS)** Site Selection
  c) Does it denote a significant increase in **BASELINE** Behaviour?

  NOTE: In Stage I VTRA, history of violence is a significant risk enhancer but the best predictor of future violent behaviour is an **increase or shift in baseline**. This may also include an individual who has become more withdrawn or quiet as opposed acting out!
  - Do they have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behaviour?
  - Is there evidence of fluidity in their writings, drawings or verbalizations?
  - Does the threat maker (subject) use drugs or alcohol? Is there evidence it is a risk enhancing factor in the case at hand?
  - Is there a mental health diagnosis or evidence of a mental health diagnosis that may be a risk enhancing factor in the case at hand?

Notes

Series IV Questions (The Target Typology)
• Remember that in some cases the Target is higher risk for violence than the threat maker with the most common case being where the Threat Maker is the victim of bullying and the Target is the Bully. • Does the target have a history of violence or threats of violence? If yes, what is their past: • If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recency (FIR) of the violence? • What has been their past human target selection? • What has been their past site selection? • Is there evidence the target has instigated the current situation?
Notes

Series V Questions (Peer Dynamics)
• Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification process? • Who is in the threat makers (subjects) peer structure & where does the threat maker (subject) fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader, and follower)? • Is there a difference between the threat maker's individual baseline & their peer group baseline behaviour? • Who is in the targets peer structure & where does the target fit (i.e.: leader, co-leader, and follower)? • Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?
Notes

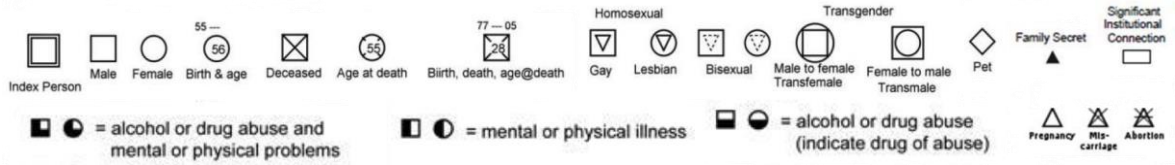
Series VI Questions (Empty Vessels)
• Does the student of concern (subject) have a healthy relationship with a mature adult? • Does the student have **inordinate knowledge** versus **general knowledge** or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school – based attacks? • How have they responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc.)? • What type of violent games, movies, books, music, Internet searches, does the student (subject) fill themselves with? • Is there evidence that what they are filling themselves with is influencing their behaviour? (**Imitators vs. Innovators**?) • What related themes are present in their writings, drawings, etc.? • Is there evidence of fluidity and/or religiosity?
Notes

Series VII Questions (Contextual Factors)
• Has the threat maker experienced a recent loss, such as a death of a family member or friend; a recent break-up; rejection by a peer or peer group; been cut from a sports team; received a rejection notice from a college, university, military etc.? • Have their parents just divorced or separated? • Are they victims of child abuse & has the abuse been dormant but resurfaced at this time? • Are they being initiated into a gang & is it voluntary or forced recruitment? • Have they recently had an argument or "fight" with a parent/caregiver or someone close to them? • Have they recently been charged with an offence or suspended or expelled from school? • Is the place where they have been suspended to likely to increase or decrease their level of risk?
Notes

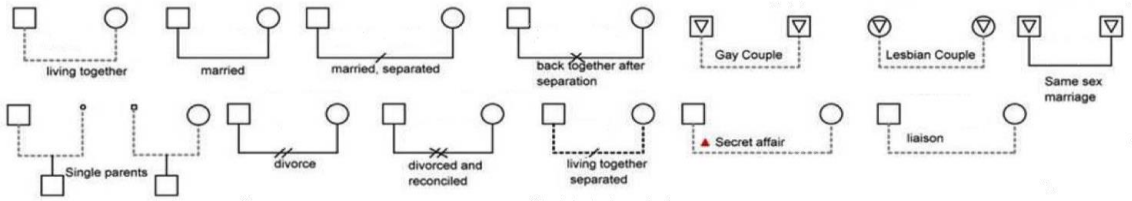
Series VIII Questions (Family Dynamics)
• How many homes does the student (subject) reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparents' home)? • Is the student (subject) connected to a healthy/ mature adult in the home? • Who all lives in the family home (full-time and part-time)? Has anyone entered or left the home who may be influencing level of risk? • Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often are they around? • Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards their siblings or parent(s) caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom including Frequency, Intensity, Recency (FIR)? • What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home? • Are parent(s) or caregiver(s) concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children or others? • Does the students level or risk (at home, school, or the community) cycle according to who is in the home (i.e. the student is low risk for violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times their father travels away from home for work)? • Does the student have a history of trauma? Including car accidents, falls, exposed to violence, abuse, etc. • Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM IV diagnoses? • Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family? • Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse in the family?
Notes

Genogram

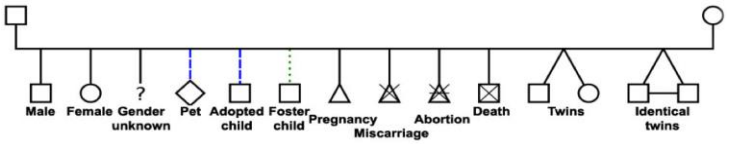
Basic Symbols:



Basic Couple Relationships:



Basic Child Relationships:



Step 8: Other Agencies

Other agency partners may be involved in the Stage I VTRA process as consultants to the School TAT and sources of initial data relevant to the case. Once contacted, partner agencies will check to see if the student in question is, or was, a client. Then the agency determines if they are in possession of information that, in conjunction with the Stage I data, requires them to "disclose". Generally Stage II VTRA Team designates will report that a record check has been completed and:

1) There is nothing to report.
2) There is information relevant to the case that needs to be disclosed as per the VTRA Protocol (significant risk of harm to the health or safety of others is present).
3) The risk is not immediate but a Release of Information Form should be requested to allow for a full disclosure of the contents of the file relevant to the case at hand.

Professional/Agency	Contacted	Comments
Children's Services:		
Mental Health:		
Probation:		
Other:		
Other:		

Step 9: Risk Enhancer(s)

NOTE: **Identify enhancers and reducers as either immediate or longer-term, and be as descriptive as possible.**

Examples (may include but not limited to):

- Individual Dynamic: Undiagnosed/unmanaged/mismanaged mental health issues (child and/or parent/guardian).
- Peer Dynamics: recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, influences.
- Family Dynamics: recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, disclosures.
- School Dynamics: recent changes within the school or moving from other schools, recent changes in, or ongoing academic struggles/difficulties, relationships with staff.

Risk Enhancers	Risk Reducers	Immediate ✓	Long-Term ✓

Step 10: Stage I Level of Concern determined by team: *(Circle One)*		
Low	**Medium**	**High**

Step 11: **Stage I Decision/Action Plan determined by team:** ***(Check the applicable Boxes)***	
Check	
	Low to Medium Level of Concern - *develop and implement the Intervention Plan*
	Medium to High Level of Concern - *develop and implement the Intervention Plan*
	Refer for a Stage II Risk Assessment

Members of Stage I Team Involved in Data Collection		
Position / Title	Team Member Name:	Signature:
Administration		
Clinician		
Police Officer		

Appendix E: VTRA Intervention Plan

VTRA Intervention Plan	✓
Stage I - Threat Assessment Intervention Plan *(Attach Stage I Report Form)*	
Stage II - Risk Assessment Intervention Plan *(Attach Stage I and II Report Forms, Reports, Assessments, etc.)*	

Date of Incident:		Date of VTRA:	
Location of Incident:		VTRA Team Lead:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Phone:		Age:	
Address:		Gender:	____ Male ____ Female
School:		Grade:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Address:		Other Address:	
Previous VTRAs	____ YES ____ NO		
Previous incident type(s)			

Intervention Plan ***(Immediate or Long Term Risk Reduction – Conditions for Re-Entry)***	**Lead Professional(s) / Agency(s)**
Disciplinary Actions*: Suspension; Expulsion; Breaches; Charges; Restitution: Trespassing Notices; etc.*	
Assessments: *Suicide; Mental Health; Psychiatric; Pediatric; Medical; Psycho-Ed; etc.:*	
Counseling/Therapy: *Individual; Family; Alcohol/Drug; etc.*	
Plans: *Individual Ed. Plan; Behavioural; Safety; etc.*	
Protective Measures*: Frequent and Random inspections of Locker, Backpack, Bedroom, Electronics, etc.; Increased Supervision (School, Home, Community); Restricted Access; Modified attendance and Schedule; etc.*	

Intervention Plan ***(Immediate or Long Term Risk Reduction – Conditions for Re-Entry)***	**Lead Professional(s) / Agency(s)**
Parent/Guardian Responsibilities: *Supervision, Communications, Transportation, Appointments, etc.*	
Other:	
Attach Additional Pages as Necessary	

VTRA Intervention Plan	**Date:**
Implemented:	
To Be Reviewed:	
To Be Reviewed:	
To Be Reviewed:	

VTRA Intervention Team Member:		**Signature:**	**Date:**
Administration:			
Clinician:			
Police Officer:			
Parent/Guardian			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

I have reviewed this Intervention Plan	
Parent / Guardian's Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix F: Student Transport Information Form

Date:			
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Phone:		Age:	
Address:		Gender:	____ Male ____ Female
School:		Grade:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Address:		Other Address:	

Hospitalizations, Medical Illnesses, Injuries, Allergies			
Current Medications (Name, Dosage, Schedule, Start Date)			
Family Physician	Address (Street, City, Postal Code)	Telephone No.	Notified
			___Yes ___No
Staff Member	Position Title	Business Card Attached	Additional Documents
		___Yes ___No	___Yes ___No

Please (✓)		**Crisis Triage Rating Scale (CTRS):**	
Dangerousness		**1**	Expresses or hallucinates suicidal/homicidal ideas or has made a serious attempt in present episode of illness. Unpredictable, impulsive, and violent.
		2	Expresses or hallucinates suicidal/homicidal ideas, without conviction. History of violent or impulsive behaviour but no current signs of this.
		3	Expresses or hallucinates suicidal/homicidal ideas with ambivalence, or made only ineffectual gestures. Questionable impulse control.
		4	Some suicidal/homicidal ideation or behaviour, or history of same, but clearly wishes to control behaviour.
		5	No suicidal/homicidal ideation/behaviour. No history of violence or impulsive behaviour.
Support System		**1**	No family, friends or others. Agencies cannot provide immediate/support needed.
		2	Some support can be mobilised but its effectiveness will be limited.
		3	Support systems potentially available but significant difficulties exist in mobilising it.
		4	Interested family/friends, or others but some question exists of ability or willingness to provide support needed.
		5	Interested family, friends, or others able and willing to provide support needed.
Ability to cooperate		**1**	Unable to cooperate or actively refuses.
		2	Shows little interest in or comprehension of efforts made on his/her behalf.
		3	Passively accepts intervention strategies.
		4	Wants help but is ambivalent or motivation is not strong.
		5	Actively seeks treatment, willing to cooperate.

Immediate concerns:

Please shred this document after hospital visit.

Appendix G: Stage II VTRA Form

This section to be completed by Stage I VTRA Team Lead

Date of Incident:		Date of VTRA:	
Location of Incident:		VTRA Team Lead:	
Name:		Date of Birth:	
Phone:		Age:	
Address:		Gender:	____ Male ____ Female
School:		Grade:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Parent/Guardian:		Phone:	
Address:		Other Address:	
Previous VTRAs	____ YES ____ NO		
Previous incident type(s)			

******* IMPORTANT *******

This is **not** a request for a determination of level of risk by yourself or your agency.

As part of a multidisciplinary team, this is a request for you or your agency to share any pertinent information that you may have so that collectively the team may more thoroughly determine level or risk.

Through this process, a more **Comprehensive Therapeutic Intervention Plan** can be developed for the client.

Stage II – Community VTRA Team Member:	**Contact Person**	**Consent** ***(attached)***
Stage I VTRA Team		✓
AHS Addiction & Mental Health		
Child & Family Services		
Doctor (Pediatrician; Psychiatrist; Specialist; etc.)		
Psychologist		
Counseling Agency		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		
Stage II VTRA Referral Information		✓
Stage I VTRA Report (attached)		
Stage I VTRA Intervention Plan (attached)		

This section to be completed by each Stage II VTRA Team Member

Instructions: *Please return this document to the Stage II Lead when completed. Information from this document will be incorporated into a collaboratively developed VTRA Intervention Plan. A copy of the plan will be forwarded to all team members.*

Stage II – Community VTRA Team Member's Agency/Profession:			
Stage II - VTRA Team Member Name:			
Client is: (Circle all that apply)			
New Referral	*Repeat Referral*	*Current Client*	*Old Client*
Reason for involvement or previous referral (*If this is a Current Client, Old Client, or Repeat Referral):*			
Reports - Assessments/Standardized tests used - *Outcomes, Diagnosis, Recommendations, etc.:* *(If this is a Current Client, Old Client, or Repeat Referral)*			
Reports, Assessments, or Summaries attached: *(Circle one)*		**Yes**	**No**
Treatment plan *(If this is a Current Client)*			
Treatment plan – client progress/response *(If this is a Current Client)*			
Reason for file closure *(if this is a Repeat Referral or an Old Client):*			
Risk Enhancer(s)			

NOTE: Identify Enhancers and Reducers as either Immediate or Longer-Term, and be as descriptive as possible

General Examples (may include but not limited to):

Individual Dynamics: Un-diagnosed/un-managed/mismanaged mental health issues (Child and/or Parent/Guardian).

Peer Dynamics: recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, influences.

Family Dynamics: recent changes, chronic issues/concerns, disclosures.

School Dynamics: recent changes within the school or moving from other schools, recent changes in, or ongoing academic struggles/difficulties, relationships with staff.

Notes

Risk Enhancers	Risk Reducers	Immediate ✓	Long-Term ✓

Appendix H: VTRA Parent Notification Letter Template

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians:

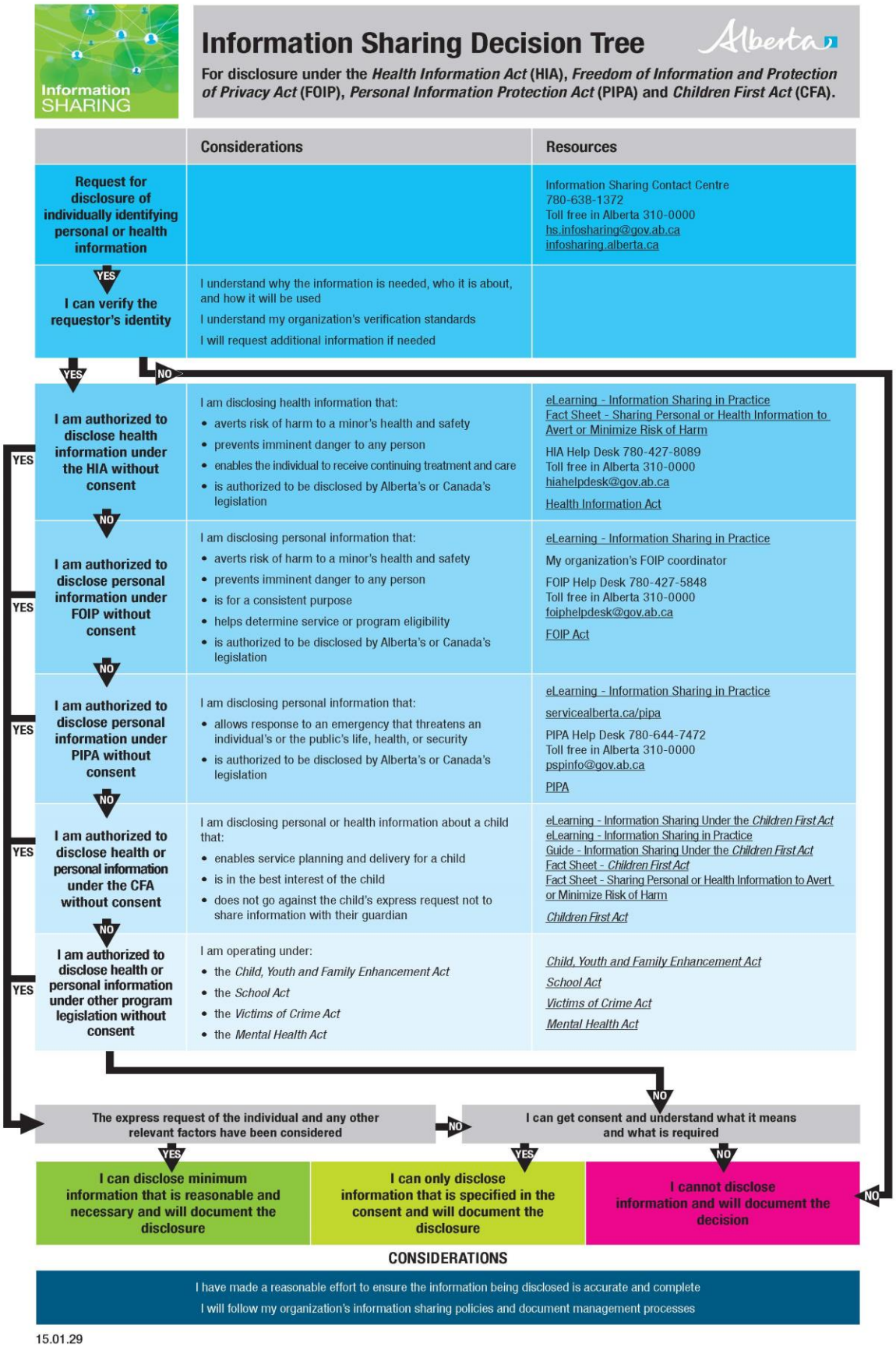
The **(APPROPRIATE DISTRICT/SCHOOL BOARD)** is committed to providing safe learning environments for all students, staff, school visitors and community members. When a student behaves inappropriately, Principals use progressive discipline to help a student take responsibility for their actions, change their behaviour, and learn from their mistakes.

When students' behaviours pose a potential threat to safety or serious harm, the Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Risk Threat Assessment (VTRA) Protocol helps Principals take further steps to protect students' well-being. The protocol helps schools respond quickly to threatening incidents such as: possession of a weapon or a replica weapon, bomb threats or plans, verbal, written or electronic (internet, text) threats to kill or injure oneself or others or other threats of violence, fire setting.

The Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol outlines how a school responds immediately to threatening behaviour. Principals may first bring together a School Threat Assessment Team, which ideally includes the Principal/Vice-Principal, a school-based clinician/jurisdictional lead, and police. If the situation is serious, the Principal may also consult with the Superintendent of Schools, and call in members of the Community Threat Assessment Team. This community team may include representatives of community agencies who work with us to keep our schools safer such as local police, children's mental health organizations or Human Services. Parents and guardians will be notified as soon as possible in the Stage I-VTRA process. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, or if they choose not to provide consent, but a concern for safety still exsists due to threatening behaviour, the threat assessment may still proceed. Personal information shared throughout this process will respect and balance each individual's right to privacy with the need to ensure the safety of all.

As always, student safety is our first priority. If you have any questions regarding the **(APPROPRIATE DISTRICT/SCHOOL BOARD)** Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol, please contact **(INSERT CONTACT INFO)**.

Appendix I: Information Sharing Quick Reference



Appendix J: File Notice

Insert
District Logo and
Contact Information

Notice

A Threat/Risk Assessment (VTRA) was done on (Student's Name) _____,

By (Team Lead Name): _____

During the _____ School Year

Notes:

- Information related to the Threat/Risk Assessment is retained in a confidential file at the District office for a period of _____ years after the student ceases to be registered within the District, after which it is destroyed.

Appendix K: Definitions

Child/Youth
Child/Youth refers to all children and youth under the age of 18.

School Threat Assessment Team (School TAT)
A team of trained school-based professionals (e.g. principals, vice-principals, counsellor, FSLC) trained to assess a threat to child/youth safety by a child/youth or group of children/youths. District staff (e.g. School Supervisor and Educational Services Administration) will be consulted and will participate in the school- based risk/ threat assessment process.

Community Threat Assessment Team (Community TAT)
When a School TAT has assessed that a child/youth(s) poses a threat to child/youth/staff safety the Principal will call the School Supervisor who will then contact the Superintendent of Schools (or Designate) to request that the Community Threat Assessment Team be activated.

Worrisome Behaviour
Defined as those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a child/youth is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. Worrisome behaviours include but are not limited to: drawing pictures that contain violence, stories/journal writings that contain violence, making vague/generalized statements about violence towards others that do not constitute a threat. Worrisome behaviours may be an early warning sign of the development of more serious high-risk behaviours. All worrisome behaviours should be addressed. These situations may involve activation of the School TAT and consultation with Educational Services.

High Risk Behaviours
Defined as behaviours that express intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. High risk behaviours include but are not limited to: interest in violent content, unusual interest in fire/fire setting, escalation of physical aggression, significant change in anti-social behaviour, unusual interest in and/or possession of weapon/replica of a weapon, bomb threat, internet threat to kill and/or injury to self and/or others. The School TAT should be activated and after consultation with the school supervisor and Supervisor of Schools may lead to the activation of the COMMUNITY TAT.

Do not be deceived when traditional risk behaviours do not exist. There is no profile or checklist for the high-risk child/youth. Some child/youth who actually pose a threat display very few traits of the traditional high-risk child/youth. Identify possibility / degree of fluidity between homicidal and suicidal domains. This is critical to the development of a response to the incident, including the creation of a child/youth support plan.

The School TAT may be activated by the school Principal. When this occurs, the school Principal will notify the Superintendent of Schools. The COMMUNITY TAT may be activated by the Superintendent as a result of the School TAT intervention plan.

Threat Making Behaviours
Defined as any action that an individual, who in any manner knowingly utters, conveys, or causes any person to receive a threat.

Threat
Defined as any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, posted on the internet (Facebook, Snap Chat, Twitter, Instagram, AskFM, etc.) or made by gesture only. Threats may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Immediate Threat
In the case of immediate threat, staff will **CALL 911** and then contact the school administration/ designate. The school will contact the Superintendent (or Designate) of Schools who will then activate the COMMUNITY TAT.

Lockdown
There are immediate risk situations where the threat maker has already left school property to possibly obtain the means to carry out an attack at school where the school may need to go into a peripheral lockdown or limited access mode. In these circumstances the case-at-hand may be deemed a "Threat/Risk Management (rather than "assessment") Case until otherwise determined by the VTRA members.

Threat Assessment
Is the process of determining if a threat maker (someone who utters, writes, emails etc. a threat to kill a target or targets) actually poses a risk to the target they have threatened?

Risk Assessment
Is the process of determining if a child/youth of concern may pose a risk to some unknown target or targets at some unknown period in time?

Categories of Risk:

Low Level of Concern
Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is minimal.

- Within the general range for typical baseline behaviour for the student in question.
- Low risk does not imply "no risk" but indicates *the individual* is at little risk for violence.
- Data collected suggests threat is:
    - Vague or
    - Indirect or
    - Implausible or
    - Lacking detail or
    - Lacking realism.
- Monitoring of the matter may be appropriate

Medium Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is credible, violent action is possible.

The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.

- Increase in baseline behaviour.
- Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (e.g., possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (e.g., weapon, seeking), although there may be an ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: "I'm serious!"
- *The individual* is at an elevated risk for violence, and those measures currently in place or further measures, including monitoring, are required in an effort to manage the individual's future risk.

High Level of Concern

Risk to the target(s), students, staff, and school safety is specific and plausible; the student or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.

- Significant increase in baseline behaviour.
- There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.
- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on threat.
- Information suggests strong concern about the student's potential to act violently.
- Immediate intervention is required to prevent an act of violence from occurring

Sources for the above categorizations represent the work of the FBI, and the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

Violence

Violence is a continuing process of thoughts and behaviours that is dependent on the interaction between a **person** who is inclined to violence; a **stimulus** that causes the violence; and **a setting** that allows for violence or does nothing to prevent a violent act from occurring. Violence is **dynamic** and multidimensional. It is a process that is developed over time.

Appendix L: Brochure Template

Everyone's safety is a priority

We are committed to creating and maintaining school environments in which students, staff, parents, and guests feel safe. School cannot ignore any threat of violence.

What is a threat?

A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be verbal, written, drawn, posted on the internet or made by gesture. Threats must be taken seriously, investigated and responded to.

When is Threat Assessment initiated?

A Threat Assessment will be initiated when behavior indicates an individual is moving along a pathway of violence. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- serious violence with intent to harm or kill
- verbal/written threats to harm or kill others
- internet website/internet threats to harm or kill others
- possession of weapons (including replicas)
- bomb threats
- fire setting
- significant change in baseline behaviour

(Name) School Division

Our mission:

We value:

Our Vision is to:

Our contact information:

School Division Name
[Street Address]
Phone: [Phone number]
Fax: [Fax number]

www.schooldivisionweblinkhere.com

Threat Assessment

School Division Name

Fair Notice and Process

March 2015

What is the purpose of a Threat Assessment?

- To ensure the safety of child/youth, staff, parents, and others.
- To ensure a full understanding the factors that contributes to the threat makers' behaviour.
- To be proactive in developing an intervention plan that addresses the emotional and physical safety of the threat maker
- To promote the emotional and physical safety of all.

Duty to report

To keep school communities safe and caring, staff, parents, students, and community members must report all threat related behaviour.

What is a Threat Assessment Team?

Each school has a Threat Assessment Team which is multi-disciplinary. The team may include Principal, Vice-Principal, School Psychologist, Counsellor, and Police.

What happens in a threat assessment?

All threat making behaviour(s) by a child/youth(s) shall be reported to the Principal who will activate the protocol for the initial response.

Once the Threat Assessment Team has been activated, interviews may be held with the child/youth(s) the threat maker, parents, and staff to determine the level of risk and develop an appropriate response to the incident.

Intervention plans will be developed and shared with parents, staff and child/youth(s) as required.

Can I refuse to participate?

It is important for all parties to engage in the process. However, if for some reason there is a reluctance to participate in the process, by the threat maker or the parent/guardian, the threat assessment process will continue in order to ensure a safe and caring learning environment for all.

Do other school divisions follow the same process?

Our school division is a partner of the SW Alberta Regional Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol. The regional partnership includes school divisions, emergency services, and community agencies, all working together for the safety of all children/youth and families. For further information about the regional protocol go to: www.swrcsd.ca/vtra

Link to school division policy:

The information in this brochure summarizes our school division policy. Click the link below for further detail:

(insert school division link here)