

Guidelines for Assessing Threatening and Dangerous Behaviors in Schools

with Integrated Intervention Strategies

2nd Edition

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Introduction

A student with a single incident of a serious behavior or a student with chronic behavior problems presents multiple challenges to school staff. A significant challenge occurs when a student makes a threat or engages in dangerous behavior. It is natural for staff to experience fear about the risk of violence and confusion about how to respond. Knowing how to assess the situation and how to intervene is often left to past practice and policy. Often this translates to suspension or expulsion. Through research and experience, we have learned that punishment-based discipline does not improve student learning or behavior nor school safety. The student does not "learn a lesson" by being removed from school. The school is not always a safer place due to the removal of the student with a behavior concern. Schools need a systematic process based on sound psychological principles and research when addressing the risk for future student violence.

The Guidelines for Assessing Threatening and Dangerous Behaviors (GATDBS) offers school staff a systematic process to assess the risk of violence and address dangerous behavior through an integrated intervention plan. The GATDBS provides documentation of the incident, an assessment of the level of risk that the student's behavior presents to the school and interventions that correspond to the staff's level of concern.

If staff members are seriously concerned about the student's behavior after completion of the risk assessment, the intervention plan will recommend strategies suited to a level of serious concern. On the other hand, a minimum concern by staff would generate strategies appropriate to that reduced level of concern. Matching the level of concern to the intensity of the intervention is aimed to produce benefits to school, family, community and student that generate sustained and durable improvements. All interventions are culturally-competent, family-friendly and aimed at the prevention of a reoccurrence of the behavior of concern. Matching the level of concern to the intensity of the intervention and participation by the student and family in the development of an intervention plan may prevent disenfranchisement of the student and family, delinquency and dropping out.

A 2002-2003 pilot study in the Huron Valley School District endorsed the use of the Guidelines. The multidisciplinary approach and the examples of indicators for differentiating the levels of concern (strong, moderate or minimal) were highly valued by the staff participating in the pilot. Staff also believed that the information gathered increased their understanding of the student's history and behavior and led to appropriate interventions. Importantly, staff agreed that the time used to complete the Guidelines was worthwhile.

The authors of these Guidelines anticipate that your school team will find the assessment process and integrated intervention plan a benefit to your students, families, school and community. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us.

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- Select *Educators* from the pull-down menu
- Go to the subcategory called *Classroom Resources*
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Instructions

The Guidelines for Assessing Threatening and Dangerous Behaviors is intended to:

- Be used after immediate disciplinary decisions have been made and school staff has addressed immediate concerns regarding legal, health and safety issues.
- Guide school personnel in conducting a thorough assessment of threatening and dangerous behavior when problems/concerns are reported to them.
- Guide decision-making about the need for further actions.
- Guide and document decisions regarding potential for violence by considering known principles of risk assessment.
- Be completed by an interdisciplinary team consisting of an administrator and at least two additional staff within three (3) school days.

Directions for Use

Part 1: Initial Assessment

- 1. The school administrator completes the *Initial Assessment* (Sections A, B and C). By the end Section C, the administrator makes a decision based on available information. That decision may be to continue the assessment (See Part 2 below) or end the assessment and move to developing an *Intervention Plan* (See Part 3 below).
- 2. Administrators completing the *Initial Assessment* may experience some ambiguity at the *Decision Point*. In such cases, continue with the assessment process.
- 3. Parent notification is recommended when an assessment of threatening and dangerous behavior begins, but no later than the completion of Section C. Examples for making a parent contact are provided in Appendix B.

Part 2: History & Interviews with Follow Up

- 1. The interdisciplinary team completes *History & Interviews with Follow Up* (Sections D through J) by completing interviews of the student and parents/guardians. Typically, different school personnel interview the student and parents/guardian through discussion of items in Sections D through I.
- 2. Members of the interdisciplinary team take responsibility for getting staff input (See Appendix C) and reviewing the student file for related history.
- 3. Staff participating in the data collection meet and review information. They integrate findings to make a single cohesive and comprehensive report (Section I). Then the team hypothesizes motivation and concludes with a final *Level of Concern* (Section J).
- 4. In preparation for the *Intervention Plan*, staff may wish to consider possible interventions (Appendix D) based on their final level of risk assessment (Appendix A) and explore the feasibility of those strategies.

Part 3: Intervention Plan

- 1. The *Intervention Plan* is completed at a joint meeting of school personnel (including the administration), community agencies, parents and the student. Interventions are developed for the student, family, school and community that are appropriate to the level of risk as determined in Part 2.
- 2. Individuals responsible for implementing aspects of the *Intervention Plan* are designated and a timeline for completing tasks is developed.
- 3. A case manager is named and that person invites the required people to review meetings and chairs those meetings. The case manager ensures that the parent receives a copy of the *Intervention Plan*.
- 4. The effectiveness of the *Intervention Plan* is evaluated at regular intervals and the timeline for completion of tasks by is monitored.
- 5. Revisions are made to the plan as necessary.

Guidelines for Assessing Threatening and Dangerous Behavior

Administrate	me h pol and loca	tion of incident		
A. INCIDE	N T Briefl	tudent?	nent this student	to your attention. Be specific
Immedi Discipli Decisio	ine 🗆	In-school suspension (# of days) After-school detention Saturday attendance Community service Out-of-school suspension (# of days Referral to School Board for expulsion Other:)	
Immedi Action(Taken:		Informed student of infraction Notified student's parents Contacted police Notified Special Education Person(s) notified Notified victim(s) and their parents Referred for risk assessment Other:	Date	By Whom

1

Legal Issues:	Bo	hysical assault ossession of a dexual criminal coexual harassmentalking		n school property theft, vandalism, e	etc.)
B. ASSESSI	MENT C	F BEHAVIOR			
Do not i	dentify		Informant(s)	Relations	hip to Student
informa		ame.	Α		
Use the l		<i>,</i> ,	В		
C, D" t informan		rice	С		
			D		
Check the typ	pe of beh	navior(s) and indica	ate Informant(s) by let	ters A, B, C	
Type(s) of	behavior	r			Informant(s)
VERBAL ☐ Conditional threat ("ifthen" s ☐ Direct threat (clear verbal state) ☐ Insults, name-calling, verbal p ☐ Veiled threat (implied threat-nee) ☐ Other			ment of intent to do ha provocation ed description)	·	
NONVERB Gestu Physi Picto Prope Veiled Wear	AL ures (fist: cal cont rial threa erty dam d threat oon obse en threat	is clenched, panton fact (pushing, sho fat nage (implied threat-ne ferved, reported t	mime weapon use) ving, violation of perso	onal space)	
Are the info	rmants' ı	reports consister	nt? □ Yes □ No <i>(If n</i>	o, describe any inco	nsistencies.)

Sp	ecific	s Sur	rounding T	hreat and/or Behavior (May check more than one box.)
	Yes	No	Needs Further Assessment	
				Student has a plan. (When, where, who, how is known.) Student has access to weapons, bombs, etc. Student intends to carry out plan. (Same day or near future) Student stalks threatened victim. Student shows no remorse. Student shows no concern about consequences.
	Othe	er Stu	dent Facto	rs to Consider (May check more than one box.)
	Yes	No	Needs Further Assessment	
C.	Wha	at happ	DNAL CON	Attention seeking Change in social relationship (e.g. romantic breakup or rebuff) Change of status or group membership Disengaged with school staff Humiliation Impulsive remark or response, no real harm intended Joking/teasing and you tend to believe it Lacks ability to understand and carry out threats Other family or life stress (e.g. divorce, death, move) Recent disciplinary action Socially isolated from peers Target of teasing or bullying Other: TEXT diately prior to incident? (Ask informants. Consider provocation.)
	LEV	/EL O	☐ Mode	RN (Please rate your level of concern as a whole, after reviewing sections A-C. See Appendix A.) g concernerate concerner
	DE	CISIO	N POINT (At this point, indicate your decision.)
			CON	ITINUE (go to "History and Interviews" on page 4)
			DISC	CONTINUE (go to "Plan" on page 7)

Part 2: History & Interviews with Follow Up

	Name, Title	Date
	Name, Title	Date
	Name, Title	Date
	History & Interviews with Follow Up (Sections D through bers. Please copy pages as needed for individual team men	
	DENT PERSPECTIVE OF INCIDENT Have the student to say: "There are different sides to a story. I want to hear you	,
	RENT PERSPECTIVE OF INCIDENT Have the parent ent. (You may wish to say: "What is your understanding of w	
	DENT'S BEHAVIOR HISTORY (Briefly describe. Consider the factor is not applicable per student or parent report.)	der frequency, duration and intensity. Indic
/v/A vi	Previous violence/aggression (details)	
	Tantrums, outbursts or aggression	
	Tends to blame others for own problems, holds grudges, k	agne liete
	Lightee live made as violant throats when an array	·
	Lack of empathy	
	History of personal failures and/or disappointments	
	Few friends, socially isolated	
	Attitude toward school	
	Preoccupation with violent music, movies, video games	
	Fascination with weapons and/or military	
	Recreational use of weapons	
	Alcohol or drug abuse	
	Legal involvement	
	Gang membership	
	Exposure to aggressive role models	
	Psychological problems	
	Depression or significant mood swings	
	Self-injurious behavior	
	Suicide attempt	
	Brain injury	
	Cruelty to animals	
	Fire setting	
	Parents unaware of student's activities/friends	
	Student's behavior reflects cultural/family norms	
	Other:	

G.		ILY CIRCUMSTANCES (Briefly describe. Consider frequency, duration and intensity. Indicate N/A when is not applicable per student or parent report.)
		People living in the home
		Change(s) of residence
		Discipline strategies used at home
		Turbulent parent-child relationship
		Significant family conflict
		Incarceration of family member
		Substance abuse
		Recent divorce, separation, remarriage
		Change in financial circumstances
		Protective Services involvement
		Weapon(s) in the house
		Other:
Н.		ITIVE SUPPORTS (Briefly describe. Consider frequency, duration and intensity. Indicate N/A when factor applicable per student or parent report. Consider these elements for intervention if they are not present.)
		Student employment
		Positive school performance
		School activities
		Recreational activities
		Supportive friends
		Supportive family
		Family/student in therapy
		Adult mentor
		Other:
l.	FOL	LOW UP TO "Areas Needing Further Assessment"
	1. S	pecifics surrounding threat and/or behavior (from page 3)
	C	heck the items that administrator indicated needed further assessment from Section B.
		☐ Student has a plan. (When, where, who, how is addressed.)
		☐ Student has access to weapons, bombs, etc.
		☐ Student intends to carry out plan. (Same day or near future)
		☐ Student stalks threatened victim.
		☐ Student shows no remorse.
		☐ Student shows no concern about consequences.
		eview and synthesize administrative concerns regarding "threat and behavior specifics" with all available formation. Summarize your conclusions.
	_	
	_	
	_	

2.	Othe	r factors to consider (from page 3)
	Check	the items that administrator indicated needed further assessment from Section B.
		Attention seeking
		Change in social relationship (e.g. romantic breakup or rebuff)
		Change of status or group membership
		Disengaged with school staff
		Humiliation
		Impulsive remark or response, no real harm intended
		Joking/teasing and you tend to believe it
		Lacks ability to understand and carry out threats
		Other family or life stress (e.g. divorce, death, move)
		Recent disciplinary action
		Socially isolated from peers
		Target of teasing or bullying
		Other:
		and synthesize administrative concerns regarding "other factors to consider" with all available information.
R/I	OTIV	ATION
B	ased o	n all the available information, check factors that may apply to your hypothesis.
		Attempting to solve a problem seen as otherwise unbearable
		Escape or avoid person, situation, place, activity, etc.
		Peer approval, following the lead of others
		Revenge for a perceived grievance or injury
		Seeking attention, recognition or notoriety
		Self-defense
		Wanting to die or be killed
		Other:
	_	Othor.
L	EVEL	OF CONCERN
		ate team's level of concern (Appendix A) based on all of the information gathered including ut from (Appendix C).
	Str	ong concern
		derate concern
		imal concern

J.

Part 3: Intervention Plan

Student's Name	
----------------	--

Based on your team's level of concern, develop an Intervention Plan. See Appendix D.

INTERVENTIONS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DATE TO BE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
I. Student			
II. Family			
III. School			
IV. Community			

INTERVENTION PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS' SIGNATURES

Name	Title	Date			
Name	Title	Date			
Name	Title	Date			
Name	Title	Date			
Name	Title	Date			
Name	Title	Date			
Case Manager:	Phone Number:				
Intervention Plan Review:					
□ Parent given copy of Intervention	Plan				
INTERVENTION PLAN FOLLOW UF Review on scheduled date Review at earlier date due to cond Review postponed due to ongoing Review cancelled. Specify reason:	cerns (Date:) g success				

Appendix A: Levels of Concern

Listed below are some examples of indicators for Strong, Moderate and Minimal Levels of Concern.

You are rating a level of concern based on facts regarding current student behavior. A word of caution: do not allow this student's appearance, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or other stereotypical features to influence or bias your level of concern.

Str	ong Concern
	Direct, specific, and highly plausible threat Poses clear and immediate danger to the safety of others Steps have been taken to implement the plan (e.g. removal of the weapon) Act usually requires involvement of law enforcement Threat contains identifiable target(s) and specific description of intended act
Мо	derate Concern
	Could be carried out, although plan may not be realistic and/or imminent Statements seek to convey intention to carry out threat (i.e. "I'm serious!" or "I really mean it!") Wording of threat suggests the individual has given some thought to how the act will be carried out Includes a general indication of place and time, but still falls short of a detailed plan No indication that the individual has taken preparatory steps toward implementation
Min	imal Concern
	Poses a minimal risk to the victim and public safety Is vague and indirect Information is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail Lacks realism
	Content suggests individual is unlikely or incapable of carrying out the threat Inappropriate verbal comment, drawing or gesture that does not intend to threaten violence

Appendix B: Examples of Parent Contact

Letter

To: (parents of the student being assessed)

From: (administrator)

Date:

Re: Threatening and Dangerous Behavior Assessment

Today we were made aware of a threat (or dangerous behavior) exhibited by your child. It is our district practice to take all threats and aggressive behavior seriously. My initial inquiry into the situation warrants further assessment. A team of school personnel will be completing the assessment of the situation. This may include individual interviews with you, your child and others involved in the incident.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 248.xxx.xxxx. Thank you for your support in addressing this serious matter.

0.	
Sincerel	77
Officere	Lγ.

Cc:

Phone Contact

You may say the following:

- Briefly and factually describe the incident to the parent.
- □ Describe the next steps for risk assessment:

"Today we were made aware of a threat (or dangerous behavior) exhibited by your child. It is our district practice to take all threats and aggressive behavior seriously. My initial inquiry into the situation warrants further assessment. A team of school personnel will be completing the assessment of the situation. This may include individual interviews with you, your child and others involved in the incident."

- □ Ask if there are questions or concerns.
- Explain that school personnel will call the parent to arrange for interviews.
- □ Provide a contact name and phone number for the parent.
- Express your attitude and expectation about the situation. You may wish to say the following:
 - "Your support and cooperation in addressing this serious matter will be appreciated."

Appendix C: Staff Input

Tea	cher	Subject
	(Student Name)	as been referred for an assessment regarding a recent incident.
Plea	se identify student's strengths.	
Plea	ase review and respond to the fo	ollowing items. Check all that apply.
	Behavior	Comments
	Struggling academically	
	Poor attendance/tardiness Low frustration tolerance	
	Impulsive behavior	
	Poor attention span	
	Excessive motor behavior	
	Low motivation	
	Lacks self confidence	
	Defiant/oppositional attitude	
	Irritates classmates	
	Socially isolated	
	Bullies others	
	Victimized by others	
	Recent change in behavior	
	Recent change in appearance Recent change in quality of class	work
	Other concerns:	
_		
You	r input is critically important to o	ur understanding this student. We appreciate your comments.
Plea	se return this form to	by
	ıld you like to meet with a represes ☐ No	sentative from the assessment team to discuss your concerns?
Wha	at day(s) and/or time(s) are best	for meeting with you?

Appendix D: Intervention Worksheet

The following interventions are suggestions. This list is not exhaustive. It may not include various services/programs that are commercially available and/or school district specific.

The checkmarks indicate interventions that are reasonably appropriate based on the level of concern. Some interventions may be considered appropriate for all levels of concern.

A comprehensive, student-centered Intervention Plan will utilize multiple strategies drawn from *ALL* areas listed below.

MINIMAL	MODERATE	STRONG	STUDENT INTERVENTIONS
✓	✓	✓	Daily check-in with counselor or social worker between classes and at lunch time
✓	✓	✓	In-school suspension with support to do school work and problem solve
✓	✓	✓	Refer for psychotherapy (family or individual)
✓	✓	✓	Refer for substance abuse evaluation or treatment
✓	✓	✓	Refer to Alateen
✓	✓	✓	Refer to Child Protective Services
✓	✓	✓	Schedule change for academic support (appropriate classes for ability)
✓	✓	✓	Schedule change for behavior support (supervision, separation from target peers or staff)
		✓	Refer for psychiatric hospitalization
	✓	✓	Early dismissal between classes with an escort
	✓	✓	Refer for psychiatric evaluation
	✓	✓	Wrap-around
✓	✓		Encourage participation in extra-curricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)
✓	✓		In-school psycho-educational group (anger management, stress management, etc.)
✓	✓		Planned discussions: scheduled times for problem-solving with trained staff
✓	✓		Refer to Youth Assistance (anger management, counseling)
			Other:

MINIMAL	MODERATE	STRONG	FAMILY INTERVENTIONS
✓	✓	✓	Assist with obtaining family health care
✓	✓	✓	Parents have daily conversations about student's concerns, problems and fears
✓	✓	✓	Reduce exposure to violence & pornography (movies, video games, internet, magazines)
✓	✓	✓	Referral to community agency Please specify agency:
✓	✓	✓	Referral to parenting education program
✓	✓	✓	Parents monitor student behavior related to curfew, homework, school attendance
	✓	✓	Referral to family therapy
	✓	✓	Regularly scheduled meetings with student's family
	✓	✓	Request removal of weapons and other dangerous materials from the home
			Other:

MINIMAL	MODERATE	STRONG	SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS
✓	✓	✓	Build staff/peer support for target peer
✓	✓	✓	Bully-proofing program
✓	✓	✓	Comprehensive special education evaluation
✓	✓	✓	Develop behavior support plan
✓	✓	✓	Engage student in extracurricular activities
✓	✓	✓	Involve school liaison police officer
✓	✓	✓	Modify student's schedule to ensure safety of target peers or staff
✓	✓	✓	Provide behavioral monitoring (hourly, daily, weekly)
✓	✓	✓	Provide meaningful work on school campus
✓	✓	✓	Provide staff mentor
✓	✓	✓	Reentry conference (include appropriate school staff, student, parent, agencies)
		✓	Provide escort for travel between classes
		✓	Recommend expulsion with expectation of intervention during time out of school
		✓	Refer to alternative special education setting
		✓	Refer to therapeutic school-based day program
	✓	✓	Ongoing school social work intervention
	✓	√	Referral for psychiatric and/or neurological school consultation(s)
✓	✓		Referral to conflict resolution/peer mediation program
√	✓		Provide peer mentor
✓	✓		Social skills instruction
✓	✓		Utilize behavior contract
			Other:

MINIMAL	MODERATE	STRONG	COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS	
✓	✓	✓	Assist student in obtaining a personal protection order (PPO)	
✓	✓	✓	Initiate/increase communication between school, home, therapist	
✓	✓	✓	Involve local police department (notification, arrest, etc)	
✓	✓	✓	Police assist in removing weapons from the home (gun purchasing program, etc.)	
✓	✓	✓	Referral to community agency (Please specify agency:)
✓	✓	✓	Referral to Youth Assistance	
	✓	✓	Referral for psychiatric and/or neurological consultation(s)	
✓	✓		Assist with finding employment	
✓	✓		Involvement in volunteer organization/activity (e.g., Explorers, hospitals, 4-H)	
✓	✓		Referral to Big Brothers, Big Sisters	
✓	✓		Referral to mentoring program	
√			Referral to military service recruiter	
√			Referral to Job Corps	
			Other:	

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