

# Threat Assessment Models: Accounting for Clear and Present Danger

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# Targets

- Participants will increase their understanding of the complexity of threat assessment in schools
- Participants will learn a structured model for threat assessment
- Participants will identify how and when to initiate Clear and Present Danger procedures

# Understanding Threat Assessment

- Share with a partner or small group one or two take-aways from your threat assessment (risk assessment) experiences. Positive? Negative? Somewhere in between?

# Case Study

Jana is a 16 year old high school student. Her English teacher brings a journal written by Jana to the school counselor as the teacher was alarmed by the student's references to dark imagery and the hopeless tone of the writing. The counselor reviews the writing and seeks out Jana for an initial interview.

During the interview the following information is revealed:

- Jana is sad over the recent break-up with boyfriend and feels isolated from peers
- Believes parents have no idea as to how she is feeling
- During the interview the sadness dissipates and Jana becomes cold, offering little response to questions.
- Jana speaks vaguely about intent to harm herself and others because no one cares. She comments about “getting back at the teacher” for showing the counselor the journal entry.

# Case Study #1

1. Is there a threat in this scenario? If so, how would you describe the severity of the threat.
2. What additional information would be helpful in determining the seriousness of the threat
3. Would Clear and Present Danger apply in this situation?

# Threat to Self and Others

The increase of students threatening others (school violence) and threatening to harm themselves (suicidal ideation) has captured national attention, prompted educators, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, and parents to press for answers.

- 1. To what degree did we know threats/attacks were being planned?*
- 2. What could we have done to prevent students from acting on their plans?*
- 3. What protective factors exist in the threat assessment process for counselors?*



## **Illinois State Police Clear and Present Danger Reporting Instructions for Law Enforcement Officials and School Administrators**

**The Person Determined to Pose a Clear and Present Danger form shall be used by law enforcement officials and school administrators to report individuals determined to pose a clear and present danger pursuant to 20 II. Admin. Code 1230.120. The form must be submitted within 24 hours of the determination to the Illinois State Police, Firearms Services Bureau in Springfield, Illinois. This reporting duty is separate from any requests for assistance made to a law enforcement agency. For immediate police assistance, School Administrators must still contact their local law enforcement agency or call 911.**

### **Who must Report?** Pursuant to 430 ILCS 65/8.1(d)(2) and 430 ILCS 66/105,

- Law enforcement Officials
- School Administrators – principals and chief administrative officers (or their designees) of public and private: elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities.

### **What do I Report?**

- When a student or other person demonstrates threatening physical or verbal behavior, such as violent, suicidal, or assaultive threats, actions or other behaviors they may be determined to pose a clear and present danger.
- The reporting law enforcement official, school administrator, or their designee must complete **Person Determined to Pose a Clear and Present Danger** form in its entirety and sign it. Specific behaviors and statements leading to the determination must be included in the form's narrative section. Dates and times of occurrence, as well as the names and contact information of any witnesses, should also be included. Additional supporting documentation should be referenced in the narrative section and submitted along with the form.

### **How do I report?**

- The completed form and attachments must be faxed to the Illinois State Police, FOID Enforcement at **217-782-9139** within 24 hours of determining the student poses a clear and present danger.
- The Illinois State Police, Firearms Services Bureau may be contacted at **217-782-3700**, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., to answer questions or confirm receipt of a submission.
- If you need emergency assistance from the Firearms Services Bureau beyond normal business hours, contact the Illinois State Police, Statewide Terrorism and Intelligence Center at **877-455-7842**.

### **What else should I know?**

- This reporting process is intended to prevent individuals determined to pose a clear and present danger from having access to firearms or firearm ammunition by revoking the individuals FOID Card.
- Clear and present danger reporting shall be made consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (34 CFR § 99.36) to assist the Department with protecting the health and safety of the public by denying persons, who present a clear and present danger, from having lawful access to weapons. School administrators should consider consulting with their legal counsel prior to adopting clear and present danger reporting policies.
- A principal or chief administrative officer, or designee of a principal or chief administrative officer, making the determination and reporting "Clear and Present Danger" shall not be held criminally, civilly, or professionally liable, except for willful or wanton misconduct. (430 ILCS 66/110)

**District #99 Threat of Harm Model – Threat to Self**

**Indication of Suicidal Ideation or Threat**

Student expressing suicidal ideation is assessed:  
A110 – Counseling Office – On call process  
D170 – Psychologist and Social Work offices counselor

**Suicide Risk Assessment Tools only to be used as information to be shared with outside treatment providers and/or parents**

- Suicide Risk Assessment
- Suicide Probability Scale
- Columbia -Suicide Severity Scale (interview structure)
- Reasons for Living Inventory
- Brief screen for Adolescent Depression – SOS

Assess level of risk - consult with CSSS and/or AP for CSSS

**High Risk of Harm**

1. Isolate and supervise student at all times.
2. Immediately request parents come to school to gather data, inform and to plan. If appropriate contact IL SASS/CARES assessment for on site assessment 1800-345-9049.
3. Determine safe method of transport to hospital. Inform administration and /SRO/Nurse if student is transported via ambulance.
4. If screener used, provide copy for parents/and or hospital/ambulance.
5. Document with TA code/Alpha Team follow-up
6. Report "Clear and Present Danger" – Complete form, fax to State Police, Give to secretary for CSSS.

**Moderate Risk of Harm**

1. Isolate and supervise student at all times.
2. Immediately request parents come to school to gather data, inform and plan for further assessment. If appropriate contact IL SASS/CARES assessment for on site assessment 1800-345-9049.
3. If screener used, provide copy for parents and/or clinician.
4. If necessary, request parent and student sign Release of Information.
5. Document with TA code/Alpha Team follow-up

**Low Risk of Harm**

1. Contact parent to inform, gather more data, discuss safety, and provide referrals if appropriate.
2. Determine if students can return to class or if needs to be picked up by parent
3. Document with Student Personal/Crisis depending on severity/Alpha Team follow-up

Give to Parents/Guardians as appropriate:

1. Screener, if used
2. Release of Information
3. Tips for Keeping your Child Safe
4. List of community referrals

# Threat to self assessments

**Table 2.** Characteristics of Suicide Risk Assessment Tools

Scale	Administration		# of Items	Predictive Validity	Reliability	Potential Utility		Population Setting			Population Specific ^			
	Self-Report	Interview/Observation				Global Assessment	Screening	Psychiatric			Non-Psychiatric	Adults	Children & Youth	Older Adults
								In	Out	ER				
BSS®	x	x	21	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
BHS		x	20		x		x	x		x	x		x	
C-SSRS		x				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
GSIS	x	x	31		x		x	x		x			x	
interRAI-SOS		x	varies*		x	x	x	x	x			x		
MHECC			114				x							
NGASR		x	15				x					x		
RFL	x		48		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	
SAD PERSONAS		x	10				x	x	x	x		x		
SIS-MAP		x	108		x	x		x	x		x	x		
SSI-M		x	18		x	x	x	x				x	x	
SBQ	x		34		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	
SIS		x	15	x	x			x	x		x	x		
SPS	x		36	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	
TASR			26				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

*Note.* **BSS®** – Beck Scale for Suicide Ideation; **BHS** – Beck Hopelessness Scale; **C-SSRS** – Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale; **GSIS** – Geriatric Scale for Suicide Intent; **RAI-MH SOS** – interRAI Mental Health Severity of Self-harm Scale; **MHECC** – Mental Health Environment of Care Checklist; **NGASR** – Nurses Global Assessment of Suicide Risk; **RFL** – Reasons for Living Inventory; **SIS-MAP** – Scale for Impact of Suicidality – Management, Assessment and Planning of Care; **SSI-M** – Modified Scale for Suicide Ideation; **SBQ** – Suicidal Behaviours Questionnaire; **SIS** – Suicide Intent Scale; **SPS** – Suicide Probability Scale; **TASR** – Tool for the Assessment of Suicide Risk.

\*The interRAI SOS scale is embedded in a larger mental health assessment system based on three different instruments. The number of items in each instrument varies as does the time to complete the entire assessment.

^ Adults (18-64), Older Adults (65+), Children & Youth (8-18)

## District #99 – Threat of Harm To Others Assessment Model

### Step 1. Evaluate threat using the Alpha Team (meaning a member or members of if possible)

- Obtain a specific account of the threat by interviewing the student who made threat to harm others, the recipient of threat, and other witnesses.
- Write down the exact content of the threat and statements made by each party.
- Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions.

### Step 2. Decide whether threat is clearly transient or serious using peer review

- Consider criteria for transient versus substantive threats.
- Conduct building safety evaluation if needed.
- Consider student's age, credibility, and previous history.

Threat is clearly transient

Threat is serious or threat meaning not clear

### Step 3. Respond to transient threat.

Typical responses may include reprimand, parental notification, or other disciplinary action. Student may be required to make amends and attend mediation or counseling. Document using "Threat Assessment" note type noting who was involved and results of the intervention.

### Step 3. Threat reported to Administrative Representative – Including but not limited to Principal, Associate Principal or Assistant Principal for Student Support Services

**Step 4. Decide whether the threat is serious.** A serious threat involves use of a weapon or is a threat to kill, sexually assault, or inflict severe injury to others. (see 2<sup>nd</sup> page for further examples of serious threat.)

Threat is serious

### Step 5: Respond to serious threat

- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims, including notifying intended victim and victim's parents.
- Conduct necessary searches.
- Notify student's parents.
- Notifying Deans and/or School Resource Officer.
- REQUIRED – Complete Clear and Present Danger Form, Fax to state police and give to secretary for CSS for storage.**
- Refer student for counseling, dispute mediation, or other appropriate intervention.
- Discipline student as appropriate to severity and chronicity of situation.
- Possibly refer the student for a "safety assessment" with an outside assessor.

### Step 6. Implement a safety plan.

- Bring case to ASSIST to develop a written plan.
- Maintain contact with the student.
- Revise plan as needed.

# TA Organize and Analyze

1. What are the student's motive(s) and goals?
2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to harm?
3. Has the student engaged in harm-related behaviors?
4. Does the student have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence on self or others?
5. Is the student experiencing hopelessness, desperation, and/or despair?
6. Does the student have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible adult?
7. Does the student see violence as an acceptable—or desirable—or the only—way to solve problems?
8. Is the student's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?
9. Are other people concerned about the student's potential for violence?
10. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of an attack?

# Managing a stressful situation

- ▣ Successful management of a threatening situation requires substantial time and effort.
- ▣ Management of these situations comprises three related functions:
  1. *Controlling/containing the situation and/or student in a way that will prevent the possibility of a threat being carried out.*
  2. *Protecting and aiding possible targets; and*
  3. *Providing support to help the student deal successfully with his or her problems*
  4. *Providing support for counselors and support personnel through systematic consultation and follow-up supervision.*

# Key Questions in Threat Assessments

- How do I know when and how to involve others in the threat assessment process?
- How do I check on my bias in the process?
- How do I balance advocating for my client/student and the well-being of others?
- What guides my definition of a counselor when working with other professionals in a threat assessment i.e. police, administration, social workers, psychologists, etc.?
- How can a counselor shape prevention efforts with students/clients with threat of harm risk factors?
- How can schools foster self-care for counselors involved in threat assessments? Threats: students, parents, administration, police, mental health professionals

# Action Plans for School Leaders

1. Assess the school's emotional climate.
2. Emphasize the importance of listening in schools.
3. Build collaborative structures between student support personnel.
3. Take a strong, but caring stance against the code of silence.
4. Work actively to change the perception that talking to an adult about a student contemplating violence is considered snitching
5. Address all bullying concerns.
6. Empower students by involving them in planning, creating, and sustaining a school culture of safety and respect.
7. Ensure that every student feels that he or she has a trusting relationship with at least one adult at school.
8. Create mechanisms for developing and sustaining safe school climates.
9. Be aware of physical environments and their effects on creating comfort zones
10. Emphasize an integrated systems model
11. All climates of safety ultimately are "local."

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