
Background

Rocky View Schools (RVS) fosters safe, caring, and inclusive school cultures that support high levels of achievement within positive and welcoming learning environments. Rocky View Schools has a shared obligation to take active steps to eliminate violence in schools while providing welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools through the implementation of a multi-tiered positive behaviour interventions and supports framework. We strive to create working relationships with each other and community partners built on mutual respect and trust. We work collaboratively for the benefit of students, their parents/guardians, and staff while recognizing each student has unique strengths and needs and will involve students and their families in planning services and supports.

RVS will collect information, analyze and use data to guide decision-making, consult and collaborate with each other and community partners to determine an appropriate response and support plan. In accordance with [RVS Responding to Behaviour Guidelines and Fair Notice](#), RVS will take actions seen as necessary to ensure immediate risk reduction, without delay, regardless of the involvement or availability of other community partners.

The following process and protocol shall be used for responding to student threat-making and/or high-risk behaviours.

This Procedure applies to all Teachers, Educational Assistants, Administrators, and Staff within schools under the jurisdiction of RVS. It covers acts of physical aggression, threats of other violent behaviours by students, whether directed at peers, staff, or others on school property or during school activities. RVS may also use this procedure for incidents that occur outside school time that may have an impact on school safety.

Definitions

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA): this assessment aims to identify and evaluate the potential for an individual to commit acts of violence towards others. It often involves analyzing behaviours, communications, and other indicators that suggest a person might pose a threat to specific targets or the public. The assessment is conducted in a standardized method by adults trained and recognized by RVS.

Assessment of Risk to Self or Others (ARTO): this assessment evaluates the risk of an individual harming themselves (self-harm or suicide) or others (general violence or dangerous behaviour). It is broader and includes mental health evaluations. The assessment is conducted in a standardized method by adults trained and recognized by RVS.

Violence: threatened, attempted or actual conduct that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm.

Serious Injury: an injury that requires medical attention and can significantly impact a person's health, quality of life, or ability to perform daily activities. This includes severe trauma such as

fractures or head injuries. Serious injuries may also include those that can potentially endanger a person's life or lead to lasting impairments and/or physical and psychological disabilities.

High-risk behaviours: include, but are not limited to, possession of weapons, bomb threats, threats to kill or injure others and setting of fires. Threats may be written, verbal, posted on the internet or made by gesture. They may be direct, indirect, conditional or veiled.

Immediate risk situations: are those involving high risk actions in motion that require immediate police intervention and a protective school response.

Worrisome behaviours: are those that cause concern for members of the school system indicating that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violence or violent behaviour. This may include drawing pictures, writing stories or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute "uttering threats" as defined by law but are causing concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content.

The School-based Threat Assessment Response Team Stage I: is composed of staff trained in violence threat risk assessment. Threat assessment response teams may include the Principal or Assistant Principal, Learning Support Teacher, School Counsellor and/or Child Development Advisor and may include School Resource Officers/Law Enforcement personnel. The primary purpose of the school-based threat assessment response team is response to immediate risk, immediate risk reduction interventions, site specific screening and comprehensive data collection.

Divisional Threat Assessment Response Team Stage II: is activated when a more comprehensive response to moderate, high, immediate risk situations are identified requiring interventions to lower the level of risk. This may include risk evaluation, long-term intervention and treatment planning, engagement of additional community partners. The Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate will be contacted to initiate expansion of the school-based threat assessment response team to include divisional level supports and may also include a police officer/enforcement agency, service providers from other agencies such as mental health, physicians, child protection and others.

Procedures

1. Providing Notice

- 1.1 Rocky View Schools' Responding to Behaviour Guidelines serves as notice that incidents of threat or harm to others will be immediately and actively investigated. Due to the seriousness of some incidents, the investigation will continue even if parents/guardian cannot immediately be contacted. Timely and continued effort will be made to contact parents/guardians.
- 1.2 Responding to Behaviour Guidelines can be found on the Rocky View Schools website: <https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/schools/learning/responding-to-behaviour-guidelines-and-fair-notice>

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- 1.3 The Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate shall ensure that students, staff and parents/guardians are aware of and have access to the Responding to Behaviour Guidelines by ensuring that information on the website is current and updated as needed.
 - 1.4 Each September all parents will be provided a letter outlining the school and school divisions right to engage in a VTRA/ARTO as one option to ensure safety for all students and staff. Parents will also receive information on Responding to Behaviour Guidelines in their school newsletters. This information will be the most up to date and linked to the information on the school and school division website.
2. Reporting
 - 2.1 Any person in a school having knowledge of high-risk student behaviour or having reasonable ground to believe there is a potential for high-risk behaviour, shall immediately report the information to the Principal and/or Designate.
 - 2.2 The Principal will immediately report the information to the school division crisis line and a determination will be made by the Principal and the Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate as to the next course of action.
 - 2.3 No action shall be taken against a person who makes a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds.
 - 2.4 In cases where a report is made maliciously, the person shall be dealt with according to division procedure and the law, where applicable.
3. Duty to Respond
 - 3.1 Schools shall respond to all high-risk/threat-related behaviours. All high-risk behaviours shall be taken seriously and assessed as per RVS' protocols.
 - 3.2 Each school shall designate a Threat Assessment Response leader, who shall be a Principal, Assistant Principal or School Counselor. In schools where there is no School Counselor this role must be assumed by a Principal or Assistant Principal as members of the Alberta Teachers Association.
4. Immediate Risk Situations
 - 4.1 These are those matters that require immediate police intervention.
 - 4.2 The Principal or Designate shall contact law enforcement immediately while taking steps to ensure the safety of all those in the school by activating established Hour Zero functional protocols such as emergency evacuation, hold and secure or lockdown.
 - 4.3 The Principal, or Designate, shall call the school division crisis line as soon as possible following initial law enforcement contact.
 - 4.4 When safety is in place, the Principal along with the school based and divisional threat assessment teams, will engage in the VTRA process.
5. High-Risk Behaviours
 - 5.1 Upon receiving a report of high-risk behaviour, the Principal or Designate shall initiate the school-based threat assessment response team to engage in Stage I data collection to assess the high-risk behaviour and will then move into a Stage I VTRA.

- When safe to do so, the Principal will call the divisional crisis line and inform the Area Director. The Area Director will inform the divisional crisis team.
- 5.2 Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate, in collaboration with the school-based threat assessment response team will determine if a Stage 2 VTRA is required and will contact the designated divisional team to respond.
 - 5.3 In cases where it is believed a Criminal Code violation may have occurred, the police/enforcement agencies will be consulted, including to determine whether charges may be laid.
 - 5.4 If the police/enforcement agency choose not to lay initial charges, the identified threat assessment teams shall continue to conduct a risk assessment and determine follow-up interventions and recommendations.
 - 5.5 The Principal shall notify the parents/guardians of the student making the threat at the earliest opportunity, as well as the parents/guardians of those students against whom the threat was made. Parents/guardians are an integral part of the initial risk assessment process.
 - 5.6 When information collected as part of the Stage I response suggests that a student who has displayed high-risk behaviour poses a significant risk/threat, the divisional threat assessment response team would be requested through the Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate.
 - 5.7 Interview of, and data collection from, the threat maker should occur as soon as possible after identification of the threat, preferably before leaving the school. To protect others and/or the threat maker, students may be asked to remain at home during the investigation, or they may be suspended from school by the Principal during the assessment period.
 - 5.7.1 A suspension may create the necessary context for the high-risk student who is already struggling with suicidal or homicidal ideation. When a suspension occurs, a key question beyond “when to suspend” is “where to suspend”. The isolation and disconnection felt by high-risk students during a suspension may be exacerbated if steps are not taken to keep the student connected to healthy supports. Consideration should be given to an in-school suspension in circumstances that put the threat maker at higher risk for suicidal or homicidal ideation.
 - 5.8 The school based and divisional based threat assessment teams (Stage I and/or Stage II) shall guide the process from initial assessment to planning interventions to decrease risk, to plans for re-entry to school where a suspension has occurred.
 - 5.9 If circumstances warrant, and following the completion of necessary assessments, the school-based threat assessment response team members may work with the student and their parents/guardians to develop a re-entry plan for school.
 - 5.10 When the data gathered through the Stage I and/or Stage II assessment suggests that a student poses a threat to others, he/she/they may be suspended from school until a more comprehensive assessment can be conducted. The divisional based threat assessment team will guide the process for Stage II VTRA or ARTO from initial assessment to planned intervention and developing a plan for re-entry into school where a suspension has occurred.

6. Worrisome Behaviours

- 6.1 School staff shall communicate all worrisome behaviours that cause concern to the Principal for consultation.
- 6.2 School staff, after consultation with the Principal, shall develop a plan with the Principal to contact parents/guardians when worrisome behaviour is observed.
- 6.3 The Principal shall consult with members of the school-based threat assessment response team as to whether a risk assessment needs to be conducted. The Principal will inform the Area Director. The Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate may be requested to be a member of the team reviewing the worrisome behaviours, as necessary.
- 6.4 Law enforcement may be consulted but it is generally not done as a formal complaint.

7. Students Requiring Special Consideration

- 7.1 When dealing with students under 12 years of age, students with special needs or other exceptional students, maturation issues and cognitive abilities shall be taken into consideration.
- 7.2 As students requiring special consideration can still be at risk or pose a risk, the Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate shall be consulted to determine the course of action considering safety for the student at risk, other students and all staff. A designated code does not diminish the employee's right to a safe workplace.
- 7.3 The Principal and the Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate shall determine if a VTRA or ARTO is appropriate.
- 7.4 The multidisciplinary VTRA protocol will not typically be activated when child/youth with special needs engage in threat-making or aggressive behaviour that are consistent with their diagnoses and how it has been known to manifest in them ("baseline behaviour") then the school-based threat assessment response team may not be called upon to conduct an assessment. If you are unsure, a Stage I review should be undertaken.
- 7.5 If the child/youth with special needs moves beyond their typical baseline behaviour, then the school-based threat assessment response team would be activated to assist in determining the reason for the increase in baseline and whether the child/youth poses a risk to self or others. Once the VTRA or ARTO 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 child/youth with special needs will be consultants to the school-based threat assessment response team or the divisional based threat assessment response team in these cases.
- 7.6 In all cases, staff should follow RVS and Hour Zero protocols to document any threats or injuries that may have occurred or had the potential to occur.

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- 7.7 After determining the appropriate course of action for the student, other parties involved should receive general information on the actions taken while maintaining student privacy.
8. Duty to Victim/s and Others
- 8.1 The Principal will ensure that appropriate support is provided to those against whom the threat or violence occurred.
- 8.1.1 Appropriate support for employees of RVS can include information on where to access further support through RVS including benefits provider.
- 8.1.2 Appropriate support for students and their families may include information on accessing counselling supports within RVS or through other appropriate agencies.
- 8.1.3 The Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate will ensure that RVS members of Stage I and II teams will also have information on how to access supports through the RVS benefits provider.
9. VTRA/ARTO Report
- 9.1 The Principal shall be responsible for signing off on a Threat Assessment Incident Report/Assessment of Risk to Self or Others report and ensuring that the recommendations within the report are followed.
- 9.2 The notification of a completed Threat Assessment Incident Report/Assessment of Risk to Self or Others Report will be placed in the student's cumulative file.
10. Training in VTRA and ARTO
- 10.1 Each school is required to establish a school-based threat assessment response team in September of each year. All members of the school-based threat assessment response team will have minimum Level 1 VTRA/ARTO training and update their training as required by RVS.
- 10.2 The Associate Superintendent of Learning or Designate is responsible to ensure that training in VTRA and ARTO is available for school staff and for division level staff each year.
11. VTRA and ARTO are not disciplinary measures
- 11.1 Staff must not use the VTRA or ARTO as a threat or punitive measure against students.
- 11.2 If a threat assessment is warranted, it must be activated in accordance with the protocols in this Procedure, not used as a deterrent for future behaviour.

References:

- Center for Trauma Informed Practices Guidelines
- Education Act
- Criminal Code of Canada
- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- AP 350 Student Code of Conduct
- AP 149 Crisis Incident Communication
- AP 214 Inclusive Education
- AP 411 Occupational Health and Safety
- Rocky View Schools Responding to Behaviour and Fair Notice Guidelines