

Guidance on Threats to Others Best Practices

What should I do if I think a student might harm someone?

Although it does not happen frequently, there are times when school counselors, administrators and other staff may encounter a student expressing thoughts or intent to harm others, or homicidal thoughts. This could include a student making threats or sharing plans to kill other students, staff members, family members or other persons. This may also include drawings, social media posts, texts, verbal threats or other indications of potential intent to harm others. The student may or may not be known to have access to weapons or other means to harm others, but **all threats of violence or harm should be regarded seriously**. The following are **recommended procedures** to follow when a concern arises that a student poses an imminent threat of harm, violence, or death.



Individuals bringing to the attention of school administration any threats made by students should be **interviewed** to determine the threat level. A **written statement** should be prepared.



If a student makes a **threat to kill or harm another person in any manner**, school counselors and administrators should **respond immediately** to the situation.



If school administrators determine it's appropriate, the student and their possessions (including any backpack, locker or vehicle) **should be searched for weapons**.

- If a determination is made that school officials may search a student's possessions and outer clothing on school grounds without permission of the parent or guardian, **under no circumstances may a student be directed to undress**. (It is never permissible to perform a "strip search" or require a student to expose their undergarments.)



A counselor should **assess the student for thoughts or plans of self-harm, suicide, harming others and homicide**. The student should be asked the following questions:

1. Are you thinking about hurting yourself? Are you thinking about killing yourself? Are you thinking about hurting or killing someone else?
2. Do you have a plan in place?
3. Do you have access to any weapons?
4. Do you have possession of a weapon right now?
5. What feelings are you having?



The student should be **interviewed about the threat by administrators**.



A **parent or guardian should be contacted**. Let the parent know the situation, and, in the event an imminent threat has been determined, school administrators are required to contact law enforcement.



School administrators should **make a record of all contact with law enforcement** officers or agents.



An [Emergency Notification Form](#) should be filled out for the student, including the third-party statement with the facts of the incident. A [Safety Threat Assessment](#) may also be used.



Refer the student for an emergency mental health evaluation.

Depending on the severity and immediacy of the threat, it may be appropriate to **contact law enforcement**. The person(s) who discovered the threat may have to fill out a separate [Third-Party Statement](#) for the police or other responding agency, in addition to the statement prepared for the school.



The parent or guardian of the person(s) who were threatened **should also be contacted and made aware of the threat**. Pursuant to federal student privacy laws, when notifying individuals that a threat has been made the school **may not identify the student(s) who made the threat**, but the parent/guardian can be told what the substance of the threat was and made aware that they can file a police report. If applicable, tell the parent/guardian that school officials have also notified police. You should make this parent contact the same day as when the threat was discovered.



Following investigation of the allegations, if deemed appropriate **the student(s) who expressed a violent threat may receive discipline in accordance with your district policies**. If the student is identified as a student with disabilities served through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all applicable provisions apply to potential disciplinary action.



Prior to the student's return to school, school administration and counselors should formulate and **implement a [Student Re-Entry Plan](#)**. The student's initial re-entry into school may include school services delivered outside the traditional setting if appropriate.