VIOLENCE THREAT RISK ASSESSMENT (VTRA)

Background:

The Division is committed to ensuring all members of the school community are provided with welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning and working environments. To this end, the Division has worked with community partners to develop the Elk Island Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol that outlines clear planning, training and processes supporting violence prevention. The VTRA protocol is reflective of a shared commitment to respond to threat and prevent violence.

Definitions:

Baseline behaviour:
is an individual's typical level of functioning, including expressions of emotion, behaviour, attendance, participating in activities, schoolwork, pattern of interactions and other factors.

Risk enhancers:
are dynamics related to an individual or situation that increase the level of concern and indicate that more intentional planning and response may be necessary. Throughout the information-gathering stage, partners work together to identify and understand as many possible risk enhancers as possible.

Risk levels:

> **Immediate risk situations:**
> are situations when immediate risk to safety is identified. In these situations, school administrators call 911 and implement site-specific emergency protocols. VTRA activation would not occur until the situation is stabilized.

> **Low risk:**
> are situations when available information suggests the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent. Categorizing a situation or individual as "low risk" does not imply "no risk," but indicates there is little risk for violence and monitoring the situation is appropriate. Depending on circumstances, a Stage 1 VTRA may be initiated. Low risk is often indicated by the following:
> - the threat is vague and indirect;
> - information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible, lacks detail or lacks realism; and
> - the threat is within the general range for typical baseline behaviour for the threat maker.

Medium risk:

are situations when the threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible. In these situations:

- the threat is more plausible and concrete than a low-risk threat. Information gathered suggests the threat maker is deemed to be at an elevated risk for violence;
- the wording in the threat and information gathered suggests some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out—for example, a specific place and time are indicated;
- there is no clear evidence of specific planning such as weapon seeking. However, there are reasons to believe the threat is not empty; and
- there is an increase in baseline behaviour.

High risk:

are situations when the risk may not be immediate, but it is deemed to be both imminent and serious, posing danger to the safety of others. In these situations:

- the threat is specific and plausible. There is an identified target, and the individual has the capacity to act out the threat;
- information suggests concrete steps were taken toward acting out the threat; and
- information gathered suggests strong concern about the individual's potential to act violently.

Stage 1 Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA):

is a process managed by the originating partner organization. A Stage 1 VTRA is initiated when the initial information gathered suggests the risk is low to medium.

Stage 2 Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA):

is a process focused on a comprehensive risk evaluation, intervention and followup planning by a multidisciplinary team. A Stage 2 VTRA is initiated when the initial information gathered suggests the risk is medium to high, or when the information gathered as part of a Stage 1 VTRA suggests a Stage 2 VTRA is required.

Threat:

is defined as any expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats may be spoken, written, drawn, posted online or made by gesture only.

Worrisome behaviours:

are behaviours that should not be ignored, but which, after a thorough risk assessment, do not meet criteria for the Stage 1 or Stage 2 VTRA processes.

Procedures:

Training

1. It is recommended all members of the administrative and counselling team complete Violence Threat Risk Assessment Level 1 training, and at least two members of the school team complete Violence Threat Risk Assessment Level 2 training.

Gathering Information

2. If a staff member is made aware of threatening behaviour, they are to make administration aware quickly. If the situation is one of immediate risk, site-specific emergency procedures and protocols should be activated. VTRA protocols may be initiated once the situation has stabilized.

3. Once administrators receive the information, the following steps must be taken:
    3.1. Bring student(s) to office, ensuring they're in a space that can be supervised, mitigating the risk to other students and staff in the school. Ensure the student(s) of concern don't have access to locker, backpack, coat or cell phone.
    3.2. Supervise student(s) while they're in the office.
    3.3. Search student(s) backpack, locker, desk, gym locker and other belongings in accordance with Administrative Procedure 352: Interrogations and Searches.
    3.4. Document anything of concern that is found.

4. Contact the Division VTRA lead—the Director of Specialized Supports—to advise.

5. Call the school's VTRA-trained School Resource Officer to share initial data. The officer will review accessible records to help inform risk assessment.

6. After consultation, complete interviews as necessary, documenting information gathered.

7. With available information, determine if the behaviour is worrisome or if a Stage 1 VTRA or Stage 2 VTRA activation is required,
    7.1. If worrisome, arrange next steps collaboratively with the school team, including involving parents/guardians and teacher in a school-based meeting to support the student and family and to address areas of concern.
    7.2. If level of risk is low to medium, initiate a Stage 1 VTRA.
    7.3. If level of risk is medium to high, initiate a Stage 2 VTRA.

Stage 1 VTRA

8. Initiate a Stage 1 VTRA when the level of risk is low to medium.

9. Inform the Division VTRA lead that a Stage 1 VTRA has been initiated. The VTRA lead will inform the Superintendent and direct an Assistant Director and/or the Feeder School Framework Consultant to help co-ordinate next steps.

10. Feeder School Framework Consultant(s) will help to co-ordinate next steps, including:
    10.1. Contacting other protocol partners as necessary;
    10.2. Gathering information from community partners;
    10.3. Scheduling meeting(s) as necessary; and
    10.4. Creating an intervention/followup plan to both mitigate risk and support the student(s) involved.

11. For purposes of documentation:

    11.1.   School staff will upload the [VTRA Intervention/Followup Plan](#) to the school's SharePoint site in the SI-15 folder (Student Information), following the applicable naming convention.

    11.2.   Enter a summary of events as a Log Entry in PowerSchool.

Stage 2 VTRA

12. Initiate a Stage 2 VTRA when the level of risk is medium to high.

13. Inform the Division VTRA lead. The VTRA lead will inform the Superintendent. A Stage 2 VTRA involves a larger group of collaborative partners in order to create a comprehensive intervention/followup plan.

14. The Division VTRA lead along with Assistant Directors and/or Feeder School Framework Consultant(s) will support the school team in arranging the meeting(s), collecting data and creating an intervention/followup plan.

15. For purposes of documentation:

    15.1.   School staff will upload the [VTRA Intervention/Followup Plan](#) to the school's SharePoint site in the SI-15 folder (Student Information), following the applicable naming convention.

    15.2.   Enter a summary of events as a Log Entry in PowerSchool.

Reference:

Section 11, 31, 32, 33, 35.1, 36, 37, 52, 53, 56, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225 *Education Act*
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Policy 19: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments
Administrative Procedure 170: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning and Working Environments for Staff
Administrative Procedure 171: Workplace Violence Prevention
[EIPS VTRA Protocol](#)