



TITLE: ORGANIZING FOR ASSESSING AND MANAGING THREATS
NUMBER: BUL-1119.1
ISSUER: Dan M. Isaacs, Chief Operating Officer
 Office of the Chief Operating Officer
DATE: December 7, 2005

ROUTING
All Schools and Offices

POLICY: Crisis response procedures are required under California Education Code Section 35294.2(a)(2)(B). In accordance with these requirements, each school and local district shall establish an interdisciplinary system of threat assessment and management to ensure the immediate response to, and effective resolution of threatening situations at schools and in Local Districts.

MAJOR CHANGES: This bulletin replaces Office of the Chief Operating Officer Bulletin No. 1119, dated July 12, 2004, titled Organizing for Assessing and Managing Threats. It provides guidelines for threat assessment and management procedures at schools and in Local Districts. Direction for the organization and use of crisis intervention teams to help schools respond appropriately to crises is now available in Bulletin No. Bul-962.1.

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines apply.

I. BACKGROUND

As a result of the recognition that a variety of threat and crisis situations can and do occur in a district of this size, a task force developed and published, in the 2002 bulletin, the first guidelines for threat assessment and management.

The necessity of responding to a variety of threats and crises in the District over the past decade and the publication of the Secret Service Report, in collaboration with the US Department of Education and the National Institute of Justice, on "The Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools," prompted the development of guidelines to assess and manage threats made against students, school staffs and/or school facilities. The plan addresses the following concerns: 1) how to respond appropriately to threats that could precipitate a crisis; 2) how to re-establish the safety and security of the school site; and 3) how to provide appropriate psychological intervention services that can help minimize and perhaps prevent emotional damage to those who are affected.

Since the issuance of the original bulletin, several violent gun related tragedies, including some that occurred on school campuses in California, have focused attention on the importance of a threat assessment and management component to crisis response and safe school planning, which establishes policies and



procedures to evaluate and deal with threats directed toward individuals, groups, or an entire school or community.

This bulletin provides direction to schools in preparation for appropriate response to threats and crisis situations.

II. ORGANIZING FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

A. All threats made against individuals or groups by other identified or unknown individuals or groups must be taken seriously and investigated to determine whether they pose a real danger to students or staff. Threats which may initially appear or ultimately prove to be pranks or hoaxes are also taken seriously due to the severe disruption that false threats often impose on the daily operation of a school. The systematic and orderly assessment and evaluation of a threat is conducted as quickly as possible by the School Threat Assessment and Management Team in close working collaboration with the Local District Operations Coordinator. Every school should have a threat assessment and management protocol outlined in its school safety plan. This protocol should identify the school police officer and administrator on campus who will initially receive, review and investigate threats and when appropriate, refer threats to the School Threat Assessment and Management Team.

B. School Threat Assessment and Management Team

1. Each school shall establish a School Threat Assessment and Management Team. Members of the team shall be selected by the principal/designee. The team shall include at least one administrator, one mental health professional (counselor, psychologist, or psychiatric social worker) and one LAUSD police officer assigned to the school or local district. One team member may be able to resolve the situation alone or with other team members/resources as needed.
2. Responsibilities of the school threat assessment and management team include:
 - a. Gathering pertinent information in order to evaluate the nature and validity of a threat. (Examples of records that can be used include student health card, previous disciplinary problems and written assignments; other information could include results of interviews with other students, friends, parents, or co-workers)
 - b. Reporting any threat to students or staff to the Local District Operations Coordinator as required by Local District guidelines.



- c. Maintaining open communication with the Local District Operations Coordinator during the Threat Assessment and Management Process.
- d. Making team recommendations that will lead to:
 - 1) Appropriate contact with and/or apprehension of the individual(s) who initiated the threat, as well as those who might carry it out.
 - 2) Appropriate interventions or discipline (such as student suspension, written guidance, mental health evaluation/referral, or restraining orders) to immediately affect behavior.
 - 3) Appropriate warnings to, and protection for, the individual(s) or group(s) against whom the threat was directed.
 - 4) Maintaining a safe school environment.
- e. Assisting the principal in the development of a plan/strategy to monitor and provide guidance to students (victims and perpetrators) who return to the school after being removed during the threat crisis.

C. Local District Threat Assessment and Management Team

- 1. The Local District Operations Coordinator shall provide guidance and Local District Crisis Intervention Team support, as appropriate, to the school site team to facilitate the threat assessment and management process.
- 2. The Operations Coordinator in each District shall establish a Local District Threat Assessment and Management Team and is responsible for determining leadership and team member assignments. The Local District Team may include personnel selected from the Local District Crisis Intervention Team.
- 3. Responsibilities of Local District threat assessment and management teams include:
 - a. Providing threat assessment and management training for school crisis teams and school staffs in the Local District.
 - b. Providing the following services, as directed by the Local District Operations Coordinator:



- 1) Assist principals/designees with needs assessment and crisis management when a threat occurs.
- 2) Provide support to the local threat management team by offering technical assistance and direct services to students and staff, as needed.
- 3) Evaluate the necessity for assistance from central headquarters, and contact the appropriate central office when necessary, to obtain support from offices such as the Office of General Counsel, Youth Relations and Student Discipline Proceedings Unit.

III. ASSESSING AND MANAGING THREATS

- A. Threats must be assessed and managed in consideration of the conditions, risk factors and warning signs, including circumstances or events that potentially may have caused a particular person to make a threat.
- B. A threat, whether or not it is carried out, may result in an assessment. Not all indicators will require a full threat assessment or will require participation by all members of the team. Each behavior must be taken into context and handled in a common sense approach.
- C. A threat may target an individual (e.g., a note threatening physical harm to a specific person) or may target a particular group on campus, the entire school or the community (e.g., a phone call suggesting an explosive device is located somewhere on or near the school site). Additionally, administrators and staff should remember that persons other than students may be responsible for making threats and may also be the identified targets or victims of threats. This includes employees and community members.
- D. The process of threat assessment management is investigative, information driven, fact based and prevention oriented. It includes the following four steps:
 1. Identify the type of threat and the individual(s) making the threat.
 2. Assess the warning signs, risk factors, stabilizing factors and potential precipitating events to arrive at an informed opinion. Findings may range from no evidence of violent or intimidation of others to a high violence potential requiring arrest or hospitalization



- a. Risk assessment attempts to answer three questions: Is the individual moving on a path towards violent action? Is there evidence to suggest movement from thought to action? What can be done to control the progression of the threat?
- b. Assessment of the warning signs requires an evaluation of threatening oral, written or electronic communications. More significant examples include:
 - 1) Direct threats that verbalize a violent plan.
 - 2) Suicidal threats or statements that express a wish to kill, a wish to be killed and a wish to die.
 - 3) Threats or boasts about bringing a weapon or destructive device to school.
 - 4) Physical and behavioral clues that may include frequent physical altercations, assaults, bullying or intimidation as perpetrator or victim, drawings, writings and other creative outlets with persistent or intense themes describing or advocating violence.
 - 5) Persecutory thoughts or delusions with significant deteriorating thought processes.
 - 6) Inappropriate displays of emotion, particularly anger, depression and/or rage.
 - 7) Organized vs. disorganized communications – the clearer and more organized the message, the greater the potential for carrying out the threat, as compared to communications that are chaotic and suggest that the one communicating the threat is more likely to be acting impulsively at that particular moment.
 - 8) Fixed vs. variable themes – the more consistently the theme of blame in the communicated threat is related to specific significant areas of the communicator's life, the greater the risk that the threat could be carried out.
3. Develop a course of action or strategy to control the threat. Consider all options including setting parameters with administrative, mental health, legal, or criminal justice resources.
4. Recommend appropriate action to the site administrator.



- E. As a result of a threat, people have a variety of psychological reactions. As soon as the physical safety of those involved has been insured, attention must turn to meeting their emotional and psychological needs. Crisis intervention may be necessary and appropriate, as described in Bulletin No. Bul-962.1.
- F. If the person engaging in the threatening behavior is a student, it is likely that once the crisis has passed, the student will return to the school or to another LAUSD school. The threat assessment and management team should work with school administrators to develop a post-crisis plan/strategy that will assist the school in responding to, and managing the student's behavior on an on-going basis.
- F. Following the resolution of a threat situation, a debriefing for members of the Threat Management Team should be held. The principal/designee should determine whether additional staff, student body, or community needs should be addressed.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of the Chief Operating Officer.

RELATED RESOURCES: For additional information on relevant District policies, procedures and resources, the following offices may be contacted:

- School Police Department (Watch Commander) (213) 625-6631
(Chief) (213) 742-8235
- Local District Operations Coordinator
- District Crisis Counseling (Director) (213) 241-2174
- School Mental Health
(Psychiatric Social Worker, Clinical Psychologist or Psychiatric Nurse)
(818) 997-2640
- Office of the Chief Operating Officer (213) 241-4133

ASSISTANCE: For further information, please contact: Marleen Wong, Director, Crisis Intervention Services (213) 241-2174, Larry Manion, Acting Chief School Police (213) 742-8222; Dan M. Isaacs, Chief Operating Officer, (213) 241-4133; Office of General Counsel (213) 241-7600; or your Local District Operations Coordinator.