Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board

A School and Community Protocol for Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention

2nd Edition

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School and Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention Protocol

Rationale

The Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's shared vision is to engage, support and inspire all learners to achieve and succeed. Safety in schools is fundamental to learning and well-being for all students. The Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board are both committed to creating and maintaining safe, caring, and accepting school environments.

As a result, the Boards will respond to all student behaviours that pose a potential risk to other students, staff, and members of the school community through the process of violence threat risk assessment.

The effective implementation of the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol will support collaborative planning to prevent traumatic events. In addition, the timely sharing of information about students at risk for violence towards self and/or others will ensure that supportive plans are put in place for the student and school community.

The goal of this protocol is to remove, or reduce as far as possible, any threats to the safety of students, parents, school staff, other persons, the school, or other buildings or property, that arise from any actions engaged in, by students or their peers, on school property or in the community. It is hoped that support for early intervention measures by the Grand Erie District School Board, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and community partners will both reduce and prevent violence in our schools and in the community.

Vision

Violence Prevention in our schools and neighborhoods is a community responsibility. All partners are accountable and have a shared obligation to take active steps to prevent and reduce threats and acts of violence in our schools and community. This means the timely sharing of information, advice, and support to assist in the prevention of violence.

What is Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)?

The assessment of violence, threat and risk is a team approach to identifying, evaluating and addressing potential threats from students toward other students, staff and parents within the school and community environment. The purpose of carrying out a violence threat risk assessment is to ensure that those who have knowledge of the student carry out a careful analysis of the potential severity of the threat and determine an appropriate response to the threat-maker.

A multi-disciplinary assessment of student behaviour helps determine whether or not a student is moving on a pathway towards violence against him/herself or others, and creates an opportunity to intervene to decrease the risks identified. Through developing an individualized intervention plan, the underlying issues that have contributed to high-risk behaviour can be addressed.

Where a high risk is identified, a student may require further assessment from community professionals, including but not limited to, child protection agencies and medical practitioners.

Threat Assessment is the process of determining if a student actually poses a risk to the person(s) they have threatened.
A threat is when a person utters, writes, or communicates through technology a threat to harm or kill a person or persons. Typically, threat assessment occurs within a few hours of a threat being made. The timeliness of information gathering is essential and includes input from the student, family, peers, school staff, and the community agencies that may have access to information relevant to the threat being made.

Risk Assessment is the process of determining if a student of concern may pose a risk to self (e.g. suicide) or risk to some person(s) at some unknown period of time.
Typically risk assessment is a lengthier process that may involve a number of assessments, tests, and measures beyond the scope of the school-based multidisciplinary team. Consultation with the School Social Worker is required in order to request a Risk Assessment for a student.

High Risk Behaviour: When to Enact the Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention Protocol:

Student behavior that poses a threat or risk to self or others can present in a variety of ways. Examples of high risk behaviours addressed in this protocol include, but are not limited to:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Indicators of suicidal ideation as it relates to fluidity (both homicidal and suicidal)
- Verbal/written threats to kill others ("clear, direct and plausible")
- The use of technology to communicate threats to harm/kill others or cause property damage (e.g.: computer, cell phone)
- Possession of weapons (including replicas)
- Bomb threats (making and/ or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire setting
- Sexual intimidation or assault
- Ongoing issues with bullying and/or harassment
- Gang related intimidation and violence
- Hate incidents motivated by factors including, but not limited to; race, culture, religion, and/or sexual orientation
- Rehearsal behaviours or evidence of planning an attack

Students who have experienced ongoing harassment and/or bullying, or students who have a history of perceived victimization, may pose a risk to safety and could be considered for a Risk Assessment.

All behaviours that may *pose a risk or threat to others* are to be reported to the school administrator. This includes the behaviour of students, staff or community members.

Note: Students who are displaying self-harm behaviour and/or suicidal ideation *pose a risk to themselves*. This behaviour may *not* require enacting the threat/risk assessment protocol. Both the Grand Erie District School Board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board have procedures for dealing with students who are expressing suicidal ideation. Consultation with parents, school Social Worker and/or community agencies is required to determine next steps for both assessment and intervention with students at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Any of the behaviours below may lead a school towards a process of threat/risk assessment and should be reported to school administration.

Chart of Behaviours

Worrisome Behaviours	High Risk Behaviours	Immediate Threat: Call 911
Include but are not limited to: Violent Content: • drawing pictures • writing stories/journals • vague threatening statements • unusual interest in fire • significant change in anti-social behaviour • suicidal ideation	Include but are not limited to: • bomb threat plan • verbal/written plan to kill/injure • internet website threats to kill or injure self/others • fire setting • threatens violence • suicidal ideation • hate incidents and bullying • evidence of planning, rehearsal behaviours • gang related violence	Include but are not limited to: • possession of a weapon or replica • plan for a serious assault • homicidal/suicidal • behavior that threatens safety (fluidity) • fire setting

In the case of immediate threats and high risk behaviours, the Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and Intervention Protocol is to be initiated.

Worrisome behaviour can be addressed through consultation with School Social Worker, Student Support Services and/or community professionals, Resource Team Meetings and case conferences. If a school administrator is uncertain as to whether or not to enact the Threat Assessment Protocol, a consultation with the School Social Worker or Safe Schools Team is recommended. If a Risk Assessment is required, contact the School Social Worker designated to the school. If staff from a community agency is concerned about worrisome behaviour, with consent, information can be shared with the school administrator who will determine appropriate next steps.

VTRA Reminders

Students With Diverse Learning Needs and VTRA

The VTRA protocol will not necessarily be activated when students with diverse learning needs engage in threat making or aggressive behaviours typical to their baseline. In other words, if the person's conduct is consistent with their diagnosis or how they are known to typically present, then a VTRA response is not required.

However, if the student with diverse needs moves beyond their typical baseline—either a single incident or a slow-and-steady increase—and is engaged in high-risk behaviour it would warrant a VTRA response.

The role of the VTRA team is to determine why there was an increase in the baseline behaviour and whether the student poses a risk to self or others. The process of
data collection and assessment is not modified other than to ensure the appropriate interviewing strategies are used for the student with diverse needs. Staff members from the school and Special Education staff who are responsible for program planning and service delivery must consult with the VTRA teams in these cases.

As a note of caution, sometimes school and community members may under react to a serious threat posed by a student with diverse needs. They may assume all of the behaviours are a result of their functional impairment rather than considering a student with diverse needs can move along "the pathway to justification" as well.

Early Elementary Aged Children and VTRA

When younger students engage in violent or threat related behaviour, developmental and exceptionality issues need to be taken into consideration. Generally speaking, most threat-related behaviour exhibited by elementary-aged students falls into the category of "worrisome behaviours." However, just because a student is elementary age doesn't mean they can't pose a risk. If high-risk behaviours are identified, a VTRA protocol should be activated.

VTRA Trumps Suspension

In most cases, unless the individual of concern already poses an imminent or obvious safety concern such as brandishing a weapon, a Stage 1 VTRA should occur before suspension is considered. A suspension can unintentionally create the necessary context for a student who is already struggling with suicidal or homicidal ideation to take the final step, from planning to taking action. Therefore, it is important to ensure that steps are taken to complete a Stage 1 VTRA and ensure that the student is connected with healthy supports in the home and community.

Crisis and Trauma Management

Supporting Those Who May Impacted
The school administrator and the VTRA lead for the school are responsible for ensuring any possible victims of the threat are assessed and services are provided as necessary. The circumstances of the threat, whether directed towards one or more individuals, an entire class or the school population, will dictate how far reaching the intervention needs to be. The VTRA lead in consultation with the school administrators, should determine if crisis counselling or trauma follow up is needed to re-establish calm.

System Communications
Any communication regarding violence threat risk assessment situations are directed to the Communications Department for vetting and consultation.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Team

The VTRA team is a multi-disciplinary team comprised of the School Administrator(s), School Social Worker and/or Behaviour Counsellor (Grand Erie), Child and Youth Worker, Resource Officer (Secondary School), or Police Services of jurisdiction, and Guidance Counsellor (Secondary school). Teachers and school staff who have knowledge of the student, but who are not trained in Violence Threat Risk Assessment (Level One), can also provide valuable information.

(see Appendix E for further information regarding training)

Community Partners

Where applicable, other members from the community may be involved in information sharing and planning (e.g. Police Services, Children's Aid Society, Youth Justice agencies, counselling agencies, public health units, hospitals). Agreements both formal and informal between the school boards and agencies exist to allow active collaboration and information sharing. This collaborative process will respect the individual's rights to privacy and the safety of all. Information sharing may take place at a community team meeting. Where there is acutely elevated risk, or threat to personal safety, consent is *not* required to share information relevant to the identified risk.

Community professionals who become aware of student behaviour that may pose a threat are encouraged to initiate the Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention Protocol through contacting the Principal or designate at the school. Community tables in Brantford, Six Nations, Haldimand and Norfolk may also recommend a VTRA on behalf of a student of concern. (See Appendix B: Community Teams)

Community agencies participating in a violence threat risk assessment on behalf of a student may be included in the development of an intervention plan. A review of the student's intervention plan may include the student, parent(s), school staff and community professionals, and will be initiated by the school administrator as required.

Non-Work Hour Cases

If information is received by a VTRA member regarding serious violence, weapons possession or a threat that is clear, direct and plausible during non-work hours for protocol partners, Police will be called. Steps will also be taken to assess the person of concern and the target(s) will be notified and protected as required. The site specific VTRA team members and Police will determine if team members need to assist beyond regular work hours or if the non-Police aspects of the case can wait until regular work hours. In many cases, evening or weekend incidents continue to escalate into the workplace, school or community. The school Boards will be notified about any potential VTRA situations by partner agencies.

Is a student making a threat, posing a threat or neither?

Anyone in a moment of emotion can deliver a threat (verbal, written, electronic) that sounds foreboding or sinister, however that does not mean that anybody who "makes" a threat actually "poses" a threat. This document outlines the data collection process used in order to assess and evaluate the level of threat as well as develop a plan to reduce identified risks. Part of the process is to evaluate the person making the threat in order to determine whether the student has the intention, the ability or the means to carry out the threat.

Three Primary Hypothesis in Violence Threat Risk Assessment

1. Is it a conscious or unconscious "Cry for Help"?
2. Conspiracy of two or more: Who else knows about it? Who else is involved?
3. Is there any evidence of fluidity (flow between both suicidal and homicidal thoughts or actions)?

Information Sharing between Schools and Community Agencies

There are two main pieces of privacy legislation in Ontario. They are the PHIPA (Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004) and the FIPPA (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990). In addition, both the Youth Criminal Justice Act (2002) and the Child and Family Services Act (1990) speak to information sharing on behalf of children and youth.

The general intent of access to information and protection of privacy legislation is to limit the sharing of personal information without the consent of the person. **Wherever possible and reasonable, consent should be obtained.** The individual should know what he/she is consenting to, and understand the consequences of the intended disclosure. The individual must be made aware that he/she can withdraw consent at any time by giving written or verbal notice.

Challenges to the privacy legislation through the Supreme Court of Canada resulted in the decision that in cases of potential imminent danger, ***safety trumps privacy.***

Green Light	**Yellow Light**	**Red Light**
Generally speaking, pursuant to freedom of information and privacy acts, relevant personal information CAN be shared under one or more of the following circumstances:	Obtain more information and/or get advice from a supervisor, or the board lawyer in any of the following circumstances:	Information can NEVER be shared under any of the following circumstances
• with written consent • to avert or minimize imminent danger to the health and safety of any person • to report a child who might need protection under the Child and Family Services Act • by order of the court • to facilitate the rehabilitation of a young person under the Youth Criminal Justice Act • to ensure the safety of students and/or staff under the YCJA • to cooperate with a police and/or child protection investigation	• consent is not provided or is refused but where there may be a health or safety issue for any individual or group(s) • to report criminal activity to the police • to disclose records • where there is a demand or request to produce information for a legal proceeding • when a professional code of ethics may limit disclosure	• there is a legislative requirement barring disclosure • no consent is given and there is no need to know or overriding health/safety concerns • consent is given but there is no need to know or overriding health/safety concerns

Keeping Records and Statistics

The Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board will maintain records of threat/risk assessments through the generation of summary reports which will be shared with parents/guardians. Summary reports will be completed by the school Social Worker and/or the school administrator. Reports will be shared with community agencies with signed consent. Raw data collected will not be shared, and will be maintained in Social Work or Principal files.

For the purposes of expulsion hearings, the summary findings of a Violence Threat Risk Assessment will be shared with the Student Discipline Committee.

Each community partner is responsible for documenting and storing information as required by their own policy or legislation.

Review

The School and Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention Protocol will be reviewed bi-annually by the Grand Erie District School Board, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and community partners. It is considered a living document and will be adjusted to accommodate new community partners and changes in process, policies and procedures.

Appendix A: Violence Threat Risk Assessment Quick Guide

Worrisome, high-risk and/or threatening behaviours are identified to the school Principal

Immediate Threat: call 911
Review available facts with VTRA Team

Evidence Indicates VTRA is Required

STAGE 1: Data collection and immediate risk-reducing intervention

1. Make sure all students are safe. Contact Police.
2. Contact Threat Assessment Team: (Principal, Vice Principal, Social Worker, CYW, Guidance, Police, Children's Aid Society)
3. Determine if threat maker has access to weapons. (locker check, bedroom check)
4. Interview students and witnesses.
5. Notify the parents/guardians of students involved, Superintendent(s) and Safe Schools.
6. Refer to *Threat Assessment Report Form* to guide data gathering process.
7. Interview the student of concern after data has been gathered.
8. Review findings with Threat Assessment Team.
9. Develop a plan to mitigate risk and share with student, parent/guardians.

Evidence Does *not* Support VTRA

Review concerns with school team, Social Worker
Contact parent to discuss next steps
Consult with community agencies
Referral to Resource Team
Referral to Community Team

Variable, low risk identified

Risk has been mitigated

School team will monitor plan

Plan is reassessed within 30 days.

Risk is deemed high and requires further intervention

STAGE 2: Multidisciplinary Risk Evaluation

1. Conduct additional interviews as required.
2. Contact community partners for additional background information.
3. Arrange meeting(s) with school Threat Assessment Team and community partners, and parents/guardians.
4. Review findings and recommendations for further assessment and/or intervention. Consider needs of school community.
5. Develop an intervention plan involving school, family and community. Contact the student(s) parent(s) or guardian(s) to discuss the intervention plan.
6. Review the plan within 30 days.

Appendix B: Guidelines for Administrators

The Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Intervention (VTRA) Process

Step 1: Make Sure All Students Are Safe and Call Police (911)

- Appropriately monitor and/or detain the student(s) of concern until the police member of the team is present.
- Do not allow access to coats, backpacks, desks or lockers.
- Contact Superintendent(s) of Safe Schools and Family of Schools.
- Contact School Social Worker and Threat Assessment Team.
- Contact Resource Officer at Secondary School; if not available, keep him/her informed.

Step 2: Determine if the threat maker has access to the means (knife, gun, etc).
School personnel are to check locker, backpack, clothing, work area, and/or desk to look for possible weapon(s). **If there is any evidence of bombs or traps, contact Police immediately and do not search the locker.**

Step 3: Interview witnesses including all participants directly and indirectly involved.

Step 4: Notify the Student's Parent(s) or Guardian(s) as well as the parent (s) or Guardian (s) of the intended target

- explain the VTRA response is not intended to be disciplinary, rather, it is a collaborative process to review risk and ensure safety of all;
- explain the data collection is an important part of the VTRA process, and their perspective is integral to developing a plan of support for their child
- request that they come in to the school
- advise them that as per VTRA protocol, the Police may be informed about the situation, as they are part of the Threat Assessment Team

Remember to ask parent if the student has access to weapons, as well as ask them to check student's bedroom for evidence of planning.

For the parents or guardians of the student making the threat or the student who is the target, it is important to provide basic information about the incident and reassurance that steps are being taken to mitigate immediate risk. Ask the parent for their perspective on the incident, or any relevant information that may assist in the investigation. Keep in mind the information can sometimes leave them feeling fearful or traumatized. Therefore, any notification should be conducted with skill, compassion and planning.

Step 5: Initiate Data Collection with Team members.

Sources of Immediate Data may be obtained from multiple sources including:

- Reporter(s)
- The student who has made a threat
- Target(s)
- Witness(es)
- Teachers and other school staff (secretaries, teacher assistants, bus drivers)
- Friends, classmate, acquaintances
- Parents/caregivers (Call both parents. Ask them to do a bedroom check.)
- Current and *previous* school records (Call the sending school.)
- Police record check
- Check the student(s) locker, desk, backpack, recent text books/ assignment binders, cars, etc.
- Activities: Internet histories, diaries

Determine who will interview which parties and who will be responsible for which tasks. Ensure team members have a copy of the Threat Assessment Form to record information.

Interviewing the Threat Maker:

When possible, interview the threat maker(s) or student(s) of concern **after** the initial data is collected—locker check, interviewing the person who reported the threat, interviewing potential targets or witnesses and background checks with Police and relevant partners. These will provide the interviewers with the comprehensive data needed to develop case-specific hypotheses and verbatim questions that can be asked in a strategic VTRA interview.

No more than two people should be present when interviewing the threat maker—one of whom must be a clinician or counselling team member. It's important to consider and explore all relevant aspects of the threat maker's life using the Stage 1 Report Form (see Appendix C).

Community Agencies: Other agency partners may be involved in the process as consultants to the school/police Threat Assessment Team. Agencies may be sources of initial data relevant to the case at hand, based on past or current involvement. Beyond initial school/police data collection, agencies may require a signed release form in order to share further information or physically join the team.

Determine which team member will contact community agencies. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- Children's Aid Society (Child Protection) for record check relevant to the case at hand
- Family Doctor/Specialist/Mental Health Nurses
- St. Leonard's' Community Services
- Youth Probation Services
- Haldimand Norfolk REACH/Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services
- Contact Agencies (i.e.: Contact Haldimand-Norfolk, Contact Brant)
- Hospitals, Public Health Units
- Domestic Violence Agencies

The questions in the Threat Assessment Profile are offered to guide the threat assessment process. The purpose of this process is to determine whether a student *poses* a threat to the safety of others.

Does the student appear to have the resources, intent and motivation to carry out the threat? Is there evidence of attack-related behaviours that suggest movement from thought to violent action?

Document and discuss all warning signs that apply.

The Four-Pronged Assessment Model is used as a framework for evaluating a student in order to assess the intention, ability, and means to carry out a threat. Under each area there are a number of "warning signs" which can be observed to help facilitate a determination of level of threat. The four factors include: personality of the student, family dynamics, school dynamics and social dynamics. The Threat Assessment data collection form includes questions that guide information gathering pertaining to the four identified factors. (Appendix C)

Step 6: Review Findings with the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team

Convene the Threat Assessment Team and discuss all relevant information regarding the student. As a team, ask the question: *"To what extent does the student pose a threat to school/ student safety?* "Do they pose a threat to themselves or someone outside the school (i.e. family)

Variable/Low Level of Concern:

- Risk to the safety of target(s), students, staff, and school is minimal.
- Threat is vague and indirect.
- Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail; threat lacks realism.
- Available information suggests that the person is unlikely to carry out the threat or become violent.
- Typical baseline behavior
- Note: Categorization of low risk does not imply no risk. Rather, it indicates the individual is at little risk for violence and monitoring the concern is appropriate.

Medium Level of Concern:

- The threat could be carried out, although it may not appear entirely realistic. Violent action is possible.
- Threat is more plausible and concrete than a low level threat. Wording in the threat and information gathered suggests that some thought has been given to how the threat will be carried out (i.e.: possible place and time).
- No clear indication that the student of concern has taken preparatory steps (i.e.: weapons seeking), although there may be ambiguous or inconclusive references pointing to that possibility. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty. "I'm serious!"
- There are moderate or lingering concerns about the student's potential to act violently.
- Increase in baseline behavior.

High Level of Concern:

- The threat or situation of concern appears to pose an imminent and serious danger to the safety of others.
- Threat is specific and *plausible*. There is an identified target. Student has the *capacity* to act on the threat.

- Information suggests concrete steps have been taken toward acting on threat. For example, information indicates that the student has acquired or practiced with a weapon or has had a victim under surveillance.
- Information suggests legitimate concern about the student's potential to act violently.
- Significant increase in baseline behavior

Step 7: Decide on a Course of Action

With the input of the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team members, decide on a course of action. If there is a low to medium level of concern, the student can likely be managed at school with appropriate (increased) supervision.

Variable to Medium Level of Concern

Implement the Intervention Plan. *(Most students can be managed at school with interventions.)*

Medium to High Level of Concern

The Threat Assessment Team has determined that further medical/psychiatric/family assessment is needed.
If there is *imminent danger*, call *911* (i.e. a gun is found)

A Stage Two Violence Threat Risk Assessment is recommended. This means that a longer term intervention plan needs to be developed in order to mitigate risk. This will require involvement of the multi-disciplinary team, and both school and community partners. Stage One Interventions will continue until the Stage Two Assessments have been completed.

Step 8: Develop an Intervention Plan

Use the VTRA Intervention Planning Worksheet to address all concerns identified during the Violence Threat Risk Assessment (Stage One or Two) to help create a plan to mitigate risk. (Appendix D) Best practice is to schedule a follow up meeting within a 30-day time frame to review the intervention plan.

To reflect the level of risk and corresponding intervention plan, a summary report form will be completed by the school Social Worker and/or the school administrator. This report will be signed by both the author of the report along with the school administrator. A copy of the summary report will be provided to parents. The summary report will also be stored in the student's Ontario Student Record and a copy sent to Superintendent of Safe Schools for tracking purposes.

Appendix C: Violence Threat Risk Assessment Report Form

(Note: For raw data collection only: store in Principal file or Social Work file. Do not place in O.S.R.)

Student: _____ School _____

DOB: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Parents Name: _____

Date of Incident: _____

Three Primary Hypotheses in Violence Threat Risk Assessment:

One: Is it a conscious or unconscious "cry for help"?
Two: Conspiracy of two or more: who else knows about it? Who else is involved?
Three: Is there any evidence of fluidity?

Series I Questions (The Incident)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Where did the incident happen & when?	
How did it come to the interviewee's attention?	
What was the specific language of the threat, detail of the weapon brandished, or gesture made? Was there stated: Justification for the threat? Means to carry out the threat? Consequences weighed out? Conditions that could lower risk?	
Who was present & under what circumstances did the incident occur?	
What was the motivation or perceived cause of the incident?	
What was the response of the target (if present) at the time of the incident?	
What was the response of others who were present at the time of the incident? Did they add to or detract from the Justification Process?	

Series II Questions (Attack-Related Behaviours)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Has the student sought out information consistent with their threat making or threat related behaviour?	
Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intentions to attack a target currently or in the past?	
Has the student attempted to gain access to weapons or do they have access to the weapons they have threatened to use?	
Have they developed a plan & how general or specific is it? (time, date, identified target selection, site selection, journal of justifications, maps & floor plans)	
Has the student been engaging in suspicious behaviour such as appearing to show an inordinate interest in alarm systems, sprinkle systems, video surveillance in school or elsewhere, schedules & locations of police or security patrol?	
Have they engaged in rehearsal behaviours, including packing or brandishing fake but realistic looking weapons, air rifles, pistols, or engaged in fire setting? (I.e. Lighting fire to cardboard tubes cut & taped to look like a pipe bomb, etc)?	
Is there any evidence of attack related behaviours in their locker (back pack, car trunk, etc) at school or bedroom (shed, garage, etc) at home?	
Have others been forewarned of a pending attack or told not to come to school because “something big is going to happen?	

Series III Questions (The Threat Maker/Subject)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Does the student have a history of violence or threats of violence?	
Does the student appear to be more: a) Traditional Predominately Behavioural Type b) Traditional Predominately Cognitive Type? (Puppetmaster) c) Mixed Type? d) Non-Traditional?	
If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recency (FIR) of the violence? Has there been an increase in baseline behavior?	
Does the student have a history of perceived victimization?	
What has been their past human target selection?	
What has been their past site selection?	
Do they have a history of depression or suicidal thinking/behaviour?	
Is there evidence of fluidity (i.e. both suicidal and homicidal thoughts)?	
Does the student use drugs or alcohol?	
Where does the student see themselves within the power structure of their class, school and community?	

Series IV Questions (The Person/Target)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Does the person targeted have a history of violence or threats of violence?	
If yes, what is the frequency, intensity & recency (FIR) of the violence?	
What has been their past human target selection?	
What has been their past site selection?	
Is there evidence the person being targeted has instigated the current situation?	

Series V Questions (Peer Dynamics)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Are others involved in the incident that may intentionally or unintentionally be contributing to the justification process?	
Who is in the student's peer structure & where does the student fit (i.e. leader, co-leader, and follower)?	
Is there a difference between the student's individual baseline & their peer group baseline behaviour?	
Who is in the target's peer structure & where does the target fit (i.e. leader, co-leaders, and follower)?	
Is there a peer who could assist with the plan or obtain the weapons necessary for an attack?	

Series VI Questions (Empty Vessel)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Does the student of concern have a healthy relationship with a mature adult?	
Does the student have inordinate knowledge or interest in violent events, themes, or incidents, including prior school based attacks?	
How has the student responded to prior violent incidents (local, national, etc)?	
What type of violent games, movies, books, music, Internet searches, does the student "fill" themselves with?	
Is there evidence that what they are filling themselves with is influencing their behaviour? (Imitators vs. Innovators??	
What related themes are present in their writings, drawings, etc?	
Is there evidence of fluidity and/or religiosity?	

Series VII Questions (Contextual Factors)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
Has the student experienced a recent loss, such as death of a family member or friend, recent break up, rejection from a peer or sports team?	
Have his/her parents just divorced or separated?	
Is she/he the victim of child abuse, either currently or in the past?	
Has he/she recently had an argument or "fight" with a caregiver?	
Has he/she recently been suspended or charged with an offence?	
Is the place where he/she has been suspended to likely to increase or decrease his/her level of risk?	
Is he or she being initiated into a gang?	

Series VIII Questions (Family Dynamics)	**Notes: Indicate author/interviewer**
How many homes does the student reside in (shared custody, goes back and forth from parent to grandparent's home)?	
Is the student connected to a healthy/ mature adult in the home?	
Who lives in the family home (full-time and part-time)? Has anyone entered or left the home who may be influencing the level of risk?	
Who seems to be in charge of the family and how often are they around?	
Has the student engaged in violence or threats of violence towards their siblings or parent(s), caregiver(s)? If so, what form of violence and to whom including Frequency, Intensity, Recency (FIR)?	
What is the historical baseline at home? What is the current baseline at home? Is there evidence of evolution at home?	
Are parents or caregivers concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children or others?	
Does the student's level or risk (at home, school, or the community) cycle according to who is in the home (i.e. the student is low risk for violence when his/her father is home but high risk during the times their father travels away from home for work)?	
Does the student have a history of trauma? Including car accidents, falls, exposed to violence, abuse, etc.	
Has the student been diagnosed with a DSM IV diagnoses (e.g. mental health diagnosis of Anxiety, Depression, ADHD)?	
Is there a history of mental health disorders in the family?	
Is the student involved with other community services?	
Is there a history of drug or alcohol abuse in the family?	
Do the parents or caregivers know what the contents of the bedroom are or is the bedroom off limits?	

Are there indicators of domestic violence?	

* *consider including a genogram on the back of this document*

Appendix D: VTRA Intervention Planning Worksheet

Student: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

Risk Enhancer:	Intervention:	Lead Professional/Agency
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

Sample Intervention Plan

Disciplinary action taken: _____

- ☐ Intended victim warned and/or parents or guardians notified.
- ☐ Suicide assessment initiated on: _____ by _____
- ☐ Stage Two Violence Threat Risk Assessment Initiated
- ☐ Contract not to harm self or others created (please attach).
- ☐ Alert staff and teachers on a need-to-know basis
- ☐ Daily or weekly check-in with (Title/Name) _____
- ☐ Travel card to hold accountable for whereabouts and on-time arrival to destinations
- ☐ Backpack, coat, and other belongings check-in and check- out by:
- ☐ Late Arrival and/or Early Dismissal
- ☐ Increased supervision in these settings.
- ☐ Modify daily schedule by:
- ☐ Safety Plan (attach as required)
- ☐ Intervention by Support Staff
- ☐ Identify precipitating/aggravating circumstances, and intervene to alleviate tension. Describe:
- ☐ Drug and or alcohol intervention with: _____
- ☐ Referral to school Resource Team and/or Student Support Services
- ☐ If Special Education student, review IEP goals and placement options.
- ☐ Review community-based resources and interventions with parents or caretakers.
- ☐ Obtain permission to share information with community partners such as counsellors and therapists.
- ☐ Present student and/or family at a Community Team Meeting

PARENT/GUARDIANS

Parents agree to provide the following supervision and/or intervention:

Parents _____

Community Agency Support: _____

Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team Members:

Principal or Vice-Principal	Date:	_____
	Signature:	_____
Social Worker	Date:	_____
	Signature:	_____
School Resource Officer	Date:	_____
	Signature:	_____
Community Agency	Date:	_____
	Signature:	_____
Parent/Guardian	Date:	_____
	Signature:	_____

Monitor this Intervention Plan regularly and modify as appropriate. Ensure review within 30 days.

Appendix E: Violence Threat Risk Assessment- Summary Form

Date: _____

School: _____

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth _____

Address:

Parent/Guardian Names: _____

Principal: _____

Referral Description:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Referred By: _____

School Resource Officer: _____

Team Members _____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Assessment Rating Rating Rationale

- ☐ Low _____
- ☐ Medium _____
- ☐ High _____

Identify any protective (+) or risk (-) factors that would change the current level of risk:

_____

_____

_____

Intervention Plan:

Principal: _____ Signature: _____

Social Worker: _____ Signature: _____

This report reflects the student's current level of risk at the time of the assessment. A reassessment can be initiated as requested or required by the school.

Copies: Parents/Guardian
Superintendent of Safe Schools (to be centrally stored)
O.S.R.

Appendix F: Guiding Principles of Violence Threat Risk Assessment:

Kevin Cameron

1. Serious violence is evolutionary and contextual: no one just "snaps".
2. Violent incidents are most frequently planned and shared with others.
3. A common characteristic of an "offender" is that they are an "empty vessel".
4. There are predictable time frames for threat making behaviour.
5. Assessment of a student's behaviour must be a multi-dimensional approach.

Definitions

Baseline Behaviours: To determine baseline behaviour, ask the question, "Is this behaviour typical for this individual?" If the behaviour is typical, then that serves as the baseline for future reference. If the behaviour is not typical, or if a deviation from a previously identified baseline is observed, then evolution can be inferred.

Community Teams: Community teams, or "crisis tables" represent community agencies who meet as a team to review individuals and families in the community who are at an "acutely elevated risk". The teams are in place to provide immediate response to individuals and families through community collaboration.

Empty Vessels: A person who is not connected to a healthy mature adult will search for people or things to identify with. A person who feels empty will try to fill themselves with something. In Threat/Risk assessment, the question is "What are they filling themselves up with?"

High Risk Behaviours: Words or actions that express a potential intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. "High Risk" behaviours include but are not limited to: interest in violent content, unusual interest in setting fires, an escalation of physical aggression, significant change in anti-social behaviour, unusual interest in or possession of a weapon or replica, bomb threats, threatened violence, electronic threat to be violent or kill or cause injury to self and/or others.

Immediate Threat: In this case always call "911" and then contact the school administrator or designate. The school will also contact their school Superintendent as well as make contact with the Superintendent of Safe Schools. The Principal can then activate a Threat Risk Assessment.

Open vs. Closed System: a school system that is naturally open is one where the leadership openly shares information relevant to each level of the system and all levels of the system openly share information with the leadership. A closed system is one where there is a lack of information flow between the levels of the system.

Threat: Is the expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. Threats can be spoken, written or symbolic and can be classified as direct, indirect, veiled or conditional.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment Training, Level One: Is the training that forms the basis of this protocol. Developed by Kevin Cameron, of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, Level One training educates participants about the concepts behind the protocol

as it relates to addressing violence and threat/risk behaviour. It is recommended that team members participating in Threat/Risk Assessment have taken Level One training, if available.

Worrisome Behaviour: Those behaviours that cause concern and may indicate that a student is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. These behaviours include but are not limited to drawing pictures that contain violence, writings that contain violence, making vague or generalized statements about violence towards others that do not constitute a threat as defined by law. However, the nature of the threat may cause concern for some members of the school community because of their violent content.

The majority of high risk behaviour, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12, falls into this category. All worrisome behaviours must be communicated to the Principal and/or a community agency for consultation. In these cases, a threat/risk assessment may not be initiated. The Principal consults with another professional who knows the student or the community agency and will decide whether or not a threat/risk assessment needs to be activated. In many cases, follow up on worrisome behaviour results in good intervention measures. There are also cases where "a little data leads to a lot" and what seems like a minor case can quickly evolve into a formal threat/risk assessment.

Acknowledgements

This protocol has been adapted from the works of Kevin Cameron, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Trauma Response. In addition, protocols from Elk Island Catholic Schools, Waterloo Region District School Board, Halton District School Board, and Limestone District School Board were referenced to help create the current version of the Grand Erie District School Board and Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board protocol.

References:

Canadian Centre for Violence Threat Risk Assessment and Trauma Response and Violence Threat Risk Assessment Level One Training Guide, Fourth Edition, 2011.

Community Protocol for Violence Threat Risk Assessment (V.T.R.A.) and Intervention, Ninth Edition, January 2011.

Elk Island VTRA Protocol: Working Together to Keep our Communities Safe, August 2017

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A Community Threat Assessment Protocol: A Collaborative Response to Student Threat Making Behaviours, February, 2011. Limestone District School Board and Partners.

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