



Pennsylvania
**Commission on Crime
and Delinquency**

Model K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures & Guidelines: 3rd Edition (2024)

**PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME & DELINQUENCY
SCHOOL SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE**

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INTRODUCTION

About the Document

In 2019, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted new requirements for public K-12 school entities related to the establishment of threat assessment teams and related policies and procedures. Act 18 of 2019 amended the PA Public School Code to establish Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment), which provides for responsibilities of school entities and tasked the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) with providing implementation supports. Specifically, Section 1303-E of the PA Public School Code charged the Committee with developing model procedures and guidelines that:

- (i) *Establish standard definitions and terminology.*
- (ii) *Reflect best practices in identifying, reporting, assessing and responding to threats, including threats reported through the Safe2Say Program, and coordinating with stakeholders.*
- (iii) *Provide for flexibility and local decision-making and recognize the differing levels of available resources in each school entity.*
- (iv) *Be posted on the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's publicly accessible Internet website.*

In response, PCCD and the SSSC engaged a diverse group of subject matter experts and stakeholders through a Threat Assessment Workgroup to help fulfill these responsibilities. Based on the Workgroup's deliberations, PCCD presented an inaugural edition of its *K-12 Threat Assessment Model Procedures & Guidelines* to the SSSC for approval and publication in December 2019.

Section 1303-E of the PA Public School Code also tasked the Committee with regularly reviewing these model procedures and guidelines and making updates or revisions as necessary. The Guidelines were first revised in October 2022 following further amendments to the PA Public School Code related to school safety and threat assessment. Act 55 of 2022 clarified the frequency with which education and awareness efforts must be made with students, staff, and parents/guardians, as well as the frequency with which appointed Threat Assessment Team members must undergo required training.

This third edition of PCCD's *Model Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines* has been revised to reflect more recent statutory changes, as well as standards of nationally recognized best practices, as a continued resource for Pennsylvania's school entities and others working in the field of threat assessment and management.

Current Landscape of School Safety in Pennsylvania

Recent data collected and reported in Pennsylvania reaffirms the need for comprehensive efforts by K-12 schools to establish safe and supportive learning environments. These efforts rely on multidisciplinary teams, including threat assessment teams, that support the implementation of prevention, intervention, and response efforts in schools.

The number of school safety incidents in Pennsylvania schools dramatically increased in the initial years following the COVID 19 pandemic, but has stabilized in recent years. In 2023-24, Pennsylvania public schools reported 78,639 school safety incidents (compared to 86,652 incidents reported in the 2022-23 school year), including 16,345 incidents involving law enforcement.¹ Increases in school safety incidents were also seen in the most recent biennial survey of Pennsylvania students enrolled in grades 6-12.² The 2023 *Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS)* shows increasing rates of youth reporting experiencing threats of or actual violence: 18.5% of students reported being threatened with violent behavior on school property (compared to 16.7% in 2021), and 7.3% of students reported actually being attacked (vs. 6.6% in 2021). Since January 2019, the Safe2Say Something

program, an anonymous 24/7 tip-line run by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General aimed towards Pennsylvania students, has received more than 146,513 tips on potential concerns. The tip-line received 32,873 tips during the 2023–24 school year alone.³ Bullying and cyberbullying were the most reported issues to Safe2Say in 2023–24, with a 24% increase from 2022–23. Over 1,300 reports of “Threat Against Person,” a 64% increase, and more than 1,100 reports of “Threat Against Schools” were received.

In the wake of the pandemic, K–12 schools have faced heightened behavioral health challenges, including rising student mental health concerns and related issues. According to data from the [2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#), when asked about mental health concerns, 37.3% of Pennsylvania students reported feeling sad or depressed most days – down from 40.1% in 2021. Rates of self-harm, including suicidal ideation and attempted suicide, have also decreased more recently. In 2023, 16.1% of students surveyed reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide (vs. 18.6% in 2021); 5.2% said they had attempted suicide at least once in the past year, down from 10.9% in 2021.

Student mental health remains a serious matter and a focus of school districts. In a 2024 statewide survey, nearly 79% of school districts reported that addressing student mental health was their biggest instructional challenge.⁴ On average, nearly half of students require services and support for a mental health need.⁵ Key barriers to addressing mental health include a scarcity of providers, stigma and reluctance to seek help, and lack of funding.⁶ Despite increased attention to and investments in bolstered mental and behavioral health supports for youth, significant variations in the availability of school-based health and support personnel across Pennsylvania remain:

- The average student-to-school counselor ratio in Pennsylvania’s K–12 schools is 331 to 1⁷ – significantly higher than the ratio of 250 to 1 recommended by the American School Counselor Association.
- According to data from PDE, there were 1,715 school psychologists employed by local education agencies in 2023–24⁸, including 397 school districts; the average student-to-psychologist ratio is 1,022 to 1.⁹ (The National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of one school psychologist per 500 students.)
- Only 157 school districts reported employing a full-time certified school social worker in 2023–24.¹⁰ While PCCD’s School Mental Health & Safety Grants have helped augment available social work services provided through licensed social workers, the ratio of available social workers to students in many districts significantly exceeds the School Social Work Association of America recommended ratio of 250 to 1.

Threat assessment teams play a vital role within this broader framework by serving as a critical component in addressing safety concerns while supporting student well-being. Their work complements evidence-based frameworks like Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) by focusing on early identification and intervention for individuals at risk of harm to themselves or others. Through collaboration with educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and community stakeholders, threat assessment teams help bridge the gap between safety protocols and comprehensive student support systems. This integrative approach not only mitigates immediate risks but also contributes to fostering a school environment where all students feel safe, supported, and empowered to succeed.

What is Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management?

According to the U.S. Secret Service, behavioral threat assessment and management or “BTAM” is a behavior-based approach to proactively prevent incidents of targeted violence.¹¹ For more than two decades, federal and state law enforcement and education agencies have recommended the use of multidisciplinary threat assessment in schools as an evidence-based strategy to prevent

targeted violence and other safety concerns.¹² Threat assessment was initially developed by the U.S. Secret Service to identify potential threats to public officials, and has since evolved into a scientific, systematic approach to analyzing and mitigating dangerous situations in settings that range from workplaces to campuses to K-12 schools.¹³

While still statistically rare, the number of incidents of targeted violence in K-12 schools nationally has increased in recent years. Research and analysis of these incidents show there is no profile of a student attacker, nor is there a profile for the type of school impacted by targeted violence.¹⁴ As such, a behavioral threat assessment and management process is not designed to develop a profile focused on a set of traits or characteristics but to evaluate, on a case-by-case basis, whether situations, actions, and behaviors could result in a significant risk to the health and safety of individuals within a school community (see Figure 2). BTAM helps identify whether individuals with behaviors of concern are on a “pathway to violence” typical of individuals who have engaged in acts of targeted violence in schools and other settings (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Pathway to Targeted Violence¹⁵



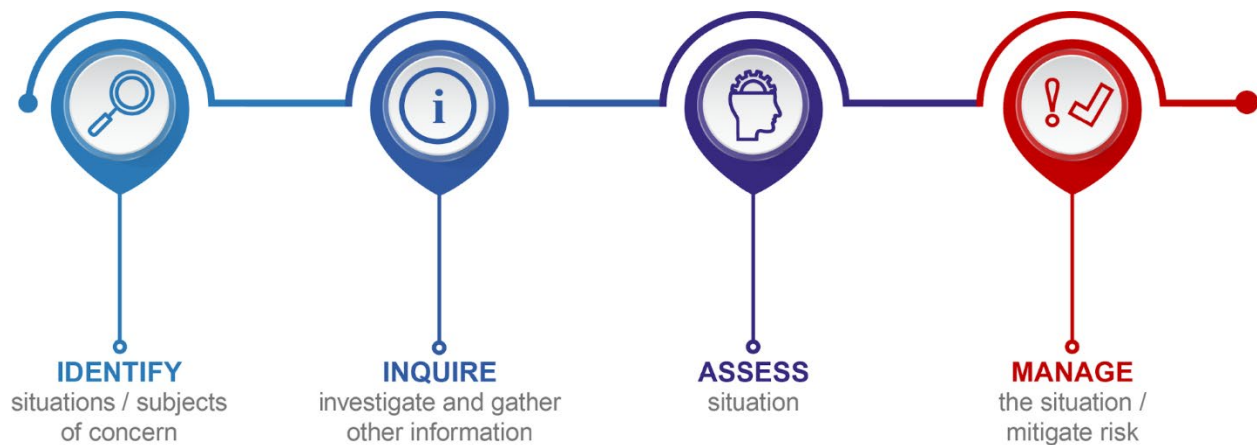
In addition to an individualized assessment, these determinations must be made based on reasonable judgment relying on the best available objective evidence to determine the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable supports, interventions, and modifications of policies, practices, or procedures could mitigate that risk.¹⁶

It is important to also note that the focus of a threat assessment process is to understand the situation and how best to mitigate safety concerns, and is not the same as a criminal or disciplinary investigative process (see Figure 3).¹⁷ It is important to note that threat assessment and a criminal investigation may coincide in some cases, resulting in independent – but ideally interdependent and coordinated – activities. Because one does not preclude the other from happening, school entities should ensure coordination to avoid interference while prioritizing safety, respecting legal rights, and meeting their obligations under federal, state, and local law.

Figure 2. What is Behavioral Threat Assessment? What is it Not? ¹⁸

Threat Assessment IS:	Threat Assessment IS NOT:
A proactive approach to violence prevention.	A criminal investigation.
A fact-based, investigative approach to determining if a person's behavior may pose a threat of violence and their intent and capacity to carry out that threat.	A simple checklist of warning signs or red flags used to remove a student from school.
An avenue for early intervention.	A physical security measure.
Focused on assessing and managing concerning behavior.	Profiling.
A means to identify, assess, intervene, and provide supports with individuals who may be at risk for violence against themselves or others.	A means to label a student as a troublemaker and enact consequences.
A way to identify someone whose behavior suggests the potential for violence in any form – self-harm, assault, risk-taking behaviors, suicide, substance misuse, and other aggressive or dangerous behaviors.	A means to find “the next school shooter.”
Focused on behavior of a given individual(s) posing a potential threat, conducted as the need arises (i.e., examines people's behavior, not things).	A vulnerability assessment, site survey, or security audit, which focuses on the facility, policies, and procedures, not individuals (i.e., examines things, not people).

Figure 3. Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Process ¹⁹



As shown in Figure 3, threat assessment is a fact-based and systematic process that works through four steps:

- **Identify:** Recognize situations or students causing concern, such as threats or troubling behavior, with a low threshold for action to ensure early intervention on a potential pathway to violence.
- **Inquire:** Gather information from lawful and ethical sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Focus on addressing concerns rather than proving a crime or policy violation, while reflecting on and taking steps to eliminate implicit biases.
- **Assess:** Evaluate gathered information as a team to determine if the student or situation may pose a threat to self or others. Suicide risk indicators should be referred to the Act 71 team for formal assessment.
- **Manage:** Develop and implement a management plan to address and reduce risks, coordinating with external resources and stakeholders as needed.

Importantly, the BTAM process does not replace mechanisms to address nonviolent behaviors of concern, such as academic, attentional, emotional regulation, or social skills, that are typically addressed through child study and/or behavioral intervention teams.²⁰ The primary function of a school-based BTAM team is to help differentiate between incidents where a threat was made but there is not a real intent to harm and other incidents that pose an actual threat of violence and harm.²¹

What Do We Mean by a ‘Threat’?

Understanding what constitutes a ‘threat’ is key to the threat assessment process. A threat may be direct or may be deduced **through an individual’s behavior** and can include:

- A concerning communication or behavior that suggests a person may intend to harm themselves, someone else, the school facility, or the broader community; and
- May be expressed or communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means, and regardless of whether it is communicated directly to the target or to a third party.
- A threat can be deduced **through an individual’s behavior**.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Threat Assessment & Suicide Risk

Article XIII-E requires that school entities’ threat assessment teams are responsible for “*assessing and responding to reports of students exhibiting self-harm or suicide risk factors or warning signs.*” For more information on how school entities should navigate the intersections of threat assessment and suicide risk screening, assessments, and response, please see PCCD’s [Threat Assessment & Suicide Risk Policy and Practices in Pennsylvania Guidance Note \(2023\)](#).

Why Behavioral Threat Assessment?

Research shows that establishing or enhancing threat assessment capabilities as part of a comprehensive violence prevention strategy can reduce the likelihood of violence and can help address students’ mental and behavioral health needs.²² As part of a broader strategy to build a positive school climate that promotes student engagement and supports student needs,²³ threat assessment can also improve student engagement, feelings of security, and safety.

Multidisciplinary threat assessment efforts in schools should work in tandem with other efforts to bolster student safety and well-being. These include initiatives like the Student Assistance Program (SAP), Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), trauma-informed practices, and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, as well as emergency management and physical security initiatives, including the *Safe2Say Something* Program.

Threat assessment is not designed to replace other school-based frameworks that identify students who may require additional interventions and supports, and should work to complement those systems, not compete with them. Threat assessment is a component of a broader, comprehensive prevention approach that schools and communities should employ to help reduce the likelihood of reaching a crisis-level incident and help prepare for a more effective, coordinated intervention response if necessary.

While Pennsylvania's mandate for school entities to establish threat assessment teams did not take effect until the 2021-2022 school year, many school entities had already established Teams to receive and evaluate reports of concerning behavior from students and other school community members. Beyond those focused on threat assessment protocols, school entities have also implemented other multidisciplinary school-based intervention teams, such as those utilized in the MTSS and PBIS frameworks. Pennsylvania schools are also required to have SAP teams in place to address concerning behavior that creates barriers for students' academic achievement and school success. These frameworks and programs, along with the services, protections, and rights guaranteed through a myriad of both federal and state civil rights laws, provide a foundation for addressing a number of systemic and individual barriers.

As described in the "Before You Get Started" section on page 12, threat assessment does not excuse school entities from compliance with other federal and state laws, including those designed to ensure confidentiality of student records as well as appropriate levels of support and protections for eligible students, such as those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans. Conversely, these obligations do not inherently prohibit school entities from engaging in a threat assessment process where evidence suggests a reasonable concern for an immediate and/or significant risk to health or safety of the student, other students, or the broader school community.

Finally, the procedures and guidelines described within this document were developed to work in coordination with a variety of school-based and community-based supports, including mental and behavioral health services, counseling, social workers, psychologists, school security personnel, and local law enforcement and other first responders. In that vein, the threat assessment process often involves referrals for interventions, supports, and services from these professionals to aid students and develop coordinated response and referral protocols.

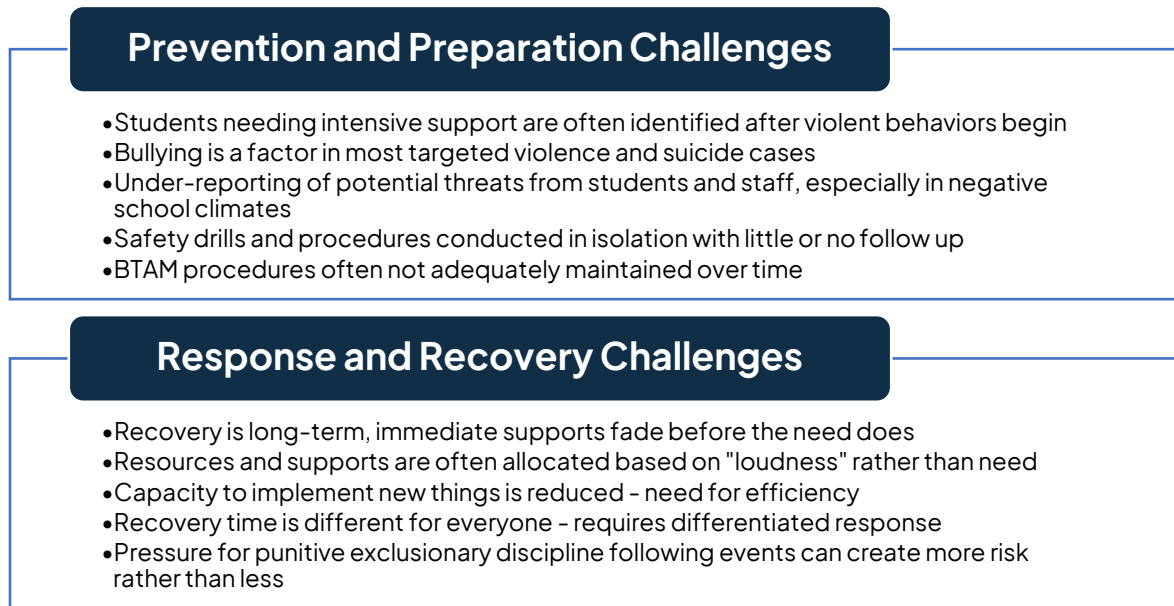
Key Considerations for Threat Assessment Teams²⁴

Threat assessment is a systematic process designed to:

- Encourage bystander reporting to share concerns about issues impacting student safety and well-being, from potential threats of school violence to other issues like bullying, self-harm, suicidal ideations, drug use, etc., through the [Safe2Say Something program](#).²⁵
- Identify individual(s)/situation(s) where behavior causes concern for violence and capacity to carry out a threat, (i.e., determine whether a student may pose a threat for harm or violence to themselves or others, not just whether the student has made a threat).²⁶
- Gather the most relevant information about the student's communications and behaviors, negative or stressful events the student has experienced, and resources the student possesses to overcome those setbacks and challenges.

- Collect and share this relevant information in a lawful and ethical manner, including complying with relevant federal and state privacy laws.
- Assess the individual(s)/situation(s) in context based on the totality of information available.
- Identify strategies to prevent violence and mitigate impact of harm to the student, school, and/or community.

Figure 4. Common Prevention, Preparation, Response & Recovery Challenges²⁷



As described previously, threat assessment serves as a critical “ingredient” in a broader continuum of prevention, preparation, response, and recovery within schools and their broader communities. As shown in Figure 4, these components each come with their own implementation challenges that school entities may encounter and should consider as they develop and refine their BTAM strategy.

Effective threat assessment procedures rely on forming and maintaining a multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team; establishing central reporting mechanisms; clearly and collaboratively defining the threshold for law enforcement intervention; providing training and information to key stakeholders; and promoting safe and positive school climates. These procedures should work in concert with other prevention, intervention, and response frameworks utilized by school entities to support prevention, preparation, response, and recovery to potential incidents (see Figure 4).

In addition, school entities should provide information and training to school community members regarding threat assessment procedures, including the names/contact information of designated Threat Assessment Team members. Training, information, and community engagement practices should encourage reporting of concerns while making clear that the threat assessment process is designed to evaluate potential situations in which significant and/or imminent threat is likely to occur (i.e., it is not designed to replace other programs/initiatives within the school that help connect students and families with necessary supports or services). Finally, while the threat assessment process provides a foundation, the specific needs and contexts of each individual case that comes to a team’s attention, coupled with the specific environment of each school/community, makes the development and ongoing work of each Threat Assessment Team inherently unique.

K-12 Threat Assessment Requirements in Pennsylvania

These *Model K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures and Guidelines* were developed in response to requirements established in the Pennsylvania Public School Code. Among its provisions, **Act 18 of 2019** established new requirements for K-12 school entities related to threat assessment under [Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code](#), as well as responsibilities for PCCD's School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) to support implementation.

Act 55 of 2022 amended Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment) to update training requirements for Team members as well as provide for further education, awareness, and training for the broader school community. This includes the annual notification of students, staff, and parents/guardians about the existence and purpose of the Threat Assessment Team, as well as making informational materials available regarding student behavior that may indicate a concern. In addition, Act 55 mandates annual training for school staff on identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, other individuals, school facilities, or the community.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Training for Threat Assessment Team Members

To maintain the effectiveness of K-12 threat assessment teams, it is essential to prioritize ongoing professional development through recurring, scenario-based training. These interactive sessions help reinforce learned skills by allowing team members to apply their knowledge to realistic, complex situations, ensuring preparedness for a wide range of potential threats. Additionally, post-incident debriefings should be a standard practice to evaluate responses, identify strengths, and address areas for improvement, fostering a culture of continuous learning. Incorporating annual in-person threat assessment training into in-service training schedules further solidifies these practices, ensuring all team members remain equipped with the latest strategies, tools, and insights to promote a safe and supportive school environment.

Pennsylvania is one of several states that require the formation and training of threat assessment teams.²⁸ To develop these revised model guidelines, procedures, and training resources, PCCD drew from other states' experiences to shape Pennsylvania's approach as well as the evolving needs of the field, recent research, and best practices. Given Pennsylvania's unique landscape and the multidisciplinary nature of threat assessment, PCCD consulted with numerous experts across education, mental and behavioral health, law enforcement, juvenile justice, emergency management, and community organizations during the development process.

Threat Assessment Requirements for School Entities Established in Article XIII-E

Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code states that school entities' **threat assessment teams are responsible for "the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others."**²⁹ Under the law, all school entities in Pennsylvania were required to establish at least one threat assessment team by the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. "School entities" include school districts, Intermediate Units (IUs), career and technical centers (CTCs), charter schools, regional charter schools, and cyber charter schools. School entities may satisfy these requirements by assigning threat assessment responsibilities to an existing team, including Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams, Crisis Response Teams, or *Safe2Say Something* Teams. A threat assessment team may also serve one or more schools within the school entity.

MODEL PROCEDURES FOR PA K-12 THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to establish procedures for the effective assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may pose a threat to themselves, other students, school staff, the community, or others.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

When implemented with fidelity and care, multidisciplinary threat assessment procedures can help school entities effectively identify and mitigate risks to the health and safety of students and the school community. However, if implemented without fidelity and care, these same procedures can also have harmful unintended consequences. As school entities implement threat assessment teams and related processes, it is important to consider the following issues and guardrails:

- **The threat assessment process is multidisciplinary and collaborative by design and should not be implemented in isolation.** Teams should include multiple school-based members (described in Figure 5) within the decision-making process regarding cases presented to them for consideration and should also be well-versed in the threat assessment process. threat assessment teams should also consult with their school solicitor, as well as other community-based partners (school entities, local law enforcement, juvenile justice agencies, behavioral health agencies, etc.) if they are unsure how to proceed with a particular case and should document any consultation with outside resources. This can include appointing individuals from community-based agencies as ‘ad hoc’ members of the school entity’s Threat Assessment Team(s) to advise on a case-by-case basis, or appointing individuals as standing members of the Team to provide ongoing input and consultation regarding potential case factors as well as recommended interventions and supports. (See section on Establish and Train Your School Entity’s Threat Assessment Team(s) on page 16 for additional information.) As a school-based process, however, decisions around interventions and supports should ultimately be made by core members of the school entity’s Threat Assessment Team (e.g., not deferring decisions around interventions to other youth-serving systems or law enforcement).³⁰



THINGS TO CONSIDER: County Safe Schools’ Collaboratives & Local Threat Assessment Groups

The Safe Schools’ Collaborative model, authorized by Act 33 of 2023, provides a framework for a collective process. Act 33 allows for a county (or counties) to create safe schools’ collaboratives to distribute, promote and develop best practices applicable to emergency response involving school safety and security through an emergency planning approach. It is also important to note that meetings of Safe School’s Collaboratives are confidential, and that Act 33 of 2023 requires the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), along with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) and the Office of Homeland Security to provide technical assistance related to the establishment of a county collaborative.

In addition, some jurisdictions have established Threat Assessment or Threat Advisory Groups or Teams to further enhance local behavioral threat assessment and management capabilities. These groups/teams, sometimes referred to as Behavioral Threat Assessment Units (BTAUs) are often housed within law enforcement agencies and bring together a wide range of community partners and stakeholders, including educational institutions, as part of local and regional threat assessment partnerships. Where established, BTAUs can further enhance and support school-based threat assessment teams and related practices. More information about this approach is

- **It is important to note that the completion of a threat assessment does not excuse a school entity from complying with all requirements for students with disabilities provided through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as state laws.** The threat assessment process should be completed concurrent with any federally or state mandated processes to determine if a student's needs are being met by their current services. Conversely, whether a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or not does not mean a school entity cannot complete a threat assessment.
- School entities should **review their policies, practices, and procedures** – including their **Code of Conduct** and any **Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with outside agencies** (including with local law enforcement agencies) – to ensure they are aligned with recommended best practices and requirements of current state and federal law and aligned with their threat assessment protocol.
- Strong **bystander reporting mechanisms like Pennsylvania's Safe2Say Something Program** remain critical to the success of school-based threat assessment programs, as they empower individuals to share concerns before potential threats escalate. Despite a recent rise in "swatting" and false threats fueled by social media, robust reporting tools and response procedures remain essential, as they ensure legitimate concerns are addressed promptly while deterring harmful hoaxes through vetting and response protocols.
- Depending upon information provided to a school entity's Threat Assessment Team or to local law enforcement, **the threat assessment process may need to be postponed in lieu of immediate action to prevent serious injury or death**, in accordance with procedures and protocols articulated within the school entity's Emergency Preparedness Plan.³¹ Teams should reconvene the process once the environment is made safe, including providing documentation of the incident in coordination with relevant parties.
- Finally, while Threat Assessment Teams may receive a wide range of reported concerns, its role is limited to intervening only in situations with the greatest likelihood the behavior could result in harm. **The threat assessment process is not intended to replace existing supports, referrals, and services provided through other school-based intervention efforts like SAP, MTSS/PBIS, Crisis Teams, etc.** School entities should **promote and monitor coordination** between their Threat Assessment Team(s) and other school-based teams to **ensure appropriate referrals and responses**, including **evaluating relevant data** and **conducting after-action reviews through lenses of equity and trauma-informed approaches** to identify and learn from successes and failures and make necessary improvements.

STEP 1: GETTING STARTED WITH SCHOOL-BASED THREAT ASSESSMENT



RESOURCES & TOOLS: Getting Started

SchoolSafety.gov: A comprehensive federal [clearinghouse](#) providing resources and recommendations for creating safe and supportive learning environments, from improving [school climate](#), to preventing [targeted violence](#) and [emergency planning](#), to [threat assessment and reporting](#), among other topics. You can also access a comprehensive [School Safety Readiness Tool](#) assessing your school across 10 distinct categories.

School Climate Resources – The PA Department of Education (PDE) has a number of school climate-related resources available on its [webpage](#), including information on the [school climate improvement process](#) and the free [PA School Climate Survey](#).

Cultivating a Supportive School Climate: A “How To” Guide: The National Center for School Safety’s [guide](#) outlines an approach for evaluating and enhancing school climate for educators and school leaders.

Threat Assessment Education & Awareness Resources for School Entities – Including PowerPoint templates school entities can adapt when providing information for [school staff, parents, and guardians](#) as well as [students](#).

Safe2Say Something: [Safe2Say](#) is an anonymous tip-line and youth violence prevention program managed by the PA Office of Attorney General.

How to Select and Train Your School Threat Assessment Team: This [section](#) of the National Center for School Safety’s [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#) provides information on nationally recognized best practices for setting up a school-based threat assessment team.

National Threat Assessment Center’s Resources on School/Campus Attacks – Housed within the U.S. Secret Service, the National Threat Assessment Center has published multiple reports and guides related to targeted violence in educational settings on their [website](#), including an operational guide for [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model](#) and [Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting](#).

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) – Crisis Recovery Resources: This [page](#) provides resources to help implement a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for students, families, and educators during and after crises (e.g., violence, pandemics, natural disasters). The focus is on health, safety, social-emotional well-being, and academic and behavioral growth.

Bullying Prevention – The PA Department of Education (PDE) has [compiled](#) resources and information for school entities related to bullying awareness and prevention, including a toll-free Bullying Prevention Consultation Line (1-866-716-0424).

Creating a Safe & Positive School Climate

An essential pre-requisite to the establishment and implementation of effective school-based threat assessment teams is a safe, positive school climate. Preventing targeted violence relies primarily on developing positive school climates that are built on foundations of safety, respect, trust, and social and emotional support. Schools can build safe, positive school climates by supporting diversity, open communication, conflict resolution, and addressing issues like bullying and harassment.

- Schools should encourage teachers and staff to **build positive, healthy, and trusting relationships with students and their families**, and should work to **break down “codes of silence”** by helping students feel empowered to **share concerns with trusted adults**. Maintaining **professional standards and boundaries** with students is foundational to these efforts, and to ensure that relationships are healthy and developmentally appropriate.
- Helping students feel more **connected to their classmates and school community** can foster a positive school climate. This can include **identifying clubs or teams at school** students can join or encouraging students to develop their own group.
- Frameworks like **school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** can promote safe, supportive school climates by actively teaching students what appropriate behavior looks like in a variety of settings, and by focusing on encouraging good behavior.

Assessing Readiness for Effective School Threat Assessment

While all public school entities in the Commonwealth are mandated by state law to have at least one Threat Assessment Team in place, ensuring readiness for implementing a BTAM strategy with fidelity is critical to meeting both the letter and the spirit of the law.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Key Criteria for School Threat Assessment Readiness³²

- Support and clear direction from central administration and school entity leadership
- Sufficient resources dedicated to support a threat assessment process
- Identifying and training Threat Assessment Team members
- Allowing Team members sufficient work time to manage threat assessment cases and attend regular Team meetings
- Grant Threat Assessment Team authority to evaluate potential threats and advise school entity leadership on interventions and supports needed to address concerns
- School entity has developed and adopted policies guiding the establishment and implementation of Threat Assessment Teams

A recent survey of Pennsylvania school entities conducted by PCCD's K-12 Threat Assessment Training & Technical Assistance Network initiative found that some of the biggest perceived barriers and challenges for school-based threat assessment teams to be compliant with the law as well as operate with a high degree of competency and confidence were:³³

- **Time** to complete training, meet as a Team, and fit Threat Assessment Team responsibilities within other school-related responsibilities and commitments.
- **Staff capacity** concerns, including lack of dedicated staff, staff turnover, and/or team members wearing many “hats” requiring them to navigate multiple roles, competing commitments, etc.

- **Training** for team members including providing ongoing and continual professional development opportunities for team members.

In addition, schools cited a need for support and buy-in from leadership and school administrators to prioritize school safety and threat assessment practices, funding and other resources, as well as providing tools to address case management, paperwork, and other documentation needs.³⁴

Establish and Train Your School Entity's Threat Assessment Team(s)

The first step in implementing these procedures is to establish a multidisciplinary Threat Assessment Team that will direct, manage, and document the school entity's threat assessment process. The Team is responsible for receiving reports from school community members regarding behaviors and situations that are concerning, gathering additional information, evaluating the potential risk posed to the community, and developing appropriate intervention and management strategies.³⁵ Of note, most K-12 threat assessment experts surveyed by the National Center for School Safety indicated that law enforcement and counselors are essential team members (84% and 82% respectively).³⁶

- Under state law, **members of a school entity's Threat Assessment Team(s)** must be identified by the chief school administrator, in consultation with the Safety and Security Coordinator.³⁷ A school entity must also **designate a Team Leader** for each Threat Assessment Team, usually a senior administrator within the school. When there are staff transitions or a **vacancy occurs on the team** or with the team leader, the chief school administrator and School Safety and Security Coordinator should review these considerations and identify other appropriate staff to fill any vacancy(ies) on the team.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: What's in a Name?³⁸

While Pennsylvania state law requires that school entities establish "threat assessment teams," schools can choose an alternative name. For example, some schools have opted to use the label "Assessment and Care Team" to encourage involvement from those who might be concerned about a student, and to focus on getting a student access to needed resources and supports. Other schools have chosen to refer to this group as a "Behavioral Intervention Team" to focus on a spectrum of concerning behaviors that a student may be exhibiting. Finally, some schools have continued to refer to their groups as "threat assessment team" to highlight the heightened sense of concern about a student who is identified. Regardless of the team's title, all members of the school community should be informed that this is the team assigned responsibility for completing the threat assessment process, and how to submit information to the team.

- **By statute, Pennsylvania's K-12 Threat Assessment Teams must include personnel from a variety of disciplines and areas within the school community** to ensure different points of view and experience are represented in the threat assessment process. Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code requires that teams include certain individuals, including the school entity's appointed School Safety and Security Coordinator; see Figure 5 below, for a list of statutorily required and optional/suggested members. Finally, school entities should **include individuals who have familiarity and rapport with students** referred to the Threat Assessment Team.

Figure 5. Threat Assessment Team Members – Pennsylvania Requirements³⁹

Required Members (Article XIII-E)	Optional Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Safety and Security Coordinator • Individuals with expertise in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School health; ○ Counseling, school psychology, or social work; ○ Special education; and ○ School administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other school staff or community resources who can assist with the threat assessment process. <i>Examples: School security personnel; law enforcement agencies; behavioral health professionals; individuals receiving reports from the Safe2Say Something Program; SAP team members; juvenile probation professionals; etc.</i>
<p>**Reminder: The chief school administrator must designate a team leader.</p>	



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Team Members' Roles & Responsibilities⁴⁰

- **School Administrator**, often a superintendent, principal or assistant principal who may function as a team leader. This individual may be responsible for student discipline and safety and, in these roles, can coordinate threat assessment and disciplinary actions. The school administrator may be involved in an initial review of the seriousness of the case and direct additional team members and resources as needed.
- **School Safety and Security Coordinator**, reports directly to the chief school administrator on all matters related to school safety and security. This individual can advise the Team on the school's policies and procedures relative to school safety and security and compliance with federal and state laws regarding school safety and security, coordinate training and resources for the Team, and serve as the Team's liaison with community-based resources and supports.
- **Mental Health Professionals**, such as school counselors, school psychologists, or school social workers, can bring expertise in helping at-risk students resolve personal problems and conflicts. They may be involved in interviews, as well as assessments of mental health status and need for services. They may guide long-term follow-up and monitor a student's participation in the intervention plan and assess its effectiveness.
- **Law Enforcement** such as school resource officers trained to work in schools. An officer can advise the team on relevant criminal law, conduct criminal investigations, contribute information from community sources and social media, and provide protective services in the most serious cases. More generally, the officer builds and reinforces positive school relationships.
- **Other School Staff** (teachers, coaches, nurses, facilities staff) can provide information and input in cases involving students with whom they have significant contact. A school staff member with expertise in special education can be a valuable member of the team, especially when cases involve students with special education needs. Teams will need to coordinate with special education teams or programs serving any student who receives a threat assessment. It is important to note that there is no expectation that teachers, etc. serve on a team. These staff are often less involved because they have other primary responsibilities and threat assessment is regarded as a student support activity.

- The size of a Threat Assessment Team will vary depending on the school entity but is typically between **3-5 people**. School entities should also consider **identifying other individuals within the school entity and broader community to consult** with as needed during a threat assessment but who are not part of the core Threat Assessment Team.

- School entities should consult with their solicitor regarding any **contractual or collective bargaining implications and confidentiality/privacy requirements** in assigning team members to the Threat Assessment Team.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Composition of Threat Assessment Teams

Your school entity's initial Threat Assessment Team configuration should not be understood as "final" or "written in stone." Instead, consider your Threat Assessment Team to be comprised of a core team of 3-5 members, augmented by others as needed. Some questions to consider as you think about the initial and ongoing make-up of your school entity's Threat Assessment Team(s):

- *Who in your school might fulfill statutorily required roles? Can members fulfill more than one of these roles?*
- *Who else could be beneficially included either as a sitting member of a Threat Assessment Team or as someone called in on an ad hoc basis where specialized expertise would be of value?*

-
- Team members must **work collaboratively** with each other, with other school staff, and (as appropriate) with community partners and resources to support the threat assessment and management process and ensure the safety of the school and its students and staff.
 - Teams must **establish protocols and procedures** that are followed for each assessment. These should include procedures for interviewing the student of concern; talking to classmates, teachers and or parents/guardians; and documenting all phases of the threat assessment immediately; identifying who will interview the student(s) of concern; who will talk to classmates, teachers, or parents/guardians; and who will be responsible for documentation. The team leader would assign responsibilities for each individual case, as appropriate. This will ensure members are aware of their own responsibilities and roles as well as those of their colleagues. These protocols and procedures should include defined thresholds for intervention and response, including referrals to law enforcement and community-based partners.
 - In addition to meeting whenever concerning student behavior or situations arise, **Team members should meet on a regular basis** to ensure continued follow up with students of concern as well as to provide opportunities to learn and work together so when a crisis does occur, the Team will be able to operate as a cohesive unit. This should include community-based partners, such as law enforcement, behavioral health, emergency response, and other agencies who play a role in various aspects of threat assessment, mitigation, management, and response.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Coordination with Other Multidisciplinary Teams

Multidisciplinary threat assessment efforts are designed to work in conjunction with, and not in place of, existing legislation, programs, and frameworks focused on promoting the safety, well-being, and success of all students, including:

- Student Assistance Program (SAP)
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)
- School climate initiatives
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Social-emotional learning
- Suicide prevention and awareness

Article XIII-E allows school entities to satisfy requirements by assigning threat assessment responsibilities to an existing team, including SAP or *Safe2Say Something* Crisis Teams.

Pursuant to Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code, PCCD has published **guidance for coordination and communication with other school-based teams** for threat assessment teams, with a focus on SAP and Special Education teams. More information and resources are available on PCCD's [School Safety and Security webpage](#).

Defining Prohibited & Concerning Behaviors⁴¹

Schools should establish or modify policies, procedures, and codes of conduct defining prohibited behaviors that are unacceptable and warrant immediate intervention. These include threatening or engaging in violence, bringing a weapon to school, bullying or harassing others, as well as other concerning or criminal behaviors.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Examples of Concerning Behaviors

- Physical violence toward a person or property
- Direct or indirect threats of violence
- Bullying that continues after interventions to stop the behavior
- Possession of weapons on school grounds or at school events
- Any statements or behaviors indicating suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Any behaviors or communications that suggest the individual has engaged in research or planning related to carrying out a targeted attack; efforts to acquire the means to engage in an attack; and/or end of life planning
- Any act, gesture or statement that would be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating, such as overt physical or verbal intimidation; throwing objects or other gestures intended to cause fear; and/or making contextually inappropriate statements about harming others
- Unusual or bizarre behavior that would cause a reasonable person to fear injury or harm due to its nature and severity, such as:
 - Stalking
 - Erratic or bizarre behavior
 - Fixation with mass murder, weapons, or violence generally
 - Fixation with hate group, terrorist, or extremist material

- **It is important to remember that concerning behaviors occur along a continuum**, and that interventions should reflect the level of risk and an evaluation of the unique needs of each student.
- School entities should also consider ways **to identify behaviors that may not necessarily be indicative of violence but also warrant some type of intervention**. These include a marked decline in academic performance; increased absenteeism; withdrawal or isolation; sudden or dramatic changes in behavior or appearance; drug or alcohol use; and erratic, depressive, and other emotional or mental health concerns.

- Similarly, school-based threat assessment teams and their partners should ensure that protocols not only capture and take into account risk factors, accelerators, triggers, and precipitating events, but also consider **protective factors** that may serve as an inhibitor or “stabilizer” that can prevent an individual from acting in a violent manner.⁴²



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Examples of Protective Factors⁴³

- Employment or academic success
- Finances and resources
- Health/mental health and treatment options
- Residence
- Spirituality
- Prosocial friends, peer support
- Family, siblings
- Optimistic outlook for future or identified prosocial goals
- Coping skills, easygoing disposition, friendly attitude
- Emotional resiliency
- Sports, music, art, theater, extracurricular activities, clubs, etc.
- Work or a job
- Extended family with concerned support
- Structure and stability
- Peer respect or favorable reputation
- Routine and constructive scheduled activity
- Pets

-
- **Coordination with other multidisciplinary teams** including SAP, Special Education, and/or MTSS/PBIS can help ensure that if these behaviors are observed or reported to the Team, appropriate resources and supports can be provided in the form of mentoring and counseling, mental/behavioral health care, tutoring, and/or social and family services.
 - School entities and Teams should consider the **threshold for intervention** they would like to establish, and what individual(s) or group(s) can intervene when the concerns are low risk vs. high risk, in consideration of relevant information regarding the student, such as whether the student has an IEP or 504 Plan.⁴⁴ The **Systems Approach** provides a framework for how community-based partners contribute resources toward the Threat Assessment Team’s violence prevention efforts. Violence prevention requires a community-wide approach, and law enforcement agencies must be prepared to leverage their partnerships with other agencies to help reduce the likelihood of violence.
 - Pursuant to Act 55 of 2022, all school entities must provide training, in accordance with established standards established by the School Safety and Security Committee, on an annual basis to school employees regarding a range of topics related to school safety and student well-being, including:
 - Two hours of annual training (in-person or online) in one or more of the following: situational awareness; trauma-informed approaches; behavioral health awareness; suicide and bullying awareness; and substance use awareness.
 - One hour of annual training (in-person) on emergency training drills, including fire, natural disaster, active shooter, hostage situation and bomb threats; and

- identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat (online or in-person).
 - PCCD has developed standards for these topics and makes [training](#) available to schools at no cost.
- Pursuant to [Act 71 of 2014](#), all school entities in Pennsylvania are also required to have a **youth suicide awareness and prevention policy** in place and must include in their **professional development plan** at least four hours of training in youth suicide awareness and prevention every five years for professional educators in school buildings serving students in grades 6-12.⁴⁵
- During the assessment process, Teams may uncover **additional information** regarding statements, actions, or other behaviors of the student that can help determine whether the student is at risk of hurting themselves or others. Teams should consider parameters of obtaining this information within the context of **state and federal confidentiality and privacy laws** and should also only use this information specifically for the purpose of determining whether a risk is present and how to address a student's needs. Additional information regarding state and federal confidentiality and privacy laws is available in the "Information & Record Sharing" section on page 43 of this document.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Assessment for Students with Disabilities

It is important to recognize that some of the behaviors identified in threat assessments may also be characteristics of students with certain disabilities. For example, students with disabilities such as ADHD or emotional disturbances may exhibit impulsivity or low frustration tolerance, which can sometimes result in threatening statements.⁴⁶ The threat assessment process can serve as a valuable mechanism to help school staff avoid overreacting to such behaviors by considering whether the underlying causes of behaviors, including a student's disability, are carefully considered and factored into decision-making regarding appropriate interventions and supports.

Threat Assessment Teams should review information about a student's disability, in collaboration with adults who are familiar with the student, such as members of the student's IEP Team, when conducting a threat assessment, to understand how, if at all, the student's disability impacts their behavior and communication. The Team should also consider what behavior supports are included in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

More information regarding steps and considerations that both Threat Assessment Teams and special education teams should take when conducting an assessment of a student with disabilities is available in the **Questions and Answers on Threat Assessment Procedures and School-Based Intervention Teams guidance document** published by PCCD and available on PCCD's [School Safety and Security webpage](#).

Determining the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention

It is important to remember that most of the incidents or concerns that are commonly reported can be appropriately handled by school personnel using school or community-based resources. For instance, the most common types of reports submitted to Pennsylvania's Office of the Attorney General via the *Safe2Say Something* Program have been related to bullying/cyberbullying, suicide and self-harm, and threats.⁴⁷ Many of these reports may not require the involvement of law enforcement. For those incidents that do require law enforcement involvement, however, it is essential that school entities have established policies and procedures in place to ensure timely response and intervention.

- Pennsylvania's **school entities are required by law to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each law enforcement agency** that has jurisdiction over property of the school entity.⁴⁸ These MOUs must address a variety of issues, including reporting and information exchange guidelines, priorities of each party, and notification of incidents to law enforcement. School entities are strongly encouraged to consider updating MOUs to reflect their threat assessment protocols, including how law enforcement will be engaged as part of the work of school-based Threat Assessment Teams.
- Both best practice and Pennsylvania state law⁴⁹ require that reports regarding student behaviors **involving weapons, threats of violence, physical violence, or concerns about an individual's safety** immediately be reported to law enforcement in accordance with the procedures set forth in the school entity's MOU with local law enforcement and Board policies.⁵⁰ Both School Code and state regulations define the types of incidents that must be reported to law enforcement, and those that may be reported at the discretion of the school entity.⁵¹ When reporting an incident to law enforcement, specific information must be provided, which will help inform law enforcement of the best way to work with the school entity in handling the situation and meeting the needs of all students involved. The notification must also contain specific information regarding the student and incident, which includes:
 - Nature of the incident;
 - Names and ages of the individuals involved;
 - Weapons involved in the incident (and whether they have been secured);
 - Injuries;
 - Whether the incident involves a student with a disability, the type of disability and its impact on the student's behavior; and
 - Other information as is known to the school entity and believed to be relevant to the incident.
- In responding to students who have committed an incident, the law specifically states that school entities may consider using available school-based programs, such as school-wide positive behavior supports (PBIS, MTSS) to address student behavior, and shall notify the law enforcement agency of the student's placement in a program.⁵²



THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Immediate Law Enforcement Notification Requirements for PA School Entities

Section 1319-B of the PA Public School Code and Chapter 10 of the state education regulations require **immediate reporting of certain enumerated offenses by chief school administrators to law enforcement** when they are committed on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on a conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity.⁵³ These include attempts, solicitation, or conspiracy to commit any of the following:

- Homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Stalking
- Kidnapping
- Unlawful restraint
- Rape
- Sexual assault
- Arson
- Institutional vandalism

- Burglary
- Criminal trespass
- Riot
- Possession of firearm by minor
- Possession, use or sale of a controlled substance or drug paraphernalia

When reporting an **incident committed by a student with a disability** to a law enforcement agency, the school entity must provide information required by state and federal laws and regulations, including **ensuring that copies of the special education and disciplinary records of the student are transmitted for consideration** by these authorities.

NOTE: The school entity should transmit these records only to the extent permitted by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and other relevant laws. Copies of the school entity's procedures for behavior support, developed in accordance with the school entity's special education plan, will also be provided to law enforcement as appropriate.

In responding to students who commit one of these types of incidents, school entities can consider **utilizing available school-based programs**, such as schoolwide positive behavior supports, to address the student's behavior, as appropriate. School entities must notify law enforcement agencies of the student's placement in the program when this option is taken.⁵⁴

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- School entities should also consider and carefully define the **participation of law enforcement or a School Resource Officer (SRO) on a Threat Assessment Team**. If an SRO is not available to serve on the Team, school entities should establish a clear threshold for when **law enforcement will be asked to support or take over an assessment**. If applicable, these definitions and parameters should be developed and established in collaboration with jurisdictional Threat Advisory Groups/BTAUs to align school, local, and county resources and response protocols. School entities should develop these protocols in compliance with the school entity's **MOU with law enforcement** regarding notification and response to incidents, while also considering **ways to prevent and address equity concerns**, like disproportionality. (For more information on how school entities should consider long-term monitoring and evaluation of threat assessment protocols, please see "Step 3: Evaluating Effectiveness of Threat Assessment Policies, Procedures & Practices" on page 37.)
 - **Note:** If law enforcement is contacted as part of an incident/situation reported to the Threat Assessment Team (such as an incident that occurs over the weekend), it is still advisable for Teams to conduct their own assessment of the student's behavior since the scope and criteria may be different than what law enforcement is looking for in an investigation, including the development of an effective management plan.
 - School entities must also ensure that law enforcement agencies and school security personnel such as School Police Officers and SROs are provided with updated information regarding the **school entity's procedures on positive behavior support**. These partners must also be invited to school entity **training on the use of positive behavior support, de-escalation techniques** and **appropriate responses to student behavior** that may require intervention, in accordance with state regulations.⁵⁵



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Notification "Triggers" and Procedures for School-based Teams

- Regardless of law enforcement action, Teams should conduct their own assessment to ensure the school is ready to respond to any risks / offer supportive interventions

- Threat Assessment Teams must be familiar with these triggers for notification of law enforcement, as they may discover criminal allegations or concerning behaviors as to criminal behavior in the process of their work
 - Note, however, this reporting is a **school administration duty**, not a Threat Assessment Team duty
 - In addition, school entities must immediately notify, as soon as practicable, the caregiver(s) of a victim or suspect directly involved in these incidents
 - Caregivers must be informed as to whether the law enforcement agency has been, or may be, notified of the incident
 - Again, while not a duty of the Team, in practical terms, where this relates to a threat assessment case, it may well be the Threat Assessment Team who make the notification
 - Threat Assessment Teams must be clear on the procedures related to law enforcement notification associated with students with a disability
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- The U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center recommends the establishment of **Behavioral Threat Assessment Units (BTAUs) by state and local law enforcement agencies to prevent targeted violence**.⁵⁶ Sometimes referred to as "Threat Advisory Teams" or "Threat Advisory Groups," BTAUs complement school-based threat assessment teams and are designed to assess and intervene with individuals who might pose a risk of violence through carefully defined operational policies and standard operating procedures.⁵⁷ State and local law enforcement agencies with established BTAUs should have corresponding policies and procedures in place clarifying the threshold for case initiation. Ideally, these policy statements should be developed in conjunction with other entities engaged in bystander reporting, threat assessment and management, and related responsibilities, including school entities. BTAUs should also conduct proactive outreach to community partners so they can be a well-known resource for partner agencies, like school entities, to receive and respond to potential concerns of targeted violence.⁵⁸ Finally, local law enforcement agencies and BTAUs should work closely with school entities and other relevant stakeholders to confirm jurisdiction and expeditiously share information to help "collect and connect the dots" for a potential individual or situation of concern.⁵⁹

STEP 2: IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-BASED THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS



RESOURCES & TOOLS: Implementing School-Based Threat Assessment Teams

Pennsylvania K-12 Threat Assessment Case Management Form – This free [template](#) is available to download as either a Word document or a PDF and was developed in response to requests from Pennsylvania school administrators. The tool helps document key elements of the threat assessment process, including what was reported, findings from interviews, analysis of findings, determination of threat level, threat response strategies, case resolution or safety plan, and other information and resources. The template provides an easy-to-follow framework for documenting threat assessment cases aligned with PCCD's Threat Assessment Model Procedures and Guidelines as well as PCCD's Threat Assessment Process Flowchart (including color-coding to visually align with the flowchart).

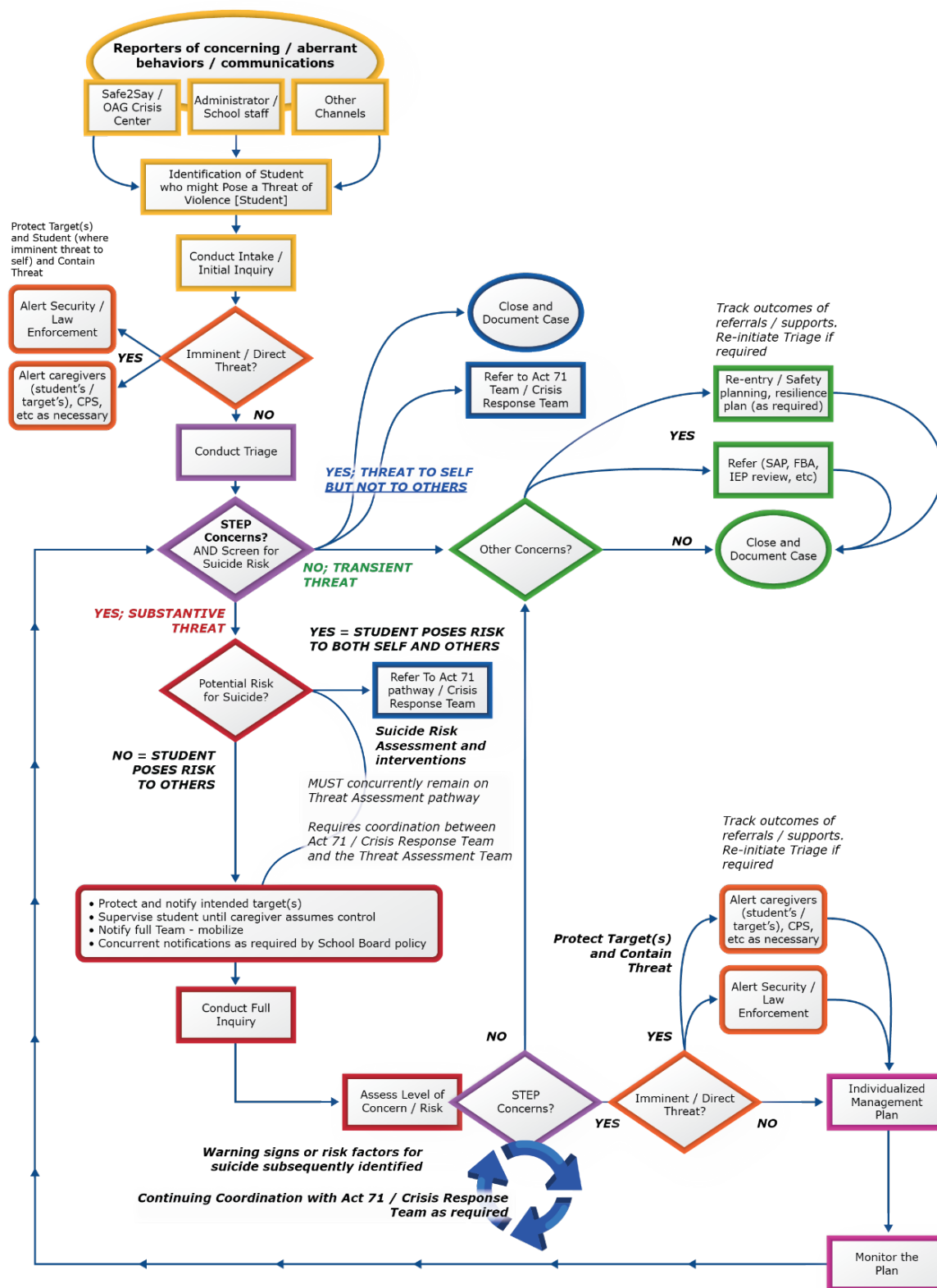
PCCD Threat Assessment Tools & Resources: In 2019, PCCD's School Safety and Security Committee approved model resources to aid school entities as they plan for the Commonwealth's threat assessment requirements. Model informational materials for students, parents/guardians, and school employees as well as guidance for threat assessment teams' coordination and communication with other school-based response/intervention teams are available on PCCD's [School Safety and Security webpage](#).

PA K-12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance & Training Network: In addition to these preliminary resources, in 2019, PCCD secured a federal grant through the U.S. Department of Justice's STOP School Violence Technology and Threat Assessment Solutions for Safer Schools Program to support the development and launch of a comprehensive Pennsylvania K-12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance and Training Network. More information about the Network as well as links to free online training modules, resources, templates, and technical assistance supports is available on PCCD's [Threat Assessment](#) webpage.

K-12 Threat Assessment & Safe2Say Webinar: This 2023 [webinar session](#) and corresponding [presentation slides](#) review changes made to PA's Public School Code related to school safety and threat assessment through Act 55 of 2022, including ways to align threat assessment team efforts with Safe2Say protocols.

How to Implement Threat Assessment in Your School: This [section](#) of the National Center for School Safety's [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#) provides an overview of key principles of school-based threat assessment and typical pathways to violence, as well as related implementation tools and resources.

Overview of PA Model K-12 Threat Assessment Guidelines⁶⁰



Create or Identify a Central Reporting Mechanism

When members of a school community have concerns about a student's actions or behavior, they should have a centralized mechanism to report those concerns to the Threat Assessment Team.

- School entities in Pennsylvania are required to **make informational materials available** to school employees regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior that may present a threat to the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community, or others, as well as **how to report their concerns**. This can include reporting through the **Safe2Say Program**, or through other school reporting mechanisms and tools.⁶¹ In addition, Act 55 of 2022 mandates that school entities provide **one hour of training annually for all school employees regarding identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat to safety** (in-person or online) and **emergency training and preparedness** (in-person only).
- Under state law, school entities must also **annually ensure that school employees are aware of the staff members who are appointed to the Threat Assessment Team(s)**, and how to report threatening or at-risk behavior, including through the *Safe2Say Something* Program.⁶² School employees must also annually complete at least two hours of training (in-person or online), in accordance with established standards, related to situational awareness, trauma-informed approaches, behavioral health awareness, suicide and bullying awareness, and/or substance use awareness. In addition, school entities must annually ensure that students and parents/guardians are provided **information and guidance** on recognizing behaviors of concern, their roles and responsibilities in reporting the behavior, and how they should report that information.⁶³
- Teams should consider **designating an individual(s) responsible for monitoring all incoming reports and develop protocols for quickly assessing, responding, and making appropriate determinations and referrals**; this should include an **immediate response** when someone's safety is concerned. State law requires that Threat Assessment Teams **assist in assessing reports received through the Safe2Say Something Program**.⁶⁴
- In providing information and training to members of the school community, Threat Assessment Teams should emphasize **options for providing information anonymously** (such as through the *Safe2Say Something* Program), and that **reports will be acted upon, kept confidential, and handled appropriately**.⁶⁵ Anonymous reporting programs are closely linked to an increase in students' willingness to report weapons and other safety concerns in school settings, making them a vital tool in the threat assessment process.⁶⁶



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Utilizing the Safe2Say Something Program

In 2018, the General Assembly passed Act 44 mandating the establishment and use of the *Safe2Say Something* anonymous reporting system by every Pennsylvania school entity by January 14, 2019. The [Safe2Say Something Program](#) is managed by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and teaches students, educators, and administrators how 1) to recognize the signs and signals of individuals who may be at risk of hurting themselves or others; and 2) to anonymously report this information through the *Safe2Say Something* app, website, or 24/7 Crisis Center Hotline.

The *Safe2Say Something* program works in the following ways:

1. A tip is submitted via mobile app, website, or phone call – arriving first at the *Safe2Say Something* Crisis Center.

2. OAG Crisis Center analysts vet and triage the tip, and may engage the tipster in anonymous two-way chat in order to provide detailed and immediately actionable information to schools and 911 County Dispatch. Analysts are trained to categorize each tip as either “Life Safety – Imminent and In-Progress,” “Non-Life Safety Crime/Violence,” “Non-Life Safety,” or “Non-Notification” to help prioritize tips.
 3. Crisis Center analysts deliver the tip to the impacted school and, as needed, law enforcement via 911 County Dispatch.
 4. The school and, as needed, law enforcement, assess and intervene with the at-risk individual.
 5. The school then closes out the tip and reports actions taken as a record for their school.
-

Establish Assessment Procedures⁶⁷

Threat Assessment Teams should establish clearly defined processes and procedures to guide their assessments. These threat assessment protocols can help the Team form an accurate understanding of a student’s thinking, behavior, and circumstances to inform both the Team’s assessment as well as identify appropriate interventions. Protocols must meet requirements articulated in state law, and should also address the following best practices related to intake, assessment, and response:

- Teams should work to **build rapport that can facilitate information gathering efforts** by demonstrating that their goal is to support students who may be struggling, while also ensuring that the student(s) and broader school community are safe. Teams can build trust by taking care with all reported concerns and sharing information and updates, where appropriate, with individuals involved in the threat assessment process, as well as updating the broader school community on these efforts.
- **Utilize a case management form/system or similar method to maintain documentation** related to intake of reports, including what information is gathered; when, how, and where information was gathered; individuals interviewed or contacted during the process; the specific behaviors and circumstances that were of concern for a particular student/situation; and the strategies for intervention taken by the Team/school entity. (NOTE: Under state law, records/documentation developed or maintained by Threat Assessment Teams, as well as the report and information presented to the school entity’s board of directors and submitted to the School Safety and Security Committee at PCCD are not subject to Pennsylvania’s Right-to-Know Law.)⁶⁸
- **Use a community systems and relationship-based approach** that identifies sources that may have information regarding the student’s actions and circumstances. Specifically, this means identifying and engaging individuals that have an existing relationship or frequently interact with the student, as well as organizations or platforms that may be familiar with the student’s behaviors. This is particularly important in terms of **evaluating the student’s concerning behaviors and communications in the context of their age, social/emotional development, cultural background, and other unique contexts**. While some students’ behavior might seem unusual or concerning, they may be normal for adolescent behavior or in the context of a mental or developmental disorder. Gathering information from multiple sources, including those within and outside of a student’s immediate circle, increases the likelihood that Teams can accurately assess the student’s risks and needs, and can also help determine appropriate interventions, supports, and resources. In addition, ensuring that Team members have received required training will help identify and avoid racial, cultural, or disability bias in this process.

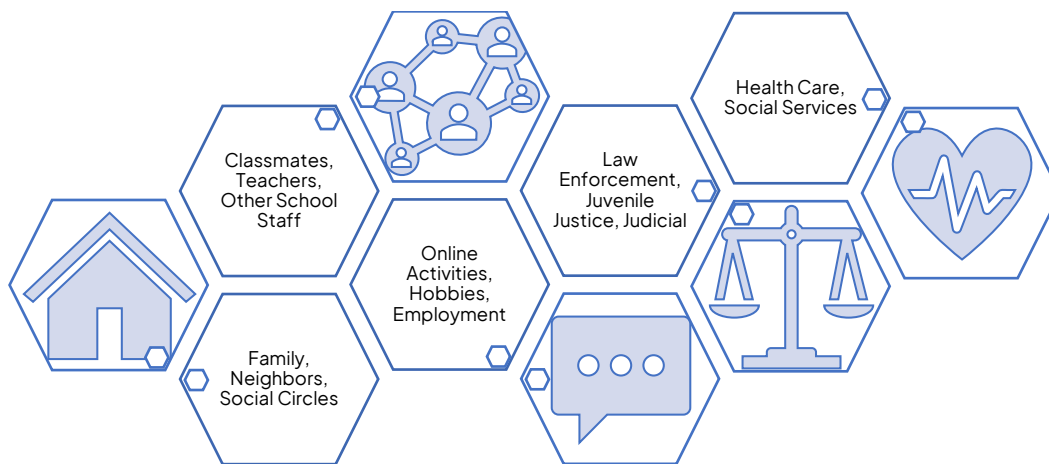


THINGS TO CONSIDER: Developing an Individualized Action Plan⁶⁹

When fielding reports related to students who are in crisis, the team should create an individualized action plan responsive to key questions such as:

- Who has a previous relationship with the student?
- Who is in the best position to make an assessment?
- How will that person reach out?
- When and where will the assessment take place?
- Who else needs to be interviewed? (e.g., parents/guardians, teachers, school staff, peers)

Figure 4: Community Systems Approach to Threat Assessment⁷⁰



- As part of their assessment process, Teams should review **academic, disciplinary, law enforcement, and other formal records** that may be related to the student. When reviewing school-based records, Teams should determine whether the student has been the subject of prior reports to school officials, especially if those reports involve concerning or threatening behaviors. This review of records should also include information about previous incidents, including any supports or interventions provided, to gauge what strategies might best address the student's current situation. It is important to remember that Teams must comply with relevant federal and state laws protecting privacy of student information, as well as ensure that records are used for appropriate purposes that are relevant to the threat assessment process. School entities should consider what protocols, agreements and/or MOUs should be in place to facilitate the timely and appropriate sharing of information, and to provide safeguards against inappropriate use and/or redisclosure.
- Teams should organize their intake, information gathering, and assessment process around **several investigative themes/areas related to a student's actions, circumstances, and any other relevant factors**. These investigative themes/areas should be based on those recommended by the U.S. Secret Service (see "Things to Consider," on page 30).
- Under state law, Threat Assessment Teams must also **ensure that parents/guardians are notified** whenever determinations/referrals take place. Article XIII-E of the PA Public School

Code specifically requires that, upon preliminary determination that a student's behavior may indicate a threat to themselves or others, the student's building principal (or designee) must **immediately notify the student's parent or guardian**. Parent/guardian **consent is also required for certain actions**, including referral of the student to a behavioral service provider, a healthcare provider, or a county agency. Importantly, nothing in state law precludes school entities from acting **immediately to address an imminent threat**, including prompt reporting to law enforcement.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Key Themes to Guide Threat Assessment Investigations

- **Motives:** Understanding a student's motive helps Teams assess their goals and how far they may go to achieve them. This can guide strategies to steer the student away from violence.
- **Communications:** Teams should note concerning or violent communications but remember that a lack of threats doesn't rule out violent intent.
- **Inappropriate Interests:** Teams should look for signs of interest in topics such as weapons, school shooters, mass attacks, or other types of violence.
- **Weapons Access:** Teams must assess both inappropriate interests in weapons and whether the student has access to firearms or other dangerous items, such as explosives, incendiary devices, bladed weapons, or combinations thereof.
- **Stressors:** Identify any personal stressors, such as family or school challenges, and whether the student has supportive relationships to help cope. Stressors can include those in or out of school, such as coursework, friendships, romantic relationships, family issues, bullying and cyberbullying, etc.
- **Emotional and Developmental Issues:** Mental health concerns like anxiety or depression should be evaluated in the context of the student's known behavior patterns. It is also critical that behaviors exhibited by a student with a diagnosed disorder or mental illness be evaluated in the context of their diagnosis and the student's known baseline of behavior.
- **Desperation or Despair:** Teams should assess if the student feels hopeless or desperate, and whether they have coping resources.
- **Violence as an Option:** Determine if the student sees violence as a solution, especially if they have used it before.
- **Concerned Others:** Evaluate whether people close to the student (e.g., peers, family members, staff) have expressed concerns about their behavior.
- **Capacity to Carry Out an Attack:** Assess the student's ability to plan and carry out an attack, considering that school attacks are rarely impulsive. The Team should assess whether the student has made specific plans to harm the school or individuals in or outside of school. (Note: Planning does not need to be elaborate.)
- **Planning:** Determine if the student has made specific plans for violence, even simple ones.
- **Consistency:** Check if the student's statements align with their actions and the observations of others.
- **Protective Factors:** Consider positive influences, like trusting relationships with adults or peers, that might reduce the risk of violence. This includes determining whether a student has a positive, trusting relationship with an adult at school, and whether the student feels emotionally connected to other students/peers.

Develop Options for Response & Interventions

Once a Threat Assessment Team has completed a comprehensive and thorough assessment of a student/situation, it can evaluate whether there are factors present that indicate violence might be a possibility. When a determination is made, Teams can develop strategies that reduce the risk for engaging in violence and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

- Every student/situation referred to the Team's attention should undergo assessment as part of the threat assessment process. For cases that come to the team's attention that are not deemed to represent 'no' or 'low risk', the team should ensure students have an **individualized management plan** that reflects the unique resources and supports a student might need based on the information gathered during the assessment. Management plans should remain in place until the Team is no longer concerned about the student or the risk for violence.
- As described previously, more often than not, the Team may determine the likelihood that a student may engage in violent or harmful behaviors is low but the student may still **require monitoring or guidance** to cope with challenges, enhance resiliency, and/or learn more appropriate strategies to manage emotions. It is important to note that although these students may not need an individualized management plan, decisions should still be documented to ensure those steps take place.
- Teams should identify **resources to assist the student**, including both school and community-based services and supports, such as peer support programs, therapeutic counseling, life skills classes, tutoring, and/or mental or behavioral health care. In addition, the student may be referred to a specific staff member or other school-based team (e.g., SAP, IEP team, etc.) for follow-up. If, during the course of a threat assessment investigation, a Team member is presented with information that indicates the student may be a victim of child abuse, a report should be made in accordance with the requirements of the Child Protective Services Law and school policy.⁷¹



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Identifying & Connecting to Available Resources⁷²

As part of this step in the threat assessment process, teams should consider resources available within the school setting and in the community, including but not limited to mental health (school-based or community-based); substance use disorder treatment; social services; housing; education, employment, and training; community crisis response teams; peer support; parent and family resources; and/or local law enforcement.

The team should connect with each relevant resource, asking questions that can help facilitate services and supports for students in crisis:

- Who is the point of contact?
- What specific services are provided?
- Are you taking new clients/patients?
- Is there a wait list?
- Is there a fee associated with the service?
- Do you take insurance?
- How are referrals made?
- What is your location and hours?
- Do you have emergency appointments?

-
- When considering the possibility of disciplinary action as part of management strategies, Teams and school administrators should **consider how exclusionary discipline practices (such as suspension or expulsion) may affect their ability to monitor the student and can increase risk**.⁷³ Actions that further disconnect the student from monitoring and supports can further escalate emotions and disconnect the student from the school and social environment.⁷⁴ Therefore, these types of practices should be implemented only after

careful team consideration, and they should always be paired with supportive interventions. For example, the best response could be not suspending the student and keeping them at school in order to implement interventions and supports. Teams should also consult with the school solicitor when assessing behavior or communications that take place outside of school or on a student's personal technology and platforms prior to considering exclusionary disciplinary practices.⁷⁵

- **Notify law enforcement immediately if a student is thinking about or planning to engage in violence** so they can help in managing the situation. (See “Determine the Threshold for Law Enforcement Intervention,” beginning on page 22, for more information about establishing thresholds for notifying law enforcement.)
- Threat Assessment Teams should **make referrals to the school entity's Crisis Response Team/Suicide Prevention Coordinator and/or coordinate responses** when receiving reports of concerns about students who may pose a harm to themselves. (Note that immediate notification to law enforcement and/or other appropriate first responders should still be made if there is an imminent threat to the student or to the safety of others.)
- **Take steps to address the safety of any potential targets** if necessary, including altering and enhancing security procedures for schools or individuals. This can also include **collaborating with the family and/or law enforcement** to prevent or remove the student's access to means or weapons as part of broader efforts to keep the environment safe.
- **Address the student's motive.** This will be unique to each student, but strategies could include bullying prevention efforts or offering counseling to a student who is experiencing personal challenges. School entities can also **reduce the effect of stressors** by providing supports and resources that help students manage and overcome setbacks.

Figure 6. Classifying Threats to Determine Response Strategies⁷⁶

Threat Classification – Level of concern a student/situation may pose a risk for violence	Transient Threat or Substantive Threat?	Range of Potential Actions
<p>Low Risk Threat (Low Level of Concern): The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be easily resolved.</p>	<p>In most cases, unless there are other STEP^{®77} concerns, Low Risk Threats (Low Level of Concern) would represent a Transient Threat. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-genuine expression; • Non-enduring intent to harm; • Temporary feelings of anger; • Tactic in argument; • Intended as joke or figure of speech; • Resolved on scene or in office (time-limited); and/or • Ends with apology, retraction, or clarification. <p>If in doubt, treat as Substantive.</p>	<p>Low Risk Threat (Low Level of Concern): Where threat / the level of concern is assessed as low, there will typically be no need to notify or take action to protect the person(s) to whom the threat was directed.</p> <p>Actions to address the situation might include, clarification, explanation, retraction, and/or an apology; potential disciplinary action; potential referral to school or community-based resources, as appropriate.</p>
<p>Moderate Risk Threat (Moderate Level of Concern): The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others at this time but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.</p>	<p>Threats classified as Moderate Risk (Moderate Level of Concern) or greater would represent a Substantive Threat. Examples of Substantive Threats will include those where the following attributes may be present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific and plausible details such as a specific victim, time, place, and method; • Repeated over time or conveyed to differing individuals; • Involves planning, substantial thought, or preparatory steps; • Recruitment or involvement of accomplices; • Invitation for an audience to observe threat being carried out; and/or • Physical evidence of intent to carry out threat (e.g., lists, drawings, written plan). 	<p>Moderate Risk Threat (Moderate Level of Concern): Where threat / the level of concern is assessed as moderate, response actions typically would comprise notifying intended target(s) of threat and taking precautions to protect them. In addition: Taking steps to monitor and supervise the individual(s) who might pose a threat of violence, as well as providing support and taking disciplinary action, if appropriate. Potential referral to school or community-based resources, as appropriate should also be considered, for example, counseling, conflict mediation, or other interventions to reduce the threat of violence and address underlying conflicts or issues that lead to the threat.</p>
<p>High Risk Threat (High Level of Concern): The individual/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.</p>		<p>High Risk Threat (High Level of Concern): These cases include threatening behaviors indicating the intent, planning, or preparation to cause serious bodily injury or death (e.g., to rape, physically assault, and inflict serious injury, kill, or use weapons against self or others). Where threat / the level of concern is assessed as high, actions will comprise notifying local law enforcement and consulting with School Safety and Security officials. In other words, actions</p>

Threat Classification – Level of concern a student/situation may pose a risk for violence	Transient Threat or Substantive Threat?	Range of Potential Actions
		will include taking <i>immediate precautions to protect potential victims</i> (e.g., direct supervision of individual who might pose a threat of violence, notifying intended targets and caregivers, etc.); taking disciplinary action, as appropriate; and, where mental health or disability issues are reasonably believed to cause or contribute to violence risk, an assessment should be conducted by a qualified professional, such as a licensed psychologist.
Imminent Threat: An individual/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.		Imminent Threat: Where threat / the level of concern is assessed as imminent, <i>immediate containment and action to protect identified target(s) will be essential</i> . This will entail immediate referral to law enforcement and consultation with School Safety and Security personnel, as well as identifying Emergency Operations Plans and strategies to manage the active situation.
Direct Threat: An individual/situation poses a significant risk to the health or safety of themselves and/or others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. The direct threat standard applies when the Threat Assessment Team or school entity administration determines that an individual/situation poses a direct threat and that applicable disciplinary procedures are not available or sufficient to mitigate the threat.		Direct Threat: Where the subject/situation is assessed to present a direct threat, response actions would, in many cases, be the same as for students/situations assessed to pose a High or Imminent risk threat, with additional processes in place to permit exclusion of individual who might pose a threat of violence from school and school activities.

Conduct Training & Provide Information to Key Stakeholders

As part of their work to implement threat assessment protocols as part of comprehensive school safety and violence prevention efforts, school entities should identify training needs for all relevant stakeholders, including the following groups:

- **Threat Assessment Team members:** Under Pennsylvania state law, school entities are required to facilitate opportunities for members of their Threat Assessment Team(s) to **annually complete group or individual training** consistent with nationally recognized best practices during paid working hours or as in-service training and credited toward continuing professional education or staff development requirements, as applicable.⁷⁸ This training must address the following minimum criteria:
 1. responsibilities of Team members;
 2. the process of identifying, reporting, assessing, responding to, and intervening with threats, including identifying and avoiding racial, cultural, or disability bias; and
 3. confidentiality requirements under federal and state law.⁷⁹

Team members should also be familiar with laws, regulations, and policies that guide confidentiality and the handling of student and staff information (see Appendix D for more information).

- **Faculty, staff and administrators:** State law also requires that school entities **annually ensure school employees are informed of the existence and purpose of the Threat Assessment Team(s)**, including posting information on the school entity's website and ensuring school employees know who has been appointed to the Team.⁸⁰ Threat Assessment Teams are also required to make information available to school employees regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior, and how to report their concerns, including through the **Safe2Say Something Program or another school hotline**.⁸¹ This helps school personnel become aware of procedures and protocols they should follow when concerning or threatening information or behaviors are observed. Informational materials and training should include information about the school entity's Threat Assessment Team(s), including how to notify the Team(s), what information to share, and the steps school personnel can take to safely and appropriately intervene with concerning situations.⁸² School entities are also encouraged – and in some cases, required – to provide training on other topics, such as suicide awareness and prevention, conflict resolution, mental health, and developmental disabilities, as part of efforts to promote safe and positive school climates.⁸³ In addition, Act 55 of 2022 mandates that all school employees receive at least one hour of training each year on emergency response and preparedness and identification or recognition of student behavior that may indicate a threat, as well as two hours of training on other topics related to school safety and security and student well-being.
- **Students:** School entities in Pennsylvania must also **annually ensure students are informed** of the existence and purpose of the Team(s) under state law.⁸⁴ Threat Assessment Teams are also required to **provide age-appropriate information** to students regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior as well as how to report their concerns, including through the **Safe2Say Something Program or other school hotline**.^{85,86} School entities should consider ways to build on these efforts to make sure students are aware they can make a report to the Team or another trusted adult **anonymously**, that their information will be **followed-up on**, and will be kept **confidential**, based on the school entity's legal and investigative requirements.⁸⁷ Training and information should also focus on the important role students play in promoting a safe, positive, and inclusive school climate, including ways they can safely step in and intervene if needed.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Safe2Say Something Training

Free online and in-person training for students and other resources for schools are available through the PA Office of Attorney General's *Safe2Say Something* Program. The "[School Resources](#)" webpage on *Safe2Say Something*'s website includes Frequently Asked Questions guidance, informational materials, and training materials specifically designed for students.

The *Safe2Say Something* student training provides information about different types of actions, behaviors, and situations that might be harmful or dangerous, and how to share those concerns using the tip line or reporting app. Informational materials, including handouts, are also available for school entities.

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- **Parents and families:** School entities must also **annually ensure that information is available for parents and families regarding the threat assessment process** in place at their child's school, and their role in that process.⁸⁸ It is recommended that information for parents/families provide clear instructions on who to call, when, and what information they should be ready to provide. Parent trainings can also provide information on available resources and can **reduce the stigma** around mental, emotional, or developmental issues.⁸⁹ Information for parents/families should be provided in a language and format that is accessible and easy to understand.
 - **Law enforcement and SROs:** School entities are required by law to establish MOUs with law enforcement agencies and should consider taking steps to **develop and strengthen relationships with law enforcement agencies**, so they are aware of the school's threat assessment process, as well as their own responsibilities if a threat is identified. Training for law enforcement and SROs should review emergency response procedures as well as building layouts.⁹⁰

STEP 3: EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PRACTICES



RESOURCES & TOOLS: Evaluating Effectiveness of Your School Entity's Threat Assessment Program

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Threat Assessment Program: This [section](#) of the National Center for School Safety's [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#) outlines steps for evaluating a threat assessment program's effectiveness, focusing on implementation fidelity and understanding impact on students.

Resources for Measuring Impact on Students & School Communities:

- [Civil Rights Data Collection \(CRDC\)](#), U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.
- [Data and Reporting](#), PDE
- [Future Ready PA Index](#), PDE
- [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#), Annie E. Casey Foundation
- [Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#), PCCD
- [Violent Crime](#), U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics
- [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System](#), CDC
- [Safe2Say Something Annual Report Data](#), PA Office of Attorney General

Promoting Equity, Continuous Improvement & Sustainability

As described earlier in this document, when implemented with fidelity and care, multidisciplinary threat assessment protocols can help school entities effectively identify and mitigate risks to the health and safety of students and the school community. However, if implemented without fidelity and care to address issues like implicit bias or trauma, these same protocols can also exacerbate systemic problems like exclusionary disciplinary practices and the school-to-prison pipeline, which disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities.

- Schools should **engage stakeholders – including students, parents, families, educators, and community members – in all phases of planning and implementation** to ensure that threat assessment protocols are culturally responsive and trauma-informed.
- School entities should identify **metrics and goals** to determine how effective the threat assessment process is and whether any **unintended consequences or harm** have occurred as a result of these procedures. These goals and measures should be **connected to broader school priorities and initiatives**, informed by an **equity lens**, and should be reviewed frequently by the Threat Assessment Team(s), school administrators, and community members. For instance, school entities could track the **number of threat assessment cases** initiated and completed by grade; **source(s) of concern** (i.e., reporter type); the **student-level outcomes** (referral, intervention); **characteristics** of students referred to Threat Assessment Team vs. other school-based interventions (i.e., race/ethnicity, disability status, etc.); **timeliness of assessment**; **training needs and outcomes** for students, faculty/staff, and others; and **other measures** that can indicate whether protocols are being implemented with fidelity.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: State-level Resources for School-based Threat Assessment Programs

As described previously in these *Guidelines*, eligible school entities can apply for funding through **PCCD's School Safety and Security Grant Program** to support activities and costs associated with planning, implementing, and sustaining threat assessment protocols. Additional information regarding funding criteria and resources for applicants is available on [PCCD's School Safety and Security webpage](#).

In addition, PCCD provides **no-cost training to support school-based threat assessment teams** via the PA K-12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance and Training Network. The School Safety and Security Committee has also adopted training criteria and standards for other topics related to school safety, student well-being, and promoting positive school climates pursuant to requirements enacted in Act 55 of 2022. More information about these online and in-person training opportunities is available on PCCD's *School Safety and Security* website.

Community Anti-Threats Officer (CATO) & Community Anti-Threat Team (CATT) Program: The FBI's CATO Program aims to enhance the capabilities of law enforcement, probation and parole officers, and School Resource Officers in targeted violence investigations. CATO members can support Threat Assessment and Threat Management Teams, serving operational and training roles within their agencies and communities. The CATT Program, a partnership between the FBI and Penn State University, helps bring together community stakeholders to prevent, assess, and address targeted violence through the establishment of county and regional Threat Assessment and Threat Management Teams. More information about the CATO and CATT initiatives is available on the [CATT SharePoint site](#).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR K-12 THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

INTERSECTIONS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT WITH SUICIDE RISK & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISES



RESOURCES & TOOLS: Suicide Risk & Behavioral Health Crises

Guidance Note for PA K-12 Threat Assessment Teams on Threat Assessment & Suicide Risk Policy & Practices (2023): This [document](#) from PCCD provides guidance for school-based threat assessment teams in Pennsylvania on handling suicide risk. It explains the relationship between Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment) and Act 71 (Suicide Awareness and Prevention), emphasizing the need for collaboration between threat assessment teams and mental health professionals.

Act 71 – Youth Suicide Awareness & Prevention: PDE’s [website](#) provides links to resources, including Suicide Awareness/Prevention Education Guidelines & Educational Materials and model curriculum developed pursuant to Act 71 of 2014.

2023 Pennsylvania’s Suicide Prevention Guide: [Document](#) highlights messaging tools and other resources related to suicide prevention, mental health, and wellness.

Mental Health Resources: PDE’s [website](#) includes information and resources for schools and family members, including tools on trauma, crisis intervention, grief and loss, social-emotional learning, managing and coping with emotions, self-care, and a staff and student wellness guide.

CDC Guidance for Suicide Prevention: This [webpage](#) provides data, information, and resources related to suicide and suicide prevention strategies.

Key Issues for Threat Assessment & Addressing Behavioral Health Crises

K-12 threat assessment teams face challenges at the intersection of suicide risk, behavioral health crises, and other concerning behaviors, requiring a multi-faceted response. Key issues include:

1. **Identification and Differentiation:** Recognizing the difference between suicidal ideation, mental health issues, and other threats to safety is crucial. Misidentification can lead to ineffective interventions.

2. **Coordination with Mental Health Services:** Schools must balance threat assessment protocols with mental health screenings and crisis interventions, ensuring that students in crisis receive appropriate care.
3. **Collaborative Responses:** Effective threat assessments require coordinated responses involving school teams, mental health professionals, parents and families, and community-based services. Schools should work with external mental health providers to develop comprehensive support and safety plans and ensure follow-up with students with suicide risk.
4. **Resource Allocation and Training:** Many school-based threat assessment teams may lack sufficient resources, staff training, and tools to accurately assess and address complex behavioral health issues in students. Suicide risk screening and assessment tools, behavior assessments, and continuous awareness and training for staff are essential components of a successful threat assessment protocol.
5. **Crisis Intervention:** School teams should implement intervention strategies that include both immediate crisis management (for imminent risk) and long-term mental health support to mitigate future risks. Follow-up care and monitoring are vital to prevent escalation.
6. **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** Balancing student privacy, safety, and legal responsibilities can present a challenge. Schools must follow legal mandates such as suicide prevention laws (e.g., Act 71) and threat assessment policies (e.g., Article XIII-E) while ensuring ethical intervention and communication.
7. **Community-Based Responses:** Effective threat management often requires extending beyond the school. Schools need to foster partnerships with law enforcement, social services, and local mental health providers for a coordinated response to high-risk situations.

In short, K-12 threat assessment teams must navigate the complexities of student mental health, identifying risk early and coordinating effective interventions while ensuring adherence to legal and ethical standards.

Requirements Under Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment) & Act 71 of 2014 (Suicide Prevention)

As described in PCCD's recently published [guidance note](#), Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code requires schools to form threat assessment teams to evaluate and intervene with students whose behavior may pose a safety threat, including self-harm or suicide risk. Schools must establish procedures for assessing and intervening in such cases. "Assessment" broadly includes screening and/or assessment, either by school staff or community professionals, while "intervention" covers all aspects of suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. These processes ensure that schools effectively address and respond to student behaviors linked to potential harm or safety concerns.

Article XIII-E and Act 71 of 2014 (Suicide Awareness and Prevention) intersect by requiring schools to adopt policies for identifying and addressing suicide risk. Act 71 mandates suicide awareness policies, staff training, early identification, intervention, and postvention protocols. It also requires referral procedures when staff notice suicide warning signs. Article XIII-E complements this by requiring threat assessment teams to incorporate suicide risk assessment into broader safety protocols. Schools should align their threat assessment and suicide prevention efforts to ensure comprehensive approaches to student safety.

Responsibilities of K–12 Threat Assessment Teams Related to Suicide Risk

Under state law, PA's K–12 threat assessment teams are responsible for assessing and intervening when a student shows behavior that threatens their own or others' safety, including suicide risk. However, suicide risk assessments are handled through Act 71 protocols, not directly by the Threat Assessment Team (though many of these team members may be the same individuals). Mental health professionals (e.g., counselors) perform these assessments and screenings. If a student's behavior poses a threat to others, threat teams must watch for suicide warning signs and ensure suicide risk screenings are done. Collaboration between the Threat Assessment Team and other school teams (e.g., Crisis Response) is critical for effective intervention.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Relevant Policies & Programs – Mental & Behavioral Health

- **Mental Health and Behavioral Health Services for Minors:** Act 65 of 2020 (35 P.S. §§ 10101.1–10101.2) addresses who can provide consent to voluntary mental health treatment for minors who are 14 years of age and less than 18 years of age in both inpatient and outpatient settings. The Mental Health Procedures Act (MHPA) applies to voluntary and involuntary inpatient treatment (50 P.S. § 7103, 55 Pa. Code § 5100.4(a)). See the [Department of Human Services Act 65 of 2020 page](#) for additional information.
- **School Based Health Services:** PA Public School Code requires certain school health services for all children of school age, regardless of the school setting. Those services include physical examinations and health screenings, as well as dental health. The PA Department of Health provides reimbursement for state mandated school health services through a state formula for reimbursement.
- **Suicide Prevention Online Learning Center** – Prevent Suicide PA's [Online Learning Center](#) includes a range of suicide prevention trainings for free, including an 8-part course on 'Suicide Prevention for Educators.'
- **Pennsylvania Community of Practice (CoP) on School-Based Behavioral Health** – This community of cross-sector stakeholders share a commitment to the advancement of early childhood, school-age, and adult behavioral health and wellness, and is spearheaded by the PA Technical Assistance and Training Network (PaTTAN). The CoP's goal is to support schools' efforts to overcome non-academic barriers to learning for children and youth.
- **Supporting Safe and Healthy Students (ESSA, Title IV Part A):** Pennsylvania identified addressing the comprehensive needs of students through school-based supports and community partnerships, including through the Community Schools Framework, as a state priority for federal Title IV, Part A funding in its approved Consolidated State Plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Differentiating Threat Assessment from Suicide Risk Screening & Assessment

Schools should not use the Threat Assessment Team's case management form for suicide risk screening or assessment, as it is insufficient for that purpose. Proper suicide risk screening and assessment require distinct procedures, tools, and trained personnel, such as school counselors or psychologists.

Suicide risk assessments differ from threat assessments and need specialized training. School teams must establish clear protocols to ensure suicide risk interventions are not duplicated or in conflict with threat assessment processes, while maintaining appropriate communication and confidentiality between teams.

School entities should have standardized procedures and forms for documenting suicide risk assessments and interventions. Consistent documentation ensures clear communication, follow-up, and adherence to procedures. All actions taken, including family contacts, should be recorded.

If a student is referred to the Threat Assessment Team and suicide risk is identified, this should be noted on the threat assessment form. For cases involving only suicide risk, schools should use their designated suicide risk forms according to established policies and procedures.



THINGS TO CONSIDER: Approaching “Dual Threats” & Other Scenarios Involving Potential Suicide Risk

If a student poses a risk for both violence and suicide, they may undergo both a threat assessment and suicide screening simultaneously. If suicide risk is identified during a threat assessment, the school should refer the student through the Act 71 process, and this must be documented. If there is no threat to others and only suicide risk is present, Act 71 procedures apply without further threat assessment involvement. Ongoing communication between Act 71 and threat assessment teams is essential to ensure coordinated intervention.

INFORMATION & RECORD SHARING



RESOURCES & TOOLS: Information & Record Sharing

PCCD Guidance on Communication & Information on Confidentiality: This [document](#) provides guidance in a Q&A format to assist schools as they navigate collaboration, communication, and information sharing with other school-based intervention teams. The document focuses on how Threat Assessment Teams should work with Student Assistance Program (SAP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams while maintaining appropriate confidentiality in accordance with state and federal law.

Frequently Asked Questions about Threat Assessment and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – The National Center for School Safety has developed this [handout](#) as part of its [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#) highlighting key questions related to FERPA, confidentiality and information sharing, and other considerations for school-based threat assessment teams.

For a comprehensive listing of available resources and information related to confidentiality, privacy, and consent laws, among other topics, please see **Appendix B (Additional Resources for School Entities)** on page 51.

Access to Protected Information

Article XIII-E of the PA Public School Code explicitly provides a school entity's Threat Assessment Team(s) with access to the following student information, to the extent necessary for fulfilling their duties and allowed by federal law:

- Student health records;
- Prior school disciplinary records;
- Records or information shared with the school entity related to adjudication;
- Records of any prior behavioral or mental health or psychological evaluations or screenings maintained by the school entity; and/or
- Other records or information that may be relevant to evaluating a threat or determining treatment/referral options for a student that are maintained by the school entity.

Several laws address privacy of student information, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which restricts disclosure of information from student education records, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which protects certain special education information of students with disabilities.⁹¹ State laws in Pennsylvania and adopted board-level policies also provide privacy protections for students. Please see the “Tools and Resources: Confidentiality, Privacy & Consent Laws” summary box below for additional information.

Student records and information must be handled, created and accessed only to fulfill responsibilities for completing the threat assessment process, and in accordance with applicable law, regulations, board policy and the school entity's Student Records Plan. The rights and privacy of students and their families should be respected at all times.

The confidentiality and handling requirements for student information should be based on an analysis of:

- Who created the record or information (i.e., school administrator, nurse, law enforcement agency, juvenile court, outside behavioral health provider)?
- Where is the record or information stored (i.e., in the guidance office, in a psychologist's files, in an outside clinic)?
- What is the purpose of the record or information - why was it created?
- Who has access to the record or information?

Laws and regulations related to confidentiality of student information address exceptions for disclosing certain information in emergencies to protect the health and safety of students and others. School entities, law enforcement agencies, behavioral health providers and other organizations that may be involved in the threat assessment process should follow the requirements applicable to their creation and handling of confidential records and should seek the advice of legal counsel for guidance.

NOTE: School entities may use data collected through their Threat Assessment Team activities, and may release such data in the aggregate, in order to help the school entity develop a general approach to threat assessment, as set out in 1302-E(a)(2)(v). The school entity's release of aggregate data collected through its Threat Assessment Team activities is permissible only where the release of such aggregate data may not result in the breach of federal and state confidentiality laws.

Exclusion of Certain Records from the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law

Pennsylvania has enacted statutory exceptions for the Commonwealth's Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) because of the sensitivity of information used in the threat assessment process as well as other safety-related activities, such as school safety assessments/audits. Records that are exempt from RTKL are:

- School security plans
- School safety and security survey responses to PCCD
- Records developed by Threat Assessment Teams
- School safety and security report provided annually to the school entity's board of directors

Section 708(b)(16) of Pennsylvania's RTKL also provides for exemptions which commonly apply to law enforcement records, such as those relating to or resulting in a criminal investigation.⁹²

School entities should work with their school solicitor or other legal counsel in responding to RTKL requests concerning school safety and security and the threat assessment process. Remember, although some records may be exempt from access, actions taken by the board at a public meeting in regard to information will always be accessible to the public (i.e., approval of a contract for a school security system, hiring of school security guards, approval of a Memorandum of Understanding with Local Law Enforcement or an outside behavioral health provider, expulsion of a student identified only by number following a hearing).

APPENDIX A: Article XIII-E, PA Public School Code

Section 1301-E. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this article shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Behavioral service providers." The term includes, but is not limited to, a State, county or local behavioral health service provider, crisis intervention center or psychiatric hospital. The term includes a private service provider which contracts with a State, county or local government to act as a behavioral health agency.

"Chief school administrator." A superintendent of a school district, executive director of an intermediate unit, administrative director of an area career and technical school or chief executive officer of a charter school, regional charter school or cyber charter school.

"Committee." The School Safety and Security Committee established under section 1302-B.

"County agency." The term includes, but is not limited to, a county children and youth agency, drug and alcohol service agency, behavioral or mental health agency or other human or social services agency.

"Law enforcement agency." As defined in section 1302-D.

"Safe2Say Program." The Safe2Say Program established under Article XIII-D.

"School entity." A school district, intermediate unit, area career and technical school, charter school, regional charter school or cyber charter school.

"School security personnel." A school police officer, school resource officer or school security guard appointed or employed under Article XIII-C.

"Student assistance program." As defined in 22 Pa. Code § 12.16 (relating to definitions).

"Team." A threat assessment team established by a school entity under section 1302-E(a).

Section 1302-E. Threat assessment teams.

(a) Duties of school entities and chief school administrators.--

(1) A school entity shall establish at least one team as provided under subsection (b) for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others.

(2) The chief school administrator or a designee, after consultation with the school entity's safety and security coordinator, shall:

(i) Appoint the members of the team and designate a member to serve as team leader.

(ii) Ensure and establish procedures for the implementation of this section.

(iii) Annually facilitate opportunities for members of the team to complete group or individual training consistent with nationally recognized best practices during paid working hours or as in-service training.

(iv) Annually ensure that students, school employees and parents and guardians are informed of the existence and purpose of the team. The information under this subparagraph shall be posted on the school entity's publicly accessible Internet website.

(v) Annually develop and present to the school entity's board of directors at an executive session a report generally outlining the school entity's approach to threat assessment. The report shall also be submitted to the school entity's school safety and security coordinator for inclusion in the required report under section 1309-B(c)(5) to the committee, which shall include:

(A) A verification that the school entity is in compliance with this article.

(B) The number and composition of established teams.

(C) The total number of threats assessed in the school entity.

(D) Additional information determined by the chief school administrator or designee.

(vi) Annually present to the school entity's board of directors at an executive session the following:

- (A) A summary of interactions with outside law enforcement, juvenile probation and behavioral service providers.
- (B) An assessment of the operation of the school entity's teams.
- (C) Recommendations for improvement of the school entity's threat assessment processes.
- (D) Any additional information determined by the chief school administrator or designee.

(b) Team requirements.--The following shall apply to teams established under subsection (a):

(I) Each team shall:

(i) Include individuals with expertise in:

- (A) School health.
- (B) Counseling, school psychology or social work.
- (C) Special education.
- (D) School administration.

(ii) Include:

- (A) The school safety and security coordinator appointed under section 1309-B or a designee.
- (B) Other school staff or community resources who may serve as regular team members or be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate, and as determined necessary by the team, including:
 - (I) School security personnel.
 - (II) Law enforcement agency representation.
 - (III) Behavioral health professionals.
 - (IV) The individual identified by the school entity to receive reports from the Safe2Say Program.
 - (V) An individual who serves on the student assistance program.
 - (VI) Juvenile probation professionals.

(iii) Have a designated leader.

(iv) Be responsible, at a minimum, for the following:

- (A) Making age-appropriate informational materials available to students regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior that may present a threat to the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others and how to report their concerns, including through the Safe2Say Program.
- (B) Making informational materials available to school employees regarding recognition of threatening or at-risk behavior that may present a threat to the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others and how to report their concerns, including through the Safe2Say Program.
- (C) Ensuring that school employees are aware of the staff members who are appointed to the team and how to report threatening or at-risk behavior, including through the Safe2Say program.
- (D) Assisting in assessing and responding to reports received through the Safe2Say Program. Where a school entity has only one team, that team may also serve as the school entity's team for assessing and responding to reports received through the Safe2Say Program.

- (E) Assessing and responding to reports of students exhibiting self-harm or suicide risk factors or warning signs as provided for under section 1526.
- (F) Assessing, responding and making appropriate determinations and referrals under subsection (c) based on the information available to the team. The team, when appropriate, may coordinate with the student assistance program.
- (G) Providing required information to the chief school administrator or designee to make the report provided for under subsection (a)(2)(v).

(v) Ensure that parents and guardians are notified as provided under subsection (c).

(vi) Undergo training which shall address, at a minimum, the following:

- (A) Responsibilities of team members.
- (B) The process of identifying, reporting, assessing, responding to and intervening with threats, including identifying and avoiding racial, cultural or disability bias.
- (C) Confidentiality requirements under Federal and State law.

(2) The training required under this section shall be credited toward a professional educator's continuing professional education requirement under section 1205.2, any staff development requirements for paraprofessionals under 22 Pa. Code § 14.105 (relating to personnel), a school or system leader's continuing professional education requirement under section 1205.5 and the school safety and security training required under section 1310-B.

(3) A school entity may satisfy the requirements of subsection (a) (1) by assigning the duties listed under paragraph (1) to an existing team established by the school entity. For purposes of this paragraph, the existing team established may include, but is not limited to, the student assistance program.

(4) A team established by a school entity may serve one or more schools within the school entity.

(c) Notification and referral. --Upon a preliminary determination that a student's behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others, the following shall apply:

(1) The team shall immediately notify the chief school administrator or a designee, the student's building principal and the school safety and security coordinator. The building principal or designee shall then immediately notify the student's parent or guardian.

(2) Following notification of the parent or guardian, the team may refer the student, as appropriate, to:

- (i) a student assistance program;
- (ii) a law enforcement agency;
- (iii) an evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.) or section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.);
- (iv) a student's existing individualized education program team established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and 22 Pa. Code Ch. 14 (relating to special education services and programs); or
- (v) an existing team established to implement a student's section 504 service agreement established under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and 22 Pa. Code Ch. 15 (relating to protected handicapped students).

(3) A parent or guardian shall provide consent prior to a team referring a student to:

- (i) a behavioral service provider;
- (ii) a health care provider; or
- (iii) a county agency.

(4) Nothing in this section shall:

- (i) Preclude school employees from acting immediately to address an imminent threat. Imminent threats and emergencies shall be promptly reported to a law enforcement agency.
- (ii) Limit the responsibilities of school employees or other mandated reporters to report suspected child abuse as required by law.
- (iii) Limit the authority of a school entity to refer a student to the student assistance program without referral by a team, so long as the student's behavior does not indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others.

(d) Access to student information.--In order to carry out the duties under subsections (b) and (c) and facilitate the timely assessment of, and intervention with, students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others, a team shall have access to the following student information to the extent permissible under Federal law:

- (1) Notwithstanding any provision of section 1409 to the contrary, student health records.
- (2) Prior school disciplinary records.
- (3) Records or information shared with the school entity under Article XIII-A and 42 Pa.C.S. § 6341(b.1) (relating to adjudication).
- (4) Records of any prior behavioral or mental health or psychological evaluations or screenings maintained by the school entity.
- (5) Other records or information that may be relevant to evaluating a threat or determining treatment or referral options for a student that are maintained by the school entity.

(e) Cooperation of county agency or juvenile probation department.--Notwithstanding 42 Pa.C.S. § 6352.2 (relating to interagency information sharing), upon a preliminary determination that a student's behavior indicates a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others, a team may request that the county agency or juvenile probation department consult and cooperate with the team in assessing the student who is the subject of the preliminary determination. The county agency or juvenile probation department shall comply with the team's request except as prohibited by the following:

- (1) 42 Pa.C.S. § 5944 (relating to confidential communications to psychiatrists or licensed psychologists).
- (2) The act of February 13, 1970 (P.L.19, No.10), entitled "An act enabling certain minors to consent to medical, dental and health services, declaring consent unnecessary under certain circumstances."
- (3) The act of July 9, 1976 (P.L.817, No.143), known as the Mental Health Procedures Act.
- (4) The act of November 29, 1990 (P.L.585, No.148), known as the Confidentiality of HIV-Related Information Act.
- (5) Federal law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 90-247, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-191, 110 Stat. 1936), and the procedures, limitations and criteria set forth in regulations adopted by the United States Department of Health and Human Services relating to the confidentiality of drug and alcohol treatment records.

(f) Use of information or records.--The team shall use the information or records obtained under subsection (d) or (e) in fulfilling the team's duty to evaluate a threat or the recommended disposition of a threat. No member of a team may redisclose any record or information obtained under this section or otherwise use any record of a student beyond the purpose for which the disclosure was made to the team.

(g) Disclosure.--The following shall apply:

- (1) Records or documentation developed or maintained by a team shall not be subject to the act of February 14, 2008 (P.L.6, No.3), known as the Right-to-Know Law.
- (2) The report and information presented to the school entity's board of directors and submitted to the committee under subsection (a)(2)(v) shall not be subject to the Right-to-Know Law.
- (3) School entities shall not be required to report any data on the functioning of the team other than specifically required under this article.

Compiler's Note: Section 24 of Act 18 of 2019 provided that the amendment or addition of section 1310-B(1) and this section shall apply beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

Section 1303-E. Threat assessment guidelines, training and information materials.

(a) Duties of committee.--No later than 180 days from the effective date of this section, the committee shall:

- (1) Research, develop and publish best practices in implementing this article.
- (2) Develop and offer, at no charge to school entities through the Internet or other distance communications systems, all of the following:
 - (i) A model training program for members of teams that may be used and adapted by school entities and team members to meet the requirements of section 1302-E(b)(1).
 - (ii) A model training program for school employees, other than members of teams, that may be used and adapted by school entities to meet the requirements of section 1310-B(1).
 - (iii) Model, age-appropriate informational materials for students that may be used and adapted by school entities to meet the requirements of section 1302-E(a)(2)(iv) and (b)(1)(iv)(A).
 - (iv) Model informational materials for parents and school employees that may be used and adapted by school entities to meet the requirements of section 1302-E(a)(2)(iv) and (b)(1)(iv)(B).
- (3) Develop model procedures and guidelines that school entities may use in implementing this article. The model procedures and guidelines shall, at a minimum:
 - (i) Establish standard definitions and terminology.
 - (ii) Reflect best practices in identifying, reporting, assessing and responding to threats, including threats reported through the Safe2Say Program, and coordinating with stakeholders.
 - (iii) Provide for flexibility and local decision-making and recognize the differing levels of available resources in each school entity.
 - (iv) Be posted on the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's publicly accessible Internet website.
- (4) Comply with Federal and State student record confidentiality laws and regulations.
- (5) Provide guidance to teams for communications and coordination with student assistance program and individualized education program teams.
- (6) Annually review school entity threat assessment reports and use them when developing the requirements under this subsection.
- (7) Annually review the training programs, informational materials and model procedures and guidelines and make updates or revisions as necessary.
- (8) Notify school entities when the training programs, informational materials, model procedures and guidelines become available or are updated or revised.

APPENDIX B: Additional Resources

Threat Assessment

- [**Pennsylvania K–12 Threat Assessment Training & Technical Assistance Network:**](#) Launched in 2021 as a resource for Pennsylvania school entities, this PCCD initiative offers free training opportunities, technical assistance, materials, templates, and other resources.
- [**The National Threat Assessment Center \(NTAC\):**](#) Provides links to best practices in threat assessment and the prevention of targeted violence, including resources on conducting threat assessment in K–12 schools, building positive school climates, and requesting information/training from NTAC personnel.
- [**Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing, and Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks**](#) – The U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Behavioral Analysis Unit – National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime recently published this report/guide on assessing and managing the threat of targeted violence.
- [**National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\):**](#) Provides information and links to resources and research related to conducting threat assessment in K–12 schools as part of systems-level prevention efforts.
- [**National Behavioral Intervention Team Association \(NaBITA\):**](#) Provides education, resources, and supports to K–12 and campus behavioral intervention teams.
- [**Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center:**](#) National clearinghouse developed by the U.S. Department of Education for school safety information, including training, resources, and information related to violence prevention, response, and recovery, including threat assessment.
- [**Comprehensive Student Threat Assessment Guidelines \(CSTAG\):**](#) Provides guidelines and resources for schools to conduct threat assessments, including links to research on threat assessment.

School Safety and Violence Prevention

- [**Center for Safe Schools:**](#) Pennsylvania-based organization provides training on a variety of school safety and youth violence prevention topics.
- [**Center for Schools and Communities:**](#) The Center for Schools and Communities is committed to improving outcomes for children and families through prevention and intervention initiatives. Staff possess diverse backgrounds in education, human services, community development, and law, as well as specialized services in program development and design, evaluation, training, and resource development.
- [**Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence \(University of Colorado\):**](#) Conducts research and provides support related to implementing evidence-based programs that promote positive youth development, reduce problem behaviors, and prevent violence and other antisocial behaviors.
- [**Evidence-Based Prevention & Intervention Support Center \(EPISCenter\) \(Pennsylvania State University\):**](#) A collaborative partnership supporting the dissemination, quality implementation, sustainability, and impact assessment of a menu of proven-effective prevention and intervention programs.
- [**Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety:**](#) A report of findings and recommendations published in 2018 by the Federal Commission on School Safety, established to research and recommend solutions to advance school safety. The Federal Commission was co-chaired by leaders of the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Department of Justice.
- [**International Association of Chiefs of Police, Youth Focused Policing \(YFP\):**](#) Provides information, resources, and training to help law enforcement work and intervene with children, teens, and young adults.

- **[Keep Kids Safe PA](#)** – Provides information and resources for parents, educators, and youth-serving professionals on Pennsylvania’s mandated reporting laws and how to report suspected abuse through ChildLine (1-800-932-0313).
- **[Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan](#)** – Pursuant to Act 18 of 2019, PCCD’s School Safety and Security Committee adopted a Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan in August 2019. The Model Plan was designed for school entities seeking funding through the [School Safety and Security Grant Program](#), as well as to provide relevant, evidence-based resources and information for school entities to use as they work to develop and enhance trauma-informed communities.
- **[National Association of School Resource Officers \(NASRO\)](#)**: Provides training, information, and resources to school-based law enforcement officers.
- **[National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)** – Part of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers information, technical assistance, and resources to states, districts, schools, institutions of higher education, and communities focused on improving student supports and academic enrichment.
- **[PA Network for Student Assistance Services \(PNSAS\)](#)** – Provides information, assistance, and support related to SAP for Pennsylvania school entities.
- **[PA PBS Network](#)** – Pennsylvania has supported the implementation and scale-up of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) efforts through a cross-system PaPBS Network, hosted by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.
- **[Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(PaTTAN\)](#)** – Working with PDE’s Bureau of Special Education, PaTTAN provides a full array of professional development and technical assistance targeted to improving student results, including efforts focused on MTSS/PBIS and culturally responsive practices.
- **[Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#)** – PAYS provides schools with the ability to measure a variety of risk and protective factors for students enrolled in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12, including behavior, attitudes, and knowledge concerning alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and violence. The survey is sponsored and conducted every two years by PCCD to help schools and communities direct prevention resources to areas where they are likely to have most impact.

Emergency Management and Response to School Violence

- **[Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center](#)**: National clearinghouse developed by the U.S. Department of Education for school safety information, including training, resources, and information related to violence prevention, response, and recovery. This includes the [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#), among other resources.
- **[IACP Prevention and Response to School Violence](#)**: Provides trainings, tools, and resources to help law enforcement and community stakeholders prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents of school violence.
- **[Standard Response Protocol](#) and [Standard Reunification Method \(I Love U Guys\)](#)**: Free resources developed to help school and district safety teams organize response to incidents as well as with planning, practicing, and achieving a successful reunification.
- **Relevant Pennsylvania Statutes, Regulations, and Guidance**: By law, each school district must have a **comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan** (35 Pa. C.S.A. § 7701), commonly referred to as an “all hazards plan” or “Emergency Operations Plan,” which must be developed in cooperation with the local emergency management agency and the PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and in accordance with law and regulations ([22 Pa. Code § 10.24](#)).
 - Under Act 44 of 2018, the plan must also be reviewed annually by the School Safety and Security Coordinator and/or School Administrator and filed with or submitted to the local emergency management agency as well as to each police department that has jurisdiction over the school, county communications or dispatch and each local fire department.

- **Emergency Response/First Responder Training:** Tiered response training can be conducted in schools by first responders with teachers, staff, and students.
 - Tier 1 includes response to intruder situations;
 - Tier 2 is triage and treating the wounded; and
 - Tier 3 includes interviews and reuniting people.
- **Additional Emergency Management Training:** School officials can also take an **incident command class**, such as the [National Incident Management System \(NIMS\)](#) training, to provide for universal language during response to an emergency.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Consent

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) – U.S. Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office webpage providing information and resources related to FERPA, including exceptions for schools to disclose student education records, such as those related to health and safety emergencies. See [School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), U.S. Department of Education, February 2019.
- **Guidance on the Application of FERPA and HIPAA to Student Health Records** – Joint guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services addressing the application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to records maintained for students.
- **Relevant Pennsylvania Statutes, Regulations, and Guidance:**
 - Sworn Statement Prior to Admission (24 P.S. [§13-1304-A](#) and [13-1318.1](#)) – Requires a sworn statement or affirmation indicating whether a student was previously or is presently suspended or expelled for an act or offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs, violence or conviction or adjudication of delinquency for sexual assault upon another student in the same school entity.
 - [Chapter 12 – Students and Student Services](#) (22 Pa. Code Chapter 12, [Section 12.12 Confidential Communications](#); [Section 12.41 Student Services](#))
 - [Enrollment of Students](#) (24 P.S. §13-1301-§13-1306) – PDE Basic Education Circular, provides guidance regarding public school enrollment procedures, including required enrollment documentation and a description of items that may be requested but not as a condition of enrollment, such as health records, academic records, discipline records, IEP and other special education records, etc.
 - **Related:** [Student Enrollment FAQ](#) (24 P.S. § 13-1301-§13-1306)
 - [Protection of Pupil Rights](#) (20 U.S.C. §1232h) – PDE Basic Education Circular outlining students’ rights under federal law related to programs, surveys, analyses, or other evaluations conducted by school entities.
 - [Student Records Being Retained by a Private School](#) (22 Pa. Code §12.31) – PDE Basic Education Circular providing guidance regarding the practice of a private school temporarily retaining a student’s records, pending resolution of an infraction of the private school’s policies or a contractual dispute with a parent or guardian.
 - [Transfer of Records](#) (24 P.S. §19-1926) – PDE Basic Education Circular providing information regarding responsibility of school entities to transfer education records to educational programs in state correctional institutions.
 - [Student Health Records](#) (24 P.S. § 14-1409) – Article 14 of the PA School Code contains a provision that addresses confidentiality, transference, and removal of health records.
 - [Confidentiality and Student Health Information](#) – PA Department of Health webpage outlining state and federal privacy protections for student health information, including Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

APPENDIX C: Definitions & Key Terms

1. **Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY):**⁹³ Programs implemented by a school district, area career and technical school, a group of school districts, or an Intermediate Unit which removes disruptive students from regular school programs in order to provide those students with a sound educational course of study and counseling designed to modify disruptive behavior and return students to a regular school curriculum.
2. **Behavioral Service Providers:**⁹⁴ Includes, but is not limited to, a state, county, or local behavioral health service provider, crisis intervention center, or psychiatric hospital. The term includes a private service provider which contracts with a state, county, or local government to act as a behavioral health agency.
3. **Behavior Support:**⁹⁵ The development, change, and maintenance of selected behaviors through the systematic application of behavior change techniques.
4. **Bullying:**⁹⁶ An intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in a school setting that is severe, persistent or pervasive, and that has the effect of doing any of the following: 1) substantially interfering with a student's education; 2) creating a threatening environment; or 3) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.
5. **Chief School Administrator:**⁹⁷ A superintendent of a school district, executive director of an Intermediate Unit (IU), administrative director of an area career and technical school, or chief administrator of a charter school, regional charter school, or cyber charter school.
6. **Culturally Responsive:**⁹⁸ The valuation, consideration, and integration of individuals' culture, language, heritage, and experiences leading to supported learning and development.
7. **Individualized Education Program (IEP):**⁹⁹ An IEP is a written plan for the provision of services for the education of students with disabilities or gifted students. Under federal and state law, public school entities in Pennsylvania have a responsibility for children "thought-to-be" eligible for special education services and/or accommodations, including locating, identifying, and evaluating all students with suspected disabilities, including but not limited to evaluating a student for whom a request for an evaluation has been made. Two criteria exist for an IEP, both of which must be met:
 - a. The student must meet one of the 13 disability categories defined by the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#); and
 - b. The student must need special education (that is, the child requires specially designed instruction to receive educational benefits).
8. **Individualized Management Plan:**¹⁰⁰ A plan developed for each student that is referred to a Threat Assessment Team that documents the concerns that brought a student to the Team's attention, as well as the unique resources and supports a student might need based on the information gathered during the assessment. A management plan should remain in place until the Team is no longer concerned about the student or the risk for violence.
9. **Law Enforcement Agency:**¹⁰¹ A police department of a city, borough, incorporated town or township, the Pennsylvania State Police, district attorneys' offices, and the Office of Attorney General.
10. **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):**¹⁰² A standards-aligned, comprehensive school improvement framework for enhancing academic, behavioral and social-emotional outcomes for all students. As part of the MTSS framework, cross-disciplinary teams

represented at the local education agency (LEA), school, grade and individual levels use a problem-solving process to integrate evidence-based academic, behavioral, and social-emotional practices matched to student needs and with fidelity of implementation. A continuum of supports and services exist across three tiers (Universal, Secondary, and Tertiary), and is undergirded by high-quality professional learning, cultural responsiveness, partnership and meaningful involvement with families, and dynamic decision-making that rests on the use of reliable and valid data sources.

- a. Tier 1 (Universal): Provide preventive, proactive, and universal interventions to support academic instruction for all students.
 - b. Tier 2 (Secondary): Provide targeted interventions to support students classified as academically “at risk,” who require more intervention than is typically provided within Tier 1 (Universal) supports.
 - c. Tier 3 (Tertiary): Requires the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant, high intensity academic support needs (assessment based).

11. **Pennsylvania School Climate Survey:** PDE has developed free, online school climate surveys for use by school entities in Pennsylvania. These surveys provide schools with formative and summative climate data for use with needs assessments, program development, and short and long-term planning. The domains measured by the surveys include: Social Emotional Learning, Student Support, and Safe and Respectful School Climate.

12. **Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS):**¹⁰³ A biennial survey of Pennsylvania school students in the 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades to learn about their behavior, attitudes, and knowledge concerning alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and violence. Since 1989, PCCD has sponsored and conducted the PAYS to assess use/misuse of harmful substances and behaviors as well as risk factors related to these behaviors and the protective factors that help guard against them.

13. **Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS):**¹⁰⁴ A proactive, multi-tiered approach to discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. PBIS provides direction and a decision-making framework for developing a comprehensive system of behavior support tailored to individual program and school needs and is based on a three-tiered model.
 - a. Tier 1 (Universal): Provides a system of supports to all students in a school based on preventative practices which emphasize teaching and reinforcing expected student behaviors.
 - b. Tier 2 (Secondary): Provides targeted interventions to support students classified as “at risk,” who require more intervention than is typically provided within Tier 1 (Universal) supports.
 - c. Tier 3 (Tertiary): Requires the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant behavioral/emotional support needs (assessment based).

14. **Positive Behavior Support Plans:**¹⁰⁵ A plan for students with disabilities and eligible young children who require specific intervention to address behavior that interferes with learning. A positive behavior support plan shall be developed by the IEP team, be based on a functional behavior assessment, and become part of the individual eligible young child’s or student’s IEP. These plans must include methods that utilize positive reinforcement and other positive techniques to shape a student’s or eligible young child’s behavior, ranging from the use of positive verbal statements as a reward for good behavior to specific tangible rewards.

15. **Professional Development:**¹⁰⁶ Activities that:
 - a. Are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early

childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and

- b. Are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.
16. **Protective Factors:**¹⁰⁷ Characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, or community (including peers and culture) level that are associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduce the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes.
17. **Safe2Say Something Program:**¹⁰⁸ Established by Act 44 of 2018, the *Safe2Say Something* Program teaches students, educators, and administrators how (1) to recognize the signs and signals of individuals who may be at risk of hurting themselves or others, and (2) to anonymously report this information through the *Safe2Say Something* app, website, or 24/7 Crisis Center Hotline. The program is managed by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, in partnership with the nonprofit organization Sandy Hook Promise.
18. **Safety Planning:**¹⁰⁹ Safety planning can occur within a range of contexts, including suicide prevention and intimate partner violence, but are generally used to anticipate and prevent risks to an individual's well-being, including identifying strategies for internal and external supports and interventions when preventive measures do not avert a crisis. Safety planning identifies specific actions that will occur in these cases, and is developed using input from relevant stakeholders, such as families, school personnel, and community-based providers.
19. **School Entity:**¹¹⁰ A school district, Intermediate Unit (IU), area career and technical school, charter school, regional charter school, or cyber charter school.
20. **School Security Guard:**¹¹¹ An individual employed by a school entity, nonpublic school or a third-party vendor or an independent contractor who is assigned to a school for routine safety and security duties and has not been granted powers under section 1306-C(a)(3) or (b).
21. **School Police Officer:**¹¹² Any of the following:
 - a. A law enforcement officer employed by a school entity whose responsibilities, including work hours, are established by the school entity.
 - b. An independent contractor or an individual provided through a third-party vendor who has been appointed by a judge of the court of common pleas of the county within which the school entity is situated, pursuant to Section 1302-C of the PA Public School Code.
22. **School Resource Officer:**¹¹³ A law enforcement officer commissioned and employed by a law enforcement agency whose duty station is located in a school entity and whose stationing is established by an agreement between the law enforcement agency and the school entity. The term includes an active certified sheriff or deputy sheriff whose stationing in the school entity is established by a written agreement between the county, the sheriff's office, and the school entity or nonpublic school.
23. **Section 504 Plan/Service Agreement:**¹¹⁴ A Section 504 Plan describes the regular or special education and related aids and services a student needs and the appropriate setting in which to receive those services to meet requirements for students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Plans/agreements can include setting forth the specific related aids, services, or accommodations needed by the student, which are implemented in school, in transit to and from school, and in all programs and procedures, so that the student has equal access to the benefits of the school's educational programs, nonacademic services, and extracurricular activities.

24. **Student Assistance Program (SAP):** Established under [Section 1547 of PA Public School Code](#), SAP is a team-based process designed to assist school personnel in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student's success. Pennsylvania requires all school entities (school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools) to have SAP programs for all grades (elementary and secondary). The [PA Network for Student Assistance Services \(PNSAS\)](#) Regional Coordinators are available to provide technical assistance to support schools in meeting required criteria.
25. **Suicide Risk Assessment:**¹¹⁵ A suicide risk assessment is used to identify the presence of suicidal ideation, intent, and plans and determine if a student is at risk for doing something to end their life in the near future.
26. **Suicide Risk Monitoring:**¹¹⁶ Students who have previously been assessed and found to have any level of suicide risk need to be monitored regularly for changes in suicide risk. As suicidal ideation is episodic, it weakens and intensifies, regular monitoring will increase the likelihood that variations in the student's suicide risk are being identified and addressed.
27. **Suicide Screening:**¹¹⁷ Suicide risk screenings are used to identify students who need more in-depth assessments to determine whether they are suicidal, and if so, at what level of severity.
28. **Threat:**¹¹⁸ Communication or behavior that indicates an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. The threat may be expressed/communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means. These actions can be considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by a third party, and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.
- a. **Low Risk Threat:** The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be easily resolved.
 - b. **Moderate Risk Threat:** The individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of violence or serious harm to self/others at this time, but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
 - c. **High Risk Threat:** The individual/situation appears to pose a threat of violence, exhibiting behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and efforts to acquire the capacity to carry out the plan; and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
 - d. **Imminent Threat:** An individual/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s); and may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention.
 - e. **Direct Threat:** An individual/situation poses a significant risk to the health or safety of themselves and/or others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. The direct threat standard applies when the Threat Assessment Team or school entity administration determines that an individual/situation poses a direct threat and that applicable disciplinary procedures are not available or sufficient to mitigate the threat.
29. **Threat Assessment:**¹¹⁹ A fact-based process for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behaviors may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community, or others.

30. **Threat Assessment Team:**¹²⁰ A multidisciplinary group of individuals identified by a chief school administrator responsible for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community, or others.
31. **Trauma:**¹²¹ Includes results from an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual well-being.
32. **Trauma-Informed Approach:**¹²² Includes a school-wide approach to education and a classroom-based approach to student learning that recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, professional learning, procedures and practices for the purposes of recognizing the presence and onset of trauma, resisting the reoccurrence of trauma and promoting resiliency tailored to a school entity's culture, climate and demographics and the community as a whole.
33. **Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS):**¹²³ Developed in 1990 by the CDC to monitor health behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States, the YRBSS includes national, state, territorial, tribal government, and local school-based surveys of representative samples of 9th through 12th grade students. Surveys are administered every two years, conducted by relevant departments of health and education.

- ¹ [Safe Schools Online](#), PA Department of Education.
- ² [2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#), PCCD.
- ³ ^[1] [Safe2Say Something Annual Report: 2023–2024 School Year](#), Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General.
- ⁴ [2024 State of Education. Pennsylvania School Boards Association.](#)
- ⁵ [2024 State of Education. Pennsylvania School Boards Association.](#)
- ⁶ [2024 State of Education. Pennsylvania School Boards Association.](#)
- ⁷ <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/a988972b-1faa-4b5f-8b9e-a73b5ac44476/ratios-22-23-alpha.pdf>, American School Counselor Association.
- ⁸ [Professional Personnel Individual Staff](#), Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- ⁹ [Student to School Psychologist Ratio 2022–2023](#), National Association of School Psychologists.
- ¹⁰ [Professional Personnel Individual Staff](#), Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- ¹¹ “Targeted violence” is defined as a premeditated act of violence directed at a specific individual, group, or location, regardless of motivation and generally unrelated to other criminal activity. See [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ¹² Dewey G. Cornell, [Overview of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines \(VSTAG\)](#), University of Virginia, June 18, 2018. See also [National Center for School Safety, School Threat Assessment Toolkit \(2024\)](#).
- ¹³ See [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ¹⁴ [Protecting America’s Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2019.
- ¹⁵ Adapted from PCCD’s K–12 Threat Assessment Team Training Program.
- ¹⁶ [Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, Third Edition](#), Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2020.
- ¹⁷ [Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management for Educators and Administrators](#), Texas School Safety Center, [Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management for Educators and Administrators](#) <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tam-toolkit/defining-tam>, Texas School Safety Center.
- ¹⁸ Adapted from [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024, and [Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management for Educators and Administrators](#), Texas School Safety Center., <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tam-toolkit/defining-tam>.
- ¹⁹ Adapted from [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ²⁰ [Upholding Student Civil Rights and Preventing Disproportionality in Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management \(BTAM\)](#), National Association of School Psychologists, 2021.
- ²¹ [Upholding Student Civil Rights and Preventing Disproportionality in Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management \(BTAM\)](#), National Association of School Psychologists, 2021.
- ²² [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#), National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ²³ Deborah Temkin, Ph.D., [“Examining State and Federal Recommendations for Enhancing School Safety Against Targeted Violence.”](#) Testimony, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, July 25, 2019.
- ²⁴ Adapted from [Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines, Third Edition](#), Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, August 2020; and [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#), National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ²⁵ [Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K–12 Reporting Programs](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), United States Secret Service, May 2023.
- ²⁶ M. Louvar Reeves and S.E. Brock, “School Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management,” *Contemporary School Psychology*, October 2017.
- ²⁷ Adapted from [Statewide Crisis Prevention Preparation Response and Recovery within an MTSS Framework](#), Center on PBIS.
- ²⁸ As of [November 2024](#), 10 states require the establishment of threat assessment teams in K–12 schools: Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington State. About 85% of schools nationally maintained a behavioral threat assessment team during the 2023–24 school year, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).
- ²⁹ [Section 1302–E, Article XIII–E, PA Public School Code.](#)
- ³⁰ John Van Dreal, Courtenay McCarthy, and Coleen Van Dreal, *Youth Violence Prevention: The Pathway Back Through Inclusion and Connection*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham), 2022.
- ³¹ Emergency Planning, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, School and Child Care Safety. <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/pema/ready-communities/planning/school-safety.html>.
- ³² Adapted from the [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#), National Center for School Safety, 2024.
- ³³ [PCCD K–12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance & Training Network Project Report – End of School Year 2023–24 Survey Report](#), SERIO, July 2024.
- ³⁴ [PCCD K–12 Threat Assessment Technical Assistance & Training Network Project Report – End of School Year 2023–24 Survey Report](#), SERIO, July 2024.

- ³⁵ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ³⁶ [School Threat Assessment Toolkit – Section 1: How to Select and Train Your School Threat Assessment Team](#), National Center for School Safety, 2024.
- ³⁷ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ³⁸ Adapted from *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ³⁹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ⁴⁰ [School Threat Assessment Toolkit – Section 1: How to Select and Train Your School Threat Assessment Team](#), National Center for School Safety, 2024.
- ⁴¹ Adapted from *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁴² John Van Dreal, *Assessing Student Threats: Implementing the Salem-Keizer System*, 2nd Edition, 2017.
- ⁴³ Mohandie (2000) as cited in John Van Dreal, *Assessing Student Threats: Implementing the Salem-Keizer System*, 2nd Edition, 2017.
- ⁴⁴ [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement To Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2024.
- ⁴⁵ [Act 71](#), PA Department of Education.
- ⁴⁶ [School Threat Assessment Toolkit](#), National Center for School Safety, 2024.
- ⁴⁷ [Safe2Say Something Annual Report 2023–2024 School Year](#), PA Office of Attorney General.
- ⁴⁸ [PA Public School Code, Section 1319-B](#); 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 10. Safe Schools. [Section 10.11](#).
- ⁴⁹ [22 Pa. Code, Chapter 10. Safe Schools. Section 10.21. Immediate Notification](#).
- ⁵⁰ Note: School entities in Pennsylvania are also required to adopt a youth suicide awareness and prevention policy under Act 71 of 2014. Additional information is available on PDE's Office for Safe Schools' website: <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/laws/Pages/Act71.aspx>.
- ⁵¹ See 22 Pa. Code [§ 10.21 \(Immediate notification\)](#), [§ 10.22 \(Discretionary notification\)](#), [§ 10.23 \(Response and handling of a student with a disability\)](#), [§ 10.24 \(Emergency and nonemergency response and preparedness\)](#), and [§ 10.25 \(Notification to parents/guardians and Appendix A – Model Memorandum of Understanding\)](#).
- ⁵² [22 Pa. Code, Chapter 10. Safe Schools. Section 10.21. Immediate notification](#).
- ⁵³ [PA Public School Code, Section 1319-B](#).
- ⁵⁴ [22 Pa. Code, Section 10.21. Immediate notification](#).
- ⁵⁵ [22 Pa. Code Section 10.23. Response and handling of a student with a disability](#).
- ⁵⁶ [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ⁵⁷ [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ⁵⁸ [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ⁵⁹ [Behavioral Threat Assessment Units: A Guide for State and Local Law Enforcement to Prevent Targeted Violence](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, October 2024.
- ⁶⁰ Adapted from Dewey G. Cornell, [Overview of the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines \(VSTAG\)](#), University of Virginia, June 18, 2018.
- ⁶¹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E.
- ⁶² PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E.
- ⁶³ *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁶⁴ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁶⁵ *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁶⁶ Jillian Peterson and James Densley, *The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic*, Abrams Press (New York), 2021.
- ⁶⁷ Unless otherwise noted, language in this section is adapted from the *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model* guidelines published by the National Threat Assessment Center.
- ⁶⁸ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁶⁹ Jillian Peterson and James Densley, *The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic*, Abrams Press (New York), 2021.
- ⁷⁰ Adapted from *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁷¹ PA Department of Human Services, [Keep Kids Safe](#).
- ⁷² Jillian Peterson and James Densley, *The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic*, Abrams Press (New York), 2021.
- ⁷³ John Van Dreal, Courtenay McCarthy, and Coleen Van Dreal, *Youth Violence Prevention: The Pathway Back Through Inclusion and Connection*, Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham), 2022.
- ⁷⁴ National Association of School Psychologists' Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Best Practice Considerations for K–12 Schools.
- ⁷⁵ National Association of School Psychologists' Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) Best Practice Considerations for K–12 Schools.

- ⁷⁶ Adapted from [K-12 Threat Assessment Training: Train the Trainer Manual](#), Pennsylvania K-12 Threat Assessment Training and Technical Assistance Network, PCCD.
- ⁷⁷ STEP© (Gene Deisinger and Marissa R. Randazzo, 2008) is a framework used to organize inquiry, assessment and management of threats by specific consideration of four domains: The Subject [student of concern for risk for violence], Target, Environment and Precipitating Events.
- ⁷⁸ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁷⁹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁸⁰ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁸¹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁸² *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁸³ For a comprehensive summary of relevant laws and regulations, including requirements for school employee professional development and training related to school safety and security, please see [PDE's Office for Safe Schools' webpage](#) and [Pennsylvania Compilation of School Discipline Laws and Regulations](#), U.S. Department of Education, April 2019.
- ⁸⁴ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#). Threat assessment teams.
- ⁸⁵ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E.
- ⁸⁶ Safe2Say Something, <https://www.safe2saypa.org/>.
- ⁸⁷ Adapted from *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁸⁸ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E; *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁸⁹ *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁹⁰ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E; *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model*, National Threat Assessment Center, July 2018.
- ⁹¹ FERPA [20 U.S.C. 1232g](#) and [34 CFR Part 99](#); IDEA [20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.](#) and [34 CFR Part 300](#); PA Public School Code Sections [1306-A](#), [1402](#), [1409](#); 22 Pa. Code [Chapter 12](#), [15.9](#), [16.65](#).
- ⁹² [RTKL Guide for Law Enforcement Agencies](#), Pennsylvania Office of Open Records, September 4, 2018.
- ⁹³ PA Public School Code of 1949, Article XIX-C. Disruptive Student Programs; Article XIX-E. Private Alternative Education Institutions for Disruptive Students.
- ⁹⁴ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ⁹⁵ 22 Pa. Code [Section 14.133](#). Positive behavior support.
- ⁹⁶ PA Public School Code, [Section 1303.1-A](#). Policy relating to bullying.
- ⁹⁷ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E (Threat Assessment).
- ⁹⁸ [Culturally Responsive Systems](#), Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN).
- ⁹⁹ [IEPs and 504 Service Agreements](#), Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- ¹⁰⁰ [Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence](#), National Threat Assessment Center, 2018.
- ¹⁰¹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-D (Safe2Say Program). [Section 1302-D](#). Definitions. NOTE: For purposes of student education records handling and confidentiality, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) has a different definition for "law enforcement unit" which could include a school police officer employed or contracted by the school entity, or an outside law enforcement agency. ([34 CFR Sec. 99.8](#)).
- ¹⁰² [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(Academic\)](#), Pennsylvania Technical Assistance and Training Network.
- ¹⁰³ [Pennsylvania Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#), Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.
- ¹⁰⁴ [Overview of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#), Pennsylvania Technical Assistance and Training Network.
- ¹⁰⁵ 22 Pa. Code [Section 14.133](#). Positive behavior support.
- ¹⁰⁶ ESEA Section 8101(42).
- ¹⁰⁷ [Risk & Protective Factors](#), Youth.gov.
- ¹⁰⁸ [Safe2Say Something Guidelines](#), Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, October 2019.
- ¹⁰⁹ Adapted from *Core Element: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning*, Child Behavioral Health Knowledge Center, Massachusetts Department of Mental Health.
- ¹¹⁰ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ¹¹¹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-C. School Security.
- ¹¹² PA Public School Code, Article XIII-C. School Security.
- ¹¹³ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-C. School Security.
- ¹¹⁴ [42 U.S.C. § 12102](#) – ADA, 22 Pa. Code Section [15.2](#), [15.7](#). See also: [Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504 in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#), U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, December 2016.
- ¹¹⁵ Erbacher, T.A., Singer, J.B., & Poland, S. (2023). *Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention and postvention*, 2nd Edition.
- ¹¹⁶ Erbacher, T.A., Singer, J.B., & Poland, S. (2023). *Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention and postvention*, 2nd Edition.
- ¹¹⁷ Erbacher, T.A., Singer, J.B., & Poland, S. (2023). *Suicide in schools: A practitioner's guide to multi-level prevention, assessment, intervention and postvention*, 2nd Edition.
- ¹¹⁸ [Virginia Guidelines](#).
- ¹¹⁹ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E. Threat Assessment.
- ¹²⁰ PA Public School Code, Article XIII-E, [Section 1302-E](#).
- ¹²¹ [PA Public School Code, Section 102 \(Definitions\)](#).
- ¹²² [PA Public School Code, Section 102 \(Definitions\)](#).
- ¹²³ [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.