QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

TO

THREAT ASSESSMENT AND

MANAGEMENT

Gadsden Independent School District
Crisis Counseling and Intervention Services

TITLE: ORGANIZING FOR ASSESSING AND MANAGING THREATS

DATE: August 1, 2013

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines apply.

I.   BACKGROUND

The district recognizes that a variety of threat and crisis situations can and do occur in a district. As a result, a task force was developed.

The necessity of responding to a variety of threats and crises in the District over the past prompted the development of guidelines to assess and mange threats made against students, school staff and/or facilities. The plan addresses the following concerns: 1) how to respond appropriately to threats that could precipitate a crisis; 2) how to re-establish the safety and security of the school site; and 3) how to provide appropriate psychological intervention services that can help minimize and perhaps prevent emotional damage to those who are affected.

II.   ORGANIZING FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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

B. School Threat Assessment and Management Team

1. Each school shall establish a school Threat Assessment and Management Team. Members of the team shall be selected by the principal/designee. The team shall include at least one administrator, one mental health professional (counselor, psychologist, or social worker) and security officer as available. One team member may be able to resolve the situation alone or with other team members/resources as needed.

2. Responsibilities of the school threat assessment and management team include:
   a. Gathering pertinent information in order to evaluate the nature and validity of a threat. (Examples of records that can be used include student health card, previous disciplinary problems and written assignments; other information could include results of interviews with other students, friends, parents, or co-workers.)
   b. Reporting any threat to students or staff to the District Operations Coordinator as required by District guidelines.
   c. Maintaining open communications with the District Operations Coordinator during the Threat Assessment and Management Process.
   d. Making team recommendations that will lead to:
      1.) Appropriate contact with and/ or apprehension of the individual(s) who initiated the threat, as well as those who might carry it out.
      2.) Appropriate interventions or discipline (such as student suspension, written guidance, mental health evaluation/ referral, or restraining orders) to immediately affect behavior.
      3.) Appropriate warnings to, and protection for, the individual(s) or group(s) against whom the threat was directed.
      4.) Maintaining a safe school environment.
   e. Assisting the principal in the development of a plan/strategy to monitor and provide guidance to students (victims and perpetrators) who return to the school after being removed during the threat crisis.

C. District Threat Assessment and Management Team

1. The District Operations Coordinator shall provide guidance and district Crisis Intervention/Response Team support, as appropriate, to the school site team to facilitate assessment and management process.
2. The Operations Coordinator for the District shall establish a District Threat Assessment and Management Team and is responsible for determining leadership and team member assignments. The District Team may include personnel selected from the District Crisis Intervention Team.
3. Responsibilities of District threat assessment and management teams include:
    a. Providing threat assessment and management training for school crisis teams and school staff's in the District.(e.g. All Hazard Team responsibility)
    b. Providing the following services, as directed by the District Operations Coordinator:
        1.) Assist principals/designees with needs assessment and crisis management when a threat occurs.
        2.) Provide support to the local threat management team by offering technical assistance and direct services to students and staff, as needed.
        3.) Evaluate the necessity for assistance from central office, and contact the appropriate office when necessary, to obtain support.

III. ASSESSING AND MANAGING THREATS

A. Threats must be assessed and managed in consideration of the conditions, risk factors and warning signs, including circumstances or events that potentially may have caused a particular person to make a threat.

B. A threat, whether or not it is carried out, may result in an assessment. Not all indicators will require a full threat assessment or will require participation by all members of the team. Each behavior must be taken into context and handled in a common sense approach.

C. A threat may target an individual (e.g. a note threatening physical harm to a specific person) or may target a particular group on campus, the entire school or the community (e.g., a phone call suggesting an explosive device is located somewhere on or near the school site). Additionally, administrators and staff should remember that persons <u>other</u> than students may be responsible for making threats and may also be the identified targets or victims of threats. This includes employees and community members.

D. The process of threat assessment management is investigative, information driven, fact based and prevention oriented. It includes the following four steps:

1. Identify the type of threat and the individual(s) making the threat.
2. Assess the warning signs, risk factors, stabilizing factors and potential precipitating events to arrive at an informed opinion. Finding may range from no evidence of violent or intimidation of others to a high violence requiring arrest or hospitalization.
   a. Risk assessment attempts to answer three questions: Is the individual moving on a path towards violent action? Is there evidence to suggest movement from thought to action? What can be done to control the progression of the threat?
   b. Assessment of the warning signs require an evaluation of threatening oral, written, or electronic communications. More significant examples include:
   1.) Direct threats that verbalize a violent plan.
   2.) Suicidal threats or statements that express a wish to kill, a wish to be killed and a wish to die.
   3.) Threats or boasts about bringing a weapon or destructive device to school.
   4.) Physical and behavioral clues that may include frequent physical altercations, assaults, bullying or intimidation as perpetrator or victim, drawings, writings and other creative outlets with persistent or intense describing or advocating violence.
   5.) Persecutory thought or delusions with significant deteriorations thought processes.
   6.) Inappropriate displays of emotion, particularly anger, depression and/or rage.

7.) **Organized vs. disorganized communications**. The clearer and more organized the message, the greater the potential for carrying out the threat, as compared to communications that are chaotic and suggest that the one communicating the threat is more likely to be acting impulsively at the particular moment.

8.) **Fixed vs. variable themes**. The more consistently the theme of blame in communicated threat is related to specific significant area of the communicator's life, the risk that the threat could be carried out.

3. **Develop a course of action or strategy to control the threat**. Consider all options including setting parameters with administrative, mental health, legal, or criminal justice resources.

4. **Recommend appropriate action to the site administrator**.

E. As a result of a threat, people have a variety of physical reactions. As soon as the physical safety of those involved has been insured, attention must turn to meeting their emotional and psychological needs. Crisis intervention may be necessary and appropriate.

F. If the person engaging in the threatening behavior returns to the school or work setting the school administrators should develop a post-crisis plan/strategy that will assist the school in responding to, and managing the student's behavior on an on-going basis.

G. Following the resolution of a threat situation, a debriefing for members of the Threat Management Team should be held. The principal/designee should determine whether additional staff, student body, or community needs should be addressed.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of Associate Superintendent for Support Services

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

- GISD Security Department   (575) 882-9751
- Local District Operations Director   (575) 882-6913
- District Crisis Counseling   (575)……………….
- School Mental Health   (575) 882-1080

- Office of Associate Superintendent for Support Services

(575) 882-6940

ASSISTANCE:

GUIDELINES FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

DEFINITION: Threat assessment is a process for responding to threatening situations in which an individual threatens another individual. "The primary purpose of a threat assessment inquiry is to determine whether a particular individual poses a threat of targeted school violence." Threat assessment inquires are initiated, conducted, and controlled by the school or Crisis Intervention/Response Team.

SCHOOL-SITE THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

The school-site Threat Assessment and Management Team (TAM) is comprised of 3 or more individuals for the school-site crisis team:

- Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal or Designee)
- Mental Health Professional (Social Worker, Counselor, School Psychologist)
- Other personal selected by Principal

The Mental Health Professional may be school-site or District employees. It is recommended that the school site threat assessment team be informed and ready to respond at the beginning of each academic year.

PROCESS OF THREAT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT
   A. ASSESSMENT
      1. Convene the Threat Assessment Team
      2. Identify the kind of threat
             For Example: Direct Threat or indirect Threat, personal injury, death, vandalism, arson, extortion or criminal act.
      3. Identify the target of the threat (the teacher, student, team, organization, group)
      4. Identify the individual or group making the threat. Is the threat anonymous?
      5. Determine the degree of impact on the school.
      6. Consult the District Operations Coordinator and determine if additional support is needed.

Based on the initial assessment of this information, the threat assessment team (Administrator, mental health professional, and security officer) may decide that a threatening situation warrants an investigation by a local law enforcement agency. The determination should be made on a case-by-case basis.

B. DOCUMENTATION
1. Create a Threat Assessment Folder.
2. Document all steps taken and date all materials placed in the folder.
3. Maintain strict confidentiality about student information among team members and appropriate district staff.

C. ASSESSMENT TEAM PROTOCOL

1. Administrator /Threat Assessment Team leader should:
   a. Determine which team member will be responsible for maintain all documents in the folder.
   b. Designate specific tasks to each member such as interviews, records review, resource referrals, locker check, etc.
2. The assessment team should:
   a. Review student's school history-cumulative records, health, Assistant Principal, attendance and counseling records, and IEP information.
   b. Interview all adults who come in contact with the child (present and past teachers, counselors, supervisors, etc.). Advise staff who have regular contact with the student to monitor the student's behavior and to keep the assessment process confidential.
   c. Collect written materials or pictures produced by the student.
   d. Interview friends using discretion in relation to questions asked and timing involved. Secure written materials, emails, pictures produced by the student.

IN HIGH RISK SITUATIONS, THE THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM MAY DECIDE THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT SHOULD BE NOTIFIED.

In the event of a team decision that the student poses an <u>imminent</u> threat to self:
Call 911.

Determine the category or level of risk for a particular point in time. The five categories described by Dr. Kris Mohandie[*] cover a continuum from imminent risk to moderate-to – low risk.

Category 1 – High violence; qualifies for immediate arrest or hospitalization

Category 2 – High violence; does not qualify for arrest or hospitalization

[*] Mohandle, Kris; school Violence Threat management: A Practical Guide for Educators. Law Enforcement, and Mental Health Professionals, Specialized Training Services, San Diego, CA, 2000

Category 3 – Insufficient evidence for violence potential, sufficient evidence for
   repetitive/intentional infliction of emotional distress upon others.

Category 4 – Insufficient evidence for violence potential; sufficient evidence for
   the unintentional infliction of emotional distress upon others.

Category 5 – Insufficient evidence for violence potential, sufficient evidence for
   emotional distress upon others.

In determining risk, remember;
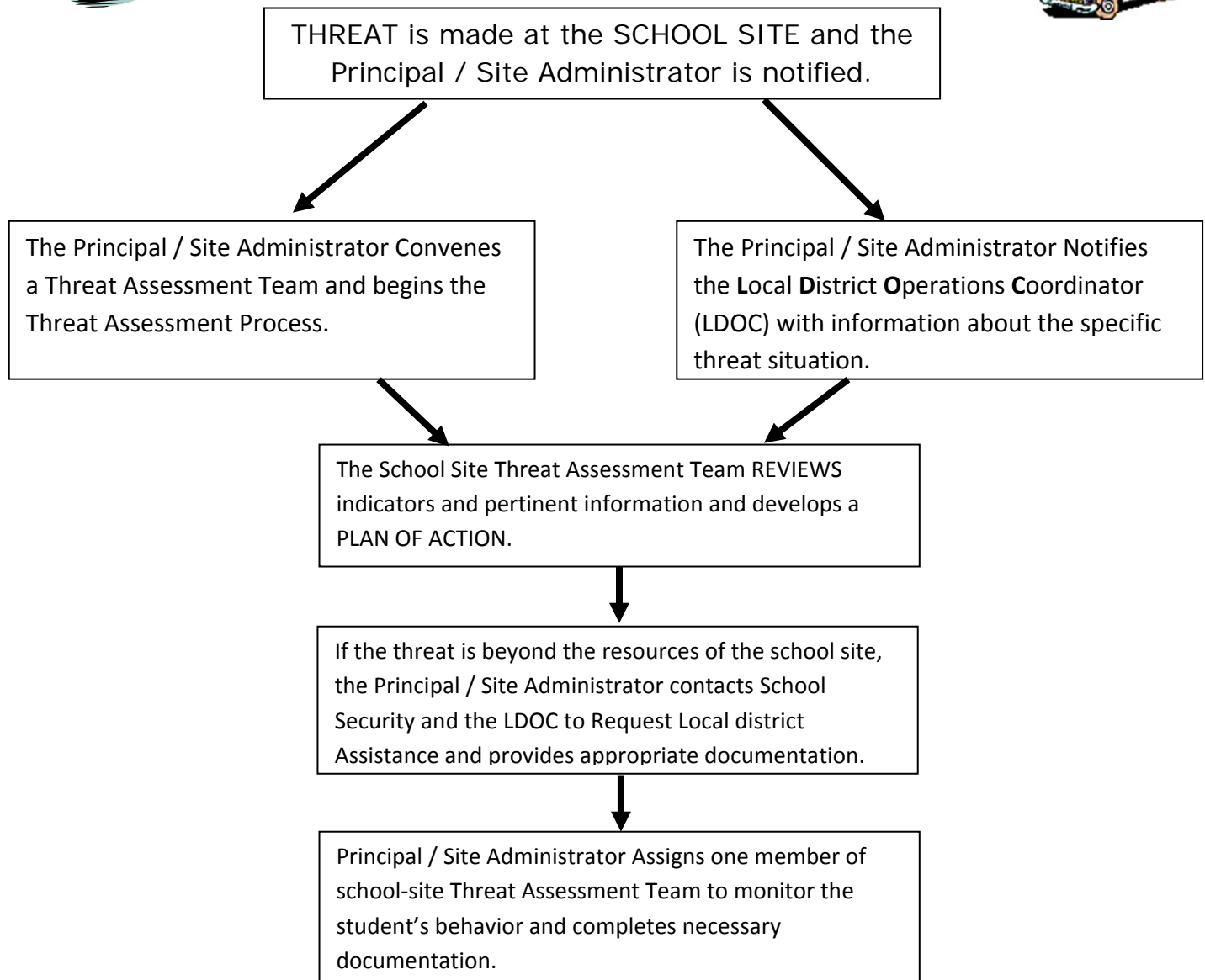
- The clearer and more organized the threat message, the greater the potential for action on the threat.
- Chaotic threats may suggest that the person communicating the threat is more likely to be acting impulsively at the particular moment.
- Consistently blaming others in the threat message for problems in the communicator's life, the risk that the threat could be carried out.

GISD

School Threat Assessment Flow Chart

THREAT is made at the SCHOOL SITE and the Principal / Site Administrator is notified.

The Principal / Site Administrator Convenes a Threat Assessment Team and begins the Threat Assessment Process.

The Principal / Site Administrator Notifies the **L**ocal **D**istrict **O**perations **C**oordinator (LDOC) with information about the specific threat situation.

The School Site Threat Assessment Team REVIEWS indicators and pertinent information and develops a PLAN OF ACTION.

If the threat is beyond the resources of the school site, the Principal / Site Administrator contacts School Security and the LDOC to Request Local district Assistance and provides appropriate documentation.

Principal / Site Administrator Assigns one member of school-site Threat Assessment Team to monitor the student's behavior and completes necessary documentation.

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS FOR LEVELS OF RISK

1. High level of risk for violence – danger to others. Call assigned school security officer.
2. High level of risk for violence – danger to self (suicidal). Call 911.
3. Insufficient evidence for violence potential, but sufficient evidence for repetitive/intentional infliction of emotional stress upon others. The **Threat Assessment Team** may determine that the student could benefit from other resources which may include referral(s) to Southern New Mexico Human Development 575-882-5101, school based or district mental health services, assessment for appropriate educational placement, disciplinary action, etc.

Gadsden Independent School District

Checklist for Threat Assessment and Management

The following are to be taken after a threat has been made at a school site. Some steps may be taken concurrently or in a different order than shown, depending on the circumstances.

A.___ CONVENE AND NOTIFY: Convene your Threat Assessment and Management Team: School-site administrator, mental health professional and Principal designee.
1. ___Identify specific threat and determine degree of impact on the school.
2. ___Notify Local district Operations Coordinator
3. ___Determine whether additional support is needed and request it if appropriate:
   a. ___District Crisis Intervention/ Response Team
   b. ___Law enforcement agency such as: Anthony Police Department, Doña Ana Sheriff, NM State Police, Sunland Park Police

B. ___ DOCUMENT: Document all steps taken. <u>Strict confidentially</u> about student information should be kept among team members and appropriate District staff.

C. ___ ASSESS: In assessing the validity, review the warning signs and all background information of the student, interview witnesses, staff, peers, etc.
   <u>DO ALL OF THIS BEFORE CONTACTING THE PARENT.</u>
1._ Review school history, using a questioning and skeptical mind set.
   - ☐ Copy of Student Identification Information (SIS), Power School
   - ☐ Copy of Emergency Card
   - ☐ Copy of Discipline Record
   - ☐ Copy of Attendance Record
   - ☐ Copy of cum folder cover
   - ☐ Copy of most recent report card and/or progress report
   - ☐ Copy of Health record
   - ☐ Other pertinent information (IEP, written material, e-mail, pictures, etc.)

2.__ Interview adults on campus who had contact with the student.

3.__ Interview students who may have been threatened and friends of the student.

4.__ Interview the student (use the <u>10 Key Findings</u> from the Secret Service Threat Assessment in Schools Guidelines).

5.__Interview the parents (last)
   a.__ Identify any new family or individual stressors, including changes in the family, loss or separation, or violence at home or in the neighborhood.

b.__ Ask if the student or any member of the family is currently receiving counseling.

6.__ Determine the **level of risk.** The categories are:
- ☐ Category 1: High Violence potential; qualifies for immediate arrest or hospitalization.
- ☐ Category 2: High Violence potential; does not qualify for arrest or hospitalization.
- ☐ Category 3: Insufficient evidence for violence potential; sufficient evidence for the repetitive infliction of emotional distress upon others.
- ☐ Category 4: Insufficient evidence for violence potential; sufficient evidence for the unintentional infliction of emotional distress upon others.
- ☐ Category 5: Insufficient evidence for violence potential; insufficient evidence for emotional distress upon others.

D.__ MAKE A TEAM RECOMMENDATION – no one person should make the decision alone without the input of the other team members.
1. __ Implement an intervention plan
2. __ Monitor progress have school safety
3. __ Reconvene the team when necessary.
4.__ Decisions made and action taken should result in:
      a.__ Contact with and/or apprehension of person(s) who initiated the threat.
      b.__ Warning and protection for the targeted victim(s) of the threat.
      c.__ Disciplinary action, if needed.
      d.__ Continuation of a safe school environment.

GADSDEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
CRISIS COUNSELING & INTERVENTION SERVICES
Threat assessment Report Form

School:_____   Date:_____

Date of Incident/Allegation: _____   Time of Incident/Allegation:_____

Name of Threat Maker:_____

DOB of Threat Maker:_____   Grade:_____

Description of Incident/Allegation:_____

_____

_____

_____

Name of Potential Victim:_____
DOB of Potential Victim: _____   Grade:_____

Name of Potential Victim:_____
DOB of Potential Victim: _____   Grade:_____

Name of Potential Victim:_____
DOB of Potential Victim: _____   Grade:_____

REPORTED TO:

Office/Unit Contacted	Name of Person
District Operations Coordinator	
District Mental Health Professional	
School Security	Badge #
Local Law Enforcement Agency	Badge #
Legal Counsel	
Staff Relations	
Probation Officer	

Summary of Recommended Actions:_____

_____

SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET FOR THE THREAT

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

DATE	*INFORMATION OBTAINED / ACTION*
EXAMPLE: *1/15/13*	a.) Reviewed cum folder, heath record, discipline record, IEP b.) Parent interview: parents separated; no access to weapons; history of mental illness, demeanor of parents. c.) Team Determined Category 2 threat level: d.) Mental health referral, IEP scheduled e.) School plan for the week: monitor student behavior, check student progress with teachers f.) Safety plan for targeted victim(s) g.) Reevaluate situation in two weeks

Secret Service Threat Assessment in Schools

Ten Key Findings

➢ Incidents of target violence at school rarely are sudden, impulsive acts.

➢ Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan attack.

➢ Most attackers did not threaten their target directly prior to advancing the attack

➢ There is no acute or useful "profile" of students who engage in targeted school violence.

➢ Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.

➢ Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Many had considered suicide.

➢ Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.

➢ Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.

➢ In many cases, other students were involved in the attack in some capacity.

➢ Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most attacks were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention and most were brief in duration.