

Topic:	Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)
Effective:	May 2013
Cross-Reference:	Ontario Human Rights Code Accepting Schools Act, 2012, S.O. 2012, c. 5 Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe at School), 2009, S.O. 2009, c. 17 Education Act, Part XIII Behaviour, Discipline and Safety Policy and Program Memoranda: PPM 120 (Reporting Violent Incidents); PPM 128 (Provincial/Board/School Code of Conduct); PPM 144 (Bullying Prevention and Intervention); PPM 145 (Progressive Discipline); Ontario Regulation 472/07 (Mitigating Circumstances); Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations; HDSB Policy: Safe Schools; HDSB Administrative Procedures: Positive School Climate - Progressive Discipline Bullying Prevention and Intervention Suspensions and Expulsions Managing Violent and Aggressive Behaviour of Students with Special Needs Halton Region Police – School Board Protocol Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol Youth Criminal Justice Act
Review Date:	September 2020
Revision Date:	September 2022
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education – Safe Schools

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board is committed to a whole school approach to creating safe, caring and inclusive school environments for all students, staff and members of the school community. The Board supports all students in developing healthy relationships, making good choices, continuing their learning and achieving success. As a result, the Halton District School Board will respond to all student behaviours that pose a potential risk to any students, staff, or members of the community.

The Halton District School Board supports the implementation of the *Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol* developed in collaboration with the Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) and our community partners.

DEFINITIONS**1. Violence Threat Risk Assessment**

The Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) is an evidence-based, multi-disciplinary team approach to identifying, evaluating and addressing potential threats from students towards other students, staff, and parents within the school and community environment.

2. Threat

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

3. Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol and Operating Guide.

The *Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol* and *Operating Guide* are tools intended to be used by and guide the work of VTRA team members in their response to violent and/or threatening behaviours made by a student(s). The *Operating Guide* details the three stages of the assessment outlining actions and procedures specific to documentation and communication of information with appropriate parties.

4. Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team (VTRA Core Team)

Each school will ensure it has the means to implement a multi-disciplinary VTRA team, which consists of a VTRA trained and certified Principal/Vice Principal, School Social Worker, and Halton Regional Police Service personnel.

In the HDSB, Safe Schools Social Workers are consulted, attend, and facilitate all VTRAs as members of the VTRA Core Team.

Other staff [e.g., Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), teachers who know the student well, Child and Youth Counsellor (CYC)] may be asked to support the work of the team at the discretion of the Principal. Community partners (e.g., CAS, ROCK, ADAPT, etc.) may also be invited to be part of the VTRA process, particularly if they have a history of involvement with the student.

Only VTRA certified members of the Core Team are able to make final decisions as to level of risk, recommendations for next steps, and sign off on the Risk Management Plan.

ROLES**1. Superintendent of Education Responsible for Safe Schools**

The Superintendent shall:

- a) Support the implementation of current practices for a common understanding of the nature of threat assessment and related protocols and procedures through Level 1 and Level 2 VTRA and other related Safe Schools training of Principals, Vice Principals, Social Workers, CYCs, and other staff as deemed appropriate.
- b) Ensure Level 1 certification training is provided each school year for new administrators, Social Workers, and CYCs and/or those not yet trained and certified. Administrators, Social Workers, and CYCs may be required to attend further VTRA training as needed. As Level 1 VTRA certification is mandatory for all HDSB Principals, Vice Principals, Social Workers, and CYCs, maintaining an accurate list detailing the training of identified Board staff is essential.
- c) Ensure Safe Schools Personnel obtain and maintain Level 3 certification as well as Traumatic Event Systems (TES) training as per VTRA Protocol requirements.
- d) Maintain a secure file at the J.W. Singleton Centre to store all completed Violence Threat Risk Assessments.
- e) Ensure the current Fair Notice letter regarding the Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol and associated practices and processes is communicated annually and directly to all HDSB families.

2. Principal or Designate

The Principal shall:

- a) Ensure all threat assessments are carried out in accordance with the *Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol* and the associated *Operating Guide*.
- b) Establish and maintain a School Violence Threat Risk Assessment Team as required in the *Halton Community Violence Threat Assessment Protocol*.

- c) Ensure every administrator at the school is trained and certified in the *Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol*.
- d) Contact and consult with the following personnel when a VTRA is considered, as per the checklist in the VTRA document:
 - i. System Principal of Safe Schools
 - ii. Halton Regional Police Service personnel
 - iii. Appropriate school staff and Professional Support Services staff (if applicable)
 - iv. Manager of Student Services (if applicable)
 - v. System Principal of Special Education (if applicable)
- e) Seek consensus among the VTRA Core Team whenever possible but ultimately be responsible for making the final decision as to whether a VTRA is called after consulting with the Core Team and those outlined in d), above, as appropriate.
- f) Ensure the necessary preparation and local data collection has occurred ahead of the meeting of the VTRA Core Team when a VTRA has been called.
- g) Inform Family of Schools Superintendent, System Principal of Safe Schools, and the appropriate Manager of Student Services (if applicable) and/or the System Principal of Special Education (if applicable) of the outcome of the VTRA process.
- h) Ensure all steps in the VTRA checklists have been followed at both the start and the conclusion of the VTRA process (e.g., notification of families of both the threat maker and the target).
- i) Ensure the original copy of the *Violence Threat Risk Assessment Form* is forwarded to the System Principal responsible for Safe Schools for review and retention. There is only one (1) copy of the final VTRA document and it resides with Safe Schools.
- j) Ensure no notes in any form are taken by anyone attending the VTRA aside from “tombstone notes” indicating the student’s name, the date, and the location of the VTRA. Additional notes, with respect to follow up and/or next steps only, may be generated when an individual has a particular responsibility as part of the Action Plan or Intervention Plan; such notes must be considered highly confidential and be limited to essential information only for the purposes of carrying out an individual’s responsibilities.
- k) Ensure the completed VTRA *Intervention Plan*, *Action Plan*, and *VTRA Summary Report* are retained in the documentation folder of the student’s OSR.
- l) For those students deemed Medium or High Risk, a Risk Management Plan (RMP) must be developed, filed in the OSR, and communicated to all staff as appropriate as per the requirements and limitations of the OHSA, YCJA, MFIPPA, and other relevant legislation.

3. Staff

Staff shall:

- a) Report all incidents of worrisome and/or threatening behaviour to the Principal.
- b) Use teaching and learning practices that support the development of healthy relationships, making good choices continuing their learning and achieving success.
- c) Support the Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) as required.
- d) Ensure *no* notes in any form are taken when attending the VTRA aside from “tombstone notes” indicating the student’s name, the date, and the location of the VTRA. Additional notes with respect to follow up and/or next steps *only* may be generated when an individual has a particular responsibility as part of the Action Plan or Intervention Plan; such notes must be

considered highly confidential and be limited to essential information only for the purposes of carrying out an individual's responsibilities.

PROCEDURES

1. Violence Threat Risk Assessment Process

All Violence Threat Risk Assessments (VTRAs) are to be completed in accordance with the *Halton Community Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol and Operating Guide*. The *Violence Threat Risk Assessment Forms* are to be completed in their entirety and to the best of the team's ability for both Level 1 and Level 2 assessments.

2. Mandatory Consideration of a Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA)

Thresholds for VTRA Protocol activation and mandatory consideration of a VTRA include but are not limited to the following:

- Serious violence or violence with intent to harm or kill
- Verbal / written threats to kill others ("clear, direct, and plausible")
- Use of technology (e.g., computer, mobile phone) to communicate threats to harm or kill others or cause serious property damage (e.g., "burn this office down")
- Possession of a weapon (including replicas)
- Bomb threats (including making and/or detonating explosive devices)
- Fire setting
- Sexual intimidation and/or assault
- Chronic, pervasive, targeted bullying and/or harassment
- Gang related intimidation and/or violence
- Hate incidents motivated by factors including but not limited to race, culture, religion, and/or sexual or gender diversity (includes extremism and extremist views advocating violence)

Mandatory consideration of a VTRA is defined as consultation with the Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) and the Safe Schools Principal (and/or designated Safe Schools Social Worker) when determining whether a VTRA will be called. This triangulation of decision making (school lens, clinical lens, police lens) will enable Principals to make informed decisions with respect to VTRAs and the safety of their school communities.

Further consultation with other staff (e.g., school staff, school based social worker, Manager of Student Services, Special Education personnel) may be made as appropriate to assist in decision making.

3. Document Retention and Access

The Halton District School Board will retain the original copies of the completed Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Forms in a secure location at the Board office.

Board officials and other signatories to the Halton VTRA Protocol who participated in a given VTRA may request access through the HDSB Safe Schools department. Permission to view completed VTRA documents will only be granted to assist law enforcement as per MFIPPA or for other lawful purposes where the VTRA document is viewed as essential to protecting the health and safety of other persons in the community.

Parents/Guardians (or a student over the age of 18 years of age or who is 16 or 17 years of age and withdrawn from parental control), through a formal written request addressed to the Superintendent of Safe Schools, may access their child's Violence Threat Risk Assessment Forms; this will include demographic information, background information relating to data collection, answers to the Series Questions Action Plan, the Intervention Plan, the Action Plan, the VTRA Summary Report, and any applicable follow up documentation.

All identifying information related to team composition, other students, staff, or community members must be redacted prior to the parent accessing the Assessment Forms.

Further, information may be withheld if disclosure could reasonably be expected to seriously threaten the safety or health of an individual, as per the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) of Ontario (MO-3463) and sections 38(a) and 13 of MFIPPA.

All reasonable efforts must be made to contact all members of the Core Team (a designated supervisor/manager in a given agency/organization) in order to provide them with an opportunity to address matters relating to redaction prior to the parent accessing the Assessment Forms. In the event of such a request, partner agencies have authority over their own information within the Assessment Forms and, in accordance with their own policies and procedures, will advise the Board with respect to what can be shared and what must be redacted prior to sharing the Assessment Forms with parents.

In the absence of any direction or response from a participant and/or participatory agency/organization, the HDSB Safe Schools department will make decisions with respect to redaction in accordance with its own principles for the sharing of information and the guidance provided by MFIPPA and IPC decisions.

The original VTRA documentation must never leave the premises of the Board office. A parent wishing to view the Assessment Forms may do so in the presence of Board staff at the Board office *or* may request a copy of the original documentation. In either case, only the redacted version of the Assessment Forms will be shared with parents.

The *Intervention Plan, Action Plan, and VTRA Summary Report* will be retained in the documentation folder of the student's OSR.

No other documentation relating to the VTRA may be placed in the OSR. The Series Questions and Answers must NOT be retained in the OSR.

A copy of the completed VTRA document is NOT retained at the school; the original is stored at the Board office.

A Risk Management Plan (RMP) for those students deemed Medium or High Risk must be filed in the OSR and communicated to all relevant staff.