

Threat Assessment Decision Tree

A threat is reported to the principal.

Step 1. Evaluate the threat.

- Obtain a specific account of the threat by interviewing the student who made the threat, the recipient of the threat, and other witnesses.
- Write down the exact contents of the threat and statements made by each party.
- Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions.

Step 2. Decide whether the threat is transient or substantive.

- Consider the criteria for transient versus substantive threats.
- Consider the student's age, credibility, and previous discipline history.

The threat is clearly transient

Step 3. Respond to a transient threat.

Typical responses may include a reprimand, parent notification, or another disciplinary action. The student may be required to make amends and attend mediation or counseling.

The threat is substantive or the threat's meaning is not clear.

Step 4. Decide whether the substantive threat is serious or very serious.

A *serious* threat involves a threat to assault someone ("I'm gonna beat that kid up"). A *very serious* threat involves the use of a weapon or is a threat to kill, rape, or inflict severe injury on someone.

The threat is serious

Step 5. Respond to a serious substantive threat.

- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims, including notifying the intended victim and the victim's parents.
- Notify the student's parents.
- Consider contacting law enforcement.
- Refer the student for counseling, dispute mediation, or another appropriate intervention.
- Discipline the student as appropriate to the severity and chronicity of the situation.

The threat is very serious

Step 6. Evaluate the threat.

- Take immediate precautions to protect potential victims, including notifying the victim and the victim's parents.
- Notify the student's parents.
- Consult with law enforcement.
- Begin a mental health assessment of the student.
- Discipline the student as appropriate.

Step 7. Implement a safety plan.

- Complete a written plan.
- Maintain contact with the student.
- Revise the plan as needed.