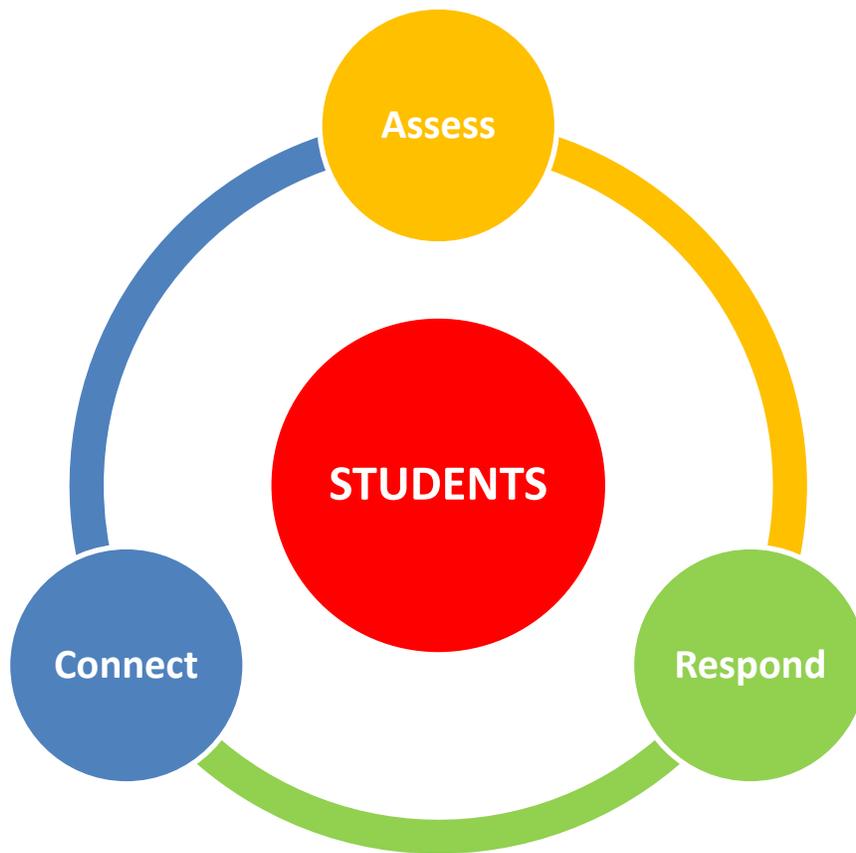


Threat Assessment & Response Procedures





Volusia County Schools

Threat Response Procedures

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Volusia County Schools

Threat Assessment Team Procedures

Section 1: Overview

A threat assessment team shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement. The threat assessment teams shall identify members of the school community to whom threatening behavior should be reported and provide guidance to students, faculty, and staff regarding recognition of threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a threat to the community, school, or self.

The goal of the threat assessment process is to keep schools safe and to help students in crisis overcome the underlying sources of their anger, hopelessness, or despair and to assess them to determine the most appropriate level of response. Effective threat assessment procedures provide school professionals with useful information about a student's risks and personal resources.

Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to himself or herself or others using the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus as a guide, the school shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian. Nothing shall preclude school district personnel from acting immediately to address a threat. If the threat is deemed substantive, the Threat Assessment Team shall immediately notify the district's Mental Health Team. In addition, law enforcement shall be called to consult as part of the school's Threat Assessment Team. The Director of Safety and Security for Volusia County Schools (Chief Michelle Newman) or the Coordinator of Emergency Services and School Safety for Volusia County Schools (Richard T. Myers), must be subsequently notified in the event of a substantive threat to inform them of the threat and the action steps taken. The school-based Threat Assessment team's administrator shall then report its determination to the Superintendent or his or her designee. The Threat Assessment Form must be completed, regardless of the level of threat (no threat, transient, or substantive), detailing the threat as well as action steps taken to ensure the safety of the student making the threat, and/or the safety of others in the school community.

If an immediate mental health or substance abuse crisis is suspected, school personnel shall follow the procedures outlined in this manual to engage mental health crisis resources. Mental health crisis resources, including, but not limited to, mobile crisis teams and school resource officers trained in crisis intervention, shall provide emergency intervention and assessment, make recommendations, and refer the student for appropriate services. In the event of a substance abuse crisis, schools shall comply with the VCS medical policies and procedures. Documentation of substance use crises shall be completed in the SSS feature in Focus, as well as in any other areas of Focus, if appropriate, such as the student's disciplinary record, etc. In addition, a Substance Use Referral should be completed for continuity of care in the SSS feature in Focus.

Upon the student's transfer to a different school, the threat assessment team shall verify that any intervention services provided to the student remain in place until the threat assessment team of the receiving school independently determines the need for intervention services. As students are transferred to a new school within the district, school counselors and administrators should review the SSS Platform to determine what social emotional supports are needed.

The threat of targeted school violence brings unique challenges to all members of the impacted school, as well as to the school district. Central among these challenges is the need to 1) assess the level of the threat; 2) ensure that steps are taken to address the safety of students and faculty; 3) effectively communicate and collaborate with parents, media and law enforcement and within school district departments; and 4) devise a plan for re-entry. Through the use of the Threat Assessment Team, procedures are developed to ensure a seamless process when addressing threats towards self, others or school board employees.

Types of Threats

A threat is an expression of intent to do harm or act out violently against someone or something. It may be spoken, written, or symbolic. Threats can be expressed directly or indirectly to the victim or to others, and threats may be explicit or implied. Threats sometimes, but rarely, involve guns or explosive devices. Many students who make a threat will never carry it out. Conversely, others who pose a real danger may not make an explicit threat. Threats may be communicated to the intended victim or related to a third party. A threat to harm others can be transient (i.e., expression of anger or frustration that can be quickly or easily resolved) or substantive (i.e., serious intent to harm others that involves a detailed plan and means):

Examples of Transient Threats:

- 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)
- Ends with apology, retraction, or clarification

Examples of Substantive Threats:

- 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
- Physical evidence of intent to carry out threat (e.g., lists, drawings, written plan)

Who is a member of a School Threat Assessment Team?

Florida Statute 1006.07(7), defines the members of the School Threat Assessment Team as:

- All school-based administrators
- School Counselors
- School Resource Deputy/Officer/Guardian
- An appointed teacher or TOA
- School Social Workers (when applicable)
- School Psychologists (when applicable)

What are the roles of the Threat Assessment Team?

The Threat Assessment Team functions similarly to the school-based Crisis Response Team and contains many of the same mental health team members. The team consists of the Principal, other school-based administrators, the School Counselor(s), the School Psychologist, the School Social Worker, and the School Resource Deputy/Officer/Guardian. In addition, a teacher serves as a member of the Threat Assessment Team. The Threat Assessment Team is involved in the initial assessment process and works collaboratively to determine the level of risk for each individual student and situation, and seeks additional supports for the student.

Section 2: Initial Threat Assessment and Determination of Risk Level

In all incidents of reported or suspected threats to self or others, it is critical and mandated to perform a threat assessment. Threat assessment is a process to evaluate the level of risk to the school or to a specific individual(s). The Threat Assessment team will work in coordination to determine the level of risk. The “risk level” will determine how the Threat Assessment Team will respond to the threat and what interventions and course of action will ensue for the student.

Threats can be classified into one of four categories (i.e., direct, indirect, veiled or conditional).

- A ***direct threat*** identifies a specific act against a specific target and is delivered in a straightforward, clear and explicit manner. *“I am going to place a bomb in the school gym.”*
- An ***indirect threat*** tends to be vague, unclear and ambiguous. The plan, the intended victim, the motivation and other aspects of the threat are masked or equivocal: *“If I wanted to, I could kill everyone at this school!”* While violence is implied, the threat is phrased tentatively: *“If I wanted to”* and suggest that a violent act ***could*** occur, not that it ***will*** occur.
- A ***veiled threat*** is one that strongly implies but does not explicitly threaten violence. *“We would be better off without you around anymore”* clearly hints at a possible violent act but leaves it to the potential victim to interpret the message and give a definite meaning to the threat.
- A ***conditional threat*** is the type often seen in extortion cases. It warns that a violent act will happen unless certain demands or terms are met. *“If you don’t pay me one million dollars, I will place a bomb in the school.”*

Specific, plausible details are a critical factor in evaluating a threat. Details can include the identity of the victim or victims; the reason for making the threat; the means, weapon and method by which it is to be carried out; the date, time and place where the threatened act will occur; and concrete information about plans or preparations that have already been made. Based on the initial threat assessment, the school Principal, in conjunction with the mental health professional at the school, classifies the situation as a Substantive or Transient Threat.

Transient Threat

There is little evidence of a potential for violence, but a pattern exists of veiled threats against others with the purpose of causing emotional distress. The school-based Threat Assessment Team, in conjunction with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), will determine if the student can remain safely at school for the remainder of the school day. However, if the Threat Assessment Team and parent(s)/guardian(s) deem that it may be unsafe for the student to remain at school, the student will be transferred to the parent's/guardian's care upon signing the Parent Acknowledgement Form and the Mutual Exchange of Information Form found in the Supplements section of the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus. Upon completion of the forms, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to have their child medically evaluated.

- a. Threat is vague and indirect.
- b. Information contained within the threat is inconsistent, implausible or lacks detail.
- c. Threat lacks realism.
- d. Content of the threat suggests person is unlikely to carry it out.

Substantive Threat

Substantial risk exists, but there is no evidence that violence is imminent or that the individual has the means to carry out the threat. Further assessment and close monitoring are essential and will probably include removal from the school setting with a re-entry process in place. Implementation of a restraining or administrative order (No Trespassing) to stay away from certain individuals or sites upon return to the school may also be necessary.

- a. Threat is more direct and more concrete than a low risk threat.
- b. Wording in the threat suggests that the individual has given thought to how the act will be carried out.
- c. There may be a general indication of a possible place and time (though these signs still fall well short of a detailed plan).
- d. There is no strong indication that the individual has taken preparatory steps, although there may be some veiled reference or ambiguous or inconclusive evidence pointing to that possibility – an allusion to a book or movie that shows the planning of a violent act or a vague general statement about the availability of weapons.
- e. There may be a specific statement seeking to convey that the threat is not empty: "I'm serious!" or "I really mean this!"

Additionally, substantive threats can be a student who may exhibit imminent danger to self or others with the means and focus to carry out violence.

It is essential to take steps to isolate the individual(s). Involvement of local law enforcement and/or emergency behavioral health screening is needed.

Example statement: *“At eight o’clock tomorrow morning, I intend to shoot the Principal. That is when he is in the office by himself. I have a 9 mm gun. Believe me; I know what I am doing. I am sick and tired of the way he runs this school.”* This threat is direct; specific as to the victim, motivation, weapon, time, and place; and indicated that the student knows his target’s schedule and has made preparations to act on the threat.

In some cases, the distinction between the levels of threat may not be as obvious and there will be overlap between the categories. Generally, obtaining additional information about the threat and student history helps clarify any confusion. What is important is that schools be able to recognize and act on the most serious threats and then address all other threats appropriately and in a standardized and timely fashion.

What is Volusia County Schools’ process for assessing threat?

When a targeted threat of violence occurs at a school site, the threat assessment process is to include the following components:

1. *Threat Assessment Form*

This form is an interview guide completed by members of the Threat Assessment Team. This process must occur in collaboration. The team should utilize the “Threat Assessment Form” in the SSS Platform of Focus. The assessment serves to obtain information from the student regarding specifics of the situation, steps to carry out the threat, access to weapons, and problems in the student’s life that led to the threat/incident.

2. *Determine Level of Threat*

Through the Threat Assessment process, the Threat Assessment Team will work collaboratively to determine the level of threat:

- **Not a Threat**
- **Transient Threat**
- **Substantive Threat**

Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to himself or herself or others using the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus as a guide, the school shall immediately attempt to notify the student’s parent or legal guardian. Nothing shall preclude school district personnel from acting immediately to address a threat.

If the threat is deemed transient, the school-based Threat Assessment Team, in conjunction with the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s), will determine if the student can

remain safely at school for the remainder of the school day. However, if the Threat Assessment Team and parent/guardian deem that it may be unsafe for the student to remain at school, the student will be transferred to the parent's/guardian's care upon signing the Parent Acknowledgement Form and the Mutual Exchange of Information Form found in the supplements section of the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus. Upon completion of the forms, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to have their child medically evaluated.

If the threat is deemed substantive, the Threat Assessment Team shall immediately notify the district's Mental Health Team. In addition, law enforcement shall be called to consult as part of the school's Threat Assessment Team. The Director of Safety and Security for Volusia County Schools (Chief Michelle Newman) or the Coordinator of Emergency Services and School Safety for Volusia County Schools (Richard T. Myers), must be subsequently notified in the event of a substantive threat to inform them of the threat and the action steps taken. The school-based Threat Assessment team's administrator shall then report its determination to the Superintendent or his or her designee. The Threat Assessment Form must be completed, regardless of the level of threat (no threat, transient, or substantive), detailing the threat as well as action steps taken to ensure the safety of the student making the threat, and/or the safety of others in the school community.

3. *Determine Level of Response*

Through the Threat Assessment process, the Threat Assessment Team will work collaboratively to determine the level of response and action steps needed. This information will be documented in the Threat Assessment.

Regardless of the determined level of threat to self and/or others, any student who is or may be in need of mental health supports can access follow up supports. Any VCS staff member who has access to the SSS feature in Focus can submit a Mental Health Referral. A Mental Health Clinician from the VCS Mental Health Team will contact the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to explore available counseling options for the student.

4. *Mental Health Evaluation* (when applicable)

A member of the district Mental Health Team will provide an assessment if the Threat Assessment Team determines that the level of threat is severe. This may result in a Baker Act.

5. *Baker Act* (when applicable)

The District Mental Health Team will determine if the student meets the criteria for a Baker Act. If a determination to Baker Act is made, the licensed mental health provider will complete the Baker Act paperwork. They will work with the school to contact law enforcement to initiate transportation of the student.

Baker Acts

Section 394.462, Florida Statute provides that an involuntary examination may be initiated by a mental health counselor by executing a certificate stating that he or she has examined the person within the preceding 48 hours, finding that the person appears to meet the criteria for involuntary examination, and stating the observations upon which that conclusion is based.

The parent/guardian should first be given the opportunity to initiate a voluntary examination. In the event the parent/guardian does not authorize voluntary examination (or cannot be reached and the student is in imminent danger), the mental health counselor shall nonetheless initiate the involuntary examination.

The school Principal or designee shall immediately notify the parent of a student who is removed from school, school transportation, or a school-sponsored activity and taken to a receiving facility for an involuntary examination pursuant to Section 394.463. The Principal or designee may delay notification for no more than 24 hours after the student is removed if the Principal or designee deems the delay to be in the student's best interest and if a report has been submitted to the central abuse hotline, pursuant to Section 39.201, Florida Statutes, based upon knowledge or suspicion of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

Threat Response Procedures Specific to Suicidal Threats

School-based mental health professionals are increasingly faced with alarming numbers of students who are depressed, may engage in self-injurious behaviors (e.g., cutting), and who may be suicidal. It is critical to assess suicidal risk in order to increase the likelihood of matching the student with needed interventions and supports.

Like the goals of threat response when violence toward others is at stake, the goal of responding to students at risk of harming themselves include: ensure student safety, assess and respond to the level of risk, determine needed services, and ensure appropriate care.

- ***Supervise the student:*** Under no circumstances should the student be allowed to leave the school or be alone (even in the restroom) until the assessment and plan has been generated.
- ***Link the Student with a Student Services Professional:*** Potentially suicidal students should be immediately brought to the attention of a student services professional. This is typically a School Psychologist, School Counselor or School Social Worker.
- ***Collaborate with administration, Threat Assessment Team, and/or the district Mental Health Team:*** Many potentially difficult decisions must be made and consulting with other professionals is reassuring and prudent.
- ***Suicide-proof the environment:*** Ensure that the means to attempt suicide have been removed from the student or made inaccessible.
- ***Utilize law enforcement when appropriate:*** If a student resists, becomes combative, attempts to flee, or is in imminent danger, law enforcement should be contacted immediately.
- ***Prepare a re-entry plan:*** All students returning from Baker Act shall have a re-entry meeting with parents, school, and community mental health personnel.

The following procedure is to be followed in the event of a threat of suicide:

1. ***Threat Assessment Form***

To be completed by the Threat Assessment Team in the student's SSS feature in Focus. In addition, contact the district mental health team immediately when the threat is deemed substantive.

2. ***Assessing Level of Threat***

The Threat Assessment Team will work in collaboration to determine the appropriate level of risk. If the threat is deemed transient, the school-based Threat Assessment Team, in conjunction with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), will determine if the student can remain safely at school for the remainder of the school day. However, if the Threat Assessment Team and parent/guardian deem that it may be unsafe for the student to remain at school, the student will be transferred to the parent's/guardian's care upon signing the Parent Acknowledgement Form and the Mutual Exchange of Information Form found in the Supplements section of the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus. Upon completion of the forms, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to have their child medically evaluated.

If the risk is deemed substantive, the district Mental Health Team will be deployed to provide a Mental Health Assessment and determine if the student meets the Baker Act criteria. The Mental Health Team shall also be contacted if the Threat Assessment Team requires assistance from a Mental Health Clinician determining the level of threat posed by a student. All efforts should be made by the Threat Assessment Team to communicate with the parent/guardian to involve the parent/guardian in the assessment process.

3. ***Mental Health Evaluation*** (when appropriate)

Upon a preliminary determination that a student poses a threat of violence or physical harm to himself or herself or others using the Threat Assessment Form in the SSS feature in Focus as a guide, the school shall immediately attempt to notify the student's parent or legal guardian. Nothing shall preclude school district personnel from acting immediately to address a threat. If the threat is deemed substantive, the Threat Assessment Team shall immediately notify the district's Mental Health Team. In addition, law enforcement shall be called to consult as part of the school's Threat Assessment Team. The Director of Safety and Security for Volusia County Schools (Chief Michelle Newman) or the Coordinator of Emergency Services and School Safety for Volusia County Schools (Richard T. Myers), must be subsequently notified in the event of a substantive threat to inform them of the threat and the action steps taken. The school-based Threat Assessment team's administrator shall then report its determination to the Superintendent or his or her designee. The Threat Assessment Form must be completed, regardless of the level of threat (no threat, transient, or substantive), detailing the threat as well as action steps taken to ensure the safety of the student making the threat, and/or the safety of others in the school community.

4. ***Baker Act*** (when appropriate)

The District Mental Health Team will determine if the student meets the criteria for a Baker Act. If a determination to Baker Act is made, the licensed mental health provider will complete the Baker Act paperwork. They will work with the school to contact law enforcement to initiate transportation of the student.

	Student Name: DANIEL F WOODWARD	Student ID: 1884702	Gender: M
	Grade: 06	Campus: DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL - 0222	DOB: 02/28/2007
	Parent:	Primary Exceptionality: NA	Phone:
	Email: 1VIYP@vcs2go.net	Address: NA	
Threat Assessment			
Student makes a threat to: <input type="checkbox"/> Harm to Self <input type="checkbox"/> Harm to Others <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment			
THREAT REPORT			
Location Threat Occurred:		Date/Time Threat Made:	
<input type="radio"/> School Building or Grounds <input type="radio"/> School Bus/Other Travel <input type="radio"/> School Sponsored Activity <input type="radio"/> Digital communication such as text or post <input type="radio"/> Other: _____		_____	
Summary of the incident or threat. What was reported? Who said or did what to whom. Who else was present?			
<div style="position: absolute; top: 50%; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%) rotate(-45deg); font-size: 48px; opacity: 0.5;">EXAMPLE</div>			
Name of person REPORTING threat: _____		Date/Time Threat Reported: _____	
Affiliation of person reporting threat: <input type="radio"/> Student <input type="radio"/> Parent <input type="radio"/> Staff <input type="radio"/> Other: _____			
Name/Title of person receiving the report: _____			
INCIDENT or BEHAVIOR OF CONCERN			
ASSESSMENT FINDINGS (All sources are not needed in most cases.)			
Sources of Information	What information was reviewed?	Relevant Findings	
Prior threats	<input type="radio"/> Reviewed <input type="radio"/> Not applicable <input type="radio"/> Not available	_____	

Throughout the steps of the assessment process, the principal is responsible for ensuring that all of the aforementioned steps have been completed.

In summary, central to the assessment of the threat level is the consideration of the following factors:

1. To what degree is the threat information credible?
2. To what degree is the threat information corroborated?

3. To what degree is the threat specific and/or imminent?
4. How grave are the potential consequences of the threat?
5. What do we know about the student's past or present circumstances that may contribute to this situation?

Section 3: Communication Issues

Communication can improve or exacerbate a school's response to a threat. Information gleaned from best practices in threat response, as well as the district's experiences, serve as the framework for addressing communication during a threat of school violence.

Typically, stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, and media) need to know that students and faculty are safe despite the threat of violence. The following communication steps can help address these valid concerns.

- Ensure that all steps have been taken to assess the situation and to restore safety.
- Assure the media, parents, faculty and students, those steps are being taken to address the threat.
- Do not avoid a response. This only encourages media and others to create their own story and perpetuate rumors.
- Ensure that a plan is in place.
- Follow the school's procedure for communicating where the media staging area is to be located off campus.
- If outside mental health professionals or local law enforcement were involved, a release of information may be in order. The team will ensure the forms and communication procedures are in place and followed.
- The parents of the targeted student(s) must be notified to make them aware of the threat and inform them of the actions in place to protect their child.
- Remember that despite the incident/threat, schools are the safest place for children. Most accidental, homicidal and suicidal deaths occur in the home or community.
- Parents/Guardians shall be notified if a student is Baker Acted and/or poses a transient or substantive threat.

The school administrator must always be in communication with the Director of Community Information prior to releasing a comment about the threat to the media or to parents. Once the message is approved, it is critical to ensure that other members of the Threat Response Team and school staff are aware of the message and are prepared to answer questions as they arise. Strategies include:

- Sharing the message verbatim with the Communications Monitoring Center (CMC) and local law enforcement (via District Safety and Security Specialist) for calls that come in regarding incidents after school hours.

- Provide talking points to clerical staff who typically receive calls and questions during school hours.
- Consider holding a “Parent Night” to address the incident. This venue can minimize rumors and has the added benefit of providing a forum to address school safety issues and enlist parental support. Your School Psychologist, School Counselor and School Social Worker should be included as they can share their expertise regarding violence prevention and children’s normal response to threats.

Section 4: Re-Entry Meetings

The goal of the re-entry process is to support the student’s ability to be successful in school when he/she returns to school following a period of exclusionary discipline (suspension and/or DJJ issues) or returning from a Baker Act.

Through the process, the administrator, School Counselor and other meeting attendees work collaboratively to complete a re-entry plan. The re-entry plan should be reasonable and achievable. The school is responsible for initiating a re-entry meeting. Schools are encouraged to reach out to district staff for additional support when needed (e.g. the district Mental Health team, district ESE teams and or the district Safety and Security team)

When should a Re-Entry Meeting Occur?

- When a student has been Baker Acted
- When the student is returning from DJJ or an Alternative site
- When the student has been suspended for 10 or more days
- When the student makes a threat to harm others

Who should participate in the Re-Entry Meetings?

- Administrator(s)
- School Counselor(s)
- Parent(s)/Student
- ESE Representation (when appropriate)
- School Social Worker (when appropriate)
- School Psychologist (when appropriate)
- Mental Health Team Members (when appropriate)
- Safety and Security Specialist (when appropriate)
- Area Superintendent (when appropriate)

The purpose of the re-entry meeting is to develop a plan to re-engage the student in a school program tailored to the student's individual circumstances.

School staff should initiate the re-entry conference and make every effort to invite the parents/guardians to participate. If the student is an ESE student, a member of the ESE

department should attend the meeting. A re-entry meeting should occur no later than **three days** before the student's reentry or enrollment.

Re-entry meeting participants should take into account:

- The circumstances related to the student's suspension or expulsion,
- The student's prior academic and discipline history,
- If the student has an IEP or 504 plan, the re-entry team should review the IEP, 504, and/or if applicable the Behavior Intervention Plan (*Note: Only an IEP Team/504 Team, through an IEP/504 Meeting, can make changes to a student's goals, services, accommodations and/or placement*),
- The severity of the disciplinary incident that led to the student's exclusion, and
- Mental Health concerns related to the individual student

The goals of the re-entry meeting are to:

- Address the individual academic, behavioral and mental health needs of the student,
- Identify point-person to support student,
- Develop a specific crisis and safety plan,
- Set a clear plan for addressing long-term absence and missed work, and allow for adjustments in classwork/homework upon return,
- Implement daily/weekly check-ins with the student,
- Establish a procedure for communication to provide regular feedback to parents/guardian on student's adjustment back to school. A follow-up meeting should always be scheduled to address additional supports needed and progress, and
- Provide family with information regarding outside services.

The purpose of the re-entry plan is to:

- Discuss the services available to the student to support their re-entry process,
- Define what the student is required to do before returning to school, and
- Identify supportive interventions that will be in place when the student returns to school.

Re-entry plans are completed on the SSS feature of Focus.



Student Name: DANIEL F WOODWARD Student ID: 1884702 Gender: M
Grade: 08 Campus: DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL SECONDARY - 0444 DOB: 02/28/2007
Parent: Primary Exceptionality: NA Phone:
Email: 1VIYP@vcs2go.net Address: NA

**Threat Response to Suicide and/or Harm to Self or Others
Re-Entry Meeting**

Date of School Re-Entry Meeting: IEP 504 Plan Reviewed:

Safety or Mental Health Concern Overview:

Discharge Plan if Hospitalized

Medications Prescribed:

Plan Recommendations:

Outside Agency Services in place:

Agency (A) Name: Agency (A) Phone:

Agency (A) Service:

Agency (B) Name: Agency (B) Phone:

Agency (B) Service:

Referrals Made at the Meeting:

Section 5: Handle With Care

A recent national survey of the incidence and prevalence of children’s exposure to violence and trauma revealed that 60% of American children have been exposed to violence, crime or abuse. Forty percent were direct victims of two or more violent acts. Prolonged exposure to violence and trauma can seriously undermine children’s ability to focus, behave appropriately, and learn in school. It often leads to school failure, truancy, suspension or expulsion, dropping out, or involvement in the juvenile justice system.

A “Handle with Care” (HWC) alert is tailored to reflect the needs and issues affecting students throughout Volusia County Schools. The below reasons may trigger a HWC alert:

- Exposed to a traumatic event
- Involved in an incident of bullying and/or harassment
- Have a Re-Entry Plan

- Have had a mental health assessment
- Need additional support for various reasons

This symbol will allow for teachers and staff to understand and respond to trauma in a positive manner. HWC promotes school-community partnerships aimed at ensuring that students who are exposed to trauma in their home, school or community receive appropriate interventions to help them achieve academically at their highest levels despite whatever traumatic circumstances they may have endured. The goal of HWC is to help students succeed in school. Regardless of the source of trauma, the common thread for effective intervention is the school. Research now shows that trauma can undermine children’s ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately in the classroom.

HWC alerts can be triggered automatically through an initiated event in the Social/Emotional Wellness platform or may be activated by identified staff members. Schools are encouraged to review their HWC alerts on a monthly basis to determine students that need additional support.

