



School-Based Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Teams (BTAM)

Q 1. What is the legislation that requires schools to develop Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams?

A On August 1, 2022, Governor Phil Murphy signed [N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.4](#) into law. This legislation requires the establishment of threat assessment teams in public schools, including charter and renaissance school projects.

Q 2. What does the law say?

A *“The board of education of each school district and the board of trustees of each charter school or renaissance school project shall develop and adopt a policy for the establishment of a threat assessment team at each school. The purpose of a threat assessment team shall be to provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students of concern, assessing those students’ risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities, and delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk, to prevent targeted violence in the school and ensure a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community.”*

Q 3. Do the Paramus Public Schools have a Board Policy for this mandate?

A **Yes.** Paramus Public Schools has adopted [Board Policy 5131.5](#), which includes guidelines for the establishment of Threat Assessment Teams.

Q 4. Does each school have its own team?

A **Yes.** Threats can occur at any grade level. Therefore, a team has been established at each school.

Q 5. Who is on these teams?

A Threat assessment teams must be multidisciplinary in membership and, to the extent possible, include the following members: 1. A school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or other school employee with expertise in student counseling; 2. A teaching staff member; 3. A school principal or other senior school administrator; 4. A safe schools resource officer or school employee who serves as a school liaison to law enforcement; and 5. The school safety specialist designated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.3.

Q 6. Are team members trained?

A **Yes.** Team members have participated in training provided by New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The training covered guiding principles of threat assessment and management, including how to identify, assess, and investigate threats and other concerning behavior. Our team members learned step-by-step procedures for gathering information, evaluating potential threats, and developing plans to reduce risk and maintain school safety. The training - grounded in national research and best practices - was conducted by experts with experience investigating school threats and shootings. In addition, district mental health professionals, security personnel, and School Safety Officers (SROs) received advanced training from law enforcement school-security professionals.

Q**7. What is the purpose of school-based threat assessment and management?****A**

The purpose of school-based threat assessment and management is to help schools identify, evaluate, and address potential threats before harm occurs. The team's work helps distinguish between situations where a student makes a threat but does not actually intend harm, and situations where a student poses a genuine threat of targeted violence.

Specifically, teams: 1) Help staff identify students exhibiting behaviors of concern; 2) Assess those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities; 3) Implement intervention strategies to manage potential risk; 4) Prevent targeted violence and promote a safe, supportive learning environment for all.

Q**8. What is considered a behavioral threat?****A**

A behavioral threat is any communication or behavior indicating an intent to harm someone, whether spoken, written, gestured, or expressed digitally (e.g., via text, email, or social media). A threat is considered serious regardless of whether it is directed at the intended target or whether the target is aware of it. Threats may also be implied through actions or behaviors that a reasonable observer would interpret as threatening, such as planning or preparing to commit a violent act. Schools must treat any concerning communication or behavior as a potential threat and conduct an assessment.

Q**9. What is the difference between a suicidal risk assessment and a behavioral threat assessment?****A**

A suicidal risk assessment is conducted when there is concern that a student may harm themselves, whereas a behavioral threat assessment is conducted when there is concern that a student may harm others. Behavioral threat assessments require a multidisciplinary team approach. In some situations, both concerns may exist, and both assessments may be conducted simultaneously.

Q**10. How can a possible threat be reported?****A**

Districts are required to have a central reporting mechanism. Paramus Public Schools uses the Gaggle SpeakUp for Safety Tipline, which allows individuals to confidentially report threats of violence or information about peers in crisis.

SpeakUp for Safety Tipline: 📞 Call/Text: (201) 292-0300 ✉️ Email: speakup@paramusschools.org

This information is available on all district and school websites. Please note: The tipline is monitored during school hours only. Always call 911 in an emergency. Families and caregivers should continue to use the HIB 338 Form to report alleged acts of Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying.

Q**11. What behaviors should be reported?****A**

Any verbal statement, electronic message, online post, or observable behavior that communicates a potential threat of violence toward any student, staff member, or school facility should be reported immediately.

Students expressing fascination with violence or hate-based topics should prompt early intervention. There is no single warning sign or formula to predict violent behavior, but research shows that targeted violence typically follows an escalating pathway over time. If you have a valid concern but are unsure of its severity, report it—the school's Threat Assessment Team will investigate and determine next steps.

Resources

[10 Key Findings to Avert School Violence](#)

[Sandy Hook Promise: Gun Violence Warning Signs](#) | [Sandy Hook Promise: Warning Signs You Shouldn't Ignore](#)