

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

**A.** *On August 1, 2022, Governor Phil Murphy signed into legislation [N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.4](#), requiring the establishment of threat assessment teams in public, 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. [Board Policy 5131.5](#) includes guidelines for Threat Assessment Teams.*

**Q. 4. Will each school have their own team?**

**A.** *Yes. Threats can occur at any level. Therefore, a team will be established at each school.*

**Q. 5. Who will be on these teams?**

**A.** *Threat assessment teams must be multidisciplinary in membership and, to the extent possible, include the following individuals: 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. Will the team members be trained?**

**A.** *Yes. Our team members have participated in training provided by NJDOE. The training provided guiding principles regarding threat assessment and management, including how to identify and investigate threats and other concerning behavior. Our team members were provided step-by-step procedures related to gathering information to assess threats; and, where necessary, developing and implementing plans to reduce risk and help maintain school safety, from national experts with experience investigating school threats and shootings. The training was grounded in research and current best practice for preventing targeted school-based violence. In addition, our mental health professionals as well as our security team members and School Safety Officers (SROs) received Advanced Training from law enforcement security professionals.*

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

**A.** *The purpose of the team is to identify, evaluate, and address potential threats to help schools distinguish between incidents where a student made a threat that is not actually legitimate (with no intent to harm) and other incidents in which the student does pose an actual threat of targeted violence, and specifically to: 1) Provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students with behaviors of concern; 2) Assess those students' risk for engaging in violence or other harmful activities; 3) Deliver intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk; and 4) 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. 8. What is considered a behavioral threat?**

**A.** *A behavioral threat is a communication of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or expressed in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other digital means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended target(s) and regardless of whether the intended target is aware of the threat. Threats may be implied by behavior that an observer would reasonably regard as threatening, planning, or preparing to commit a violent act. When in doubt, the school must treat the communication or behavior as a threat and conduct a threat assessment.*

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

**A.** *Suicidal risk assessments are screenings that are conducted when there is concern that a student may harm themselves, while behavioral threat assessments are investigations conducted when there is a concern that a student may be planning to harm others. Behavioral threat assessments require a team approach. In some cases, both concerns may exist and both therefore, both assessments would be conducted.*

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

**A.** *Districts are required to set up a central reporting mechanism. Our district will be using Gaggle Speak Up Safety Tipline. The tipline allows individuals to confidentially report threats of violence or information about peers in crisis. Note: Families/Caregivers should continue to use the HIB 338 Form to report alleged acts of Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying.*

*SpeakUp for Safety Tipline: (201) 292-0300 (call/text) or [speakup@paramusschools.org](mailto:speakup@paramusschools.org). This information is accessible on our district and school websites. Please be advised that the tipline is monitored during school hours. Always call 911 in an emergency.*

**Q. 11. What are considered prohibited and concerning behaviors that should be reported?**

**A.** *Any verbal statement, electronic message, online post, or observable/gestured behavior that communicates a potential threat of violence by or towards any of our students, staff or facilities should be reported to the school as soon as possible. Students showing interest in violent or hate-filled topics should elicit immediate intervention. It is important to note that there is no set amount of warning signs or formula to predict if someone will act out violently, and there is no accurate profile. Nonetheless, there is a pathway to targeted or intended violence that escalates over time. Intervening early is important, so if you have a valid concern but aren't sure of the level of the threat, report it and let the school investigate.*

**Resources**

[10 Key Findings to Avert School Violence](#)  
[Sandy Hook Promise: Gun Violence Warning Signs](#) | [Sandy Hook Promise: Warning Signs You Shouldn't Ignore](#)