Lloydminster Violence-Threat Risk Assessment Community Protocol

A Collaborative Response to Threat-Making Behaviours

VTRA

Updated:

September 2025

Lloydminster Violence-Threat Risk Assessment and Support Community Protocol

A Collaborative Response to Student Threat-Making Behaviours

A multidisciplinary partnership is committed to early intervention, violence prevention, a multi-perspective assessment, and a support system for the Lloydminster community in a manner that reflects the goals of all Lloydminster community partners.

The original Community Violence - Threat Risk Assessment Community Protocol was signed in August of 2013.

Lloydminster Partners has recommitted to the partnership by resigning on the following dates: September 2025.

We are further committed to reviewing the protocol yearly.

The protocol reflects the work of J. Kevin Cameron, Director of the Canadian Centre for Trauma-Informed Practices.

Violence Threat Risk Assessment Sixth Edition

Credit to Saskatoon and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol

Violence, Trauma and Suicide Prevention, A Community Response Protocol, Strathcona County

Prince Albert and Area Community Threat Assessment and Support Protocol

August 2013 June 2025

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Partners

The Lloydminster Public School Division and the Lloydminster Catholic School Division are our area's lead partners in the Violence-Threat Risk Assessment Community Protocol. That said, all partners are committed to making our community safer. The term "partner" in this document is not intended to be a legal term, but rather a collaborative arrangement. Community partners include the following agencies and organizations:

Lloydminster Catholic School Division

Lloydminster Public School Division

RCMP - Lloydminster City Detachment

City of Lloydminster

Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services- Correctional Services Division

Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Saskatchewan Child and Family Services

Alberta Children and Family Services

Saskatchewan Health Authority – Mental Health & Addictions Services

Lakeland College

SPARK Foundation

Responsibilities of Protocol Partners

To ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the VTRA Community Response Process, Community Partners agree to:
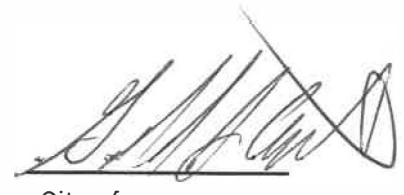
- Work together for the benefit of the Individual of Concern (IOC) to:

  - Work in ways that promote safe and caring practices for protocol partners and the community as a whole.

  - Prioritize the need for promotion, prevention and intervention strategies that demonstrate effectiveness in supporting the IOC, their family and any others impacted in the situation.

- Develop organizational policies and strategies for activating and responding to the VTRA process.

- Commit to ongoing staff VTRA Level 1 and Level 2 Training.

- Ensure Fair Notice policies and procedures are provided to protocol partners' stakeholders to inform individuals about the VTRA collaboration process.

- Participate in implementing a support plan following a VTRA as appropriate for your organization.
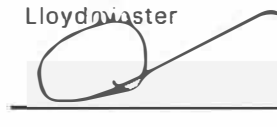
LPSD

LCSD

City of Lloydminster

Alberta Children and Family Services

Saskatchewan Child and Family Services

RCMP

Lakeland College

SPARK

Saskatchewan Health Authority

Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services- Correctional Services Division

Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Overview

Background

The general purpose of a Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocol is to assist in making our community safer. The primary purpose of the multidisciplinary VTRA protocol is to identify indicators that suggest an individual may be moving on a pathway toward violence against himself/herself or others and intervene to decrease threat risk, prevent injury, and provide support to all involved in a caring and collaborative way.

Purpose

The Lloydminster Community Partners outlined in this protocol are committed to making the community safer through collaborative efforts and sharing necessary information. This enables the team to create supportive and preventative plans to enhance a safe working and learning environment within our community.

As a result, all signing community agencies agree to follow the protocol to address behaviours that pose a potential risk to others within our community. It is hoped that by supporting early intervention measures, we will prevent school violence in learning or work environments.

The strength of the community partnerships lies in the multi-disciplinary composition of the response team. Without delay, the response team will share and review information and the event's details or threat to collaborate using a broad range of expertise. This protocol facilitates communication between agencies so that when the Violent Threat - Risk Assessment and Support team is activated, appropriate community partners may communicate relevant information.

Community partners will commit to ongoing staff development in violence threat risk assessment training as part of the protocol design. Along with Level 1 and Level 2 VTRA training, partners may provide additional training opportunities to support the knowledge and skill set of the protocol members within their organizations or the community as a whole.

This collaborative process will respect the individual's rights to privacy and safety.

Vision

All partners are accountable to the protocol's purpose and have a shared obligation to actively take steps to prevent violence.

The partners agree to work together to reduce the threat and ensure school community safety by proactively sharing information, advice, and support to prevent a potential traumatic event.

As partners, we will work together for the benefit of our community by:

- Building relationships based upon mutual respect and trust

- Involving the individual and their support system in planning supports and services.

- Working in ways to promote safe and caring environments and practices

- Recognizing that each person has unique strengths and that this must be considered when developing a support plan to meet their needs.

- Being patient, collaborative, and persistent takes time and effort, but it is necessary to support community members in being happy, resilient, healthy, and caring individuals.

- Realizing that working together successfully is a process of learning, listening, and understanding one another

- Ensuring Fair Notice of policies and procedures regarding Violent Threat Risk Assessment is provided to all protocol partners' staff, families, students, patients, subjects, or clients served.

Threat Assessment

What is Threat Assessment?

A team approach is used to determine the credibility and seriousness of a threat and the likelihood that it will be carried out. The team may include School and/ or School Division representatives, Police, a Psychiatrist, a Social Worker, a Community Counselor, a Probation Officer, and/or other community agency representatives.

Determining When to Activate a Violence Threat/Risk Assessment

The Community VTRA - Response is intended to provide all partner organizations with a common threat assessment response that encourages a multi-disciplinary approach to violence prevention. High-risk behaviours are those behaviours that cause concern for members of the community and may indicate that an individual is moving towards the risk of serious violent behaviour. Formal categories for VTRA activation include, but are not limited to :

- Serious violence or violence with the intent to harm or kill another person

- Verbal or written threats to seriously harm or kill others, to cause significant property damage. (clear, direct, plausible)

- Internet, website, and social media threats to seriously harm others

- Possession of weapons, including replicas

- Bomb threats - making and detonating explosive devices

- Fire setting

- Sexual intimidation or assault

- Extreme cases of bullying and/or harassment

- Gang-related intimidation and violence

- Rehearsal behaviours or evidence of planning

- Hate incidents are motivated by factors such as race, culture, religion, or sexual diversity

In many situations, there may be lesser, yet worrisome behaviours present that should not be ignored. These include, but are not limited to:

- Writing, blogging or social media posts that contain violent content or call for violence

- Drawing violent images

- Making vague, threatening statements

- Significant changes in baseline behaviour, or a shift from expected responses and behaviour

What is a threat?

A threat is an expression of Intent to do harm or act violently against someone or something. Threats may be verbal, written, drawn, posted on the Internet, or made by gesture. They must be taken seriously, Investigated, and responded to.

What is the purpose of a Threat Assessment?

- To ensure the safety of all.
- To ensure a full understanding of the context of the threat.
- To begin understanding the factors contributing to the threat makers' behaviour.
- Proactively develop an intervention plan that addresses the emotional and physical safety of the threat maker.
- To promote the emotional and physical safety of all.

What happens in a Threat Assessment?

The Process:

- A trained VTRA member shall report all threat-making behaviour (s) to the organization trained leader, who will activate the protocol for the initial response.

- Once the team has been activated, interviews may be held with the witnesses, the threat maker, and others to determine the level of risk and develop an appropriate response to the incident.

- Risk/need assessments will examine relevant information and determine If an individual of concern may pose a further risk.

- Intervention plans will be developed and shared with the individual, their caregivers, their support system, and others as required.

Duty to Report

Staff, parents, students, and community members must report all threat-related behaviours to keep communities safe and caring.

Activation of Community VTRA Protocol Response

When a community partner staff member determines the need to activate a VTRA, they will notify their designated lead team member. Team members will always take any actions seen as necessary to ensure immediate safety without delay, regardless of the involvement or availability of other community team members. Communication will occur between the appropriate partner agencies to determine the location and the data collection team that will be involved in the initial stages.

VTRA Process

Stage 1: Data collection and immediate risk-reducing interventions:

This stage is where the site of the threat begins to collect data to ensure immediate safety. This Initial data collection often takes two hours or less, where the team is focused on collecting readily available data that denotes the threat-maker has "engaged in behaviour consistent with their threat" (eg, bag check, locker check, police check, student file/record, etc.). This step may involve using the At Risk to Others (ARTO) screening form, and/ or completing the ARTO Micro Assessment form or the Stage 1 Violent Threat - Risk Assessment form.

Stage II: Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Risk Evaluation:

This stage focuses on further data collection beyond the initial Stage 1 collection. This is done when stage 1 collection has determined that more information is needed, and collaboration among the protocol partner group is required. This stage may involve completion of the ARTO Macro Assessment form.

Stage II members become involved by either providing otherwise confidential information regarding Immediate risk or telephone consultation on the case at hand. Stage II VTRA members are informed by the Stage I team of the activation of the protocol and any initial data the team has already collected. Upon report of the activation of the protocol, partner agencies check to see if the individual in question was a client and determine if they are in possession of pertinent information related to the identified risk enhancers that, in conjunction with Stage I data, requires them to "disclose". See "Inter-Agency Information Sharing and Confidentiality "in the attachments.

Stage III: Multi-disciplinary intervention:

This is a formal meeting of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 members following a Violent Risk Assessment or an at-Risk to Others Macro Assessment. The purpose of Stage III is to develop and implement a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary support plan. In addition to the partners, the individuals of concern and their support people should be invited to the meeting.

Community Partners will be responsible for creating and maintaining internal processes and practices consistent with the model. Legislation allows for the release of information if there is an imminent threat to health and safety. Each partner is responsible for providing Fair Notice to the clients they serve.

Documentation:

The site team completes the Stage 1 site-specific At Risk to Others Assessment or the Violent Threat Risk Assessment Report. It serves as a written record of the site-specific assessments and intervention. The written report and/or information from the meeting may be shared with community partners as needed.

If the plan requires support from the community partners outside of the specific site, that organization may receive a copy of the report. In all cases, it is essential that all information gathered and reports made are stored with the utmost confidentiality. The following principles should be followed:

- At a minimum, partner organizations should ensure their personnel follow privacy legislation which pertains to their agency.

- Information written and reported must be kept confidential and shared only on a "need to know" basis.

- Information shared is only for the purpose it was created.

- Written reports are stored securely and retained only for the time required for the purpose for which they were created.

Community partners must ensure that policies and/ or procedures are in place to protect the confidentiality of all information received by the organization and its employees through the assessment process.

Requests to amend information or requests for access to information will be addressed in accordance with the legislation applying to the agency to which the request is made.

Categories of Behaviour to Consider

There is a wide range of concerning behaviours. It is sometimes difficult, however, to determine whether or not to activate a formal Violence Threat/Risk Assessment (VTRA) process or the At Risk to Others Assessment. The following guidelines are intended to help school personnel make this determination, but there are no hard and fast rules. It is important to carefully consider each and every individual incident to ensure the most appropriate response.

1. Immediate Risk Situations

These situations include armed intruders inside the building or on the periphery who pose a risk to some target or targets, or active shooter (attacker) scenarios. When immediate risk is identified, contact the police and take steps to ensure the safety of everyone. In these cases, a threat has been posed, and the matter is one of immediate police intervention and protective school response, not Stage 1 VTRA or ARTO.

 Acts of violence are over in a matter of minutes, usually before police arrive. It is vital that institutions have a plan which everyone understands, drills have been conducted, and everyone knows what to do. In these situations, minutes count and seconds count even more. A solid lockdown plan, which is understood by everyone (staff, students, parents and visitors) and which Is exercised on a regular basis through drills, will save lives. The Importance of having lockdown plans in place can't be overstated. The fact that a solid lockdown plan exists, in itself, may serve as a deterrent to an individual who may be contemplating an act of targeted violence.

In these situations, the VTRA will not undertake a formal Threat/Risk Assessment until the situation has been stabilized, the assailant has been detained, and the formal VTRA services have been requested. In many cases, the legal system will have already referred the assailant for a comprehensive forensic assessment. VTRA Committees may still request an assessment or review by the VTRA Team prior to making decisions about re-entry into the regular school system if the assailant is a student.

  2. Early Elementary Students

If there is a significant increase in baseline behaviour, weapons possession or clear, direct, and plausible threats, the formal VTRA protocol will still be activated. Nevertheless, when younger children engage in violent or threat-related behaviours, developmental and exceptional issues need to be taken into consideration. Generally speaking, most threat-related behaviours exhibited

by elementary-aged students would fall into the category of 'worrisome behaviours'. However, just because an individual of concern is at an elementary age does not mean they cannot pose a risk.

3. Worrisome Behaviours

Worrisome behaviours are those that cause concern for members of the organization, which may indicate that an individual is moving toward a greater risk of violent behaviour. This would include instances where an individual student may be engaging in behaviours such as drawing pictures, writing stories, or making vague statements that do not, of themselves, constitute "Uttering threats" as defined by law, but are causing concern for some members of the organization because of their violent content.

The majority of high-risk behaviour, from children and youth aged 5 - 18, falls into this category. In keeping with zero tolerance for not responding to threat-related behaviour, all worrisome behaviours will be communicated to the VTRA's administrative and clinical members for consultation. In these cases, the team is not activated formally. The concerned agency may choose to connect with the school Principal, mental health etc, as to whether or not some formal action (assessment) should occur. The police member of the VTRA team may be consulted, but not through a formal "complaint" because there is insufficient data/evidence to warrant that action. If further data is obtained that suggests the student has been violent, uttered threats to kill, or Is In possession of a weapon, then the team is formally activated to deal with the new data.

In many cases, following up on "Worrisome Behaviours" results in good early intervention measures. There are also cases where "a little data leads to a lot," and what seems like a minor case can quickly evolve to the formal activation of the VTRA team.

4. Outside of Working Hours Cases

If a VTRA member receives information regarding a threat that is "clear, direct, and plausible" before or after hours, police will be called, and the possible target or their parent(s) or caregiver(s), if minors, will be notified immediately so that they can take steps to protect themselves.

As a second step, the V-TRA team will be activated if the situation is deemed to have the potential to pose an ongoing risk to some member(s) of the organization or community. Open communication between protocol organizations and police regarding non-work hour cases is essential. Many evening or weekend incidents occur that continue into the school or work environment the next day. Therefore, school and protocol teams must be informed by their police colleagues about potential ongoing risks.

5. Unauthored Threats: Assessment and Intervention

Unauthored threats are typically threats to commit a violent act against an individual(s), specific group, or site (i.e. the school). They may be found written on bathroom walls or stalls, spray painted on the side of schools, posted on the Internet, letters left in a conspicuous place (teacher's desk), etc. The lack of ownership (authorship) of the threat generally denotes a lack of commitment. Nevertheless, there are steps that should be followed to:

1. Assess the unauthorized threat.
2. Attempt to identify the threat maker.
3. Avoid or minimize the crisis/trauma response.

6. Individuals with Special Needs and VTRA

The multidisciplinary VTRA protocol will not be activated when students with special needs engage in threat-making or aggressive behaviours that are typical of their "baseline". In other words, if their conduct is consistent with their diagnoses and how it has been known to manifest in them, then the VTRA Team will not be called upon to conduct an assessment. For instance, some students diagnosed along the Autism Spectrum or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum may have histories of verbal threatening when they are frustrated and make statements such as "I'm going to take a knife and kill you" as part of their typical baseline behaviour. This would not result in the activation of the VTRA Team. However, If the student with special needs moves beyond their typical baseline and for the first time is caught with a knife in their possession or threatened a target with a knife in their hand, than the V-TRA Team would be activated to assist in determining why the increase in baseline and do they pose a risk to self or others? When the initial Stage One findings confirm a moderate to high risk for a youth who is neurodivergent, the team should activate the Community Protocol using the Whole Person Assessment (WPA) worksheet and should engage professionals with expertise in diverse presentations and unique vulnerabilities of these individuals. Staff members from the school and division level responsible for program planning and service delivery to students with special needs will always be consultants to the VTRA Team in these cases.

Good case management with those with special needs means that agency (school or other) officials should already know more about these individuals than others, as program planning requires a comprehensive assessment in the first place. This foundational knowledge about the individuals means that any significant shift in baseline that meets the criteria for the VTRA protocol activation is easily identified: the purpose of the team would be to assist with determining why the increase occurs and then contribute to the Intervention planning.

There are times when the individual with special needs has had a "slow but steady" increase in the "frequency" and "intensity" of their violent or acting out behaviours. In these cases, there may not be a single incident prompting a Stage I Threat Assessment or an At Risk to Others (ARTO) assessment, but Information may emerge that requires the benefit of all or some of the Stage II members. Community Protocol Team members can include Mental Health, Children's Services, Probation, Hospital ER Units, Health, Psychology, Psychiatry, Police, and Specialized police services(such as Intimate Partner VIolence or Counter Violent Extremism, etc), and others who can be utilized to assist with more general violence risk assessment and intervention planning.

A note of caution: sometimes school and community members may under react to a serious threat posed by an individual with special needs assuming that all of their behaviours are caused by or a result of their diagnoses rather than consider that an individual with special needs can move along a pathway of "justification" as well. The same dynamics that can increase the risk of violence in the general student population can also be factors in contributing to the violence potential of the student with special needs, independent of their diagnoses.

7. Working with members of Ethnic Minorities

The potential for cultural bias is well documented in the psychological literature. When conducting a VTRA, cultural bias may be a function of:

(a) The construct being measured (VTR between Individuals of Western cultures may present differently from VTR between individuals of Western sub-cultures, such as Aboriginal populations, or non-Western cultures), or

(b) The content of the questions and/or how the questions are phrased (eg, language and culture may influence interpretation with respect to the interviewer and/or respondent).

Members of some minority cultures experience significant rates of poverty, racism, and discrimination, and language barriers may also exist. These factors, along with possible distrust for authority figures, can lead to multiple stressors that increase the perceived level of risk or actual risk. Therefore, when a Community Protocol meeting has been called, it would be advised to have a member from the same cultural background of the IOC as a consultant to mitigate possible cultural bias that may influence the outcome and interventions.

When interviewing individuals with special education needs, English as an Additional Language needs, or those who require accommodations for the deaf/blind, consider the need for a language or hearing-impaired interpreter. Ideally, friends and family should not be used as interpreters with children/witnesses.

Key Approaches in Risk/Threat Assessment

1. Sharing of Relevant Information

   Any of the partners shares information on a proactive basis to avert or minimize Imminent danger that affects the health and safety of any person.

2. Investigative Mind-Set

   This is central to the successful application of the risk/threat assessment process.

   Threat assessment requires thoughtful probing, viewing Information with healthy skepticism and paying attention to key points about pre-attack behaviours.

   Personnel carrying out risk/threat assessment must strive to be accurate and fair.

3. Building Capacity

   Threat assessment training will be provided to as many school personnel and community members as possible.

4. Program Review

   The Lloydminster Community Protocol will be reviewed annually or upon the request of a signatory.