

# Threat Assessment and Response Protocols

At Norwood Public Schools, we work to ensure a safe and nurturing educational environment for our children, our teachers, and our staff. Below is an overview of our district approach to any potentially threatening comments, behavior, or circumstances should any such instances develop in any of our schools. The threat assessment protocol in the NPS was created collaboratively with the Norwood Police Department and Norwood Fire Department/EMS, with input and resources secured from FEMA, the Massachusetts State Police, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council and the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council .

## Threat Assessment Protocol

Whenever school and/or district administration receives information that an individual may have made a threatening comment or action targeting oneself, others, or one of our schools, our threat-assessment protocol is enacted and our administrative team immediately contacts the Norwood Police Department through our School Resource Officers and School Liaison Officers. In general\*, our threat assessment protocol and action steps are as follows:

- The administrative team immediately works to determine the validity of the threat and the risk it poses based on the information available and the origin of the threat (most often social media). If known, the persons involved are engaged immediately regardless of day and time.
- The Norwood Police Department engages in a separate investigation of the potential threat, and in cooperation with the administrative team, a final determination is made regarding the level of risk the threat poses.
- Whenever appropriate, our mental health professionals assist in determining the danger to oneself, others, or the school population.
- Depending upon the level of risk determined by the entire team, any one of the following next steps may occur separately or in conjunction with one another:
  - If the team determines there is a credible threat, we would enact our security measures if this occurs during the school day (Run, Hide, Fight) or possibly close the school if the threat is made in advance of the school day.
  - If the team determines that the information is not a valid threat, continue normal operations or make accommodations to ensure a safe environment.
  - Implement appropriate school-determined consequences.
  - Implement appropriate law enforcement determined consequences.
  - Seek further risk-assessment evaluations by mental health professionals outside of the school to prevent harm to self or others.

- Upon consideration of all available information, consider school re-entry requirements when appropriate.
- After the incident is over, the entire team debriefs procedures and resulting consequences. An overview of the event is then communicated as appropriate.

*\* This overview is generalized to preserve a level of operational security for the school district and law enforcement.*

## **Communication**

With each of these potential threats, we follow our assessment protocol; however, each situation is treated as a unique and individual circumstance requiring case-specific determinations. In most cases, the community, the teachers, and the students do not have access to the full knowledge regarding the details of these primarily confidential and individual circumstances. This makes specific communication difficult. It is not our intent to provide vague and/or ambiguous information; instead, we try to give as much information as the law provides. Too often, careless use of social media results in reports of threats or statements that have no basis in fact and/or are just foolish in nature. If we have information that indicates a threat is credible, we will take decisive action and provide instruction immediately.