

Date: September 25, 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Horizon School Division is committed to providing safe learning environments for all students, staff, school visitors and community members. To enhance safety and security, division protocol requires Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) training of School Administrators, Family School Liaison Counsellors and district staff in order to ensure a multidisciplinary approach.

When students' behaviours pose a potential threat to safety or serious harm, the Southwest Alberta Regional Violence Risk Threat Assessment (VTRA) Protocol helps Administrators take steps to protect students' well-being. The protocol helps schools respond quickly to worrisome behaviours and/or threatening incidents such as: possession of a weapon or a replica weapon, bomb threats or plans, verbal, written or electronic (internet, text) threats to kill or injure oneself or others or other threats of violence, fire setting.

The protocol requires trained school staff, division staff and community partners, as a team to complete an Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO) in all cases where students makes threats to harm others. The purpose of the ARTO process is to use the knowledge, skill and experience available to assess level of concern so that appropriate interventions can be identified to protect individuals from harm and to ensure a climate of safety in schools and the community. As noted above, a multi-disciplinary approach is used. Please be assured that the school team will be taking measures to deal with all known threats/high risk behaviors in a positive and proactive manner. If the school team invites you to a meeting to discuss safety concerns about your child, please be assured that our protocol is being followed and that the goal is safety.

The Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol outlines how a school responds immediately to threatening behaviour. The purpose of the VTRA protocol is to support students and their families in addressing these worrisome behaviours. We believe that students demonstrating such behaviours require a team to support them. Administrators may first bring together a School Threat Assessment Team, which ideally includes the Principal/Vice-Principal, a school-based clinician/jurisdictional lead, and police. If the situation is serious, the Principal may also consult with the Superintendent of Schools, and call in members of the Community Threat Assessment Team. This community team may include representatives of community agencies who work with us to keep our schools safe such as local police, children's mental health organizations or Human Services. Parents and guardians will be notified as soon as possible in the Stage I-VTRA process. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, or if they choose not to provide consent, but a concern for safety still exists due to threatening behaviour, the threat assessment may still proceed. Personal information shared throughout this process will respect and balance each individual's right to privacy with the need to ensure the safety of all.

As always, student safety is our first priority. If you have any questions regarding Horizon School Division, Southwest Alberta Regional VTRA Protocol, please contact Angela Miller at 403-634-9767 or angela.miller@horizon.ab.ca

Sincerely,

Rachelle Miller

Rachelle Miller
Milk River Ridge School