The following model policies and procedures are consistent with the requirements of the Texas Education Code (TEC) 37.115 and reflect research-based best practices. Elements of the procedure that are aligned with TEC requirements include a cross-reference to the applicable section of the TEC. Please note this document is not to be used as a train the trainer model.

**MODEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ESTABLISH AND TRAIN ON THREAT ASSESSMENT**

**PURPOSE**
As part of the Safe and Supportive School Program, the purpose of this document is to provide model policies and procedures for public school districts and charter schools in establishing and training threat assessment teams in Texas.

**POLICY**
The Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) has worked with the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) in recommending a school board policy [FFB (LEGAL) & (LOCAL)] for Threat Assessment. School Boards must adopt LOCAL policies. LEGAL policies are required by law.

**DEFINITIONS**
- A “Threat assessment team” is a team that assesses and reports individuals who make threats of violence or exhibit harmful, threatening, or violent behavior and who gathers and analyzes data to determine the level of risk and appropriate intervention. The team serves as a safety net for the community and school by:
  1. conducting a fact-based, investigative approach to determining how likely a person is to carry out a threat of violence;
  2. identifying, assessing and managing appropriate interventions of individuals who are at risk for violence against themselves and others; and
  3. providing guidance to students and school employees on recognizing harmful, threatening, or violent behavior that may pose a threat to the community, school, or individual.

  When conducting this process with fidelity it leads to a positive and safe school climate. This process is not intended to be punitive or adversarial; rather, it is a way to build trust and situational awareness.

- "Harmful, threatening, or violent behavior" includes behaviors, such as verbal threats, threats of self harm, bullying, cyberbullying, fighting, the use or possession of a weapon, sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, stalking, or assault, by a student. [TEC 37.115(a)(1)]

- "Team" means a threat assessment and safe and supportive school team established by the board of trustees of a school district. [TEC 37.115(a)(2)]
A “threat” is a concerning communication or behavior that indicates that an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others. The threat may be communicated behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means, and is considered a threat regardless of whether it is observed by or communicated directly to the target of the threat or observed by or communicated to a third party, and regardless of whether the target of the threat is aware of the threat.

**THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM**

- The board of trustees of each school district shall establish a threat assessment and safe and supportive school team to serve at each campus of the district. [TEC 37.115(c)]
- The superintendent of the district shall ensure that the members appointed to each team have expertise in counseling, behavior management, mental health and substance use, classroom instruction, special education, school administration, school safety and security, emergency management, and law enforcement. [TEC 37.115(d)]
- A team may serve more than one campus of a school district, provided that each district campus is assigned a team. [TEC 37.115(d)]
- Each team must report required information regarding the team’s activities to TEA. [TEC 37.115(k)]
- The superintendent of a school district may establish a committee or assign to an existing committee established by the district, the duty to oversee the operations of teams established for the district. A committee with oversight responsibility must include members with expertise in human resources, education, special education, counseling, behavior management, school administration, mental health and substance use, school safety and security, emergency management, and law enforcement. [TEC 37.115(e)]
- Team members shall work collaboratively with each other, with other school staff, and (as appropriate) with community resources to support the purposes of the team and the safety of the school and its students and staff.
- All team members should be involved with the assessment and intervention of individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff or students.
- Team members shall actively, lawfully, and ethically communicate with each other; with school administrators; and with other school staff who have a need to know particular information to support the safety and well-being of the school, its students and its staff.
- Each team shall conduct a threat assessment that includes:
  1. assessing and reporting individuals who make threats of violence or exhibit harmful, threatening, or violent behavior; [TEC 37.115(f)(1)(a)]
  2. gathering/analyzing data to determine level of risk and appropriate intervention, including referring a student for mental health assessment and implementing an escalation procedure (if appropriate) [TEC 37.115(f)(1)(b)].
- Each team shall:
1. provide guidance to students and school employees on recognizing harmful, threatening, or violent behavior that may pose a threat to the community, school, or individual [TEC 37.115(f)(2)];
2. support the district in implementing the district’s multi-hazard EOP [TEC 37.115(f)(3)];
3. report immediately to the superintendent a team’s determination that a student or other individual poses a serious risk of violence to self or others [TEC 37.115(h)];
4. act in accordance with the district’s suicide prevention program upon identifying a student at risk of suicide [TEC 37.115(i)]; and
5. act in accordance with the district policies and procedures related to substance use prevention and intervention upon identifying a student using or possessing tobacco, drugs, or alcohol [TEC 37.115(j)].
• A team may not provide a mental health care service to a student who is under 18 without written consent from the parent of or person standing in parental relation to the student [TEC 37.115(g)].

BUILDING A THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM—8 STEPS

Step One: Create and promote safe school climates
- Assess current school climate
- Enhance current school climate
- Strengthen students’ connectedness

Step Two: Establish a multidisciplinary team
- Choose a team name
- Identify team membership
- Designate a team leader
- Establish team procedures and protocols
- Meet on a regular basis and as needed

Step Three: Define prohibited and concerning behaviors
- Establish policy defining prohibited behaviors
- Identify other behaviors for screening or intervention
- Define threshold for intervention

Step Four: Create a central reporting mechanism
- Establish one or more anonymous reporting mechanisms
- Provide training and guidance to encourage reporting
- Ensure availability to respond
- Establish trust that reports will be acted upon

Step Five: Determine threshold for law enforcement intervention
Most reports can be handled by school-based team
- Establish which behaviors should be referred for law enforcement intervention

**Step Six:** Establish threat assessment procedures
- Decide how to document cases
- Create procedures to screen reports
- Establish procedures for gathering information
- Organize information around 11 Investigative Questions
- Make assessment and decide on intervention

**Step Seven:** Develop risk management options
- Identify all available resources for creating individualized management plans
- Identify resources to assist targets/victims
- Establish points of contact for all resources

**Step Eight:** Conduct training for all stakeholders
- Training for threat assessment team
- Training for students, staff, and parents
- Training for students, staff, and community stakeholders to anonymously report dangerous, violent, or unlawful activity

**THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**
- Receive report about a person of concern and screen for the following: 1.) imminence; and 2.) to determine need for full threat assessment.
- If threat assessment team believes the report **does** present an imminent danger or safety concern:
  - immediately notify law enforcement
  - once the emergency has been contained, the threat assessment team should complete a full threat assessment inquiry
  - if report involves a student, TA team should notify superintendent, who will notify the parent/guardian [TEC 37.115(h)]
  - if report involves a student at risk of suicide, team shall conduct a full threat assessment inquiry in addition to actions taken in accordance with the district’s suicide prevention program [TEC 37.115(i)]
  - make other notifications (i.e., anyone that is/may be directly impacted)

**OR**

If threat assessment team **does not** believe the report presents an imminent danger or safety concern:
- determine if there is a need for a full threat assessment inquiry
- if no, document initial report and screening and add information to threat assessment database
- if yes, proceed with a full inquiry using steps below
• Gather information about the person and situation from various sources, including an internet search.
• Organize and analyze information using 11 Investigative Questions from the U.S. Department of Education and Secret Service threat assessment guide.
• Make assessment about whether the individual of concern poses a threat of violence or self-harm, or if they are otherwise in need of assistance/intervention.
• Develop and implement a case management plan to reduce risk.
• As needed, refer individual of concern to local mental health authority or health care provider for evaluation/treatment AND/OR refer for a full individual and initial evaluation (FIE)/treatment for special education services.
• Monitor, re-evaluate, and modify plan to ensure intended outcome.

**TRAINING**

• Each team must complete training provided by the TxSSC or a regional education service center (ESC) [TEC 37.115(c)].
• On a regular basis, each district should monitor its team membership and quickly replace and train required expertise as needed.
• Districts should develop a system to ensure all stakeholders receive training on a continual basis.
• If a District or Charter school chooses to contract with a company to provide training for their District and/or multiple campus teams, the Texas School Safety Center only recommends training by a company that uses the Federal model that was developed by the US Secret Service and Department of Education such as SIGMA, Salem-Keizer, The Virginia Model and the Dewey Cornell model.