A. Purpose

The Garrett County Public School System (GCPS) takes numerous steps to insure that students and staff will learn in a safe, secure, and caring environment. It is a priority of the GCPS system to provide a safe school environment for students, school staff, parents and guardians, agency and contracted service providers, volunteers, non-affiliated persons or other visitors in GCPS. This includes being in school buildings, on school property and/or attending school sponsored events. Providing a protocol for behavioral team assessment of threats made toward the GCPS system, a specific school, and/or those individuals noted above is necessary to provide for school safety and a safe school environment. The policy and procedures are implemented in accordance with the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018.

B. Scope

This policy will address threats of violence made toward the GCPS system in general, toward a specific school or activity, or individual or groups of students or adults, including school staff, parents and guardians, GCPS and agency contracted service providers, volunteers and non-affiliated persons or other visitors who are in school buildings, on school property and/or attending school sponsored events. This assessment includes all forms of threats directed toward the GCPS system, whether verbal, written, visual (gestures) or made on or off school property, including social media, phone calls, text messages and emails.

C. Policy Statement

It is the intent of the Garrett County Public Schools to take all necessary steps to insure a safe, secure and caring school environment. It is the intent of this policy to establish a school environment and climate in which instruction and learning can thrive without undue concerns for school violence and safety. This policy will establish procedures by which school safety will be provided for the GCPS system and the school community by implementing behavioral team threat assessment procedures.

D. Responsibilities

There is a shared responsibility to insure that schools and all persons who are on school property or at a school sponsored event are safe from threats of violence. Obviously the reporting of threats or potential threats of violence that are directed toward the schools or person or persons in school buildings, on school property or at a school event must occur before an assessment of that threat can be implemented. Reporters have to include both GCPS staff and students, as well as other school involved individuals and the greater community who may become aware of threats to enact school violence. Research has shown that in almost every case of school violence there were others who had concerns or prior knowledge that was not shared with those who could respond to a potential risk of violence. In these cases, had the information been shared, the planned violence and resulting tragedy caused by the perpetrator could have been avoided. There are many avenues by which a person may communicate their concerns to law enforcement or the school administration. The entire community needs to be seriously focused on reporting any possible concern of school violence so that it may be investigated. Providing information through the use of resources such as the Maryland Tip Line, emails, phone calls, or speaking to school staff or law enforcement can start an investigation and assessment of the risk of violence. While schools do practice various drills which are planned to prevent or mitigate injury should an act of violence occur, awareness and reporting of the threat must first occur before the assessment procedures can be implemented.
The accompanying procedures for this policy provide the protocol to follow should a threat be reported. The team threat assessment process will be used to immediately collect sufficient information by which to analyze and determine if the threat is credible and can be acted upon by the individual who has made the threat.

E. Definitions

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** A plan developed from the Functional Behavior Assessment data that identifies the inappropriate behavior and its contingencies. It includes positive behavioral interventions, strategies and supports; program modifications; and supplementary aids and services that may be required to address the problem behavior.

**Behavioral team threat assessment:** A structured group process used to identify, assess, and manage the risk of threats of targeted violence posed by an individual or group.

**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):** A collaborative, student-centered process for gathering information that reliably predicts the conditions and/or circumstances concerning why a student is exhibiting an inappropriate behavior. An FBA is an appraisal of a student’s behavior of concern to determine the function of that behavior for the student.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A plan that is developed by a team from various educational disciplines to ensure that a student with an identified disability receives specialized instruction and related services.

**Non-affiliated person:** A person who is not an employee, student, contractor, family member or friend of a student or staff.

**School safety plan:** A plan developed by a school team that addresses a potential safety concern of a student with planned monitoring and interventions to provide for the safety of the student and of other persons who are in the school building, on school property or at a school sponsored event.

**Threat:** An expression of an intent to cause physical harm to someone. The threat may be expressed/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. Threats may be direct (“I am going to beat you up.”) or indirect (“I’m going to find a way to get you”).

**Threat assessment:** A comprehensive process emphasizing an appraisal of observed (or reasonably observable) behaviors to identify potentially dangerous or violent situations, to assess them, and to manage/address them. (See JLDBD Threat Assessment Team Procedure)

**Threat assessment team (TAT):** A threat assessment team is composed of the school administration, mental health coordinator, pupil services staff and the school resource officer. A team may specifically be led by the principal and/or assistant principal, and include the school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, the pupil personnel worker, the mental health coordinator and the school resource officer. The student’s mental health therapist may also participate (if the student is receiving therapy and if the therapist is available). The composition of the team would depend on availability of staff and the initial perception of the seriousness of the threat. A teacher might also be included when appropriate. When the threat involves a student with a disability, an individual who has expertise with knowledge of students with disabilities should be included on the team.

**504 Plan:** A plan developed for students with identified disabilities who do not require specialized instruction, but do require accommodations needed to receive equal access to public education services and/or to accomplish life tasks.