A. **Purpose**

These procedures will provide the protocol to be used for team threat assessment. When a threat is reported to a school administrator, a behavioral threat assessment team will **immediately** assess the extent of the threat and determine what response or responses are to be implemented.

B. **Background**

Through the use of team threat assessment procedures, the students, school staff, parents and guardians, agency and contracted service providers, volunteers, non-affiliated persons or other visitors in GCPS will be provided with a school environment which is safe and caring and free from perpetrated harm or violence.

C. **Definitions**

**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.

**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 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.

**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.
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.

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.

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.

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 as quickly as possible to ensure student and staff safety. It is a systematic process that is designed to:

1. Identify individual(s) whose behavior(s) causes concern for violence.
2. Gather additional relevant information in a lawful and ethical manner.
3. Assess the individual(s) situation(s) in context based on all information available.
4. Manage the individuals(s) situation(s) to prevent violence and mitigate the impact of harm.

a. A low risk (transient threat) is one in which it is determined that the individual/situation does not appear to pose a threat of serious harm to self/others, and any exhibited issues/concerns can be resolved easily. It may involve an impulsive response to anger, frustration, or humor, and may be rhetorical. The individual may retract the threat or offer an apology. A low risk threat may be handled by the ordinary school disciplinary process at the discretion of the school administration.

b. A moderate risk (serious substantive threat) is one in which the person/situation does not appear to pose a threat of serious harm to self/others at this time, but exhibits behaviors that indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or serious harm to self/others; and/or exhibits other concerning behavior that requires intervention. Steps should be taken to:

i. Warn intended victims and their parents
ii. Take steps to protect potential victims
iii. Seek ways to resolve the conflict
iv. Enact discipline as required by policy
v. Develop Safety Plan

The person may not appear to present a threat of violence or serious harm to self or others at this time. If the threat is a result of conflict between students, the team should discuss ways to resolve the conflict. The behaviors exhibited may indicate a continuing intent and potential for future violence or to inflict serious harm on self or others. Intervention for the behavior is needed.

c. A high risk (very serious substantive threat) is one in which the person/situation appears to pose a threat of serious harm. A school disciplinary response is provided, and the team is to identify any specific behaviors that indicate both a continuing intent to harm and the person’s capacity to carry out the plan, or to acquire the capacity to do so;

1. Follow steps for moderate risk
2. The individual may also exhibit other concerning behavior that requires intervention
3. Screening of student for mental health services and counseling if not receiving counseling
4. Refer to law enforcement for investigation and evidence of planning and preparation and possible need for additional community resources
5. Develop a safety plan that reduces risk and addresses student needs. If it is a student with a disability review the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan. Provide a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) if needed in addition to a Safety Plan

d. An imminent threat exists when the person/situation appears to pose a clear and immediate threat of serious violence toward others that requires containment and action to protect identified or identifiable target(s). Other concerning behavior that requires response and intervention may also be exhibited. The threat may also require a critical incident response by the school, persons and police.

D. Administrative Procedures

1. Report of a Threat

a. When an individual expresses an intent to harm another person or persons, or engages in communication or behavior(s) that reasonably implies the likelihood of a threatening situation to students, school staff, parents and guardians, other visitors, GCPS and agency contracted service providers, volunteers and non-affiliated persons who are in school buildings, on school property or attending school sponsored activities, the threat, situation or threatening behavior should be reported to the school administrator.

b. Regardless of threat assessment action, required disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement must occur when required by school system policy or Maryland law or regulations.

c. An individual who believes that a person or situation presents an imminent threat of serious violence which requires containment of the threatening person should notify the School Safety Coordinator, the school SRO, the Supervisor of Safety and Security, and/or law enforcement. This may represent a possible critical incident with the required response such as evacuation, lockdown or shelter-in-place.

d. Should this occur, the school administration will inform the parents and/or guardians, the public and media to contact law enforcement for further information.
2. Upon the school administrator receiving a report of a threat being made toward the school in general, or to the individuals or groups noted above, the threat shall be reviewed and responded to by a school-based behavioral threat assessment team. The team shall determine through a threat assessment protocol the seriousness of the threat and the appropriate response to the threat. If the TAT determines that a critical incident response should be implemented, the administrator will immediately notify the school Safety Coordinator and law enforcement, if an SRO is not present on the team to do so. The GCPS Superintendent will also be promptly notified.

E. Threat Assessment Team Process:

When an individual becomes aware of a threat being made they shall immediately report it to the school administration. The response to the threat will then be processed by a threat assessment team (TAT).

1. The team should be led by the school principal, assistant principal or senior administrator on the team.
2. When a threat is reported, the school administrator and/or TAT team leader shall initiate an initial inquiry. In consultation with the TAT, or subset of the TAT, the leader will triage the threat.
3. A subset of the team, such as a school administrator, school counselor and/or other school based professional may be designated to screen and triage threat reports made to the team.
4. If the triage team makes a determination of the seriousness of the threat as substantive or presenting an imminent threat of school violence to the school, the administrator or team leader will immediately notify law enforcement in accordance with school system procedure and follow a critical incident response.
5. All team members should understand how to effectively screen and triage reported threats to determine the next steps to be taken.
6. The TAT will provide guidance to school staff, students and other individuals should the threatening behavior be recognized as representing anything other than a low risk (transient) threat.
7. The TAT will identify members of the school, school system, parents, family, or student(s) and others to whom threats other than transient threats should be reported.
8. The TAT and school administrator shall implement local school system policies for the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior poses a threat to the safety of school staff, students or other individuals.
9. As appropriate, the TAT will follow established procedures for referral for evaluation or treatment. They should provide disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement as required by the policies, regulations and codes.
10. The TAT will use the GCPS forms established to document the threat assessment process.

F. Assessment of a Threat:

If an imminent threat is not present and/or is contained, the school administrator or TAT leader will ensure that the screening or triage occurs to determine if the full TAT needs to be involved. Triage will involve:

1. Reviewing all threatening behavior or communication.
2. Reviewing school and other records for any prior history or interventions with the individual.
3. Conducting timely and thorough interviews of the reporter, the recipients or targets of the threat, other witnesses with knowledge, and the individual(s) who(m) is (are) engaged in threatening behavior or communication. This will provide for evaluation of the context, meaning and intent of the threat.
4. Maintaining the documentation in accordance with state law and school policy.

G. TAT Response Following Assessment

1. In a case involving a student with disabilities, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) should be conducted and a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) should be implemented as needed. If the student already has a BIP, it should be reviewed and revised as needed.
2. When the TAT is investigating someone who is threatening to harm others, the TAT shall also screen for suicidal ideation and self-harm with further evaluation and follow-up if needed.
3. Referral for mental health services should occur.
4. Safety plans will be developed for threats other than transient threats.
5. The school administrator will review and ensure that all documentation has been completed.