

Threat Assessment: Assessing the Risk of Harm to Self or Others

Student Interview

Student's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Date: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____

Interviewer(s): _____

STUDENT INTERVIEW (Questions from Guidelines for Responding to Student Threats of Violence): Briefly explain purpose of the meeting and establish rapport with the student.

Review of Threat:

Do you know why you are here today? What happened? What exactly did you say/do? What did you mean when you said/did that?

I know you must have had reasons to say/do that; can you explain what led up to it?

How would you do it (carry out the threat?)

What could happen that would make you want to carry out the threat?

What would happen if you did do it? (Review both the effects on intended victims and consequences for the student?)

What do you think the school should do in a situation in which a student makes a threat like this?

What were you feeling then? How do you feel now?

How do you think (the person threatened) felt?

Relationship with intended victim(s); ask about the specific intended victim(s):

How long have you known this person?

What has happened in the past between you and this person?

What do you think this person deserves?

Do you see any way things could be improved between you and this person?

Stress:

What kind of things have been going on with you lately? What sort of things are you worried about?

How has your schoolwork been lately? Are there things you have been worried about with your school work? Other things at school?

What is the worst thing that has happened to you lately? Have any other bad things happened? Is there something you regret or wish you could change?

Have there been any changes in your family? Has anyone been sick, moved away, or had anything bad happen to him or her?

Do you have any family members in jail or in prison?

Do you take any medication? Do you know why?

Have you been involved in any counseling?

Family Support:

Whom do you live with your family? Are there other family members you don't live with? Have there been changes in the past year?

Whom in your family are you close to?

How well do your parents or guardians know you?

Where do you go after school? Where are your parents at this time?

How strict are your parents? What do they do to punish you? When was the last time you got into trouble with them? What was the worst time?

How did your parent react (or how will they react) when they find out about this situation?

Depression:

What has your mood been like the past few weeks? Have you felt down or depressed at times? How bad has it been? (Be alert for statements of pessimism and hopelessness that might indicate suicide risk.)

Have you felt nervous or anxious? Irritable or short tempered? How bad has it been?

Have you ever felt like life wasn't worth living? Like maybe you would kill yourself?

Have you ever done something to hurt yourself on purpose? Have you ever cut yourself on purpose?

Have you had any problems with your sleep? Appetite? Energy level? Concentration?

Have you been taking any medication to help with your mood or for any other reason?

Note: If there are indications of suicidal thoughts or feelings, there should be a more extensive assessment of suicide risk. If necessary, develop a plan protecting the student and making appropriate referrals.

Psychotic Symptoms:

Ask a few probing questions and follow up if there is any indication of delusions or hallucinations. Phrase questions appropriate to the student's age and understanding.

Have you had any unusual experiences lately, such as hearing things that other cannot hear or seeing things that other cannot see?

Have you felt like someone was out to get you or wanted to harm you? Have you had any other fears that seem strange or out of the ordinary?

Do you have any abilities or powers that others do not have, such as ESP or reading minds?

Have you felt numb or disconnected from the world or felt like you were somehow outside your body?

Weapons:

Ask about any weapons mentioned in the threat.

You said that you were going to stab/shoot (name of victim). What were you going to stab/shoot him with?

Do you have a knife/gun/weapon? If so, what kind is it? If not, how would you get a hold of the gun/knife/weapon?

Have you ever had to use a gun/knife/weapon with someone? What happened?

What do you think would happen if you did use a knife/gun/weapon with (name of victim?)

Are there guns in your home? Have you ever used a gun for hunting or target shooting?

What do you think you might do if you had a gun?

Have you ever had to use the gun with someone? Have you ever thought about using a gun with someone?

Bulling:

Bulling is broadly defined and may include teasing, social exclusion, or other forms of humiliation in addition to physical threats of violence. The student may not use the term “bully” and may be reluctant to admit being the victim of bullying behavior, so be prepared to rephrase questions and probe for victim experiences.

Is there anyone who has threatened you recently? Is there anyone who makes you feel afraid? (Ask about sexual threats if appropriate to the situation.)

Is there anyone who has teased you or picked on you recently? Is there anyone who has beat you up or pushed you around? How about at home?

In response to any positive answer, follow up with more information: How often does it happen? What have you tried to do about it? Did you let any adult know about this? If so, what happened? Be alert to statements indicating that a bullied student feels like there is no solution to the problem or is contemplating revenge.

Aggressive Behavior:

Do people treat you fairly? Who has been unfair with you lately? When people treat you unfairly, what do you do about it?

When you get angry, what do you do? Has your temper ever gotten you into trouble?

Do you get into fights? When was the last time? What happened?

Have you ever threatened to harm anyone before?

Have you thought about what it would be like to hurt someone really badly? Have you written any stories or made any drawing that are violent?

Have you ever set fire to things?

Have you damaged your own property or someone else's property?

Have you ever intentionally hurt an animal?

School Discipline:

When was the last time you got into trouble in school? What happened?

Have you ever been suspended or expelled? If so, what for?

Have your parents ever been called to school or certain classes?

Do you feel that the rules at this school are fair? What has been unfair?

Delinquent Behavior:

Have you been in trouble with the law or with police before? What happened?

Have you ever gone to juvenile court? What was it about?

Have you done things that could have gotten you arrested or in trouble with the law? What was the worst thing? What else?

Do you drink beer, wine, or other alcohol? Have you ever? How often do you drink? When was the last time? Tell me about it.

Do you smoke/use marijuana? Have you ever? How often? When was the last time?

Have you used any drugs? How often? When was the last time? Tell me about it.

Exposure to Violence:

Do you see or hear of violence in your neighborhood?

Do you know anyone who has been shot, stabbed, or beaten up really badly?

Do people argue much at home? Does anyone get physically aggressive?

What kind of movies do you like? What kind of video games do you enjoy playing? What are your favorite internet sites?

Also, ask about his or her reactions to any recent reaction to any acts of violence in the news.

Peer Relations:

What are your friends like? Have you had any trouble with your friends lately? Who is your best friend?

How would your friends describe you?

Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend? (Keep in mind that the student might not be heterosexual, and there may be concerns in this area.) How are things going with him/her? Did you have one before? What happened in that relationship?

Do you have friends who get you into trouble?

Have you ever joined a gang or been part of a group like a crew, clique, posse, or mob?

Do any of your friends know about (refer to threat situation?) What was said about it? Is there anyone who feels the same as you do?

Coping:

How do you like to spend your free time?

What kinds of things do you do well?

What are your hobbies and interests? What do you enjoy doing?

Can you think of a problem you faced in the past that worked out okay? Can you think of a problem that you solved? Can you think of a time when you went to someone about a problem and that person was able to solve it?

What are your plans for the future? What would you like to do when you finish school?

What could we do that would help with (refer to the problem that led to the threat?)

