



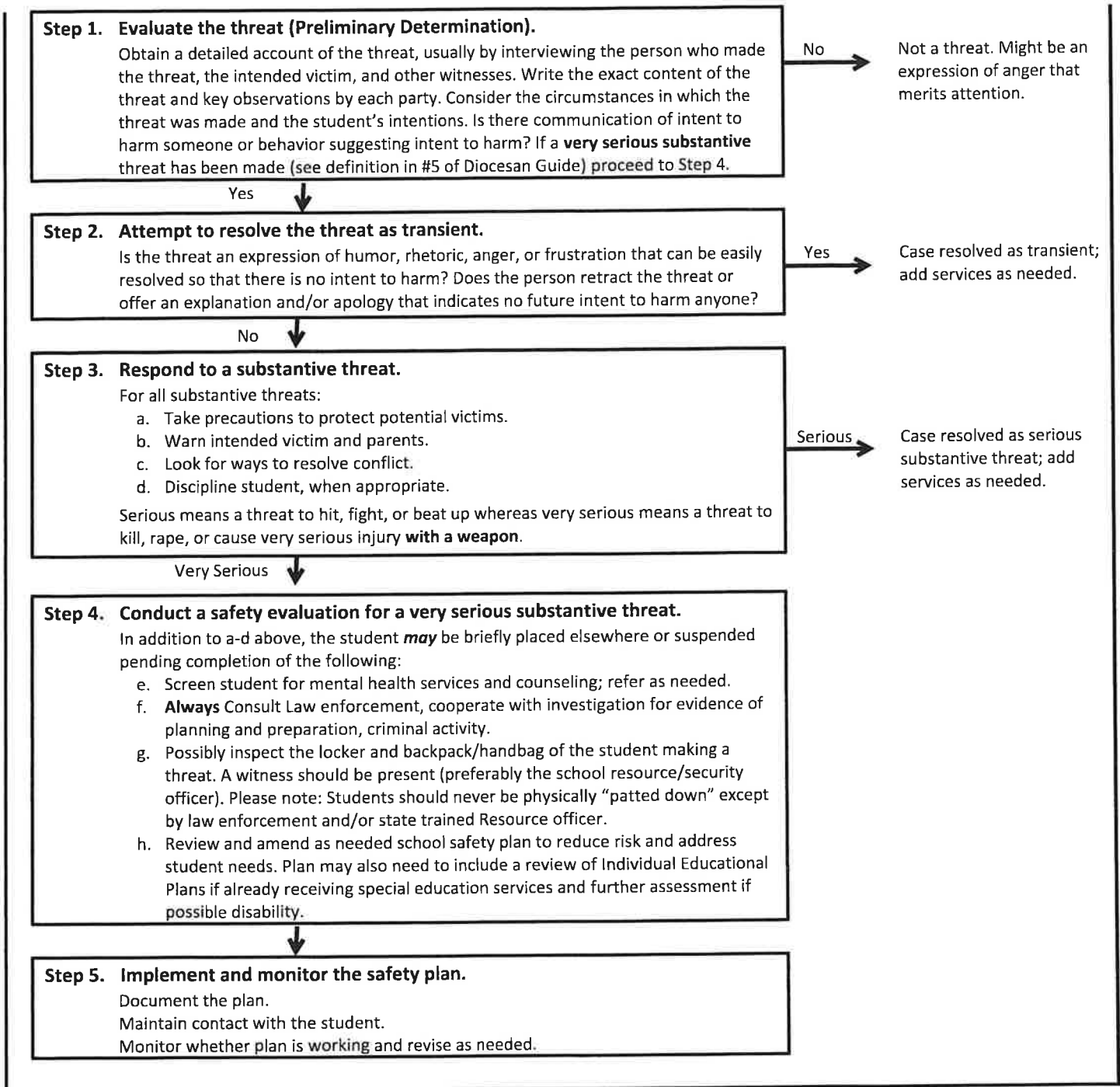
Diocese of Steubenville
Threat Assessment Decision Tree (Adapted for the Diocese of Steubenville)
Office of Christian Formation and Schools

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Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines and Protocol for Catholic Schools – Exhibit J

*The following has been adapted from the nationally recognized **Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG)**, recommended to schools in the State of Ohio by the Ohio Department of Education. This guidance shall be consulted for the purposes of assessing and responding/addressing **threats of all types, made by students to or towards other students or adult school staff**. Subsequent **disciplinary responses** should be in accordance to diocesan and school handbooks.*

1. A threat is a communication of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or expressed in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other digital means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended target(s) and regardless of whether the intended target is aware of the threat.
2. Threats may be implied by behavior that an observer would reasonably regard as threatening, planning, or preparing to commit a violent act. When in doubt, treat the communication or behavior as a threat and conduct a threat assessment. Threats that are not easily recognized as harmless (e.g., an obvious joke that worries no one) should be reported to the school administrator or other school threat assessment team members (such as a school resource officer or security personnel, school disciplinarian/Dean of Students, Guidance Counselor, or School psychologist/counselor).
3. A threat assessment begins when a threat is reported to the principal or any other member of the school's threat assessment team. The administrator or another team member makes a preliminary determination of the seriousness of the threat. The student, targets of the threat, and other witnesses should be interviewed to obtain information using this protocol. Please note that a **preliminary determination** is in fact only *preliminary* and does not imply a full-depth investigation. Nor should a full in-depth investigation be completed before the team take more immediate action, as in the case of an apparent substantive threat. The **School Threat Assessment Decision Tree is a guide** for conducting a threat assessment, but each case may have unique features that require some modification.
4. The guide makes a distinction between a **transient threat**, which means there is no sustained intent to harm and a **substantive threat**, which means the intent is present (or not clear) and therefore requires protective action. The assessment begins with a triage process to determine whether the threat can be quickly and easily resolved as a transient threat that does not pose a serious threat of violence (most cases) or will require more extensive assessment and intervention as a substantive threat. **Transient threats** are often statements that **do not express a serious intent to harm someone**, and can range from joking comments to momentary expressions of frustration. Transient threats are usually resolved when a student calms down and apologizes.
5. Substantive threats are **by definition** threats where there is a communicated intent to do serious harm someone. Substantive threats are divided into **serious** substantive threats involving a fight or assault and **very serious** substantive threats that involve **a threat to kill, rape, or use a weapon to inflict severe injury**. In cases of very serious substantive threats, **unless it is very clear and there is absolutely no doubt** that the threat was made in jest or as rhetoric, the team shall **always** consult with law enforcement and may choose to also require that the student obtain a mental health assessment as a condition for returning to the classroom.
6. A threat assessment is not a crisis response. If there is indication that violence is imminent (e.g., person has a firearm at school or is on the way to school to attack someone), a crisis response is appropriate. Take immediate action such as calling 911 and follow the school crisis response plan.



*This 5-step decision tree is a revision of the original 7-step decision tree for the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines that retains the same information and procedures in a more condensed format. 9-22-2023 revision.