

Safety Procedures Concerning Threats

Many challenges face our public schools today. In light of the violence that has occurred in schools around the country, all threats by pupils against other students and school personnel will be taken seriously and may subject the pupil to school disciplinary procedures as well as criminal prosecution. The Totowa School District takes seriously any threat made against another student that may jeopardize the safety and well-being of any other student or staff member, regardless of the intent. Because school administrators can never be sure whether the accused intends to carry out the threat at some time, threats made against another student or staff member will be thoroughly investigated. Therefore, the Totowa school administration will adhere to the following procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff members in Totowa's schools. These procedures are consistent with, but may exceed, section 4.10 of the Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement between Educators and Law Enforcement Officials.

When a threat has been called to the attention of the school administration the following procedures will be implemented:

1. As required by the Memorandum of Agreement between Educators and Law Enforcement, section 4.10: The School principal will immediately notify the school liaison officer or shift commander whenever any school employee in the course of his or her employment develops reason to believe that a student has threatened, is planning, or otherwise intends to cause death, serious bodily injury, or significant bodily injury to another person under circumstances in which a reasonable person would believe that the student genuinely intends at some point in the future to commit the violent act or to carry out the threat. The school official shall provide to the responding law enforcement agency all known information relevant to the threat, including but not limited to any historical or background information concerning the student's behavior or state of mind. For the purpose of this reporting requirement, the threatened or planned act of violence need not be imminent, and the intended victim of the violent act need not be aware of the threat. Nor shall it be relevant for the purpose of this reporting requirement that the intended victim is not a student or member of the school community, or that the violent act is not intended to be committed on school property or during regular school hours. The parties of this Agreement understand and agree that students who make a credible threat of harm to themselves or others should be taken seriously. Accordingly, the provisions of this paragraph shall be liberally construed with a view toward preventing future acts of violence.

2. The student accused of making the threat will be brought into the principal's office immediately and questioned concerning the accusation. If the threat involves the use of a weapon, the Totowa Police will be called and a search will take place immediately as permitted by law. If a weapon is found, the school's discipline policy will be invoked and charges will be filed with the local police department and the Passaic County Prosecutor's office. In addition, support services will be called upon and other evaluations will be ordered. If no weapon is found (proceed to #3 below).

3. The school administration will question all students and staff members who may have information concerning the alleged threat, including the accused and the accused's parents or legal guardians.

4. In all cases, the school administration reserves the right of requiring a psychiatric evaluation of the accused and may condition the accused's return to school pending the outcome of such an assessment.

5. All members of the Totowa Board of Education will be notified of an incident within a reasonable time after the incident occurred.

The school's discipline policy may be invoked if the child is found to be in violation of that policy. The Totowa Board of Education is governed by specific policy concerning student discipline and the discovery of a weapon in school. Parents may receive a copy of the following Totowa Board of Education Policies upon request: #5500 (Expectations for Pupil Conduct), #5600 (Pupil Discipline), #5610 (Suspension), #5611 (Removal of Pupils from Regular Education Program for Weapons/Firearms Violation), #5620 (Expulsion), #5512.01 (Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying & Harassment).

Parents are required to sign that they have received and read this policy.