

Managing Severe, Dangerous, and Highly Volatile Behavior (Tier 3)

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Intervention G (Pages 333-392)

Managing Physically Dangerous Behavior *and* Threats of Targeted Violence (Threat assessment contributed by Shawn Reaves)

Purpose

To effectively intervene when a student's escalating behavior poses a threat to the physical safety of other students, adults, or the student themselves (i.e., Code Red situations).

Note: This intervention is reactive and designed to protect everyone's physical safety. It is not designed to produce desired long-term results. Proactive interventions to teach self-control and other appropriate behaviors are implemented once the emergency plans are in place.

Types of behavior that may be positively affected

There are two types of behavior addressed in this intervention: (1) physically dangerous behaviors that are typically spontaneous or impulsive expressions of anger or frustration in response to a recent set of circumstances and (2) threats of targeted violence, which are a variety of threats and plans designed to cause potentially lethal violence. Intervening is recommended and may be necessary when any of the following behaviors make continuing a normal class or school routine impossible:

Physically Dangerous Behavior: Fighting, self-destructive behavior (e.g., head banging, self-biting, etc.), assault, or out-of-control behavior

Threats of Targeted Violence: Threats to use weapons (e.g., "I'm going to blow up this school."), threats toward a person or persons ("hit lists"), writings or drawings of school violence, threatening electronic communications (e-mail, Internet postings), and direct threats of physical violence (e.g., "I'm going to blow that teacher away!")

Rationale for responding to physically dangerous behavior

Students who present a physical danger to themselves or others require time-consuming and intensive help. Dealing with such situations will always be stressful and exhausting, but having an established plan and response protocol will enable the staff to act swiftly to ensure the safety of everyone involved. Otherwise, the threat of injury can become a reality with hurtful consequences and potential legal repercussions. It is recommended that a staff team develop a schoolwide policy for responding to physically dangerous behavior that addresses various emergency contingencies, including when physical restraint, room clears, and notifying law enforcement might be necessary. Once the policy is approved, the staff must be trained in how to implement each component of the policy.

Summary of components for managing physically dangerous behavior (See Step-by-Step Summary, page 390)

Although this intervention is laid out as a series of components, it is important to use professional judgment in adapting procedures to the situation and the needs of the student.

Component 1: *Immediately implement procedures to ensure everyone's safety.*

- Use room clears. Whenever possible, the preferred method for dealing with out-of-control behavior (overusing physical restraint) is to remove everyone else from the threat of violence.
- Use physical intervention only if necessary in order to avoid the risk of injury to the student or to a staff member.

Component 2: *Actively involve the parents at every step* whenever a student exhibits physically dangerous behavior in order to create a collaborative plan to work with the student at school and at home. After the first incident, set up a systematic plan for ongoing weekly communication and obtain personal cell phone numbers, work numbers, and numbers for a backup person.

Component 3: *Develop record-keeping and reporting procedures* for evaluating interventions, assisting in any special education referral, and helping with any legal issues.

- Set up a comprehensive anecdotal log of all incidents in which a student's behavior has been physically dangerous. Include time, date, location, adults involved, what occurred prior to the incident, the student's behavior, actions taken to prevent physical injury, and subsequent actions to avoid future problems. Use Form G1 on page 348 (see below).
- Keep summary records of weekly incidents and severity ratings. Use Form G2 on page 350.

Component 4: *Determine whether the student should be referred to special education and whether other agencies should be involved.*

Component 5: *Teach the student to manage his or her own behavior.* This component is an essential part of your intervention plan, as it will focus on helping the student develop strategies for preventing future violent or physically aggressive acts. See Intervention I: Managing the Cycle of Emotion Escalation or other appropriate interventions in the book.

Summary of intervention steps for threats of targeted violence (See Step-by-Step Summary, page 391)

Responding to threats of targeted violence is unique since the intervention steps range from an individual student's response to schoolwide preparedness. The following step-by-step process will help a school respond to such threats from the perspective of preparedness, response, and recovery. It is important that your school's process reflect district and state protocols and mandates.

Step 1: *Adopt schoolwide policies, procedures, and standards for record-keeping (Preparedness)*

- Develop effective policies and procedures on how to respond to threats. Include which types of communication are unacceptable, how to investigate potential threats, how to remove the student from school, options for disciplinary action, and how to take legal action. See Figure G3 (page 361) for a sample policy and procedures.
- Develop a plan for documenting incidents. Include how to document in the student's records, what needs to be retained in the school's records, and what information is kept at the district level. Also address who should have access to these records and for what reasons.

Step 2: *Conduct training for threat assessment teams and awareness sessions for staff and students. (Preparedness)*

- Identify and train a threat assessment team (TAT) whose job it will be to guide the threat assessment process (see Step 3 below). It is recommended that the team membership be multidisciplinary, with the principal serving as chair of the team.
- Develop and deliver annual awareness training for faculty and staff. The training should highlight the school's policies and procedures, describe the role of the threat assessment team, when and why to refer to the team, and the importance of staff awareness in preventing the escalation of threats and violence.
- Create and conduct student lessons in school policy and student responsibility. See Figure G4 (*Sample Lesson Plan*, page 368), Figure G5 (*Sample Policy on Verbal Threats*, page 369), and Figure G6 (*Sample Student Code of Conduct*, page 370). Conduct the lessons annually.

Step 3: *Immediately implement threat assessment procedures to respond to possible threats of targeted violence. (Response)*

- Begin using a threat assessment approach by focusing on the behaviors, evidence, and facts rather than traits and characteristics. See Figure G7 (*Principles of Threat Assessment*, page 374) for starting an effective threat assessment.
- Understand the fundamental difference between *transient* and *substantive* threats.
- Use the school-based threat assessment team (TAT) in order to achieve a comprehensive and broad-based assessment of the threat.

- Create and follow an effective flowchart or decision tree when responding to a threat. See Figure G8, *Threat Assessment Flow Chart* on page 380 (see below) for a description of the steps. The steps include determining whether or not there is an imminent risk, determining if the threat is transient or substantive, and establishing short-term plans to deal with the current threat and long-term plans to minimize future threats from the student.

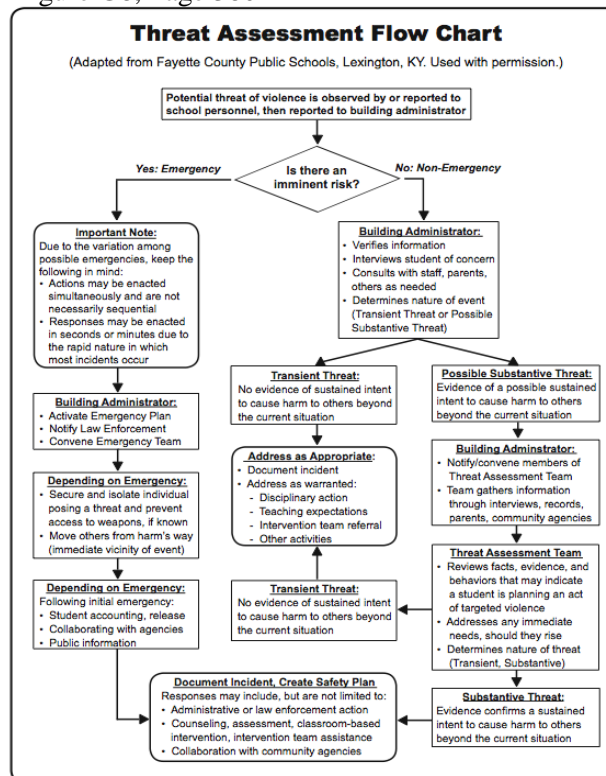
Step 4: *Involve parents and community agencies as appropriate. (Response)*

- The student’s parents must be notified and involved as quickly as possible.
- Connect with appropriate child-serving agencies to exchange relevant information. See Figure G9 (page 383) for a summary of FERPA requirements when exchanging information in situations of a threat of targeted violence.

Step 5: *Restore a sense of safety and security. (Restore)*

- It is likely in today’s climate that a threat of (or a rumor of) targeted violence will create fear and even panic. Therefore, develop guidelines for communicating with students, parents, and the larger community (including the media) during and following the reported concerns.
- Although each constituent group will have different needs, you will be addressing three topics: (a) what happened, (b) what the school will do about it, and (c) what the school will do to see that it doesn’t happen again.

Figure G8, Page 380



Intervention H (Pages 393-423)

Managing Severely Disruptive Behavior

Purpose

To defuse and resolve behaviors that have escalated into a situation (i.e., a Code Red situation) in which the teacher cannot teach or class cannot continue.

Note: This intervention is reactive and designed to remove a student from the classroom any time behavior is so extreme the other students cannot learn. In addition to implementing these emergency procedures, proactive interventions in other chapters should be implemented to reduce the frequency with which the student must be removed from class.

Types of behaviors that may be positively affected

- Overt defiance or flagrant disrespect toward adults (e.g., cursing, yelling obscenities, overt refusal to follow a direction)
- Loud sustained disruptions (e.g., kicking chairs, screaming, repetitive loud noises)
- Aggressive behavior (e.g., highly intrusive and persistent behavior toward other children, hair pulling, grabbing)

Rationale

Students who engage in severe misbehavior present adults with particularly difficult choices, and dealing with such a student is highly stressful. In dealing with a student who causes major disruptions, early intervention is essential and should be followed by other appropriate interventions (see Figure H-4 on page 418).

Figure H4, Page 418

Disruption Type	Interventions Within This Book to Consider
Emotional	"Intervention I: Managing the Cycle of Emotional Escalation"
Attention	"Intervention E: Increasing Positive Interactions" "Intervention P: Defining Limits and Establishing Consequences"
Relationships With Adults	"Intervention M: Teaching Replacement Behavior" "Intervention E: Increasing Positive Interactions" "Intervention P: Defining Limits and Establishing Consequences" "Intervention J: Cueing and Precorrecting"
Relationships With Students	"Intervention M: Teaching Replacement Behavior" "Intervention K: Self-Monitoring and Self-Evaluation" "Intervention L: Positive Self-Talk and Attribution Training"
Noncompliance	"Intervention B: Academic Assistance" "Intervention M: Teaching Replacement Behavior" "Intervention E: Increasing Positive Interactions" "Intervention P: Defining Limits and Establishing Consequences" "Intervention J: Cueing and Precorrecting"

Summary of intervention steps (See Step-by-Step Summary, pages 422-423)

Step 1: *Develop a temporary and immediate plan. Quickly gather as much background information as possible.*

- Contact the parent or guardian. Staff should work proactively with parents to develop ways to encourage and support appropriate behavior.
- Meet immediately with appropriate staff members to design temporary procedures. The classroom teacher needs to be prepared to respond both immediately and calmly.
- Identify positive student behavior, all minor misbehavior, and severe misbehavior.
- Brainstorm procedures for the teacher to focus on the student's appropriate behaviors and strengths.
- Identify and arrange mild in-class consequences for each minor misbehavior. If possible, ignore minor misbehavior where the student is trying to get attention.
- Identify and arrange out-of-class consequences for severe misbehavior. Location must be supervised and should be dull. Determine how long to stay out of class. Decide when and how the student will return to class. Consider having the student complete a *Behavior Improvement Plan* (see form H1, page 412).
- Establish a plan for receiving immediate adult assistance to escort the student.
- Set up a record-keeping and monitoring system.
- Review roles of each staff member and identify who will tell the student about the plan.

Step 2: *Meet with the student to discuss the temporary plan. Discuss everyone's roles and provide words of encouragement.*

Step 3: *Implement the temporary plan.*

- Set up a series of classroom observations and conferences with the teacher to discuss the student's severe misbehavior.
- Provide ongoing support for the teacher from the staff. Also support the student.
- Meet within one week to evaluate student behavior and establish a long-range plan.

Intervention I (Pages 425-462)

Managing the Cycle of Emotional Escalation (by Geoff Colvin, Ph.D.)

Purpose

To understand and manage the cycle of emotional escalation. This intervention will assist you in learning how to defuse potentially volatile confrontations *and* how to eventually teach the student to manage his or her own behavior by staying in control without outside assistance.

Types of behavior that may be positively affected

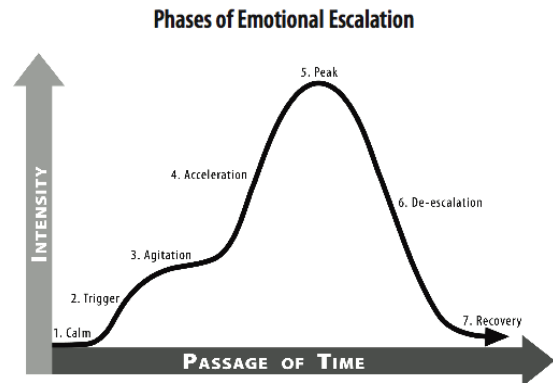
- Tantrums
- Threats
- Physical outbursts
- Explosive behavior
- Out-of-control behavior
- Volatile/explosive behavior
- Aggressive reactions
- Buildup of angry behavior
- Verbal outbursts
- Sustained disruptions

Rationale

Breaking the cycle of escalation requires understanding the relationship between the ratcheting up of student behavior, the underlying emotional responses, and the role of successive interactions.

Summary of the seven-phase model

The cycle of emotional escalation generally progresses through seven distinct phases. Once you can correlate a student's behavior with a specific phase, you can choose corresponding strategies that are best suited to stopping the behavior, heading off further escalation, helping the student settle down, and developing a problem-solving plan so that the problem won't occur again.



Summary of intervention steps at each phase (See Step-by-Step Summary, pages 461-462)

Develop behavior support plans for emotionally escalated behavior at each phase of the cycle.

Phase 1	Calm	Keep students productively engaged with instruction.
Phase 2	Trigger	Anticipate and proactively address sources of triggers (e.g., school events like conflicts, routine changes, peer provocations, pressure, ineffective problem solving, handling difficult work, facing correction and non-school triggers like high-need home or health issues) before escalation begins to snowball. See Figure I2 below for list of triggers and intervention ideas.

Phase 3	Agitation	Use supportive accommodation strategies to reduce negative emotions (like anger, frustration, and anxiety) and help students settle down and regain control. See Figure I2 below for list of agitation behaviors and intervention ideas.
Phase 4	Acceleration	Use diffusion approaches during this last opportunity to defuse the situation before the onset of severe behavior. See Figure I2 below for list of acceleration behaviors and intervention ideas.
Phase 5	Peak	Behavior is out of control. Goals are to ensure the safety of all students and staff and to allow school and classroom activities to continue.
Phase 6	De-escalation	Following a serious incident, use strategies (see Figure I2 below) to help the student process the incident with the intent of preventing future occurrences and helping the student resume regular classroom participation.
Phase 7	Recovery	Use carefully planned reintegration strategies (see Figure I2 below) to help the student re-enter the classroom successfully. Student usually wants to be busy and avoid interactions.

Figure I2—Strategies to De-Escalate at Each Stage

PHASE 2: TRIGGERS

Types of triggers (unresolved problems)	Interventions to anticipate and proactively address triggers before escalation begins to snowball
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conflicts ● Changes in routine ● Peer provocation ● Pressure ● Poor problem-solving skills ● Errors during instruction ● Home situation (health problems, nutrition, home conflicts, sleep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review your expectations ● Modify the context if possible (e.g., assign fewer problems or move student away from teasers) ● Cue and precorrect (i.e., give advance notice) ● Behavioral rehearsal ● Strong positive reinforcement ● Prompting ● Monitoring the behaviors (data)

Figure I2—Strategies to De-Escalate at Each Stage (continued)

PHASE 3: AGITATION

Signs of agitation (unfocused/distracted)	Interventions to help the student settle down and regain control
<p><i>Increases in behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Darting eyes ● Busy hands ● Moving in and out of groups ● Off- and on-task cycle <p><i>Decreases in behavior:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staring into space (like daydreaming) ● Avoiding conversation (monosyllabic and unwilling to talk) ● Contained hands (like sitting on them) ● Withdrawal from groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Empathy (more effective if there is a positive relationship with the student) ● Assisting the student to focus (e.g., help get started on the first part of the assignment) ● Providing space and some degree of isolation ● Providing assurances (e.g., additional time or extra help after class) ● Permit preferred activities for a short period of time ● Teacher proximity (effective if there is a positive relationship with the student) ● Independent activities ● Passive activities (e.g., watch video or read) or movement activities (like passing out papers) ● Student self-management

PHASE 4: ACCELERATION

Signs of acceleration (engagement)	Interventions to avoid prompting escalation, maintain calmness, be nonthreatening, and use nonconfrontational limit-setting procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questioning/arguing ● Noncompliance/defiance ● Off-task behavior ● Provocation of others ● Partial compliance (complies but also displays inappropriate behavior) ● Criterion problems (purposely doing less than capable) ● Rule violation (knowingly breaks rule) ● Whining/crying (seeking attention) ● Avoidance and escape ● Threats/intimidation ● Verbal abuse (offensive language) ● Destruction of property 	<p><i>Avoid escalating prompts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raised voices, arguing ● Cornering—power struggles, moving into space ● Touching, sudden movements, body language that communicates anger ● Belittling or sarcastic statements <p><i>Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Speak privately, quietly, calmly, respectfully, briefly (less than 15 seconds) ● Be aware of personal space, move slowly, and establish eye level positioning ● Stay with the agenda, don't get sidetracked, and avoid power struggles ● Acknowledge cooperation ● Withdraw from student if the situation escalates and attend to other students. Go to Phase 5 if escalates. ● Advance planning—rehearse with class, establish corrective consequences, present expectations and consequences as student's decision or choice.

Figure I2—Strategies to De-Escalate at Each Stage (continued)

PHASE 5: PEAK

Signs of peak (out-of-control)	Interventions to ensure the safety of all students and staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Serious destruction of property ● Physical attacks ● Self-abuse ● Severe tantrums ● Running away 	Follow through on emergency plans (See Intervention G and Intervention H)

PHASE 6: DE-ESCALATION

Signs of de-escalation (confusion, lack of focus)	Interventions to help the student process the serious incident to prevent future occurrences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confusion ● Reconciliation ● Withdrawal ● Denial ● Blaming others ● Responsiveness to directions ● Responsiveness to manipulative/mechanical tasks ● Avoidance of discussion ● Avoidance of debriefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make certain the student has had enough time to calm down. Give the student a simple direction to assess his/her cooperation. ● Debriefing (see Behavior Improvement Form, I2, page 454): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ What did you do? ✧ Why did you do it? ✧ What else could you have done?

PHASE 7: RECOVERY

Signs of recovery (eagerness for work, reluctance to interact)	Interventions to support the student’s composure, focus, and cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eagerness for something to do ● Subdued behavior in groups or discussion ● Defensive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a strong focus on normal routines ● Provide a simple re-entry task that doesn’t require immediate peer interaction and reinforce the student as soon as he or she engages in the task ● Avoid negotiating the consequences for serious misbehavior ● Acknowledge the occurrence of problem-solving behaviors by the student ● Communicate support and high expectations ● Establish a specific behavior support plan if necessary (see Behavior Support Plan, Reproducible I1, page 443)