Suicide Prevention Protocol for School-Based Threat Assessment Teams

Santa Rosa County School District

Student Services Department

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INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this protocol is to establish a recommended process for schools that is readily available and easy to follow in the event a student is at-risk for harming him/herself. This process is broken down into three critical components:

- **Prevention**: How schools can promote resiliency and reduce the potential for youth suicide.
- **Intervention**: How school staff should intervene with students at risk for suicidal behavior.
- **Follow-Up Intervention or Postvention**: How schools should respond to students returning from a crisis center or after a threat has been made or attempted.

The school-based threat assessment team (Threat Assessment Team) plays a vital role in suicide prevention, intervention, and follow-up intervention, and will be tasked with specifically addressing the suicide prevention protocol flowchart when handling at-risk students.

Everyone has a role in suicide prevention. A comprehensive approach to suicide prevention involves students, school personnel, parents, and community agencies. Collaboration and communication are key to promoting positive mental health in the school setting.

School administrators have a critical role in suicide prevention. Administrators will ensure that key personnel are made aware of these processes, including office staff, the school nurse, and the School Resource Officer. Threat Assessment Team will assist in this regard and be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

School personnel should be trained annually by the Threat Assessment Team to recognize warning signs associated with students who are at risk for suicide. In addition, school personnel should be aware of the positive conditions (i.e., protective factors) that promote resiliency and reduce the potential for suicide. All school personnel should be aware of this protocol and follow the steps outlined in the Suicide Intervention Process flowchart.

Suicide Prevention: Factors to Consider

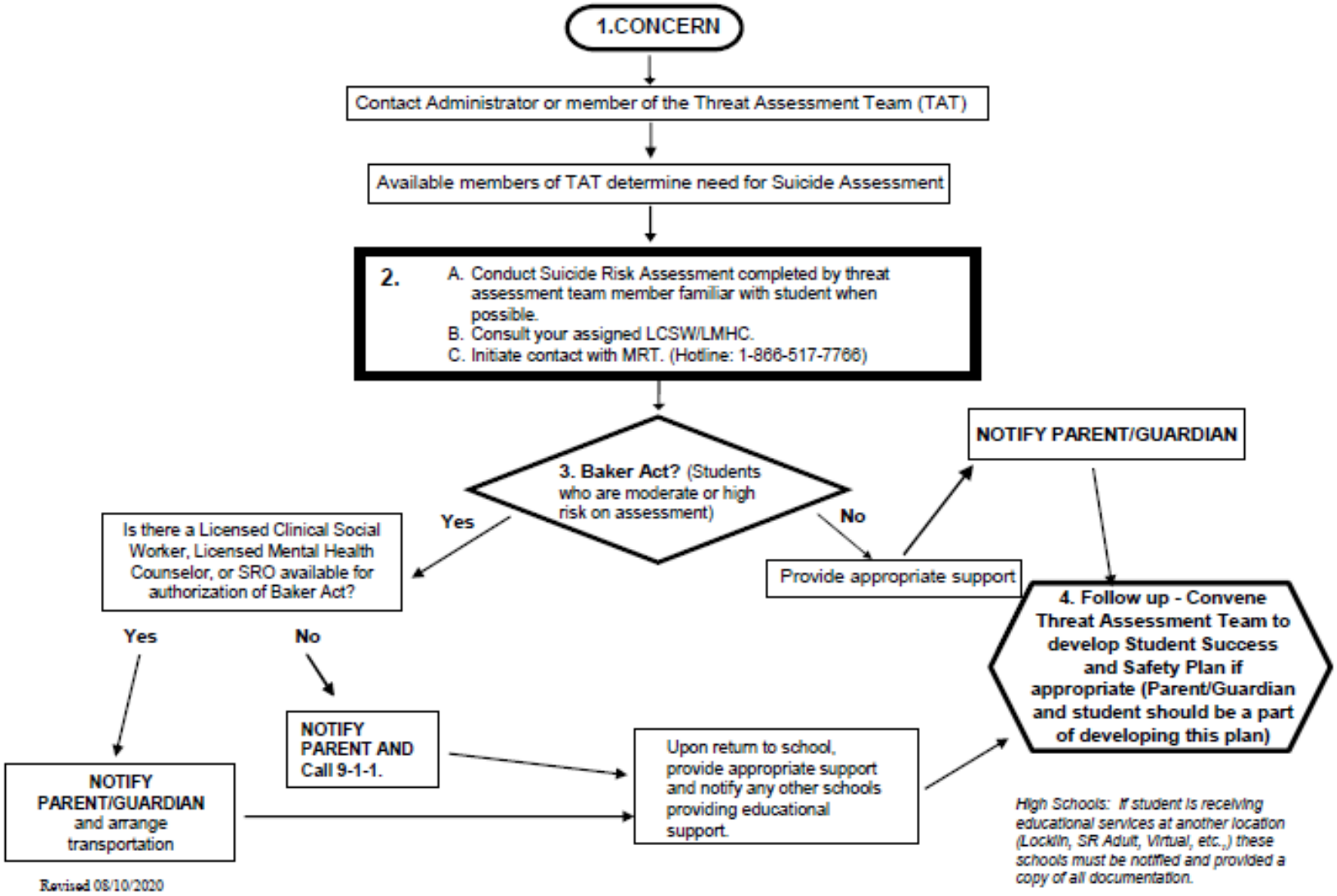
The list below should not be considered exhaustive.

Protective Factors	
• Close family bonds • Strong sense of self-esteem • A sense of personal control • A supportive home environment • Responsibilities/duties to others • Best friends • Cultural and religious beliefs • Opportunities to participate in projects/activities/ constructive recreation	• Lack of access to lethal means • Access to services for mental, physical, and substance abuse concerns • Skills in coping/problem solving • School connectedness • Feeling close to at least one adult
Risk Factors	
• Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders • Alcohol and other substance abuse • Hopelessness • Impulsive/aggressive tendencies • History of abuse • Previous suicide attempt • Family history of suicide • Break up/change of relationship • Easy access to lethal means • Recent suicides/contagion effect • Social alienation/isolation • Barriers to accessing mental health care	• Preexisting medical conditions/hormonal changes • Efforts to hurt oneself or displays of non-suicidal self-injurious behavior • Delinquency • Death of a loved one or significant loss • Bullying/victimization • Family dysfunction • Academic crisis • Exposure to stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity
Warning Signs	
• Suicide notes • Threats • Final arrangements • Inability to concentrate or think rationally • Changes in physical habits and appearance • Sudden changes in personality, friends, behaviors • Death and suicidal themes • Plan/method/access	

Sources: National Association of School Psychologists, National Council for Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration & the University of South Florida Youth Suicide Prevention School-Based Guide.

Suicide Prevention (Baker Act) Protocol

Santa Rosa County School District



Revised 08/10/2020

All stakeholders have a role in reporting suicidal concerns for students: students, teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, administrators, parents, etc.

1. CONCERN IS REPORTED

- Threat Assessment Team implements the Suicide Prevention Protocol (see flowchart on pg. 6).
- Once the concern has been reported (actions may not be conducted in a linear order):
  - Determine need for suicide risk assessment.
  - Verify location of student and ensure supervision and safety.
  - Reporter/concerned adult will make sure an administrator is notified of the concern.
  - **Student should be supervised by an adult. Do not leave the student alone.**
  - **School personnel** must escort the student to the office. Parent volunteers and students must not be used.
  - Obtain the student's emergency contact information.

2. CONDUCT SUICIDE ASSESSMENT

- A member of the threat assessment team most familiar with student should conduct a suicide assessment interview of the student (see **Suicide Risk Assessment pg. 11-12)**
- Review appropriate school records
- Gather additional information from parent(s)/guardian(s) and relevant school personnel as part of the assessment.
- The Threat Assessment Team will assess the level of risk as low, moderate or high (see Suicide Risk Assessment Factors Guide – pg. 13-14).
- If assessment is conducted by MRT, district assessment is not required.

Use information gleaned from the **Suicide Risk Assessment,** consultation with Threat Assessment Team, and the **Suicide Risk Assessment Factors Guide** (p. 13), to estimate the level of risk and required actions.

3. Determine and Implement Next Step—Baker Act?

- **For all circumstances in which a student expresses suicidal ideation, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be notified.**

The probable level of risk should be considered by the team when determining next steps (p. 13-14)

4. Follow up --- Convene Threat Assessment Team to develop Student Success and Safety Plan if appropriate

Follow-up may vary depending upon the needs of the student. In some cases, the student may have expressed suicidal ideation, but the protocol suggested that involuntary evaluation (i.e., Baker Act implementation) was not necessary. At other times, involuntary evaluation was necessary and initiated by the local law enforcement or the parent.

Protocol Implemented but No Involuntary Evaluation (i.e., Baker Act not implemented)

- The threat assessment team should convene to determine appropriate next steps, which may include but are not limited to:
    - Check in with a trusted, designated adult
    - Development of a *Student Success and Safety Plan* (pgs. 16-18), including parents and student as participants
    - Peer/Adult Mentoring
    - Establishment of Safe Area
    - CDAC services/ in school counseling
    - Referral to MTSS Team for behavioral/emotional/academic supports
    - Other interventions as needed

Involuntary Evaluation (i.e., Baker Act implemented/Hospitalization)

- The threat assessment team should notify appropriate school personnel (e.g., classroom teacher) that the student may be experiencing challenging circumstances that might involve hopelessness or depression. Students should be monitored closely for distress.
- The Threat Assessment Team should convene and follow up with the student and parent upon the student's return to school to determine appropriate next steps, which may include but are not limited to:
    - Check in with a trusted, designated adult (daily or as needed)
    - Development of a *Student Success and Safety Plan* (pgs. 16-18), including parents and student as participants
    - CDAC services/ in-school counseling
    - Schedule Change
    - Peer/Adult Mentoring
    - Establishment of Safe Area
    - Referral to MTSS Team for behavioral/emotional/academic supports
    - Develop or modify the IEP/504 Plan, as applicable
    - Other interventions as needed

- If administration is notified of the student's discharge from any crisis center by the parent/guardian or agency, the information should be used by the Threat Assessment Team and parent(s)/guardian(s) for educational planning purposes.
    - **Attempts should be made to obtain the parent's written consent (and student's consent, when required) for mutual exchange of information between the agency and the school.**

General Considerations upon a Student's Return to School

Be Supportive

- Ask in private how the student is doing, but do not ask any specific details about their experience; let them decide if they wish to share with you.
- Let the student know you care about them.
- Do not make jokes about their situation.
- Consider being flexible and compassionate with completion of school assignments, tests, etc.
- Utilize skills and techniques learned in Youth Mental Health First Aid.

Be Observant

- Be aware of changes in behavior that may indicate the student is in need of further help.
- In the event the student needs more support, contact a Student Services Professional.
- Maintain the student's confidentiality.

Be Consistent

- Routine is important for students.
- Assist the student in resuming typical schedules and school activities.
- Be alert to any needs or supports that the student may require.

Practices for Conducting the Suicide Assessment

How to ask the tough question:

Inappropriate: **"You're not thinking of hurting yourself!"**
"Are you thinking of hurting yourself?"

Appropriate: **"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"**

Tips on asking the "suicide" question:

- Talk to the student in a private setting.
- Acknowledge that the student is in distress.
- Allow the student to talk freely.
- Stay with the student **at all times**.
- Take suicide statements seriously.
- Do not act shocked.
- Do not agree to keep the student's suicidal intentions a secret.
- Do not offer simple solutions to serious problems.
- Use your skills learned in Mental Health First Aid.

**The Threat Assessment Report and Student Success and Safety Plan will be maintained in Student Records and shared with receiving schools should student transfer. (s.1003.25, F.S.) Revised July 24, 2020.

Santa Rosa County School District
Suicide Risk Assessment

The following questions are suggested, not required. Presentation may not be in a linear fashion.

Establish Rapport / Limits of Confidentiality

- Ask about interests (e.g., clubs, music, pets, sports, video games)

  _____
  _____
  _____

Affective/Behavioral Factors

- How is school? _____
- How is your life at home? _____
- How are things going with your friends? _____
- How are you sleeping? _____
- How are you eating? _____

Transition and Focus on Concern / Intent

- Some people here at school are really concerned about you.
- How are you feeling today? _____
- Are you feeling sad/depressed/angry? _____
- Have you thought about wanting to kill yourself? How often? How long ago?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Plan / Lethality

- Do you have a plan? _____
- What is your plan? _____
- Do you have access to the "means"? (e.g., gun, pills, knife) _____
- When did you plan to kill yourself? _____
- What would stop you from killing or hurting yourself?

  _____
- Why not now? _____
- Have you told anyone about your plan? _____
- What was their response?

  _____
  _____

History of Suicide Attempts

- Have you previously tried to kill yourself? When? How? Did you tell anyone?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Did you get help? (e.g., medical attention, crisis center, counseling)

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Do you know anyone who has attempted suicide? (e.g., family, friends, neighbors)

  _____

Risk Factors / Coping / Protective Factors

- What is happening in your life now? (e.g., academics, relationships, conflicts, family issues)

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How does that make you feel? (e.g., angry, frustrated, helpless, hopeless)

  _____
  _____
  _____

- When you are upset, who do you talk to? What do you do? How do you cope?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- What plans do you have for tomorrow? The future?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Do you have medical concerns? Any medications? Any problems with impulse control?

  _____
  _____
  _____

- Which substances do you use? (e.g., alcohol, drugs) How often? Recently?

  _____
  _____
  _____

Prepare Student for Next Steps

- I'm really concerned about you.
- Here's what we need to do to keep you safe. (Summarize what will happen.)
- **We need to contact your parents now**. (MANDATORY STATEMENT)

Santa Rosa County School District
Suicide Risk Assessment Factors Guide

The following table provides guidance to determine the level of intervention for a student who may be in distress and contemplating suicide. Although factors are presented within specific columns of the table, such factors are fluid and may be applicable to any level of risk.

There is no single factor indicating low, moderate, or high risk. Rather, consideration should be given to several factors and multiple sources of data when completing the assessment.

A history of suicide attempts, of course, is a sufficient reason for action. High risk also is associated with very detailed plans (when, where, how) that specify a lethal and readily available method, a specific time, and a location where it is unlikely the act would be disrupted. Further high-risk indicators include the student having made final arrangements and having experienced a critical, recent loss.

Assessment Factors	**Probable Risk**		
	Low	**Moderate**	**High**
Suicide Plan	☐ Vague details ☐ No availability of means ☐ No specific time frame	☐ Some specific details ☐ Potential availability of means ☐ Time frame identified	☐ Defined plan (when, where, how) ☐ Easy access or readily available means ☐ Immediate time frame
Previous Suicide Attempts	☐ None	☐ Any history	☐ One high lethality or multiple attempts
Reaction to Stress	☐ Few stressors ☐ Appropriate coping skills identified	☐ Multiple stressors ☐ Limited coping skills identified	☐ Multiple stressors ☐ Inappropriate or lack of coping skills identified
Symptoms	☐ Daily activities continue as usual with little change ☐ No significant changes in personality or behavior ☐ Presence of stable relationships	☐ Some daily activities disrupted ☐ Disturbance in eating, sleeping, school performance ☐ Some changes in personality or behavior ☐ Limited relationships or recent change(s) in relationships	☐ Gross disturbances in daily functioning ☐ Sudden, extreme changes in personality or behavior ☐ Isolation, limited relationships, or recent change(s) in relationships
Resources	☐ Multiple protective factors	☐ Limited protective factors	☐ Few or limited protective factors
Medical Status	☐ No significant medical issues	☐ Mild chronic or acute psychological or medical issues	☐ Chronic, debilitating, or acute catastrophic illness
OVERALL RISK	☐ **LOW**	☐ **MODERATE**	☐ **HIGH**

Low Probable Risk

- Reassure and supervise the student.
- Notify and assist parent in connecting with school and community resources.
- Encourage parent to monitor for safety and suicide-proof the environment.
- Help parent and student identify caring adults, coping skills, and resources. Provide parent with mental health resources/handouts as needed.
- Complete a *Parent Notification of Suicide Risk Assessment* form (p. 15)
- If appropriate, develop a *Student Success and Safety Plan* (pgs. 16-18) that establishes a circle of care among the family, school personnel, and community mental health providers. Meet with student and parent to go over safety plan. This may involve a referral to CDAC.

Moderate Probable Risk

- Reassure and supervise student at all times.
- Meet with SRO to discuss current situation. The administrator(s) will contact the licensed mental health counselor assigned to the school. If not, call a LMHC listed on the flow chart. If needed, contact the Mobile Response Team.
- Consult SRO about checking backpack and/or locker.
- Ensure that parents are informed of the actions being taken.
- Encourage parent to monitor for safety and suicide-proof the environment and provide resources.
- ONLY release student to: Parent(s)/guardian(s) or law enforcement or EMT if 911 was called
- If the parent(s) is unable or unwilling to assist with the potentially suicidal crisis, SRO will proceed accordingly.
- Complete a *Parent Notification of Suicide Risk Assessment* form (p. 15)
- Prior to student returning to school, prepare a *Student Success and Safety Plan* (pgs. 16-18) that establishes a circle of care among the family, school personnel, and community mental health providers.

HIGH PROBABLE RISK

- **Initiate Baker Act**
- Supervise student at all times. Calm the student by talking and reassuring him/her until SRO/first responders arrive.
- Ensure that parent(s) is informed of the actions being taken.
- Protect the privacy of the student and family.
- Complete a *Parent Notification of Suicide Risk Assessment* (p. 15) form
- Notify Mental Health Coordinator via email or phone call (WrightA@santarosa.k12.fl.us or 850-983-5568)
- Prior to student returning to school, develop a *Student Success and Safety Plan* (pgs. 16-18) that establishes a circle of care among the family, school personnel, and community mental health providers.

**The Threat Assessment Report and Student Success and Safety Plan will be maintained in Student Records and shared with receiving schools should student transfer. (s.1003.25, F.S.) Revised July 21, 2020.

Santa Rosa County School District
Parent Notification of Suicide Risk Assessment

Santa Rosa County School District personnel take student safety very seriously; consequently, it is important that concerns are shared with parents so that they monitor their child for safety and take appropriate safeguards.

Mr./Ms. _____parent/guardian of _____

- ☐ participated in a conference via phone __ or in person __ on (date) _____.
- ☐ could not be reached. Please see bottom of this page for attempt information.
- ☐ Social Work referral submitted for delivery of this form.
- ☐ SRO contacted
- ☐ LCSW/LMHC contacted ☐ MRT contacted

During this conference, the parents(s)/guardian(s) was informed that their child expressed suicidal ideation. Parent(s)/guardian(s) were encouraged to do the following:

If the student is not in imminent danger, parents/guardians were encouraged to:

- Consult primary care physician and/or mental health provider
- Other _____

If the student is in imminent danger, parents/guardians should take one of the following actions:

- Call 9-1-1
- Take the child to the local Emergency Room

Required Signatures:

_____ _____
Parent or Legal Guardian Date

_____ _____
School Administrator or Designee Date

Unsuccessful attempts to contact parent were made via phone on (date) _____ and (date)_____ to:

_____ _____
Name of Individual Phone Number

_____ _____
Name of Individual Phone Number

A copy of this letter was provided to the parent (indicate method) _____ on (date)_____.

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Santa Rosa County District Schools
Student Success and Safety Plan

Date: _____ School: _____

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Reason for Follow-up (briefly summarize situation, date, level of threat, etc.):

☐ Baker Act: _____

☐ Threat Assessment: _____

☐ Suicide Assessment: _____

☐ Other: _____

☐ MRT (Attach plan if applicable):_____

Date of Student Interview: _____ Date of Parent Interview: _____

Actions to take:
Support Team members informed of Safety Plan:

☐Parent ☐Teacher ☐Administrator
☐Counselor ☐School Psychologist ☐Social Worker
☐SRO ☐Outside Agency
☐Other: _____

Specific Interventions Developed by Threat Assessment Team (referrals to community-based mental health agencies needed for Moderate/High Suicide Risk Assessment or Serious/Very Serious Substantive threat):

☐Change of class/schedule ☐Supervision ☐Change of seating
☐Modified transitions ☐Search student belongings ☐After-school activities
☐Other: _____

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OTHER CONSIDERATIONS TO BE DISCUSSED:

☐Technology support (cyberbullying)
☐FBA/BIP
☐Mental Health Screening
☐Additional academic supports?
☐Outside Agencies: _____

☐Counseling (School or Community Based)
☐504 evaluation/eligibility meeting
☐MTSS for possible behavioral interventions
☐Consideration of ESE evaluation

Specific Information:

Student will seek support from the following individuals (3 trusting adults student can to go to for help):

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

ADDITIONAL INPUT FROM STUDENT OR PARENT/GUARDIAN:

MONITORING:

☐Daily ☐Weekly ☐Bi-weekly ☐Monthly

Is student receiving academic services in another setting? (Locklin College, Online, Santa Rosa Adult, Dual Enrollment) If yes, notify and provide documents to administrator and counselor.

☐ **Yes or** ☐ **No**

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Was a Consent Form for Mutual Exchange of Information signed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER SIGNATURES -Including student and parent/ guardian

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

COPIES TO:
Cumulative record (black folder)
Parent
Student
Support Team members
Certified School Counselor
CDAC or Community-Based agency (if applicable)
Mental Health Coordinator, District Office
Other schools providing services if applicable
All classroom teachers and personnel who need to be informed

TAT team has determined that student is progressing and no longer needs to be monitored with this SSSP. If at anytime there is an indication that this plan needs to become active again, the team will meet and make that determination.

Date SSSP discontinued:_____

Administrative
Signature:_____

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question	Answer
Should the assessment interview be done with other professional's present?	The student should feel comfortable so they will honestly disclose information. It may be helpful to have one additional, appropriate adult in the room. However, having too many people present may cause the student to shut down.
Do we complete the protocol every time a student blurts out a statement impulsively, even when follow-up suggests that the student was not suicidal?	Not necessarily. The risk level will depend on the credibility of the threat. For repeated threats of the same nature, review the action plan, revise as necessary, and document next steps if modified. If the student has an IEP, consider meeting as a team with parents to address needs and revise the IEP.
Do we conduct the protocol if there are a lot of signs/risk factors, but the student has not stated or written anything about suicide?	If, in your professional opinion, you believe the student is in danger, contact the administrator and parent(s)to share your concerns and proceed accordingly.
If the parent arrives at the school during the assessment and wants to sign out the student, should the student be released?	This decision should be made by the Threat Assessment Team. If the SRO determines that the child needs to be Baker Acted. If it is determined, then the SRO must follow their protocol to ensure the child's safety.
Can we mail the Parent Notification of Suicide Risk Assessment or the Student Crisis Monitoring Plan Follow-Up form home for parent signatures?	The parent must always be involved throughout the process, including follow-up intervention. If the parent is unable to attend the meeting(s), make every effort to include them (e.g., phone conference with witness), document that on the form, obtain the signature of a witness, and complete Social Work referral for delivery of form to parent.
What are acceptable ways to provide the parent/guardian notification if they cannot be reached?	Continue attempts to notify the parent/guardian. If they cannot be reached, consult with the site-based administrator to develop a plan (e.g., call others on the emergency card, home visit).

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