

Safety Matters!



October 2019

HCPS Threat Assessment Process

The Office of School Safety and Emergency Management has created a robust threat assessment process for schools to use when a threat is made. A threat is any expression of intent to do harm, including self-harm, or cause damage to property, whether it is spoken, written, gestured, communicated electronically or preliminarily being carried out (or in progress). So what do staff members need to know?

Each school has a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) led by a school administrator who is the TAT leader. You need to know who is on the TAT team and the name of the TAT leader.

All staff members are mandated reporters of threats, and when made aware of a threat, you must report it to an administrator in a timely manner, so the investigation can begin. Do not wait until the end of the day! Also know that threat assessment pertains to any individual in your learning community who poses a threat, and this also includes staff. HCPS works in

partnership with the Henrico Police Threat Assessment team on threats made by adults.

Anyone can report a threat, and we now have Anonymous Alerts for reporters to use if they do not want to talk directly to school staff. Please encourage your students and their families to use this.

When a threat is reported, your TAT uses a prescribed process to determine if the threat poses a risk of violence. The core responsibility of any TAT is to review and investigate reported information by assessing if the named individual poses a continuing threat of violence. The goal is to get the person who poses a threat off the pathway to violence through monitored interventions.

In September, a full threat assessment was done as a result of an Anonymous Alerts tip.

SAFE SCHOOLS WEEK: OCTOBER 21-27, 2019

Helpful Tips to Assist with Student Backpacks

When backpacks were invented in the early 1900s, they were intended to carry books. However, the modern backpack is equipped with many compartments and several deep pockets, including a padded one for a laptop computer. So what happens? Students load them up with items such as a laptop, textbooks, notebooks, the almost-finished library book, lunch box, water bottle, umbrella, and other items which may also include the dirty P.E. suit at the bottom of the bag! What's the result? A heavy backpack.

As a staff member, you may want to consider offering the following recommendations:

1. Clean out the backpack frequently.
2. Replace binders with folders if possible.
3. Carry lunchbox in hands.

How a student wears a backpack is often just as important as its overall weight. If students have backpacks that have two wide straps, you may want to suggest that they wear it properly so the weight is evenly distributed. Heavier items such as books and laptop should be packed so they are carried closest to the child's body to minimize additional strain. You may want to discourage a student from slinging it over one shoulder because this could cause muscular pain.

If you notice a student struggling with a backpack, you may want to share some of these tips to help the student lighten the load.

Animals on School Property

Animals are not permitted on school property unless approved by your school's principal because they enhance the educational program, or when allowed by law (e.g., service animals and law enforcement animals). Animals permitted on school property must be immunized against diseases common to the specific type of animal, and proof of immunization must be provided upon request. Please know that when making decisions regarding animals and the educational program, principals must take into consideration the type of animal, whether any students or staff have allergies, and the safety of the students with the animal in the classroom.



Please understand that this applies to citizens walking dogs on school property and parents who are walking to drop off or pick up children and have dogs with them. It also applies to staff members who may think that it's fine to bring their dog to school for a short period of time. Again, animals are not permitted on school property.

Safety Matters! is a newsletter created by the Office of School Safety & Emergency Management. We would like to hear from you about topics that you would find interesting. Please contact us at 652-3511 or by email.

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