

# Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Threat Assessment Response Policy and Procedures

Effective Date: April 13, 2010

## POLICY:

### I. Preface

Central Washington University is committed to promoting and maintaining an environment where students participate in the educational process without compromising the health, safety or welfare of themselves or others. This policy describes a Central Washington University, two-tier protocol to work with students who are exhibiting behaviors that cause others to fear that students pose a danger to themselves or others. The goal is to create a cross-functional, multi-disciplinary university threat assessment strategy to assess and intervene with students who may be at risk for self harm or for causing harm to others, and to give guidance to the university community members who may need to refer students for assistance and review. The process involves the well established Problem Solving Team (PST) and the Threat Assessment Team (TAT) working in conjunction with each other. The Problem Solving Team will meet weekly and review all incident reports and refer reports that warrant the attention of the Threat Assessment Team for review and action as needed.

This policy:

- Establishes the Student Conduct Report Network, a system for referral of students of concern
- Establishes a Threat Assessment Team to evaluate the severity and risks associated with observed behavior
- Establishes process to address threatening behavior
- Outlines reporting, screening, and assessment processes
- Defines review options
- Lists other related policies

# Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Threat Assessment Response Policy and Procedures

## PROCEDURES:

### II. Student Conduct Report Network

The Student Conduct Report Network is a web-based protocol by which any member of the Ellensburg university community can submit concerns about the behavior of students and know that relevant university officials will respond to the situation. While concerns about threats to self or others may be primary, the system also will encourage reporting of concerns relating to academic performance/progress and physical health and well-being or any violation of the Student Conduct Code. These procedures exist to allow all CWU faculty, staff and students to report student behaviors that are threatening or raise concern about the student's safety or the safety of others. Reports that are generated from the non-Ellensburg based campuses will be directed to the Assistant to the VP in the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management office and will involve representatives at the respective campuses as needed. The Student Conduct Report webpage provides information about certain warning signs that may indicate intervention is needed. In addition, the Student Conduct Report webpage provides emergency contact information, resources for assistance and referral, and protocols for providing information to be reviewed by the Problem Solving Team and possible referral to the Ellensburg campus-based Threat Assessment Team as needed.

**THE STUDENT CONDUCT REPORT WEBPAGE IS NOT MONITORED BY  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES  
AND SHOULD NOT BE USED TO REPORT EMERGENCIES.**

### III. Problem Solving Team/Threat Assessment Team

#### Problem Solving Team (PST)

The PST meets weekly to review incident reports and other behavioral concerns. The role of the PST as related to the threat assessment process is as follows:

1. Identify a person who has engaged in threatening behaviors or done something that raised serious concern about their well-being, stability or potential for violence or suicide.
2. Provide initial screening to determine whether there is an imminent danger or emergency situation.
3. Determine need for full inquiry by gathering initial information from several key sources.

The preliminary information will be used to answer the following triage questions.

1. Has there been any mention of suicidal thoughts, plans, or attempts?
2. Has there been any mention of thoughts/plans of violence?
3. Have there been any behaviors that cause concern for violence or the person's well being?
4. Does the person have access to a weapon or are they trying to gain access?
5. Are there behaviors that are significantly disruptive to the campus environment?

If there is a “yes” response to any of these questions, further inquiry is recommended and the TAT members may be contacted as needed for further information/investigation.

If the answer to all five questions is “no” and the PST gathered sufficient information to be able to answer those questions fully, then no further inquiry is necessary and the incident will be recorded for future reference. Referral to professional staff within the CWU community and the local community may be made as appropriate.

### **Threat Assessment Team (TAT)**

Upon referral from the Problem Solving Team, the Threat Assessment Team will conduct a full inquiry. All information previously gathered will be shared with the TAT. The TAT will proceed as follows:

- Identify who in the person’s life may have some information the team needs to know. The role of the team in a threat assessment inquiry is to figure out who might have a piece of the puzzle, ask those people what they know about the person in question, and then assemble all of those pieces of the puzzle to determine whether the person poses a threat or otherwise needs help or intervention. Additional information may come from the following areas:

- Faculty and staff members
- Student Conduct process
- Faculty Grievance/conduct boards
- Faculty Grievance review committees
- Office of Equal Opportunity
- Assistant Attorney General
- Campus Police
- Campus housing
- Local Law enforcement
- Previous school attended
- Current employer
- Email and internet information
- Student Health and Counseling Center
- Interview the person of concern

- Following the gathering of information about the person in question and his or her current situation, the next step is to sort through the information to see what comprehensive picture of the person emerges.
- Once the team has gathered, organized and documented the information it has collected, the information will be used to answer several key inquiry questions.
  1. What are the person’s motive(s) and goals?
  2. Have there been any communications suggesting ideas or intent to attack?
  3. Has the person shown inappropriate interest in any of the following?
    - Work place, school or campus attacks or attackers;
    - Weapons (including recent acquisition of any relevant weapon);
    - Incidents of mass violence (terrorism, workplace violence, mass murders);

- Obsessive pursuit, stalking or monitoring others.
  - 4. Has the person engaged in attack-related behaviors (i.e., any behavior that moves an idea of harm forward toward actual harm)?
  - 5. Does the person have the capacity to carry out an act of targeted violence?
  - 6. Is the person experiencing hopelessness, desperation and/or despair?
  - 7. Does the person have a trusting relationship with at least one responsible person (e.g., friend, significant other, roommate, colleague, faculty advisor, coach, parent etc.)?
  - 8. Does the person see violence as an acceptable, desirable, or only way to solve problems?
  - 9. Is the person's conversation and "story" consistent with his or her actions?
  - 10. Are other people concerned about the person's potential for violence?
  - 11. What circumstances might affect the likelihood of violence?
  - 12. Where does the subject exist along the pathway to violence?
- Following the computation and documentation of the answers to the above questions the TAT will answer two questions to complete the investigation.
    1. Does the person appear to pose a threat of harm, whether to himself/herself, to others, or both? Does the person's behavior suggest that he or she is on a pathway toward potential harm?
    2. If the person does not appear to pose a threat of harm does the person otherwise show a need for help or intervention, such as mental health care?

If the answer is "no" to the above two questions, the team documents its response, records the person and incident, and closes the inquiry.

If the answer is "Yes" to one or more of the above questions, the team documents its responses and rationale and develops, implements, and re-evaluates a plan to monitor the person and situation and/or connect the person with resources in order to assist him/her with solving problems or addressing needs. The team should document the details of this plan, as well as document steps taken to implement the plan and/or refer the person for help. The Team should also document its efforts to monitor the effectiveness of the plan and modify the plan as needed. Following the development of the plan, all parties that have been involved in the investigation will be notified in an effort to provide closure to the investigation.

The Problem Solving Team and the Threat Assessment Team are comprised of Ellensburg campus representatives from Student Health and Counseling Services, Health and Wellness Services, University Police, University Housing, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Human Resources, Office for Equal Opportunity, and the Office of the Provost, with the Attorney General's Office acting in an advisory capacity. The PST and TAT respond to reports about students of concern and will screen and intervene with students whose behavior is perceived as threatening to self or others.

#### **IV. Threatening Behavior**

Central Washington University, a community dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, expects all students to behave in a manner consistent with its high standards of scholarship and conduct. The purpose of these standards and processes is to educate students and protect the welfare of the

community. CWU's Code of Conduct for Students prohibits physical abuse, threats, intimidation, and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person, including one's self.

Recognizing that student behaviors that are perceived as threatening may be amenable to intervention and correction, this policy establishes a protocol for members of the university community who witness such behaviors to forward their concerns to university officials for assessment and review. The purpose of such an intervention is to foster the safety and well-being of the involved student, as well as of the university community, by connecting students with appropriate resources and services.

### **Reporting, Screening, and Assessment**

#### **Reporting**

Any member of the university community who is concerned about possible threats as a result of a student's behavior may forward this concern to the Ellensburg PST via the CWU Student Conduct Report form or by direct contact with the Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. This policy is not a substitute for police intervention when appropriate.

**WITNESSES SHOULD FIRST CALL 911 FOR EMERGENCY OR THE CWU POLICE IF THE STUDENT IS THREATENING PHYSICAL HARM OR VIOLENCE OR ACTING IN A VIOLENT MANNER.**

#### **Screening**

When a report is received, the Ellensburg campus based PST will review the information to determine whether the behavior poses a risk that warrants a referral for medical assessment, whether no action is required, or whether the behavior should be addressed through alternative means (such as the student conduct process). In order to make this determination the PST member(s) may contact the referring party(ies) for additional information and may contact other persons who witnessed the behavior of concern. The PST also may interview the student whose behavior is at issue. The PST will take the lead in the information gathering and refer to the TAT when necessary.

If the PST assesses the behavior as transient and not substantive, the student will be sent a letter describing the behavior of concern, clarifying the standards of conduct, and providing information about campus and community resources that may help address concerns.

If the behavior is determined to be substantive, the student will be contacted by a member of the TAT, informed of the concerns, and referred for professional assessments to evaluate the student's risk of harm to self or others. The assessment related to harm to self or others, will be completed as appropriate, by professional staff at CWU Counseling Services or other qualified mental health professional. In certain circumstances, the University may require another independent mental health examination, at the University's expense.

The TAT may take additional steps, as deemed appropriate given the nature and severity of the behavior, including but not limited to: referral for action under the student code of conduct, including possible interim suspension and ultimate expulsion when warranted; contacting the student's family or emergency contact(s), as permitted by university policy and FERPA; contacting law enforcement for intervention or consultation; and taking other precautions to protect the student and/or potential

victims. If the student is referred for an assessment, following the assessment recommendations is required.

If the student withdraws from school or completes the quarter prior to completing the assessment, a Student Affairs registration hold or other restriction(s) may be applied, and the student may be required to complete an assessment prior to enrolling in subsequent quarters.

If subsequent reports are received about a student who has completed an assessment, the TAT will meet to consider whether additional assessment or other additional actions are necessary in order to protect the student and the university community.

### Suspensions and Expulsions

Students may appeal suspensions and expulsions only, as outlined in the Student Conduct Code.

### **V. Related Policies**

- Student Conduct Code (Chapter 106-120 WAC)
- Mandated Assessment Following Suicide Threats and Attempts
- Sexual Assault Response Policy

Approved by: Charlotta Jull VP for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management Date: 6/25/10

[Responsibility: SAEM; Reviewed/Endorsed by: Cabinet/PAC; Review/Effective Date: 4/13/2010]

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Threat Assessment Response Policy and Procedures - CWU Campus Centers**

Campus Centers as part of the total Central Washington University system will be covered by this policy.

The reporting of student conduct will be addressed as described under Section II Student Conduct Report Network.

When a student is identified as a concern, the same investigation practice will ensue as described in Section III Problem Solving Team/Threat Assessment Team.

As the investigation starts, appropriate center staff, i.e. site director, the faculty, and others, will be notified of the concern. If the concern is forwarded to the TAT, center staff may be contacted to assist with the gathering of information as needed.

If the behavior is determined to be substantive, the student will be contacted by a member of the TAT, or a representative thereof and informed of the concerns, and referred for professional assessment to evaluate the student's risk of harm to self or others. The assessment related to harm to self or others will be completed as appropriate, by professional staff at the local community college counseling center or with a local mental health provider.

Note: This document will be shared with our host/partnering community colleges and specific factors that address how the community college will participate or not participate in this practice will be identified.