



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 14, 2024

To: Local Educational Agency Leads, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities, Nonpublic School Supervisors

Route To: Business Administrators, Principals, Directors of Buildings and Grounds, School Safety Specialists, School Administrators, School Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Faculty

From: Christopher Irving, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Field Support and Services

School Safety Speaker Series:

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Best Practices for a Defensible Process and Special Education Considerations

The New Jersey Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning (OSPEP) is hosting Dr. Melissa Reeves, a nationally certified school psychologist, licensed special education teacher, licensed clinical mental health counselor, and former district coordinator of social/emotional/behavioral services on March 15, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Burlington Township High School Performing Arts Center, 610 Fountain Avenue, Burlington, New Jersey, 08016. The *School Safety Speaker Series* is being offered through the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Homeland Security Grant Program.

Dr. Melissa Reeves will be presenting on the current state of behavioral threat assessment and management (BTAM) in schools, specifically discussing best practices for a defensible process and special education considerations. Dr. Reeves will share current research, recommendations, and lessons learned from previous threat assessment cases in schools. The presentation will emphasize the critical importance of establishing multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams and how to address the systemic barriers that complicate information sharing, documentation, and follow-up planning and support. Additionally, Dr. Reeves will discuss the importance of addressing bias, equity, and disproportionality within the BTAM process and special considerations necessary to ensure threat assessment processes do not violate special education protocols and procedures.

Workshop participants will:

- Learn critical components needed to have a legally defensible BTAM process;
- Learn strategies that increase equity while decreasing bias and disproportionality;
- Learn the clear distinction between threat assessment and suicide risk assessment;
- Discuss special considerations to be considered when conducting threat assessments with students with disabilities or suspected of having a disability;
- Understand the clear distinction, yet complementary aspects, between threat assessment and special education policies and procedures;
- Learn how IDEA, 504, and ADA Title II "Direct Threat Standard" intersect with threat assessment and the considerations needed to ensure districts are complying with federal law;
- Be provided best practice guidance regarding parent permission vs. notification, information sharing, discipline, and change in programming and/or placement decisions; and,
- Be provided recommendations for improving the fidelity of implementation of the BTAM process.

There is no fee to attend this presentation, however, space is limited and registration is required. Please register [here](#).

School Safety Specialists will receive training hours for attending this workshop.

Questions can be directed to OSPEP at school.security@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group