



# SE Alberta Regional ARTO Process

A collaborative partnership response to keep our children and community safe through the assessment of potential violence

2024

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*The Southeast Alberta Regional Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO) Process is based upon the Center for Trauma Informed Practices (CTIP) model of Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) and the work of J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director.*

*We also wish to acknowledge the work of the many school boards and community organizations who have also developed regional processes in working to support the safety of individuals and families. The willingness to share experience and resources has strengthened our Southeast Alberta Regional ARTO Process.*

**Table of Contents**

**PART A: ARTO PROCESS**

**Historical Information** ..... 4  
**Background** ..... 4  
**Rationale** ..... 5  
    Need for Training ..... 5  
    Importance of School Culture ..... 5  
**Vision** ..... 6  
**Community Partners** ..... 7

# SOUTHEAST ALBERTA ARTO PROCESS

## A Collaborative Response to Threat Making Behaviours

### Historical Information

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High profile school shootings in Canada and the United States, as well as terrorist attacks and other high profile violent traumas, have understandably increased anxiety among students, staff, parents and others. Without formal procedures in schools and communities to assess high risk and threat making behaviour, the likelihood of overreacting and underreacting is increased.

In 2000, Lethbridge College and the Canadian Threat Assessment Training Board collaborated in the development of a “Threat Assessment Training” program initiative to train multidisciplinary Threat Risk Assessment Teams. The protocol was developed by J. Kevin Cameron and Deborah Sawyer as part of the original training. In 2008, the program name has been changed to “Violence Threat Risk Assessment / VTRA” to reflect the broader applications of the model. As of 2023, the VTRA model – with associated training and protocol – is here to stay, but the practical application will now be referred to as the Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO). It is a softer use of language, when communicating with non-professionals who are involved with a case of an Individual of Concern (IOC) who was reported to have made a threat to family members, coworkers, peers, or others. As such, the shortened acronym ARTO will be used throughout this document.

### Background

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The Southeast Alberta Regional Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO) Process is the result of commitment and cooperation between school jurisdictions and community agencies, all of whom are committed to making our schools and communities safe.

All Southeast Alberta Regional ARTO Process partners<sup>1</sup> have agreed to respond, given their role and mandate, to all behaviours that may pose a potential risk for violence to any individual or members of the community, in a manner consistent with this protocol. The goal will be to intervene as early as possible when an individual may be moving on a pathway towards violence.

In developing this process, consideration was given to the uniqueness and diversity of the rural and urban communities represented in our collaboration. This document will ensure common understanding of the ARTO process, and encourage the development of common responses, emphasizing a multi-disciplinary approach. A multi-disciplinary team offers a more complete understanding of the dynamics involved in the lives of those individuals making the threats and presenting the risks. This approach also better reflects consideration

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<sup>1</sup> The term “partner” in this document is not intended to infer a legal relationship, but rather a collaborative arrangement.

of the contexts in which threats occur and the impact upon those identified. The strength of the multi-disciplinary team is the access it provides to a broad range of expertise and perspective.

This process supports collaborative planning among individuals, families, schools and community agencies to reduce violence and to reflect safe, caring and restorative approaches. It fosters timely sharing of information about individuals who pose a risk for violence towards themselves or others while respecting an individual's right to privacy to the fullest extent possible. The process supports a deliberate effort to "connect the dots" that may suggest an individual is moving on a path towards violence, necessitating interventions and plans being put into place.

## **Rationale**

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The Southeast Alberta Regional Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO) partners are committed to making schools safe for students and staff. Each school jurisdiction and partner agency shall respond, as appropriate given their role and mandate, to all student behaviours that pose a potential risk to other students, staff and members of the community. Reflected in the protocol is the belief that support for early intervention measures by the school jurisdictions and community partners will reduce school violence.

The effective implementation of this process will support collaborative planning to reduce school violence and ensure safe and caring school communities. Within the parameters of privacy legislation, the timely sharing of information with partners regarding students at risk for violence towards self and/or others will ensure that supportive plans are put in place. Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO) is not a disciplinary process but rather an avenue to reduce risk. The strength of the school jurisdictions/community partnership lies in the multidisciplinary composition of the response team and the ability to activate processes and/or collaborate with partners without delay.

### **Need for Training**

This process is not a substitute for training in the field of Assessment of Risk to Others (ARTO). The process is intended for use by multidisciplinary teams trained in the theory and practice of threat risk assessment.

### **Importance of School Culture**

School culture and/or climate is widely acknowledged to be a key to creating a safe environment. By placing a strong emphasis on safety, tolerance, communication and programming designed to facilitate social responsibility, we can create an environment where violence is less likely to occur. Environments such as these are characterized by systems that allow for early identification of potential problems. It is critical for individuals and families to be actively involved in the development of school initiatives and programming.

## Vision

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All partners are accountable to the purpose of the process and have a shared obligation to actively take steps to prevent violence.

In situations where a person poses an imminent risk to themselves or others, the partners agree to work together for the common goal of threat reduction and safety by sharing information, advice, and support that assists in the reduction of risk.















The partners will work together to:

- Build collaborative working relationships based on mutual respect and trust;
- Work in ways that promote safe, caring and restorative environments and practices;
- Prioritize the need for promotion, prevention and intervention strategies that demonstrate effectiveness in providing coordinated and integrated supports and services for the person of concern and, as appropriate, their family;
- Involve individuals and their families in planning for services and supports, as appropriate;
- Recognize that each individual has unique strengths and needs that should be considered when developing supports, interventions and services;
- Realize that working together successfully requires persistence and is a process of learning, listening, and understanding one another;
- Ensure that fair notice of policies and procedures regarding Assessment Risk to Others (ARTO) is provided to staff members, individuals and families.

The process is designed to enhance communication between schools and community partners. It is incumbent upon the partners to share necessary information that may initiate or facilitate a threat assessment process.

## Community Partners

The geographical area covered by this process generally encompasses Southeast Alberta. The school jurisdictions are the lead partners in the Southeast Alberta Regional ARTO Process. Current community partners are summarized below:

	AHS Addiction and Mental Health South Zone Paul Weiss, Director, Community Based Services Heather Woodward, Manager, Medicine Hat
	Children and Family Services, South Region Jerry Mortensen, Regional Director
	Center for Trauma Informed Practices J. Kevin Cameron, Executive Director
	CAPE School Jeney Gordon, Principal
	Christ The Redeemer Catholic School Division Dr. Andrea Holowka, Superintendent
	Grasslands Regional Division No. 6 Scott Brandt, Superintendent
	McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Tracie Mutschler, Executive Director
	Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education Dwayne Zarichny, Superintendent
	Medicine Hat College Kevin Shufflebotham, President and CEO
	Medicine Hat Police Service Alan Murphy, Chief of Police
	Medicine Hat Public School Division Mark Davidson, Superintendent
	Prairie Rose School Division No. 8 Reagan Weeks, Superintendent
	Royal Canadian Mounted Police Curtis Zablocki, Deputy Commissioner
	YMCA of Medicine Hat Sharon Hayward, CEO