



*Saskatchewan's Action Plan to
Address Bullying and Cyberbullying*

November 2013

Executive Summary

Children and youth who are targets of bullying and cyberbullying don't have a consistent mechanism for reporting and rapid response. To help address this problem and prevent it, in February 2013, the Premier of Saskatchewan appointed the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Saskatoon Fairview, Jennifer Campeau, as the Legislative Secretary responsible for the anti-bullying initiative.

The Legislative Secretary was provided with a triple mandate to be completed by the end of the year, including public consultations in relation to anti-bullying, gathering promising practices from other jurisdictions, developing an anti-bullying strategy and providing recommendations for the Minister of Education. To prepare her recommendations, the Legislative Secretary hosted province-wide consultations, reviewed the work being done in other Canadian jurisdictions, consulted other ministries, conducted a literature review and identified a monitoring tool to gauge progress and support local action.

After hearing from over 1,000 Saskatchewan residents and gaining knowledge from the research process, the Legislative Secretary drafted a proposed definition of bullying and six key recommendations to address bullying and cyberbullying in Saskatchewan. The definition is the following:

Bullying is a relationship issue where one person or group repeatedly uses power and aggression to control or intentionally hurt, harm or intimidate another person or group. It is often based on another person's appearance, abilities, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. Bullying can take many forms; physical, emotional, verbal, psychological or social. It can occur in person or through electronic communication.

These recommendations speak to the need to:

- update policies and procedures in the education sector to ensure consistency in the prevention, rapid response and intervention in bullying incidents;
- develop an anonymous online reporting tool for the reporting of bullying incidents;
- assess the implications for Saskatchewan of upcoming federal cyberbullying legislation;
- support students to develop appropriate and responsible online behaviour;
- provide a stand-alone website for anti-bullying tools and resources for students, families and educators; and,
- engage youth in building solutions to address bullying.

In order for the Government of Saskatchewan to act on these recommendations, the Legislative Secretary proposed "***Saskatchewan's Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying.***" This plan proposed key actions that can be taken to provide students, families and schools with the knowledge, skills, resources and supports to help children and youth to feel safe and accepted at school, in their community and online. The four themes contained in the action plan that emerged through the consultation and research process will guide the creation of safe, caring and accepting schools for all Saskatchewan children and youth.

The first theme, ***“Build consistency across the system to prevent and respond to bullying,”*** addresses:

- developing an online reporting tool;
- renewing the education system’s security protocols and procedures;
- enhancing school-based restorative justice approaches;
- supporting risk assessment training for school-based staff and community professionals;
- providing supports for instructional planning; and,
- engaging the office of the Advocate for Children and Youth.

The second theme, ***“Work across government to align priorities,”*** focuses on:

- assessing the upcoming federal cyberbullying legislation;
- working together within the Child and Family Agenda to address bullying across government;
- planning with the education sector through *Student First* consultations;
- developing early years programming;
- continuing cross system work on community mobilization projects; and,
- improving mental health and addictions services.

The third theme, ***“Support students to develop responsible and appropriate online behaviour,”*** ensures that all students understand the lasting impact of what they post online by:

- supporting the instruction of responsible and appropriate online behaviour for Kindergarten through Grade 12 students;
- providing a stand-alone website for anti-bullying information and supports; and,
- mentoring older students to become role models for younger students.

The fourth theme, ***“Engage children and youth in creating solutions to foster positive relationships,”*** engages young people in the work to stop bullying and cyberbullying by:

- hosting annual *Student First Forums*;
- participating in SaskTel’s “I Am Stronger” campaign; and,
- responding positively to student requests for school groups such as Gay-Straight Alliances.

The Legislative Secretary provided this report for consideration of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Letter of Transmittal

To: Honourable Don Morgan, Q.C.
Minister of Education

From: Jennifer Campeau, MLA
Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education, Responsible for the Anti-Bullying Initiative

Please accept this report, *Saskatchewan's Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying*, as the completion of my mandate as the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education responsible for the anti-bullying initiative. Since my appointment in February 2013, I have worked closely with Ministry of Education officials to hold province-wide consultations with the public, interest groups and individuals and gather cross-jurisdictional information to develop this action plan.

The findings and recommendations in this action plan were informed by what was learned through the public consultation process and the knowledge gained from commissioned reports and research. The three year action plan will provide students, families and schools with the knowledge, skills, resources and supports to help Saskatchewan's children and youth feel safe and accepted at school, in the community and online.

It has been a privilege to have met with so many Saskatchewan residents during the consultations and to read the written submissions that have been sent.

On behalf of myself and Ministry of Education officials, I would like to thank those who participated in the consultation process. Your input was carefully considered in the development of the recommendations included in *Saskatchewan's Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying*. A common theme we heard throughout the consultation process was, "it takes a community to raise a child." As a result of the consultations, I recommend that the government work with communities to take action to ensure that children and youth are able to report a bullying incident and know they will receive a timely response to resolve the situation. I am sure you will see this theme within the recommendations put forth. We look forward to creating safe, caring and accepting schools for all children.

I humbly submit our findings and our recommendations to you.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Campeau, MLA

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Introduction

Bullying is a provincial and national high-profile issue. Recent tragic deaths have increased public awareness of bullying in Saskatchewan. We can do more to protect our children.

Improving student achievement, encouraging healthy and safe lifestyles and preparing students for success in both school and life are all essential to the *Saskatchewan Advantage*. This work needs to be done through a *Student First* lens, by putting the student first. If our children are to reach their full potential, they need to feel safe at school and in our communities. Too many children and youth in Saskatchewan are targets of bullying and cyberbullying. We all have a role to play to ensure that every Saskatchewan student has a safe, caring and accepting learning environment. We can all stand up and lead the change to better understand how our behaviour affects others.

In February 2013, the Premier of Saskatchewan appointed the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Saskatoon Fairview, Jennifer Campeau, as the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education responsible for the anti-bullying initiative. The Legislative Secretary was provided with three mandates to be completed by the end of the year:

MANDATE #1:

- Act on behalf of the Minister of Education at public consultations and meetings in relation to anti-bullying.

MANDATE # 2:

- Gather cross-jurisdictional information that will aid the development of an anti-bullying strategy.

MANDATE #3:

- Provide recommendations for the Minister of Education.

To fulfill the mandate, the Legislative Secretary, in partnership with the Ministry Education, completed the following actions to inform this report:

- Hosted province-wide consultations with the public, interest groups and individuals;
- Reviewed legislation, actions, approaches and initiatives from other Canadian jurisdictions;
- Discussed common areas of concern regarding bullying with other ministries;
- Conducted a literature review on best practices in prevention and intervention; and,
- Identified a tool that can be used to monitor progress and support local action.

This report outlines recommendations in the form of an action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying in Saskatchewan. It also highlights the key actions that can be taken to provide students, families and schools with the knowledge, skills, resources and supports to help children and youth to feel safe and accepted at school, in their community and online.

Through the analysis of the consultation process, four themes emerged. The same themes were apparent in the literature review, discussions with other provincial ministries and the information gathered from other Canadian jurisdictions. For this reason, the recommendations and subsequent proposed government actions to create safe, caring and accepting for all Saskatchewan children and youth will be framed under the following:

- Build consistency across the system to prevent and respond to bullying;
- Work across government to align priorities;
- Support students to develop responsible and appropriate online behaviour; and,
- Engage children and youth in creating solutions to foster positive relationships.

The Ministry of Education is about to embark on province-wide discussion about how to unify, re-orient and re-engage the education system on what matters most – the student. The recommendations and actions from this report will help inform the *Student First* engagement process. The findings from the *Student First* consultations will inform and further prioritize the keys actions associated with student safety using a *Student First* perspective.

What We Learned

What steps did we take to learn about bullying?

We listened to the people of Saskatchewan. An extensive consultation process that began in June and ended in October provided a variety of perspectives, increasing our understanding of bullying behaviour and its impacts on Saskatchewan people. Over 1,000 Saskatchewan residents provided input either through the face to face consultations, the online community or by written submission. (1)

The consultation process provided a safe forum for people to share their stories, experiences and truths about how bullying is negatively affecting our children and youth online, at home, at school, at work and in the community. We heard an urgent need to take action that is timely and practical. Respondents provided concrete examples of actions, tools and services that will help address bullying.

In addition, the Legislative Secretary and Ministry of Education officials reviewed the actions and approaches taken by other provinces, territories and the federal government to create safe, caring and accepting schools. A literature review of best practices was also commissioned. Previous actions taken by the Ministry of Education were also considered in the formation of the action plan. (2) (3)

Finally, the Ministry of Education discussed bullying with other ministries within government. Cross-government initiatives such as the Child and Family Agenda will engage other ministries beyond Education in finding solutions to bullying and cyberbullying. We heard from parents that mental health services for children and youth need to be enhanced to ensure that services are available when there is a need. The need for legislation was also raised. Given the federal government's fall Speech from the Throne indicating they will be introducing changes to the criminal code of Canada to address cyberbullying, we realize the need to assess provincial legislation after this work is complete.

What did we learn that will guide us in taking action?

We have learned that:

- Bullying is complex and there are no easy solutions.
- Young people who are seen as different are at risk of being bullied.

We need to build consistency across the system:

- Consistent policy and practices are needed to prevent, respond to and intervene to bullying.
- An action plan should provide a continuum of supports from universal prevention and intervention strategies to more targeted approaches for specific situations and intensive supports for individual children and youth.
- To resolve bullying, the “the target,” “the offender,” “the bystander” and the community should be included in creating solutions.
- Children and youth need a place to report bullying incidents where action can be taken quickly.

We need to work across government to align priorities:

- Solutions to bullying should be comprehensive and collaborative rather than a patchwork of individual programs. Multiple ministries in government need to be involved.
- Government is expected to provide leadership and set measurable goals and monitor progress towards these goals; however, communities need the flexibility to meet local needs.
- Build on work that already exists and invite school-based staff, students, families and the local community to become involved in anti-bullying efforts.
- Prevention is key to stopping bullying.

We need to support students to develop responsible and appropriate online behaviour:

- Although students are comfortable using technology, they may not be using it appropriately.
- Because technology is a part of children’s everyday lives, they need to learn the necessary skills to use technology in healthy and ethical ways.
- Cyberbullying is a major concern, particularly for parents and caregivers; some feel they lack the knowledge and expertise to help their children in the digital age.
- We need tools to support parents and caregivers to recognize when their child is in need and know how to help them.

We need to engage children and youth in creating solutions to build positive relationships:

- Children need to be supported to develop positive, caring relationships early in life. Their future interactions with others are shaped by their early environments.
- We need to continue to discuss bullying and cyberbullying with young people and support them to get involved in finding relevant solutions.
- Students need the support of schools and communities to create spaces where they feel respected and accepted.
- Saskatchewan people care. They want children and youth to achieve to the best of their ability. There is genuine concern about bullying and the government is not expected to solve it alone; the efforts and commitment of the entire community are needed.

Defining Bullying

There are challenges in defining bullying and cyberbullying. Other jurisdictions across Canada have created legal definitions which have been received with mixed reviews. Some are considered too vague while others are too specific. During the consultation process participants were asked to share their perspectives regarding a definition for bullying. The following common elements were identified and have informed the definition and actions to address bullying that are proposed in this report.

Perspectives on bullying

Participants of the consultation process provided many opinions and perspectives on a definition for bullying. We heard it would be difficult for a single definition to cover the many circumstances, settings and ages in which bullying can occur. People also had personal definitions based on their own experiences or from stories in the media. Concern regarding the legal viability and enforcement of a provincial definition was also raised. Yet schools, organizations and governments are often called on to define bullying and cyberbullying in order to differentiate it from teasing, harassment or criminal behaviour in order to respond or intervene appropriately to a bullying incident.

Bullying is a relationship issue where one person or group uses power and aggression to control or intentionally hurt, harm or intimidate others. It was common to hear that the target of bullying may feel unable to resolve the situation. Three roles were identified as common to bullying situations: Target(s); Offender(s); and, Bystander(s). We were reminded that assigning a label to a child limits our ability to see the whole child and support the building of positive relationships. We heard that if we empower the bystander to stand up and act we can achieve something extremely important which will help curb bullying.

Bullying can occur at any age and in situations where someone is in, or is perceived to be, in a **position of power** over someone else. Bullying can happen anywhere: in the community, at school, in the park, at a friend's house, on a sports team, in a club or through electronic communication.

Young people at risk of bullying often include ethnic and religious minorities, those who are overweight, who have a disability or are of a different socioeconomic status. Some students, such as First Nations and Métis students and those who identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), are particularly vulnerable. (4)

Most participants agreed that **bullying behaviour is repetitive**. The offender may target a specific individual and repeat the behaviour or regularly target a number of different individuals. In addition, the general view is that **bullying behaviour is learned** through examples provided by parents, caregivers or guardians, peers, older children, and/or those in influential positions. It is recognized that those who bully others have often been bullied themselves and that the role can be interchanged.

Bullying can be **physical acts** intended to intimidate or harm another person or their property. It can be **unwanted physical contact or sexually inappropriate actions and comments**. There are many examples of **emotional, psychological and social** bullying. Some are:

- Name calling, put downs, threats, gossiping, spreading rumors either verbally or electronically;
- Inappropriate images that are posted or sent to others without permission;
- Physical cues such as eye rolling or inappropriate gestures to hurt or embarrass someone; and,
- Isolating, excluding or ganging up on someone because of one's physical features or abilities, race, creed and sexual or romantic orientation. (1) (5)

Cyberbullying is emotional, psychological or social bullying that occurs using technology to forward or spread hurtful messages and/or images through email, texting, social media or other forms of electronic communication. Cyberbullying is simply a different setting for bullying. Those who are the target of cyberbullying may be the target of other types of bullying as well.

For Saskatchewan, building on what we learned from the consultations and the guidelines for a definition provided to school divisions in 2006 (3), the following definition is proposed:

Bullying is a relationship issue where one person or group repeatedly uses power and aggression to control or intentionally hurt, harm or intimidate another person or group. It is often based on another person's appearance, abilities, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. Bullying can take many forms; physical, emotional, verbal, psychological or social. It can occur in person or through electronic communication.

From the consultations we learned that a universal definition must support identifying bullying as well as reporting, responding and resolving an incident in multiple contexts, including online, using a restorative approach rather than punitive. Further discussions will be a priority to ensure the Saskatchewan definition can meet these demands.

Why Does Saskatchewan Need an Action Plan to Address Bullying?

Bullying affects children's physical, mental and emotional well-being, the way they interact with others and their school experience. Bullying puts "the target" and the "the offender" at a higher risk of poor performance, poor attitudes towards school, low grades and absenteeism. There is a heightened negative impact on mental and emotional health with the effects varying from child to child. Some experience low self-esteem, while others may engage in self-harming or risky behaviours. The most common symptom is anxiety and depression. The more frequent the bullying, the more likely the target will experience symptoms of poor health, whether physical, mental or emotional. Bullying also affects

the health of bystanders who see acts of bullying in which they would like to intervene to help the victim but do not. (4)

- Bullying and cyberbullying occurs frequently.
- At least 1 in 3 adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied recently. (6)
- Over 50% of those who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual have seriously considered suicide; 37% reported an attempt. (7)
- Approximately 40% of adolescents report that they both bully others and are bullied. (8)
- 22% of students reported being the target of at least one form of cyberbullying and 30% report cyberbullying others. (9)
- Over half of bullied children do not report being bullied to a teacher. (10) (11)
- Almost 70% of the children reported witnessing at least one form of bullying at least once in the past 3 weeks. (12)

A safe school environment is critical for student engagement, learning, and well-being. Research using Tell Them From Me (TTFM), an online anonymous survey, found that students who reported being victims of bullying were five-and-a-half times as likely to be suffering depression, and were almost three times as likely to have a low sense of belonging at school. They were also less likely to be intellectually engaged. Using TTFM results, school staff, students, parents, school community councils (SCCs) and community agencies can work together to prevent bullying by developing positive policies and practices to address student safety.

Through the consultations we heard that student safety needed to be addressed more consistently. While school divisions have the legislated authority across a wide range of activities, including discipline, *Student First* can provide an opportunity to further discuss student safety within a sector plan. The wide ranging consultations will include students, teachers, administrators and parents. *Student First* consultations will also look to find successful practices in schools and school divisions to replicate. The findings from the *Student First* consultations will also influence the future direction for anti-bullying efforts in the province.

Saskatchewan is growing. Securing a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people is a priority. The future of our province lies with our ability to prepare today's children and youth of today for success in both school and life for tomorrow. Research and input from Saskatchewan residents indicate that bullying and cyberbullying puts our children and youth at risk of not reaching their full potential as citizens of our province and leaders in their communities.

Recommendations

Six key recommendations are presented below and are grouped based on the themes that emerged through the analysis of the consultation and literature review process. They outline the key steps that the Government of Saskatchewan can take to address bullying. The recommendations, along with the corresponding actions will help to prevent bullying and ensure that children and youth are able to report bullying and know they will receive a timely response to resolve the situation. Foundational to the recommendations is the need to develop positive relationships beginning at a young age. To encourage this there will be a strong link between the anti-bullying action plan and other government priorities within the Child and Family Agenda such as the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.

Effective bullying reduction and prevention programs require collaboration and long-term commitment. Government will work with community, including students, families, schools, school divisions, school community councils and other partners, to build communities where bullying is not accepted.

Build Consistency Across the System

Recommendation #1

Recognizing the need in the education sector to update current policies and protocols to prevent, rapidly respond to and intervene in bullying incidents, including critical or violent situations in a consistent and timely manner:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with education sector partners to establish consistent policies and protocols to identify bullying as well as to report, respond and resolve an incident in multiple contexts, using a restorative approach through the renewal of the *Caring and Respectful Schools* policy and by using the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth as an avenue to address unresolved bullying issues for children and families.

Recommendation #2

Recognizing that when in need, children and youth currently have a 24-hour, 7 days a week support in place to talk to trained volunteers and counsellors through the Kids Help Phone, but that an anonymous online reporting tool would help ensure bullying incidents are reported and responded to in a timely manner by the best people available to resolve the situation:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan develop an anonymous smartphone-friendly internet reporting tool and continue to support the toll-free Kids Help Phone.

Work Across Government to Align Priorities

Recommendation #3

Recognizing that work is being done through the Child and Family Agenda related to the safety and security of children and youth and that the federal government is currently proposing changes to the Criminal Code of Canada to address cyberbullying and the distribution of intimate images:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan direct that the Ministry of Education work with other ministries regarding the upcoming federal legislation and its implications for Saskatchewan.

Support Students to Develop Responsible and Appropriate Online Behaviour

Recommendation #4

Recognizing that all students need to learn the proper knowledge and necessary skills to develop appropriate and responsible online behaviour and that teachers and schools will need support to ensure this important work occurs starting in Kindergarten through Grade 12:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with school divisions to provide teacher instructional supports and student resources to teach appropriate and responsible online behavior to all Kindergarten through Grade 12 students.

Recommendation #5

Recognizing that students, families, schools and community members need access to a website to provide a one-stop source of anti-bullying resources and supports to prevent, report and intervene on bullying incidents:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan partner with the SaskTel “I Am Stronger” campaign to house their anti-bullying resources, supports and an anonymous reporting tool on the “I Am Stronger” website.

Engage Children and Youth in Creating Solutions to Build Positive Relationships

Recommendation #6

Recognizing that young people are the most affected by bullying and that they are key partners in the work to build solutions as they can be empowered to become role models for their peers on how to build positive relationships:

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with school divisions and other community partners by engaging youth in creating solutions to address bullying and cyberbullying and to help build positive relationships in our schools and communities.

Proposed Actions

The following actions are proposed to enable government to address bullying and cyberbullying:

Build Consistency Across the System

In Saskatchewan, The *Education Act* (1995) sets out the legal description, membership, duties and powers of school divisions and schools boards. This includes the responsibility for responding to student behaviour. School divisions have administrative procedures in place that address respectful learning environments and student conduct, and each school division has administrative procedures to monitor and address bullying and other student behaviour.

To support this responsibility, the Ministry of Education provided *Caring and Respectful Schools* (2004) and *Bullying Prevention: A Model Policy* (2006) to guide school division efforts in preventing and responding to instances of bullying. These documents have provided the foundation on which to build additional supports and resources. In addition, the ministry has provided curricula and recommended resources to support students in building healthy relationships. Revisions to the *Caring and Respectful Schools* policy documents will include an updated definition for bullying that will reflect the current challenges related to the use of social media and other electronic activity.

Consultations indicated the need to establish guidelines, additional tools and training to better prepare people working within the education sector to prevent and respond to bullying. Findings from the environmental scan indicate that many jurisdictions in Canada are reviewing student safety and security practices, including student codes of conduct that support positive relationships within the school. There will be an emphasis on using restorative approaches rather than punitive as a base for schools to address bullying.

Restorative approaches hold all members of a school community accountable to address bullying and cyberbullying. By supporting positive relationships between students, staff, administration, parents and community partners, practical and positive ways of resolving a bullying situation can be found. (15) For young people, school-based restorative programs assist them to learn the value of conflict resolution, develop leadership skills and gain skills to build healthy relationships. Programs such as the Restorative Action Program (RAP) in Saskatoon can be used as a model for other areas of the province. In Saskatoon, it was determined that students go to RAP workers to address a wide range of conflicts and problems, including fights with friends, internal emotional conflicts, troubles in class, bullying, physical violence, substance abuse and more. Most of the students involved in the program in 2012-13 (88%) received some kind of one-on-one support to address a specific issue or incident. Over half of these sessions (54%) ended in a resolution of the issue and slightly less than a fifth (17%) resulted in a mediation being planned. Some mediation involved more than just student participants – parents, teachers, and school administrators also took part (16).

Student safety in our schools and communities is a shared responsibility. Many of the school divisions in the province have staff and community partners trained in Threat Risk Assessment. Ensuring that all

school divisions have basic Threat Risk Assessment will be a first step in creating provincial consistency. This training will reinforce the need to report any threat to the appropriate level of authority and respond appropriately depending on the level of risk.

This plan includes a proposed reporting tool and established protocols to ensure that Saskatchewan's children and youth can report a bullying incident and receive a timely response. Research suggests that 72 percent of students would report cyberbullying if it could be done anonymously. (13) British Columbia has developed an anonymous online bullying reporting tool that children and youth can access through the ERASE website. Once an incident is reported, an alert is sent to the appropriate school division and the Ministry of Education if necessary. These protocols have proven to be successful in proactively addressing crisis situations such as suicide attempts and fights. (14) In Saskatchewan, it is proposed that a Safe School Coordinator within the Ministry of Education would be responsible to work with school divisions to follow-up on bullying incident reports.

To address building consistency across the system, it is proposed that government:

Expand options to report bullying incidents across the province

An internet reporting tool should be developed that is accessible online through a website and through a smart-phone friendly app, with information stored on a secure database. Alerts are sent to those who can take action.

Support access to trained volunteers or professional counsellors when in need

Support should be provided to community partners to ensure children and youth have access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to trained volunteers or counsellors (e.g., Kids Help Phone).

Establish a provincial body

School divisions and other key stakeholder should be invited to nominate members to join a time-limited provincial advisory body to provide recommendations to renew and align school division bullying and student safety policy and protocols.

Enhance school-based Restorative Justice approaches

Government should build on the success of the Restorative Action Programming. Using restorative approaches students, staff, administration, parents and the community are better able to resolve conflict together.

Support risk assessment training

The Ministry of Education should fund basic risk assessment training to ensure that all school divisions in the province have staff and community professionals with the skills to identify worrisome or threatening behaviour, determine the level of risk and intervene appropriately.

Engage the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth

The Ministry of Education should engage the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth to provide children, youth and their families with another avenue to address unresolved issues. The Advocate can provide public education about bullying and support the implementation of provincial actions that strengthen efforts to prevent; respond to and intervene in bullying behaviours.

Promote citizenship education resources

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General should continue to partner with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to provide citizenship education to students from Prekindergarten to Grade 12. Citizenship education provides students with opportunities to explore how human rights, social justice and democracy can support the development of positive relationships with others. When a child or youth understands and can communicate to others their “rights and responsibilities,” their relationships will be based on respect for self and for others. This can reduce the power imbalance that can occur between individuals or groups and foster positive relationships rather than destructive ones such as bullying or discrimination.

Provide curricular connections for educators

Saskatchewan’s curricula are the foundation for building students’ understanding and knowledge about diversity, equity and human rights. The government should remain committed to inclusive curricula that provide all children and youth with equal opportunity to develop the knowledge, ability and confidence to pursue their goals. Anti-bullying, positive relationships and mental well-being curriculum connections at the elementary, middle and secondary levels should be made available to support teachers to prevent and address bullying while meeting curricular responsibilities.

Maintain a Saskatchewan standard for school curricular resources

To further support teachers, Saskatchewan should continue to evaluate all learning resources against specific criteria to ensure alignment with Saskatchewan curricula and their relevance to the interests and needs of the students. Recommended resources lists support teachers to plan for effective instruction.

Work Across Government to Align Priorities

In Saskatchewan, a Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth was established in December 2010 in response to the Child Welfare Review Panel's final report. The Committee consists of the Ministers of Social Services, Education, Advanced Education, Justice and the Attorney General, Corrections and Policing and Government Relations. The committee identifies challenges and initiatives to help children, youth and families realize a better quality of life.

The goals of the Cabinet Committee are:

- Children get a good start in life;
- Youth are prepared for their future;
- Families are strong; and,
- Communities are supportive.

The Child and Family Agenda provides an opportunity to leverage cross government action and investment that can impact bullying behaviours. Supporting children early in life to develop positive relationships is important to developing empathy, which is an important contributing factor to preventing bullying. The government supports these aims through early years programs like Prekindergarten. Prekindergarten programs include interacting with peers, resolving conflicts and identifying and regulating emotions as essential learning experiences.

The Government of Saskatchewan is developing a mental health and addictions action plan that builds on the care and services already in place. An online consultation process has begun to seek input from Saskatchewan residents on how to improve mental health and addiction services across the province. Through the anti-bullying consultation process we heard that mental health and addictions services are integral to bullying prevention and intervention.

The *Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime* initiative complements other anti-bullying efforts. The Centres of Responsibility (COR) can further identify community solutions while HUBs, such as the one in Prince Albert, can provide multidisciplinary, timely interventions for individuals and families when needed.

The Ministries of Education and Health, using a Comprehensive School Community Health approach, will continue work to support students, families, schools, school community councils and communities to work together to improve the well-being and achievement of children and youth. The approach is already used to frame work to promote healthy relationships, healthy behaviours, healthy weights and mental health.

Since bullying goes beyond schools into the community, a cross government response is necessary. The goal is to create supportive families, schools and communities where positive relationships thrive and children, youth and their families feel safe and accepted. The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes that students, teachers, families and community partners will also be included through government action.

The federal government's fall 2013 Throne Speech committed the government to introducing legislation related to cyberbullying and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. Saskatchewan will assess the need for provincial legislation recognizing the federal action and the benefit of a comprehensive approach that includes programs, tools and resources.

Strong programs that are proactive and foster, model and promote behaviour that benefits other people or society as a whole are needed, and the development of a positive learning environment is also critical. Involving children and youth in drafting intervention protocols, as well as implementing educational and restorative approaches, are seen as best practice in creating caring and respectful environments. (17)

To address working across government to align policies, it is proposed that government:

Assess the need for provincial legislative action

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General should jointly assess the appropriate legislative action required to address bullying and cyberbullying, recognizing upcoming federal legislation.

Consult through Student First

Saskatchewan is putting students first and is working with stakeholders to make a sector plan. The Student First approach should build on successes already in place in school divisions throughout the province.

Focus the Child and Family Agenda

The Child and Family Agenda should be working to address pressing issues facing our children and families: early childhood development; First Nations and Métis education; child welfare; parenting supports; child and youth obesity; crime reduction; and, mental health and addictions. Ministries should continue to work together with school divisions and community-based organizations to help children succeed in school, keep communities safe and help vulnerable children and families get the services they need.

Provide children with a healthy start

The Ministry of Education should continue to support a variety of services that focus on developing the whole child, including a child's social and emotional development through healthy and supportive interactions with caregivers and other children, as well as engaging families as partners in early learning programs that can support anti-bullying efforts.

Launch Voice for Change – an anonymous online mental health and addiction consultation

Feedback from Saskatchewan people should be used to help make meaningful change to improve mental health and addiction services across the province. An inter-ministerial action plan should be developed to address the complex and often connected issues of mental health and addictions, including services for children and youth. Led by the Ministry of Health, the plan should be developed in partnership with the Ministries of Education, Social Services and Justice and Attorney General, including Corrections.

Build Partnerships to Reduce Crime

Ministries should continue to work together to break down silos and work across systems to better assist those individuals and families in need. These community mobilization projects include Centres of Responsibility (CORs) and a HUB which are community-based, foster cooperation among the police, community organizations, government ministries and human service agencies and can be adapted to meet local needs.

Implement Comprehensive School Community Health

In Saskatchewan, the Ministries of Education and Health should continue to address health and safety issues of children and youth through a Comprehensive School Community Health approach. This approach engages school divisions, schools, families and community partners to improve student achievement and well-being. *Caring and Respectful Schools* provides the framework for strengthening schools and engaging School Community Councils in creating safe and accepting learning environments where all children and youth have the right to an education, free from all forms of bullying and violence.

Support Students to Develop Responsible and Appropriate Online Behaviour

During the consultation process, parents shared their concerns that they were unable to support nor model proper technology use for their children because they lacked the necessary understanding and skills in this area. The new digital world that youth are embarking on is completely unlike parents' own childhood experiences and is ever-changing. Parents felt that they needed help to ensure their children were receiving the proper knowledge and understanding about how to develop responsible and appropriate online behaviour. Not only did they desire more supports for their children at school to learn these skills, they wanted to learn them as well. They also expressed the need for "a one stop shop" for online information and supports and more information when purchasing cellular devices for their children.

The integration and effective use of technology in education is vital to support the teaching and learning environment in Saskatchewan schools and to improve student achievement. Although students are comfortable using technology, they may not be using it appropriately or ethically because they lack the skills and maturity to evaluate online content and the lasting impact of the material that they share. Studies show that only 33 percent of students had been taught how to judge the reliability of information found online, however most trusted the information that they read online and regularly shared it with their peers. (18) Lacking these skills can be problematic and can draw youth in cyberbullying behaviour and victimization. Students must realize that online activity is permanent and follows them for life.

Saskatchewan's *Technology in Education Framework* (TEF) guides the use of technology within the education system. Key outcomes in the framework state that both students and educators need to be able to use technology safely and effectively to communicate and collaborate with others in a global society. The promotion of human rights education and digital citizenship is a key component of a coordinated strategy to address cyberbullying. (4)

Outside of their home environments, students and school-based staff have the most access to young people. By giving them leadership opportunities and resources to model and mentor others on how to behave appropriately and ethically online in social and educational settings, they can positively impact younger students and their future online activity. In essence, by encouraging students and educators to become digital ambassadors, they will help to ensure youth learn the necessary skills and knowledge required for living in a digital world. They will also have the opportunity to practice these skills in a monitored environment where they can receive constructive feedback on their online activities. An important component of the TEF, instruction of appropriate and responsible online behaviour, will help ensure that children and youth in the digital age become responsible and principled digital citizens, capable of building and maintaining a positive digital footprint, respecting intellectual property boundaries and protecting their privacy online.

To address supporting students to develop responsible and appropriate online behaviour, it is proposed that government:

Support the instruction of appropriate and responsible online behaviour for Kindergarten through Grade 12 students

The Ministry of Education:

- should provide school divisions with model digital citizenship policies and guidelines for local adaptation and implementation;
- should work with school divisions to provide teachers with instructional supports and professional development opportunities and students with digital learning resources.

Develop and maintain an anti-bullying website and social media platforms

Through the partnership with the SaskTel “I Am Stronger” campaign, all supports and resources related to anti-bullying for students, parents, teachers and community members should be housed on a stand-alone website.

Model Appropriate and Responsible Online Behaviour

Students and school-based staff should be given leadership opportunities and supports to model appropriate and responsible online behaviour, through a digital citizenship ambassadors program.

Provide free point of sale information about appropriate use of mobile devices

Customers should be provided information at point of sale about responsible and appropriate behaviour when using their mobile device.

Engage Children and Youth in Creating Solutions to Build Positive Relationships

During the consultation process, participants expressed their desire for government to work with community agencies and families when developing solutions to anti-bullying. Key partners in this work are young people as they are most affected by bullying. This speaks to the need to continue to engage young people in conversation and solution building to ensure the actions that are taken are relevant to their lives.

Involving children and youth in decision-making empowers them. Youth can make a difference in their schools and communities while developing necessary leadership skills to facilitate change with their peers.

It is recommended that we build on the strengths of British Columbia's ERASE website. A partnership with SaskTel's "I Am Stronger" campaign would support efforts to build a movement that works collaboratively to stop bullying and cyberbullying. Through building an in-person and an online community support structure, youth can help ensure our communities are safe, caring and accepting places to live and learn. This campaign also encourages youth to organize local initiatives and provides them with resources to put their ideas into action.

Students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) were more vulnerable to being bullied. By responding positively to student requests for school groups that support safety, inclusion and respect for human diversity, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), schools can ensure that all students feel safe and accepted at school. Online supports and tools will be developed to provide practical strategies, suggestions and frequently asked questions to assist school divisions to anticipate and overcome potential challenges related to homophobia and heterosexism in the development and maintenance of GSAs. In addition, the "I Am Stronger" website will provide links to resources that are designed to assist school divisions in protecting vulnerable students. These resources, including a student handout will also support schools and students in understanding gender and sexual diversity to ensure the safety and success of LGBT students.

Tell Them From Me is an online, anonymous survey that provides students and teachers with the opportunity to provide feedback on their school experience. Data from this survey helps set future direction in schools, school divisions and the system as a whole as it informs school improvement initiatives, including anti-bullying actions.

Assembling youth in annual *Student First Forums* will bring youth together to hear their challenges and develop solutions to ensure young people are acting appropriately and responsibly in our schools, in our communities and online. As we shift the frame conceptually from cyberbullying to digital citizenship and to what it means to be a positive citizen of this new world that young people are moving into, we get a lot of creative thinking and a lot of potential for teenagers teaching other young people, which leads to much improved behaviour in the digital world. (4)

To address engaging children and youth in creating solutions to build positive relationships, it is proposed that government:

Host annual *Student First Forums*

The Ministry of Education should host students (aged 14-17), nominated by school divisions and some organizations, in annual youth forums. These forums will provide an opportunity to hear from youth and allow them to gain valuable leadership skills and experiences to become role models to their younger peers.

Partner with the “I Am Stronger” campaign

The Government of Saskatchewan should partner with SaskTel’s “I Am Stronger” campaign to work collaboratively to stop bullying and cyberbullying in our communities.

Create safe, caring and accepting schools

Schools should respond positively to student requests for groups that promote safety, inclusion and respect for human diversity, such as Gay Straight Alliances, and should work with the Ministry of Education to strengthen online resources and tools to support them.

Improve the learning environment through student voice

Schools should use data from the Tell Them From Me anonymous online survey to inform school improvement initiatives.

Appendix A: Recommendations

Build Consistency Across the System

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with education sector partners to establish consistent policies and protocols to identify bullying as well as to report, respond and resolve an incident in multiple contexts, using a restorative approach through the renewal of the *Caring and Respectful Schools* policy and by using the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth as an avenue to address unresolved bullying issues for children and families.

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan develop an anonymous smartphone-friendly internet reporting tool and continue to support the toll-free Kids Help Phone.

Work Across Government to Align Priorities

Recommendation #3

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan direct that the Ministry of Education work with other ministries regarding the upcoming federal legislation and its implications for Saskatchewan.

Support Students to Develop Responsible and Appropriate Online Behaviour

Recommendation #4

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with school divisions to provide teacher instructional supports and student resources to teach appropriate and responsible online behavior to all Kindergarten through Grade 12 students.

Recommendation #5

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan partner with the SaskTel “I Am Stronger” campaign to house their anti-bullying resources, supports and an anonymous reporting tool on the “I Am Stronger” website.

Engage Children and Youth in Creating Solutions to Build Positive Relationships

Recommendation #6

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan work with school divisions and other community partners by engaging youth in creating solutions to address bullying and cyberbullying and to help build positive relationships in our schools and communities.

Appendix B: Proposed Actions

To address building consistency across the system, it is proposed that government:

Expand options to report bullying incidents across the province

An internet reporting tool should be developed that is accessible online through a website and through a smart-phone friendly app, with information stored on a secure database. Alerts are sent to those who can take action.

Support access to trained volunteers or professional counsellors when in need

Support should be provided to community partners to ensure children and youth have access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to trained volunteers or counsellors (e.g., Kids Help Phone).

Establish a provincial body

School divisions and other key stakeholder should be invited to nominate members to join a time-limited provincial advisory body to provide recommendations to renew and align school division bullying and student safety policy and protocols.

Enhance school-based Restorative Justice approaches

Government should build on the success of the Restorative Action Programming. Using restorative approaches students, staff, administration, parents and the community are better able to resolve conflict together.

Support risk assessment training

The Ministry of Education should fund basic risk assessment training to ensure that all school divisions in the province have staff and community professionals with the skills to identify worrisome or threatening behaviour, determine the level of risk and intervene appropriately.

Engage the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth

The Ministry of Education should engage the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth to provide children, youth and their families with another avenue to address unresolved issues. The Advocate can provide public education about bullying and support the implementation of provincial actions that strengthen efforts to prevent; respond to and intervene in bullying behaviours.

Promote citizenship education resources

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General should continue to partner with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) to provide citizenship education to students from Prekindergarten to Grade 12. Citizenship education provides students with opportunities to explore how human rights, social justice and democracy can support the development of positive relationships with others. When a child or youth understands and can communicate to others their “rights and responsibilities,” their relationships will be based on respect for self and for others. This can reduce the power imbalance that can occur between individuals or groups and foster positive relationships rather than destructive ones such as bullying or discrimination.

Provide curricular connections for educators

Saskatchewan’s curricula are the foundation for building students’ understanding and knowledge about diversity, equity and human rights. The government should remain committed to inclusive curricula that provide all children and youth with equal opportunity to develop the knowledge, ability and confidence to pursue their goals. Anti-bullying, positive relationships and mental well-being curriculum connections at the elementary, middle and secondary levels should be made available to support teachers to prevent and address bullying while meeting curricular responsibilities.

Maintain a Saskatchewan standard for school curricular resources

To further support teachers, Saskatchewan should continue to evaluate all learning resources against specific criteria to ensure alignment with Saskatchewan curricula and their relevance to the interests and needs of the students. Recommended resources lists support teachers to plan for effective instruction.

To address working across government to align policies, it is proposed that government:

Assess the need for provincial legislative action

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General should jointly assess the appropriate legislative action required to address bullying and cyberbullying, recognizing upcoming federal legislation.

Consult through Student First

Saskatchewan is putting students first and is working with stakeholders to make a sector plan. The Student First approach should build on successes already in place in school divisions throughout the province.

Focus the Child and Family Agenda

The Child and Family Agenda should be working to address pressing issues facing our children and families: early childhood development; First Nations and Métis education; child welfare; parenting supports; child and youth obesity; crime reduction; and, mental health and addictions. Ministries should continue to work together with school divisions and community-based organizations to help children succeed in school, keep communities safe and help vulnerable children and families get the services they need.

Provide children with a healthy start

The Ministry of Education should continue to support a variety of services that focus on developing the whole child, including a child's social and emotional development through healthy and supportive interactions with caregivers and other children, as well as engaging families as partners in early learning programs that can support anti-bullying efforts.

Launch Voice for Change – an anonymous online mental health and addiction consultation

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Partner with the “I Am Stronger” campaign

The Government of Saskatchewan should partner with SaskTel’s “I Am Stronger” campaign to work collaboratively to stop bullying and cyberbullying in our communities.

Create safe, caring and accepting schools

Schools should respond positively to student requests for groups that promote safety, inclusion and respect for human diversity, such as Gay Straight Alliances, and should work with the Ministry of Education to strengthen online resources and tools to support them.

Improve the learning environment through student voice

Schools should use data from the Tell Them From Me anonymous online survey to inform school improvement initiatives.

Appendix C: Resources and Supports

Children and Youth

- **Kids Help Phone**
 - 1-800-668-6868 or www.kidshelpphone.ca
- **I Am Stronger**
 - www.iamstronger.ca
- **Canadian Red Cross**
 - www.redcross.ca/what-we-do/violence-bullying-and-abuse-prevention/youth
- **Cybertip**
 - 1-800-532-0135 or www.cybertip.ca
- **Camp fYrefly Saskatchewan**
 - www.usask.ca/education/fyrefly

Families

- **I Am Stronger**
 - www.iamstronger.ca
- **Canadian Red Cross**
 - www.redcross.ca/what-we-do/violence-bullying-and-abuse-prevention/parents
- **PREV Net – What Parents Need to Know**
 - www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents
- **SexualityandU**
 - www.sexualityandu.ca/parents

Educators

- **I Am Stronger**
 - www.iamstronger.ca
- **Canadian Red Cross**
 - www.redcross.ca/what-we-do/violence-bullying-and-abuse-prevention/educators
- **Canadian Public Health Leader, “Assessment Toolkit for Bullying, Harassment and Peer Relations at School”**
 - www.cpha.ca/en/activities/safe-schools.aspx
- **Canadian Teachers’ Federation, “Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook: A Comprehensive Resource for Canadian K-12 Teachers, Administrators and School Counsellors”**
 - www.ctf-fce.ca/documents/info/GSFlyer.pdf

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