

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION EDUCATION AND RESPONSE

Background

The Division requires all employees to concern themselves with the physical, social and emotional welfare of each student. Abuse or neglect of children and youth must not be left unchecked by persons charged with the care of students. The Division affirms that employees will be active partners with other agencies in supporting the needs of children and directs that all employees engage in training and awareness of child abuse prevention through programs and resources approved by the board of education.

Procedures

1. Child Abuse Prevention Education

The Education Act provides boards of education and the conseil scolaire the authority for the administration and management of schools, including the preparation of administrative procedures for schools, and states that principals are responsible for the professional development of staff and overseeing student well-being and the good order, harmony and efficiency of the school.

Boards of education are also responsible to conduct a continuing program of planning and evaluation with respect to curriculum, pedagogy and effectiveness of instructional programs, including child abuse prevention education.

1.1 Educators must take appropriate steps to:

- 1.1.1. Teach child abuse prevention education for all students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 through the required outcomes of grades 1-9 health education and extend this learning to other areas of study, where it reasonably applies.
- 1.1.2. Create a safe environment in order to build trust which may decrease anxiety or additional stress on students exhibiting signs of abuse.
- 1.1.3. Provide meaningful learning environments related to child abuse prevention education.
- 1.1.4. Provide communication with parents/caregivers, when appropriate, related to child abuse prevention education and how it will be introduced in the classroom.
- 1.1.5. Provide age appropriate educational experiences and learning resources.

1.2. Professional Development and Supports

School division personnel/school administrators must take appropriate steps to:

- 1.2.1. engage all staff in professional development opportunities provided by qualified professionals to identify the signs of child abuse.
- 1.2.2. Develop relationships with qualified human services agencies to develop and maintain community contacts (e.g., healing resources, traumatic stress counsellors).
- 1.2.3. provide training and awareness to assist staff in understanding their legal duty to report child abuse.
- 1.2.4. Educators are encouraged to practice self-care by seeking professional help when needed.

Note:

- Professional development may include discussions at team meetings, presentations to employees, distribution of government pamphlets and publications, and more.
- Disclosure of abuse may arise when child abuse is the topic within the classroom. See the Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol and Duty to Report.

1.3. Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

- 1.3.1. All citizens have a duty to report child abuse or neglect in accordance with provincial legislation. It is important to refer to the Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol to meet these legislative requirements.
- 1.3.2. All employees of the Northwest School Division Board of Education have a duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect to an appropriate authority (child protection worker, Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Services Agency, police officer).

1.4. Duty to Report Abuse or Neglect by a Parent/Caregiver

- 1.4.1. Any employee of the school division who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child, under the age of 16, is in need of protection shall immediately report this information to a child protection worker, Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Services Agency and/or a police officer. See section 12 of *The Child and Family Services Act*.
- 1.4.2. The circumstances in which a child may be in need of protection include but are not limited to the following examples of abuse or neglect by a parent/caregiver:
 - Physical abuse;
 - Sexual abuse and exploitation;
 - Physical neglect;
 - Emotional maltreatment;
 - Exposure to domestic violence or severe domestic disharmony;
 - or,

- The child has committed an act that if the child were 12 years of age or more would constitute a criminal offence and family services are necessary to prevent a recurrence.

1.4.3. Youth Age 16 and 17:

- While it is not legally required, abuse or neglect by a parent of a young person aged 16 or 17 may be reported to child protection services and/or police in order to obtain assistance for the young person.

1.5. Duty to Report Sexual Exploitation

- 1.5.1. Any employee of the school division who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child under the age of 18 has been or is likely to be subjected to sexual abuse shall immediately report this information to a child protection worker and/or police officer.
- 1.5.2. Child sexual abuse occurs when a child under the age of 18 has been, or is likely to be, exposed to harmful interaction for a sexual purpose, including involvement in prostitution and/or Criminal Code offenses. See section 4 of The *Emergency Protection for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act*.
- 1.5.3. Duty to Report Child at Risk Due to Other Practices Prohibited Under Canadian Law The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits the marriage of children under 16 whether it occurs in Canada (section 293.2) or if a child is removed from Canada for that purpose (section 273.3 (d)). The Criminal Code also treats female genital mutilation as a criminal act (section 268 (4)). A child at risk from the above practices is at risk of physical and/or sexual and emotional abuse and these situations should be reported.

1.6. Duty to Report Child at Risk Due to Other Practices Prohibited Under Canadian Law

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2. Reporting

- a) Reasonable grounds to believe:
- is subjective;
 - can be based on personal observation or discussion;
 - does not require proof;
 - can be based on assumptions or credible second-hand information;
 - can take into account the training and experience of the person reporting; and
 - can still be reasonable even if it turns out eventually to be untrue.

- b) The employee making the report shall take the following steps:
 - i. The employee cannot delegate the duty to report to another individual. The employee must make the report and be supported by others.
 - ii. The employee shall make the report by telephone or in-person to a child protection worker, Ministry of Social Services, First Nations Child and Family Services Agency, and/or a police officer.
 - iii. The employee may enlist the support of the principal in making the report.
 - iv. The employee must inform the principal a report has been made unless the principal is the subject of the report. In such case, the notification that a report has been made shall be provided to the superintendent.
 - v. The employee shall also create a written report of the information received and steps taken see Appendix A.
- c) Once the principal is informed, the principal must support the employee in reporting. This can include allowing for a peer support or counsellor to accompany the employee in reporting.
- d) Employees shall not contact the parents/caregivers in situations where the parent/caregiver or the partner of the parent/caregiver is the subject of the report. Doing so in these situations may compromise the investigation. Decisions regarding contact with parents/caregivers shall be made in consultation with Social Services and/or police officers.

3. Support to the Child

Employees shall provide support to the child, particularly in a situation of disclosure.

- DO the following:
 - a) Validate the child's right to seek help.
 - b) State the right to safety.
 - c) Provide for physical comforts.
- DO NOT do the following:
 - a) Investigate for "proof".
 - b) Question for details.
 - c) Offer judgments.
 - d) Tell the child "what will happen".
 - e) Remove, alter or contaminate physical evidence.

4. Confidentiality

- a. Employees shall maintain confidentiality of all information. The fact that there is an investigation in progress is in itself confidential.
- b. Records are to be stored, accessed, and disposed in accordance with board policy.

5. Interviews of Children Conducted by Police/Child Protection Services:

- 5.1 Any request from a child protection worker to interview a child shall be referred to the principal.
- 5.2 The principal (or designate) will make the necessary arrangements for a confidential interview to occur.
- 5.3 The child protection worker and police will determine who will be at the interview and will consider the child's support needs and comfort level. By being present at the interview, there is a possibility that the staff member may be subpoenaed to give testimony at a child protection hearing or any criminal proceedings.
- 5.4 A written confirmation may be provided to the school by the child protection worker and/or police highlighting the meeting arrangements, acknowledging the assistance of the principal and indicating the general outcome of the investigation with respect to the child in the school setting. If written information is provided it shall be retained in school files.

6. Children who Change Schools Due to an Out-of-Home Placement

- 6.1 In some cases, a child may have to be removed from the parent's/caregiver's care to ensure the child's safety. When a child has been apprehended, he/ she may be placed with extended family, a foster family or a group home outside the school or school division where the child normally attends. In this case:
 - 6.1.1 The principal of the sending school shall be responsible for notifying the principal of the receiving school about the child's circumstances and academic history.
 - 6.1.2 The student's cumulative folder may be transferred with the child as agreed between the principals.

7. Students Aged 16 and Older:

- 7.1 Division employees who, through personal observation or on the basis of discussion with a student aged 16 years or older finds evidence of, or suspects possible physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, shall:
 - 7.1.1 Encourage the student to seek appropriate counseling from a professional experienced in dealing with issues of abuse.
 - 7.1.2 Assist the student, within the context of the educational environment, in obtaining help to deal with the issue facing the student.
 - 7.1.3 Assist the student, should he or she wish, within the context of the educational environment, in reporting the abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities
 - 7.1.4 Subject to law and statutory provisions keep the information confidential, unless given permission by the student to disclose the information.

- 7.1.5 Advise the student that any information received from the student might be subject to disclosure pursuant to federal or provincial laws, including a duty to disclose under the Emergency Protection Act.

Supporting Resources

- Online Training Module: Saskatchewan Duty to Report.
- Child Abuse Prevention Education and Response Blackboard Organization will provide access to resources such as the Child Abuse Protocol, applicable provincial legislation, the Child Abuse Prevention Education and Response policy statement and additional supports as they are identified.
- Resources are listed on the curriculum website at www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca. Teachers are able to sort the recommended learning resources by grade and by curriculum outcome. Learning resources can also be filtered by content, for example, sexual abuse and exploitation. Resources will be added as identified.
- Saskatchewan Advocate for Children & Youth: www.saskadvocate.ca/.

Appendices

Appendix A - Curriculum Connections: a resource document that identifies curricular outcomes that can be connected to child abuse prevention education.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, Education Act
Saskatchewan Child and Family Services Act
The Emergency Protection of Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act
Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol 2023
Youth Criminal Justice Act
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Approved: August 26, 2026