

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

PURPOSE: To seek approval from the Governing Board for the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect policy and to bring forward the procedures to the Governing Board for information.

BACKGROUND: The Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect policy was originally approved in January 26, 1999 to endorse the legal obligation of staff to report suspected child abuse and neglect in accordance with the *Children and Family Services Act* and to acknowledge that in accordance with the Education Act, all school boards are required to establish policies for the protection of students from abuse.

CONTENT: This policy has been updated in order to align with current policy and procedure development requirements and to align with current policy format.
The policy has also been updated to ensure compliance with the *Children and Family Services Act*; specifically updated contact information for the Department of Community Services and Child Welfare has been included as an appendix in the procedures.
The revised procedures provide greater clarity on the defined responsibilities of the principal and school staff, and parent(s)/guardian(s). Also, the definitions section has been moved to a separate appendix for greater clarification.

COST: n/a

FUNDING: n/a

TIMELINE: Immediately following Governing Board approval.

APPENDICES: Appendix A- Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect policy and procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Governing Board approve the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect policy and receive the procedures as information.

COMMUNICATIONS:

AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
School Principals	Danielle McNeil-Hessian Director-Program	Following Board Approval
HRSB Website	Doug Hadley, Communications Coordinator	

From: For further information please contact Danielle McNeil-Hessian, Director School Administration at 464-2000 ext. 2275 or at

dhessian@hrsb.ns.ca or Selena Henderson, Corporate Secretary at shenderson@hrsb.ca or 464-2000; ext 2324.

To:

Senior Staff
Governing Board

October 21, 2013
October 23, 2013



REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

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- 1.0 PRINCIPLES**
- 2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK**
- 3.0 AUTHORIZATION**
- 4.0 POLICY REVIEW**

1.0 PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 The Halifax Regional School Board (“HRSB”) is committed to:
 - 1.1.1 Protecting students from, and informing them of their rights and responsibilities with respect to, all forms of child abuse.
 - 1.1.2 Ensuring that all school community members, including employees, understand their rights, roles and responsibilities with respect to students.
 - 1.1.3 Ensuring that all school community members are diligent in not placing themselves in situations that can be viewed as placing students at risk.

2.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The HRSB is committed to ensuring the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Policy is written in accordance with the following:
 - 2.1.1 *Nova Scotia Education Act*
 - 2.1.2 *Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act*
 - 2.1.3 *D.007 Student Protection Policy*

3.0 AUTHORIZATION

- 3.1 The Superintendent is authorized to develop and implement procedures in support of this policy.

4.0 POLICY REVIEW

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed every 5 years or on as needed basis

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PROCEDURES

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- 2.0 PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**
- 3.0 PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN(S) RESPONSIBILITIES**

APPENDICES

- A. DEFINITIONS**
- B. DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES; CHILD WELFARE CONTACT INFORMATION**

1.0 GENERAL PROCEDURES

- 1.1 The HRSB recognizes its responsibility to ensure that students attending schools under its jurisdiction are protected from abuse and neglect in any form while at school and/or under the supervision of HRSB employees.
- 1.2 In deciding to report an incident or situation or suspected abuse or neglect of a child, it is not a requirement that the person making the report has proof that abuse has occurred. This is for the child welfare agency and the courts to determine. Any uncertainty in deciding to report a suspicion should be resolved in favour of the child.
- 1.3 The HRSB shall undertake to ensure that all employees are provided with information that will enable them to carry out their legal responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- 1.4 Where an employee is alleged to be a perpetrator, the Director of Human Resource Services must be notified in addition to notifying the appropriate agency. If an agency determines that the referral warrants investigation, it will advise the Director of Human Resource Services who will notify the Superintendent and will meet with the appropriate manager, supervisor or school principal to determine the immediate actions that may need to be taken by the school board.

- 1.5 The HRSB acknowledges that child protection workers have authority under the *Children and Family Services Act* to interview students at a school without the prior knowledge and/or consent of parent(s)/guardian(s).
- 1.6 All parties – the HRSB and the Department of Community Services – will ensure that all records created as a result of actions pursuant to the Board’s policy are shared in a timely fashion.
- 1.7 Records received by the HRSB as a result of actions pursuant to this policy are to be treated in a confidential manner, as personnel records are treated. This principle applies to records involving employees, volunteers and students.
- 1.8 Records of a complaint will be held in a separate file, that is, not in one or more personnel files, until the investigation is complete and decisions are made on appropriate action, if any.

2.0 PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 2.1 Administrators, teachers and/or other employees of the HRSB who have reason to believe that a student is being abused or neglected are obligated under the *Children and Family Services Act* and must report that information to the local office of the Department of Community Services.
- 2.2 Administrators, teachers and/or other employees of the Board who have reported suspected incidents to the appropriate agency should then inform their principal when appropriate that they have made an abuse or neglect report, but not the details of the report.
- 2.3 HRSB employees who report suspected incidents of abuse and neglect must not inform parent(s)/guardian(s) of their action. The decision to inform and investigate lies with the Department of Community Services.
- 2.4 If a suspected offender is an employee of the HRSB, the person having information must report this to the Department of Community Services and then inform Director of Human Resource Services of the report, but not the substance or details of the reported information.
- 2.5 If a parent/guardian contacts the school objecting to the school’s permitting the child protection worker to have access to their child, Principals (or designate) should indicate that it is their legal obligation to co-operate with the child protection worker.
- 2.6 Principals shall assist child protection workers by providing an appropriate interview space and discreetly arranging for the student to be interviewed.

- 2.7 A child protection worker may request that a principal or teacher be present during an interview to offer support to the student.
- 2.8 Principals (or designate) must direct a parent/guardian to the Department of Community Services if the parent/guardian is requesting information regarding the report or interview.
- 2.9 School administrators will ensure that school volunteers are fully informed of their rights, roles and responsibilities with respect to students.

3.0 PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN(S) RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 3.1 Parents/guardians shall contact the Department of Community Services if they have an objection to the school providing the child protection worker with access to their child.
- 3.2 Parents/guardians shall approach the Department of Community Services if requesting information regarding the report or interview.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**DEFINITIONS**

As defined in the *Nova Scotia Children and Family Services Act*,

Child - a child is defined in the *Nova Scotia Child and Family Services Act* as anyone under the age of 16.

Child is in need of protective services – a child in need of protective services is defined in the *Child and Family Services Act* **where:**

- a. the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by a parent or guardian of the child or caused by the failure of a parent or guardian to supervise and protect the child adequately;
- b. there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer physical harm inflicted or caused as described in (a) above;
- c. the child has been sexually abused by a parent or guardian of a child, or by another person where a parent or guardian of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual abuse and fails to protect the child;
- d. there is a substantial risk that the child will be sexually abused as described in (c) above;
- e. a child requires medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering, and the child's parent or guardian does not provide, or refuses or is unavailable or is unable to consent to, the treatment.

Abuse by a person other than a parent or guardian (“third party”) means that a child:

- a. has suffered physical harm, inflicted by a person other than a parent or guardian of the child or caused by the failure of a person other than a parent or guardian of the child to supervise and protect the child adequately;
- b. has been sexually abused by a person other than a parent or guardian or by another person where the person, not being a parent or guardian, with the care of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual abuse and fails to protect the child;
- c. has suffered serious emotional harm, demonstrated by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, caused by the intentional conduct of a person other than a parent or guardian.

Duty to report - Every person who has information, whether or not it is confidential or privileged, indicating that a child is in need of protective services shall immediately report that information to the Department of Community Services.

Duty of professionals and officials to report - Notwithstanding any other Act, every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to a child - including but not limited to a teacher, school principal, social worker, family counselor, member of the clergy, operator or employee of a day-care facility - who, in the course of that persons professional or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall immediately report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to an agency. This requirement applies whether or not the information reported is confidential or privileged.

Duty to report third-party abuse - Every person who has information, whether or not it is confidential or privileged, indicating that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse by a person other than a parent or guardian shall immediately report the information to an agency.

Department of Community Services; Child Welfare

Contact Information

Halifax District Office

6009 Quinpool Road
4th Floor
Willow Tree Tower
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5J7
Phone: (902) 425-5420
Fax: (902) 422-9424

Dartmouth District Office

Dartmouth Professional Centre, Suite 400
277 Pleasant Street
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 4B7
Phone: (902) 424-3298
Fax: (902) 424-0625

Sackville District Office

Cobequid Multi-Service Centre
40 Freer Lane
Sackville, Nova Scotia B4C 2J3
Phone: (902) 869-3600
Fax: (902) 864-4669

The *Children and Family Services Act* is available at:
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/legc/statutes/childfam.htm>