

YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Keeping Students Safe

Anti-Sex Trafficking School Board Protocol

January 31st, 2022



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PURPOSE

The [Policy/Program Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols \(PPM166\)](#) provides the foundation for the York Catholic District School Board's anti-sex trafficking protocol..

This protocol will support coordinated action by all community partners to prevent, identify and recognize sex trafficking and develop responses to facilitate early and appropriate intervention. This protocol will also identify strategies to support the successful reintroduction of students who have been affected by sex trafficking.

Welcoming and engaging school environments lead to positive student experience and safe schools, both physically and psychologically, are a critical element to successfully nurturing positive student experiences. This protocol recognizes the unique needs of all students, their families and the community, inclusive of, but not limited to:

- Students with special education needs, mental health needs, social or emotional needs or language/cultural barriers, and international students
- Students who are in care, receiving care or in customary care arrangements
- Students who are being trafficked and who may be involved in the recruiting of other victims, including students who are returning to school after they have been involved in a trafficking situation
- Parents, including those who may live overseas and/or may not speak English or French
- Students 18 years or older or who are 16 or 17 years old and have withdrawn from parental control

Due to almost daily contact with students, teachers and other education staff are well placed to educate on human trafficking prevention and promote healthy relationships, notice troubling changes in behaviour, and connect with students as caring adults. Training staff to recognize the signs of sex trafficking will better equip staff to identify the cues and safely intervene if they suspect a student is being trafficked or involved in trafficking. Education can also serve as a key factor in helping survivors of trafficking heal and rebuild their lives, helping to prevent re-victimization and resetting students on a healing trajectory towards positive outcomes.

DEFINITION OF SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is a form of sexual exploitation and is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. It can include recruiting, harbouring, transporting, obtaining or providing a person for the purpose of sex. It involves the use of force, physical or psychological coercion or deception. Most individual who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation are women and girls, but all people may be targeted.

Indigenous and racialized individuals are especially vulnerable to experiencing sex trafficking. The intersections of colonization, intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination and barriers to accessing service compound, which increases the vulnerability of being targeted by traffickers for Indigenous women and girls – of whom comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, in Canada.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

All of the interactions and relationships within the York Catholic District School Board are guided by Gospel Values and Catholic Virtues. In partnership with home and Church, we educate and inspire all students to reach their full potential in a safe and caring environment. We aim to ensure that all of our students become creative and critical thinkers who integrate Catholic Values into their daily lives, as socially responsible global citizens.

As one of the top-performing school boards in Ontario, our more than 5,000 dedicated instructional staff are committed to building a strong community of lifelong learners, guided by a commitment to critical thinking, inclusion, and active social responsibility.

It is therefore of critical importance that we continue to make all students, teachers, education staff and community partners aware, through ongoing training and education, how to prevent, identify and recognize sex trafficking and develop responses to facilitate early and appropriate intervention.

Foster student voices

Students are at the centre of this work and should be involved in efforts to develop actions against sex trafficking. Student groups should be invited to participate and inform the design, development, delivery, implementation and review of anti-sex trafficking protocols.

It is important to recognize that students with lived experience have an in-depth understanding of sex trafficking and should be considered experts. If these expert students are willing and appropriately supported through trauma-informed approaches, they could share their story and insights as part of the YCDSB's ongoing efforts to build awareness and empower students.

Engage parents/guardians/caregivers

Parents, guardians and caregivers are key partners in the development, implementation and review of the YCDSB anti-sex trafficking protocol.

When reaching out to parents, care must be given to ensure that families and caregivers are safe adults prior to engaging with them on matters regarding the student/s. Outreach to Indigenous parents and guardians, as well as outreach to Black and racialized parents and guardians, should be trauma-informed and recognize historic and systemic barriers that may impact their participation. Every effort should also be made to reduce cultural and/or linguistic barriers when reaching out to parents, guardians and caregivers about this work.

Build multi-sectoral relationships with community organizations

Ongoing consultation and engagement with community groups/agencies that support members of the school community are essential to supporting anti-sex trafficking approaches that are responsive to diverse students and the needs of local school communities.

Our York Catholic District School Board is supported by community organizations that include, but are not limited to:

- BridgeNorth
- Joy Smith Foundation
- 360 Kids
- Victim Support Services of York Region
- York Region Police

Ensure Safe Interventions

Caring adults and students within schools can promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help to reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking, and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting impacted persons to supportive services.

School board employees require comprehensive anti-sex trafficking training, so they are equipped to identify the signs of sex trafficking, safely respond to disclosures, be culturally relevant and responsive to diverse student populations, and support the immediate physical and emotional safety needs of students. Training must emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that will make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe.

Enhance school-based prevention

The development of the protocol will complement existing prevention efforts in schools, including the teaching of consent, healthy relationships and healthy sexuality. It is important for school staff to understand the historical and social context of sex trafficking and implement prevention strategies that are responsive to the needs of students and members of the local school community.

Respect confidentiality, privacy and informed consent

The development of procedures must respect confidentiality and ensure that the student fully understands how their information may be used or with whom it may be shared. It is key to develop referral relationships with community service organizations while adhering to applicable legal requirements, including those under the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#); the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#); the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#); the [Education Act](#); and the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017](#).

Promote equitable and culturally safe responses

The underlying basis of this protocol demonstrates a human rights-based, non-judgemental, culturally responsive, survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach to raising awareness, preventing, identifying and responding to sex trafficking.

STRATEGIES TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PREVENT SEX TRAFFICKING

The YCDSB recognizes the importance of utilizing culturally safe strategies to raise awareness about sex trafficking with students, school board employees, parents, caregivers and the broader school community. Protocols apply to in-person and online learning and include all school and YCDSB activities, including field trips, overnight excursions, YCDSB sponsored sporting events and YCDSB operated before and after school programs.

In order to effectively raise awareness and prevent sex trafficking, the YCDSB will employ strategies that include:

- Posting this protocol and related procedures (Duty to Report, Police and School Boards Protocol) as well as related resources on the YCDSB website's Safe Schools page [Safe and Caring Schools](#)
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students on the signs a student is being targeted, lured, groomed, trafficked, or is trafficking another student, and how to bring concerns about luring, grooming, recruitment or exiting sex trafficking to the school without fear of reprisal. The process should allow for concerns to be brought forward anonymously and as such mechanisms such as [Report It](#) and Crimestoppers will be highlighted.
- Raising awareness among staff, students, parents, guardians and caregivers about:
 - Cyber-safety
 - Signs that a student is being targeted, lured, groomed, trafficked or is trafficking another student and how to get help safely (for example, through the YCDSB, community providers and/or support hotline)
 - How they can report concerns to the YCDSB and appropriate YCDSB staff
 - Approaches to overcome barriers to participation that Indigenous, Black, newcomer and other parents/guardians may face
- A process to assist in preventing the recruitment of students for sex trafficking, through curriculum-based and community-based organizations and survivors with a focus on learning about healthy relationships, consent, mental health and well-being, coping skills, personal safety and online safety.
- The use of available technology and tools to identify and deter potential situations involving students who could be at risk of sex trafficking and other online threats, consistent with [Policy #311 – Digital Discipleship: Student Use of Technology](#).

- Highlighting and making available the phone number for the [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) in order to raise awareness about the supports and referrals it offers as it connects victims and survivors of human trafficking to law enforcement, emergency shelters, transition housing, long-term supports, counselors, and a range of other trauma-informed services. These services are offered in 200+ languages and are accessible to the deaf, hard-of-hearing and non-verbal.

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline
1-833-900-1010

Response Procedures

The York Catholic District School Board protocol has been developed with specific guidelines for school board employees to use in responding to situations where a student has been affected by sex trafficking (suspected cases and/or confirmed disclosure cases). These guidelines are provided to school staff and supported through ongoing training and review.

Requirements for reporting

The Child, Youth and Family Services Act contains provisions under Part V, Child Protection, for reporting a child who is or may be in need of protection. If any person – “including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children” – has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, the act requires that the person report their suspicions “immediately” to a children's aid society and provide the information on which the suspicions are based.

Guidance on the requirements related to the duty to report a child in need of protection can be found under Section 125(1) of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and under Policy/Program Memorandum 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection and the York Catholic District School Board [Policy 204 \(Child Protection and Abuse\)](#).

Direction on the approach to responding to possible sex trafficking recruitment by a student within the school, including appropriate interventions, supports and/or consequences are important mechanisms to address sex trafficking and have been provided to all staff in the Response Guidelines. The expectations should be consistent with the York Catholic District School Board [Policy 202 \(Safe Schools - Student](#)

[Discipline](#)). For students with special education needs, information in the student's Individual Education Plan must be considered.

Supporting Disclosures or Suspicions of Human Trafficking

Every circumstance of human trafficking is unique, and must be treated as such. Making disclosures or sharing personal information about an experience of exploitation by another person can be an emotional and vulnerable experience. Being a supportive, caring adult can have a positive effect on students.

When any board employee is made privy to a disclosure or has a suspicion of Human Trafficking, the following shall be referenced:

All staff:

- Bring to the attention of the School Administrator immediately

Administrator:

- Refer to Police & School Boards Protocol;
- Ensure that Superintendent of Safe and Caring Schools (or designate) is notified;
- Refer to Response Guides for Staff and Administration

Parent Communication:

In instances of suspected or disclosed human trafficking to school board staff, administrators must contact parents/guardians/caregivers to share the concern.

Exceptions to this include:

- Situations where students share information which leads the administrator to believe that contacting parents will increase safety concerns for the student or negatively impact their well-being,
 - consult with the Superintendent of Safe and Caring School (or designate) for additional guidance.
- If directed by York Regional Police or a Child Protection Agency not to call the parents.

The planning meeting: supporting the student while away from school

The principal shall hold a collaborative planning meeting that must include school and board staff as well as the student. Where possible, the student's parent(s) or other significant family member(s) and the student's teacher(s), should also be present at the meeting. In addition, where appropriate, community agency staff and any other relevant persons or professionals should also be included in the planning meeting.

If the parents cannot be present, the planning meeting shall still proceed, and the principal must attempt to follow up with the parent(s) of the student as soon after the meeting as possible. The purpose of the planning meeting is to:

- Identify the needs - both learning and wellbeing related - of the student while away from school
- Identify the student's risk factors and protective factors
- Clearly identify any types of support that the student may need to continue their learning

The re-entry meeting

The principal shall hold a meeting with school and board staff, the student, and, where possible, the student's parent(s) before the student returns to school. The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate the student's transition back to school by, for example, identifying and providing for any additional academic and non-academic support that the student may require upon returning to school. Where appropriate, community agency staff and any other significant persons or professionals may be involved in the re-entry planning.

TRAINING FOR SCHOOL BOARD EMPLOYEES

School board employees require comprehensive anti-sex trafficking training, so they are equipped to identify the signs of sex trafficking, safely respond to disclosures, be culturally relevant and responsive to diverse student populations, and support the immediate physical and emotional safety needs of students. Training must emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that will make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe

The *Keeping Schools Safe - Anti-sex Trafficking* protocol provides ongoing training to school board employees. Educational resources will be made available to parents, caregivers and the broader school community. Training will include the following elements:

- Key definitions, including Appendix A, and common misconceptions and myths about sex trafficking, including tactics used for online luring, grooming and recruitment
- Learning about human rights-based approaches to combatting sex trafficking, including the application of an equity lens, anti-racism, a gender-based lens, trauma-informed approaches and Indigenous cultural competencies
- Information on protective factors and prevention-focused supports and resources
- Information on risk factors and signs that a student is at risk, being lured, groomed or trafficked
- Signs that a student is or involved in luring, grooming or trafficking others
- Response procedures, including the duty to report, how to handle disclosures to support students' safety, how to support students impacted by sex trafficking and how to share information to ensure privacy and confidentiality
- Supports available to students and affected staff, including culturally responsive supports
- Additional training resources to support staff to understand and safely respond to sex trafficking
- Roles and responsibilities of school board employees in raising awareness, identifying and responding to sex trafficking

The training will be tracked and available throughout the year to all new and existing school board employees. Training will be updated and delivered regularly in order to remain current with emerging issues relating to trafficking and changes in community services and response.

MEASURING SUCCESS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

This protocol is one that is dynamic and will require regular updates to ensure relevancy and efficacy. It is expected that this protocol will evolve as training and teaching occur both within and outside our school system. It shall be reviewed, at minimum, as a component of the York Catholic District School Board's regular review cycle of policies, procedures and protocols.

The Superintendent of Safe and Caring Schools will be responsible for launching the review of this document to ensure a robust response to Anti-Sex Trafficking, consistent with the guiding values of the York Catholic District School Board.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

2SLGBTQIA: Refers to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual.

Anti-racism: Anti-racism is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.

Cultural responsiveness: “Extends beyond language to include a much larger set of professional attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and practices, and organizational policies, standards and performance management mechanisms to ensure responsiveness to the diversity of [students] who walk through [schools'] doors¹.”

Cultural safety: Refers to “an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together².”

Equity lens: Involves “strategically, intentionally and holistically examining the impact of an issue, policy or proposed solution on underserved and historically marginalized communities and population subgroups, with the goal of leveraging research findings to inform policy³.”

Human rights-based approach: A “conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress⁴.”

Survivor: Used to refer to an individual who has escaped a trafficking situation, whereas *victim* is used to refer to an individual who is in the process of being recruited or is being trafficked. The term survivor may also be used to refer to an adult with lived experience of being trafficking. This approach is used for clarity and not intended to label or define an individual's experience. Individuals who have experienced sex trafficking may prefer one term over another in order to describe their experiences. School board employees should confirm how an individual impacted by trafficking prefers to be referenced.

¹ Indigenous Primary Health Care Council. (2018, June). [Cultural Competency Guideline for Ontario Public Health Units to Engage Successfully with Aboriginal Communities](#).

² Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety—what does it mean for our work practice?. Australian and New Zealand journal of public health, 23(2), 213–214.

³ Douglas, M. D., Willock, R. J., Respress, E., Rollins, L., Tabor, D., Heiman, H. J., & Holden, K. B. (2019). Applying a health equity lens to evaluate and inform policy. *Ethnicity & disease*, 29 (Supplement 2), 329

⁴ UNICEF. (2016, January 23). [A Human Rights-based Approach to Programming: What is HRBAP?](#)

Tactics: Traffickers may use a range of tactics to target, recruit, manipulate and coerce victims. This can often involve a process of targeting an individual's vulnerabilities then luring, grooming, isolating, manipulating, controlling and exploiting a victim to then conduct sexual acts (for example, forcing a victim to have sex, to take images of child sexual abuse). Often, a victim may not be aware that exploitation is happening, and victims may be forced to recruit other victims.

Trauma-informed approaches: Are “policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence⁵.”

Victim: Used to refer to an individual who is in the process of being recruited or is being trafficked, whereas *survivor* is used to refer to an individual who has escaped a trafficking situation. The term victim is often used to refer to a child who has experienced sexual exploitation. This approach is used for clarity and not intended to label or define an individual's experience. Individuals who have experienced sex trafficking may prefer one term over another in order to describe their experiences.

⁵ Government of Canada. (2018, February 2). [Trauma and Violence-informed Approaches to Policy and Practice](#).