

Toronto District School Board

Policy P071

Title: **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Adopted: April 14, 2010

Revised:

Review:

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish the Board's commitment to eliminating gender-based violence in its school

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Gender-based violence is any aggressive action that threatens safety, causes physical, social or emotional harm and denigrates a person because of his or her gender identity, perceived gender, sexual identity, biological sex or sexual behaviour.

Gender-based violence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sexual assault (perpetrator aged 12 years and over)
- Inappropriate, problematic and intrusive sexual behaviour (perpetrator under age 12 years)
- Sexual exploitation (perpetrator an adult employee/victim a student)
- Sexual misconduct
- Sexual harassment
- Sexist discrimination
- Domestic violence
- Emotional abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Forced prostitution
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Harmful gender-based social practices, e.g. female genital mutilation

Gender-based violence operates on a societal imbalance of power and control based on social constructions of sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender, perceived gender and sexual behaviour. This imbalance may manifest in multiple forms as aggressive and discriminatory behaviours and expressions of hatred. (See Appendix A for information on gender-based violence.)

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Executive Superintendent, School Services, East

4.0 POLICY

4.1. Reporting Incidents of Gender-based Violence

- (a) All employees of the Board shall report any concerns about or incidents of gender-based violence in the school community to the school principal.
- (b) All allegations of sexual assault perpetrated by persons 12 years of age and older and/or sexual misconduct by children under 12 years of age shall be reported to the appropriate Board employee.
- (c) Any act or concern of gender-based violence that takes place off school property, including use of electronic media, and has a negative impact on a school's environment shall be reported and responded to.

4.2. Notification and Investigation

- (a) In situations where a student has been physically or emotionally harmed, the appropriate supervisory and School Services staff shall be notified.
- (b) Employee Services shall be notified of any incidents of gender-based violence involving Board staff. Where staff have a complaint against students or other staff, the Human Rights office shall be notified.
- (c) Principals shall be the first point of contact for investigating incidents.

4.3. Compliance and Accountability

As with all Board policies, all staff are expected to be compliant with this policy and its related procedures. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action.

4.4. Prevention Strategy: Staff Development

- (a) Gender-based violence policy and procedure training shall be mandatory for all staff.
- (b) All school-based staff shall receive annual training on responding to incidents of gender-based violence.
- (c) Professional learning opportunities for administrators, superintendents, teachers and support staff shall focus on the causes of gender-based violence, prevention strategies and Board policies and procedures for responding to gender-based violence.

4.5. Prevention Strategy: Professional Supports

- (a) An interdisciplinary team shall be established to deliver both policy implementation training and programs that focus on the development of student, staff and parental involvement related to raising awareness, developing school-based action plans and coordinating system-wide student-led activities.
- (b) Superintendents and principals shall work with the appropriate staff to access professional support staff on a priority basis for incidents of gender-based violence involving students.
- (c) Resources shall be realigned to establish programs at both the high school and junior-intermediate levels for students who have engaged in repeated acts of gender-based violence in order to support the re-integration and re-engagement of these young people into society and prevent future incidents.

4.6. Student Engagement

- (a) Students will have the opportunity to participate in gender-based peer education programs that examine the roots of gender-based violence and its impact on females and males, healthy relationships and equality among marginalized groups.
- (b) Issues related to gender-based violence such as healthy relationships, sexuality, gender stereotyping and homophobia shall be integrated and reinforced in subjects across the curriculum.
- (c) Primary prevention programs for students in elementary and secondary schools shall be designed to be comprehensive, coordinated, sequential, developmental, and that create both an awareness of, and a framework for dealing with, gender-based harassment and violence.

4.7. Coordination

- (a) Establish a position where the sole responsibility is the co-ordination and oversight of all initiatives relating to gender-based violence.
- (b) Establish an advisory body consisting of representatives from legal services, human rights, professional support services, caring and safe schools, guidance, health and physical education, equity, health and safety, employee services, the Anti-Bullying Committee, superintendents of education, principals, and students who shall meet regularly to advise the Gender Based-Violence Policy (GBVP) Coordinator on policy implementation and prevention strategy. The advisory body will consult with external partners as required.
- (c) Establish a policy implementation team, both East and West, consisting of one Superintendent of Education and Principal and the North - South Chiefs of Social Work to advise the GBVP Coordinator and help facilitate policy and procedure training in each quadrant.

4.8. Communication

- (a) Policies and resources relating to sexual assault and gender-based violence shall be posted in schools and shall *form* part of the orientation process for all staff and students at the commencement of each year and be included in all student agendas.
- (b) Relevant information shall be prepared for each of the employee groups, parents and community partners on gender-based violence and harassment.

4.9. Evaluation

Research tools shall be developed that ensure prevention programs are regularly evaluated to determine their effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. An annual report will be made to the appropriate standing committee.

5.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

The Director is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this policy.

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information About Gender-based Violence in Schools

7.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Board Documents (available on the Board's Policies and Procedures website)

Policies

P044, Code of Conduct

P064, Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour

P051, Safe Schools

P071, Gender-based Violence

Operational Procedures

PR585, School Code of Conduct

PR586, Programs for Students on Long-term Suspensions and Expulsions

PR608, Sexual Misconduct by Students

PR697, Consequences of Inappropriate Student Behaviour

PR698, Police-School Board Protocol

PR540, Safe Schools Student Transfer

Other Documents

Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER E.2

O. Reg. 472/07, Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils

O. Reg. 612/00, School Councils

Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memoranda

PPM 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct

Information About Gender-based Violence in Schools

Gender-based violence in schools has far-reaching consequences to students, their peers, their families and the community at large. According to the Province's Safe Schools Action Team, it needs to be seen in the context of bullying. One-third of students experience bullying and one-third report having bullied someone else. Bullying has a negative impact on school safety, school climate and student learning. It can be severe, persistent and pervasive to such a degree that it limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an education program and creates an educational environment that is hostile and threatening.

The consequences for victims can include depression, loss of appetite, nightmares, disturbed sleep, low self-esteem and feelings of being sad, afraid, scared, or embarrassed. In terms of student learning, victims reported a loss of interest in school activities, increased absenteeism, decreased quality of school work, poor grades, increases in skipping, dropping classes, tardiness and truancy. While female students are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, research has shown that males more often than females receive and make homophobic comments. Students are not the only victims of gender-based violence in schools. Significant numbers of teachers and other staff complain that they have been sexually harassed by students and other staff members.

Gender-based violence, including sexual assault and sexual harassment, is occurring at alarming rates and is largely going unreported¹. Measures relating to the protection of youth against sexual assaults, including those aimed at timely reporting of sexual assaults and anti-bullying programs have not succeeded in eliminating gender-based violence. These programs need to be combined with preventative education including gender-based peer education programs that examine the roots of gender-based violence and its impact on females and males, healthy relationships, and equality among marginalized groups, as well as the creation of "safe space" programs that use peer facilitators to lead open discussions amongst vulnerable groups.

¹ Findings of the School Safety Advisory Panel (2008) and the Ministry of Education's Safe Schools Action Team (2009).