

Reporting and Responding to Incidents

A Resource for Occasional Teachers

A safe and accepting learning environment is essential for student achievement and well-being.

Positive School Climate

A positive school climate means everyone – students, parents,¹ teachers, staff and community members – feels safe, welcome and respected. Everyone has a role to play in promoting healthy relationships and a school climate which helps to encourage appropriate student behaviour.

Ontario's approach to making schools safe and accepting focuses on:

- promoting positive student behaviour
- providing early and ongoing intervention
- preventing inappropriate behaviour
- addressing inappropriate behaviour with appropriate consequences.

What am I required to do?

You must report serious student incidents to the principal, and to respond to all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour at school or at school-related activities, or in situations where the activity will have a negative impact on the school climate.

What types of incidents am I required to report?

You must report any serious student incidents for which the principal must consider either a suspension or expulsion.

Student behaviours that can lead to suspension include:

- uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- possessing alcohol, cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), or illegal drugs
- being under the influence of alcohol or cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes)

1. In this document, parent(s) refers to parent(s) and guardian(s) as used in the *Education Act*. It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

- swearing at a teacher or at any person in a position of authority
- committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the student's school or to property on school premises
- bullying, including cyber-bullying
- any other activities identified in school board policy (ask the principal what these are).

Student behaviours that can lead to expulsion include:

- possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm
- using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person
- committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner
- committing sexual assault
- trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs
- committing robbery
- giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor
- bullying (under certain circumstances). For example, if a student has previously been suspended for engaging in bullying
- any activity for which a student can be suspended (see above) that is motivated by bias, prejudice or hate
- any other activities identified in school board policy.

These activities include incidents that occur at school or school-related events, and to activities that happen outside of school but could have an impact on the school climate.

How do I report?

You must consider the safety of others and the urgency of the situation in reporting the incident, but, in any case, you must report it to the principal by the end of the school day.

Your report must be confirmed in writing in a timely manner, using the Safe Schools Incident Reporting form – Part I (provided to you by the principal).

Note: reporting does not replace conversations between you and the principal. You are encouraged to talk to the principal about the incident.

What happens after I report an incident to the principal?

The principal will provide a written acknowledgement (Safe Schools Incident Reporting form – Part II) that your report was received and the principal must communicate with you about whether any action has been taken regarding the incident you reported.

Who else has to report?

- principals and vice principals
- administrative and custodial staff
- teachers and educational assistants
- early childhood educators employed by the school board

- non-teaching staff, such as those involved in social work, child and youth work, psychology* and other related disciplines
- staff in before- and/or after-school programs for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6 operated by school boards
- staff in before- and/or after-school programs for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6 operated by community organizations and child care centres which have entered into an agreement with the school board to provide such programming
- school bus drivers.

* Social workers and psychologists who have a clinical relationship with a student must report incidents which could lead to the student being suspended or expelled to the principal as soon as it is, in their professional opinion, reasonably possible to do so without having a negative impact on their clinical relationship with the student. As well, they must report incidents or behaviours that could result in the student doing physical, emotional or psychological.

What kind of student behaviour requires a response?

- You must respond to any student behaviour that can have a negative impact on the school climate, if in your opinion, responding would not cause immediate physical harm to you, a student or another person.
- Such behaviour includes all inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour (e.g., homophobic or racial slurs, sexist comments or jokes, graffiti), as well as those incidents that must be considered for suspension or expulsion.
- For incidents where suspension or expulsion would not be considered, but you feel it is not safe to respond, you are expected to tell the principal as soon as possible.

How do I respond?

Responding may include asking a student to stop the inappropriate behaviour, naming the type of behaviour, explaining why it is inappropriate or disrespectful and asking for a change in the future.

When responding to an incident that involves a student with special education needs, you are expected to respond in a way that takes into account information in the student's Individual Education Plan.

Who else has to respond?

Employees who work directly with students, e.g., teachers, staff in social work, child and youth work, psychology and other related disciplines, and educational assistants.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

The school principal or delegate.

LEARN MORE

For information on making Ontario's schools safe and accepting, and bullying prevention, visit ontario.ca/safeschools.