

ACTION GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSE TO USE OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR BY A STUDENT

Rationale

Although there have always been instances of unacceptable student behavior in our schools, including verbal and physical altercations or threats, there is now a growing uneasiness in regard to what has been referred to as "violence in our schools and our society". Society's problems sometimes come into schools. We want to ensure that our schools continue to be the safe and welcoming places of learning that they have been in the past. Thus, if we do have a student who chooses to use abusive or threatening behavior against someone else in the school, we will be treating this situation very seriously. As this kind of behavior (or even rumours of this kind of behavior) can have many ramifications, reference to guidelines for action such as are outlined below is recommended.

Goals

1. To ensure the safety of students and staff by forbidding weapons and abusive or threatening behavior.
2. To provide an organized, systematic, but flexible approach to dealing with serious school incidents involving the use of abusive behavior.
3. To maintain public confidence in our schools as good, safe places to learn.
 1. To develop interventions which encourage responsible student behaviours.
 2. To provide support for individuals traumatized by school incidents of abusive behaviour.

Definitions

1. Abusive Behavior - Involves fighting and/or the use of threatening, intimidating behavior with the intent to bring physical or psychological injury upon another.
2. Zero Tolerance Incident - Term used to describe any act of abusive behavior (including possession of a weapon) or a serious threat either verbal or written which put in question the safety of students and/or staff as one which will not be tolerated and for which a range of consequences will result, depending on the nature of the incident.

Shared Responsibility

In the Golden Hills School Division we are committed to "learning and growing together" and to working together. Where incidents of abusive behavior occur, we can best serve our students, their parents, our staffs and the public by working as a team. Parents will react whenever they are concerned about their child's safety. Speculation and rumours may result if communication and the dissemination of information is not handled carefully. Rumours can become as devastating to public confidence in our schools as an actual incident of abusive force. Thus, care in communication is important throughout the deliberations and follow-up actions. Together

we have a responsibility to, firstly, ensure our schools are actually safe places to be, and secondly, to reassure students, parents and community members that this is the case.

Extended Team Members

Trustees, school staff, students and parents can all play a helpful role in ensuring school safety. School staff are continually monitoring student behaviour and can notify school administration of potential problems and actual incidents. Students and parents can do the same if they hear of or see potential problems. Trustees can alert school system administrators to potential problems and ask parents reporting problems to share their concerns with school and school system staff members. When an incident does occur, refraining from making public comments and allowing the core team to do its work in clarifying the details of the incident before taking follow-up action is helpful to the team. Trustees have an additional burden of responsibility in this area as they may have to hear an appeal or become involved in litigation. An unbiased stance must be clearly demonstrated if trustees are to fulfill their role on an Appeal Committee.

Core Team Members

The degree of involvement of core team members will depend on the severity of the incident, but consideration should be given to the involvement of the following:

- ◆ School Administration
- ◆ System Administration
- ◆ Student Services
- ◆ Others designed as appropriate

Core Team Responsibilities

Administrative and counselling tasks for the team are outlined below. The team may refer to these tasks as it determines appropriate action and who will be responsible for implementing that action. It may be that the incident becomes an actual crisis. In that event, the team should refer to the Crisis Plan to guide their actions.

Administrative Tasks

Level A: Tasks to be completed within the first two to three hours.

Level B: Tasks to be completed within the first two days.

Level C: Follow-up tasks.

Level A

- ◆ Ensure the immediate safety of students and staff by isolating perpetrators, getting medical assistance for anyone injured, and reassigning staff responsibilities as appropriate (which may include bringing in a substitute teacher)
- ◆ Consider notifying school system administration of the incident.
- ◆ Clarify the details of the incident.
- ◆ Provide cool-off time for the students involved and request they record their version of the incident during this time.
- ◆ After the cool-off time, interview the students involved.
- ◆ Notify parents of the incident.

- ◆ Consider arranging alternative transportation for students involved in the incident (e.g. contact their parents to pick them up).

Level B

- ◆ Assess parent responses to the incident.
- ◆ Arrange for an assessment in situations in which a student has threatened or exhibited threatening behavior to ensure student and school personnel safety.
- ◆ Review the incident and possible courses of action with the team members. The possible courses of action will depend upon the severity of the situation and consideration of factors such as previous behavior of student perpetrators. Possible courses of action would include:
 - ◆ Suspension (In-school or Out-of-School).
 - ◆ Suspension with a behavior contract.
 - ◆ Suspension and voluntary withdrawal from school for treatment.
 - ◆ Suspension and voluntary withdrawal to an alternative education program such as Home Education.
 - ◆ Suspension and recommendation to the Board for expulsion.
- ◆ Notify staff in regard to the incident and follow-up action.
- ◆ Maintain thorough documentation of the incident and on-going action taken, including provision of counseling support.
- ◆ Dispel speculation and rumours by providing parents and public with a statement of the facts and reassurance of school safety as appropriate.
- ◆ Provide the student body with information of the incident as appropriate, state the school's stance regarding the incident, and clarify the school's expectations for student behavior.
- ◆ Provide follow-up action with those affected by the incident:
 - ◆ Perpetrator(s)
 - ◆ Consequences
 - ◆ Counselling
 - ◆ Behavior contract components
 - ◆ Victim(s)
 - ◆ Supportive counselling
 - ◆ Other
 - ◆ Parent(s) of victim(s)
 - ◆ Information sharing
 - ◆ Expectations of school
 - ◆ Consideration of parental concerns and expectations
 - ◆ Parent(s) of perpetrator(s)
 - ◆ Information sharing
 - ◆ Expectations of school

- ◆ Shared responsibility with school to determine
- ◆ Corrective action and follow-up

Level C

- ◆ Review the incident, how it was handled, and whether further preventative action (e.g. increased supervision) needs to be taken in the school.

Counselling Tasks

Level A

- ◆ Arrange for crisis counselling, if necessary, for either students or parents.
- ◆ Assist the team in reviewing the background and needs of students involved.

Level B

- ◆ Assist with follow-up counselling for students and parents as necessary (Refer to Level B* of Administrative Tasks).
- ◆ Assist with development of behavior contracts.
- ◆ Provide group counselling if needed.

Level C

- ◆ Provide transition counselling for students returning to school.

Preventative School Action

- ◆ General School Discipline Code
- ◆ Teacher Supervision
- ◆ Quest
- ◆ Counselling
- ◆ Self-Management programs
- ◆ Peer Support/Conflict Mediation Programs
- ◆ Student Leadership Programs
- ◆ Policy Involvement in the Schools
- ◆ Student Services Consultation Regarding Potential Concerns
- ◆ School rules which disallow students from bringing weapons to schools

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