

Appendix D

Procedure for School Administrators Responding to Sex-Trafficking in Schools

Human sex-trafficking is a problem across the country, especially in Ontario, that can affect some of our most vulnerable youth. In your work as a school principal, you may become aware that a student at your school is at risk of, or has experienced in some way, sex-trafficking. This document has been prepared to help detail the procedure for intervening in these cases.

- 1) A flowchart has been developed as a board resource to be used by any employee who suspects a student may be involved in sex-trafficking, or at risk of becoming involved. It designates the Mental Health Lead as the point person for these cases. Please see Appendix C.
- 2) If you or another school staff member become aware that a student is at risk of or may be involved with sex-trafficking (including the recruiting of others), ensure the Mental Health Lead is called immediately.
- 3) Given the nature of many sex-trafficking cases, a call to a child protection agency may be necessary. If you or another employee supporting the student in question becomes aware of, or suspects child abuse, ensure that the person first receiving the information passes these concerns along to the child protection agency. Note that some information may be highly sensitive and may fall under privacy provisions laid out in the Education Act and/or PHIPA.
- 4) Steps must be taken to help ensure the immediate safety of the student. Is the student a risk to themselves or others? Does s/he have a safe home environment to be released to? Are there others who may put the student at risk in the school? If the student is identified as at imminent risk of, or having already experienced, sex-trafficking, they should be closely monitored while at school. Additional safety provisions may be necessary where the student is living alone (e.g., if they are emancipated, 18 years or older) as there may be less supervision of them in their home.
- 5) Parents and guardians should be contacted early on in this process if it is safe to do so. Parents / guardians can play an important role in keeping these students safe when they are not in school. They will also be heavily involved in the transition process, which is explained in more detail later in this procedure. Provisions will have to be made to accommodate families who do not speak English, are newcomers to Canada, or may live outside of the local community.

In the case that a student is not under care of a guardian, one need not be included in the process.

- 6) Involve your school counsellor(s) for support with the student. The counsellor(s) can also help perform risk assessments to help ensure the immediate safety of the student. The counsellor can help to provide support to the students directly and indirectly involved in the situations.
- 7) The Mental Health Lead will be available to work closely with you to support you with any of the previously mentioned steps. The Lead will also connect with local agencies with programs specializing in this area. Given the complex nature of intervening in these cases, referrals to these programs will be paramount to ensure the student receives the support that they need.
- 8) Upon learning that a student is at acute risk of, or has experienced, sex-trafficking (including the recruiting of others), a student may be removed from their regular classroom until transition meetings can be held to ensure safety planning is complete. This will be especially important where a student has been groomed or recruited by another person at their school, or where a student has participated in the recruiting of others at their school. Transition meetings should also be held prior to the entry of a new student who is known to have experienced sex-trafficking.
- 9) Transition meetings will include relevant school staff, the student, their guardian(s) (if appropriate and safe to do so), and agencies that are providing support to the student. The goals of these meetings will be to establish a plan that will meet the student's needs upon their return to school, in regards to their safety, mental health, and academic needs. Supports should be trauma informed and should include culturally responsive resources for each student. Part of each plan should involve regular check-ins with the student by the counsellor or another trusted school staff.
- 10) Incidents in our schools relating to sex-trafficking should be well documented by staff. After the necessary initial reporting has been completed (e.g., child protection agency, police) a record of the situation and steps taken throughout the process will be maintained by the school.
- 11) Intervening in these situations can be very challenging and can have impacts on our staff who are providing support. Our board does offer resources to these

employees, including mental health counselling through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP).