



# Huron-Superior Catholic

## DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### **Anti-Sex Trafficking School Board Protocol**

Last Updated on January 17, 2022

#### **PURPOSE**

The *Policy/Program Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols* (PPM 166) sets a strong foundation for Ontario school boards to build local anti-sex trafficking protocols.

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<sup>1</sup>.

Welcoming and engaging school environments lead to positive student experiences, especially when families and communities are intentionally involved in the students' learning<sup>2</sup>. Safe Schools, both physically and psychologically, are a critical element to successfully nurturing positive student experiences.

Due to almost daily contact with students, teachers and other education staff are well placed to educate on prevention and promotion of healthy relationships, notice troubling changes in behaviour, and connect with students as caring adults. By training staff to recognize the signs of sex trafficking, they will be better equipped 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

---

<sup>1</sup> In response to: [Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Private members' motions](#), 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, Motion 122 voted and carried on December 3, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education. (2021). [Parent Engagement: Encouraging Parent Involvement in Schools](#).

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, who comprise a disproportionate number of trafficked persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Canada.

## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

### **A role for parents/guardians/caregivers**

Parents, guardians and caregivers are key partners in school board anti-sex trafficking protocols. Care must be given when reaching out to parents, families and caregivers to ensure they are safe adults prior to engaging with them on matters regarding student(s). Outreach to Indigenous parents and guardians, as well as outreach to Black and racialized parents and guardians, will be trauma-informed and recognize historic and systemic barriers that may impact their participation. Every effort will be made to reduce cultural and/or linguistic barriers when reaching out to parents, guardians and caregivers about this work.

### **Foster student voices**

Students are at the centre of this work and they will be involved in efforts to develop actions against sex trafficking. Student groups will be invited to improve and implement the board's anti-sex trafficking protocols. The board recognizes that students with lived experience are experts and, if willing and appropriately supported through trauma-informed approaches, could share their story and insights as part of efforts to build awareness and empower students.

### **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.

The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board has connected with a number of agencies, either directly or indirectly (e.g., through meetings of the HOPE Alliance) while developing this protocol. The board agrees to continue seeking the guidance, input, and support of these organizations and agencies while the protocol is being implemented. For more details about some of the agencies that informed our protocol, please see **Appendix A - Community Organizations**.

**Interventions must be safe**

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 will 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 will emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that will make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe.

**Build up school-based prevention**

This 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 members of the local school community. This is a particular concern for Indigenous populations, who continue to experience the effect of colonization, which has resulted in a disproportionate number of Indigenous women and children being trafficked both historically and currently.

**Respect confidentiality, privacy and informed consent**

Confidentiality must be respected and students must fully understand 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 Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board supports 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

### Availability, accessibility, and implementation of the protocol

- **Board Website** - This protocol and all related documents will be made available on the main website of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, located at [www.hscdsb.on.ca](http://www.hscdsb.on.ca). Applicable documents will appear under the Parents and/or Students tab of the website. In addition, the board will annually acknowledge Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Day on February 22 via its website and/or social media accounts.
- **Board Policy** - The board acknowledges that the online security of its students and employees is a key consideration and a potential factor in human and sex trafficking. Various board policies are related to the awareness and prevention of sex trafficking. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - **Policy 4015 – Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology Resources** outlines the types of activities that those using board-issued devices must avoid (e.g., accessing pornography). It also makes clear the responsibilities of various parties, including the need for students to report any unauthorized or inappropriate use of technology. It also emphasizes the need for teachers to supervise their students while they are using board-owned devices and the board’s network and parents’ responsibilities in monitoring their children’s use of board technologies.
  - **Policy 4016 - Bullying Prevention and Intervention** defines various kinds of bullying, including cyberbullying, as well as strategies in place within the board and all schools to prevent and address bullying.
  - **Policy 4024 - Safe Schools and Workplaces** is a complex policy that addresses numerous relevant topics, such as code of conduct, sexual harassment, and appropriate police investigations in schools.
  - **Policy 5003 - Field Trips** outlines various precautions that must be taken before and during field trips. Appropriate supervision of students while on field trips, whether they be during the school day or beyond it, is highlighted.
  - **Policy 7000 - Child Abuse** touches on employees’ duty to report situations where students may be at risk of harm. A list of child welfare agencies and contact information is provided in the policy.

## Raising awareness among parents, guardians, and caregivers

The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will consult with its Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and/or school-based Catholic School Councils to generate parent input and discuss how best to raise awareness regarding anti-sex trafficking.

It is acknowledged that parents, guardians, and caregivers will require information and/or access to training on each of the following:

- **Cyber-safety:**
  - Virtual or in-person presentations about this topic may be offered at the school or school board level. Presentation material may be locally developed or include presentations/guest speakers from outside agencies, such as R.I.S.E.
  - Digital resources may be shared through email, social media, and other means.
  - Print resources, such as brochures or newsletters, may also be shared across the board.
  - Individual schools may also share information via monthly newsletters.
  
- **Signs that a student is being targeted, lured, groomed, trafficked or is trafficking another student:**
  - Virtual or in-person presentations about this topic may be offered at the school or school board level. Presentation material may be locally developed or include presentations/guest speakers from outside agencies such as R.I.S.E.
  - Videos from former sex trafficked persons may be shared. Examples of such videos are [Bridget's Story](#) and [Karly's Story](#)).
  - In addition, videos of people involved in luring individuals into sex trafficking may be shown. See [Matthew Deiac](#) and [Behind the Story: Beaten, Branded, Bought and Sold](#) for more details.
  - Digital resources may be shared through email, social media, and other means.
  - Print resources, such as brochures or newsletters, may also be shared across the board.
  - Individual schools may also share information via monthly newsletters.
  
- **How to get help safely, exit sex trafficking safely, and bring sex trafficking incidents to the attention of the school without fear of reprisal:**

- Parents will be provided with a list of organizations/agencies, including anonymous reporting hotlines such as Kids Help Phone and [www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/submit-a-tip](http://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/submit-a-tip).
  - Parents will be referred to and/or provided with the contact information for the board's Mental Health Lead, who will then follow the steps established by the board to help the person being trafficked.
  - Anonymous concerns can be brought forward directly to the school, school board, or Mental Health Lead by phone. Parents can block caller-id information when calling in, to ensure anonymity.
  - Schools will be encouraged to create a bulletin board with support services and contact information that is accessible and visible to students, parents, and visitors. Schools can also post anonymous support hotline numbers in places such as bathroom stalls.
- **How parents can report concerns to the school board (including anonymous reporting) and the school board's process for responding to concerns:**
    - Concerns can be brought forward directly to the school or school board via phone or email. Contact information for the HSCDSB and all schools is available on the board's website at [hscdsb.on.ca](http://hscdsb.on.ca).
    - Anonymous concerns can be brought forward directly to the school, school board, or Mental Health Lead through phone. Parents can block caller-id information when calling in, to ensure anonymity.
    - Concerns brought forward will be referred to the appropriate person or \_\_\_\_\_ agency.
- **What approaches are in place to overcome barriers to participation that Indigenous, Black, newcomer and other parents/guardians may face:**
    - The board will either create or provide resources in multiple languages.
    - Parents can communicate to schools in their own language through the use of the [Talking Points App](#). This app translates messages into various languages.
    - Personal stories of persons formerly involved in sex trafficking will be shared (e.g., guest speakers, written accounts, videos); people of various cultures will be highlighted (e.g., [Bridget's Story](#))
    - In collaboration with community resources and supports, the board will provide and/or make available a resource list for culturally-based, gender-based, trauma informed services.

## Preventing recruitment of students for sex trafficking

In keeping with its mission to affirm the sacredness of life and reverence the dignity of each person as a Child of God, the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will implement the following strategies to prevent the recruitment of students for sex trafficking:

- **Teach Students Via the Catholic Curriculum** - The curriculum taught in the board's Catholic schools will continue to focus on such topics as healthy relationships, consent, mental health and well-being, coping skills, personal safety and online safety. For more detail about this curriculum, please access the curriculum documents and/or refer to **Appendix B - Curriculum Connections to Anti-Sex Trafficking Topics**.
- **Reinforce Messaging Through Other Stakeholders** - The board recognizes that, the more often students are exposed to messaging about healthy relationships, personal safety, and human dignity, the better. Accordingly, the board will also rely on other stakeholders to reinforce this message. For example:
  - Parish priests may be asked to reinforce this message in their classroom visits and/or school masses.
  - School and family counsellors will be asked to offer presentations on healthy human relationships.
  - Algoma Family Services is the local community service for anti-human trafficking. Indigenous-specific prevention and awareness with culturally appropriate support and representation will be made available, in collaboration with local Indigenous partners and services. When an event related to sex trafficking occurs and a student divulges, s/he may need or may request Indigenous supports. Such support should be offered as an option to all students who have identified as Indigenous.
  - Women in Crisis may be asked to make presentations to high school students on healthy relationships and/or identifying unhealthy relationships.
  - The VIP and D.A.R.E. programs offered by the OPP for elementary grades engage students in topics such as cyber safety, stranger danger, peer pressure, and resistance strategies. The OPP also has presentations available for secondary students on internet safety and human trafficking.
  - R.I.S.E. (Resources and Integration for Survivor Empowerment) is a community-based organization that provides resources for schools and

community members. Resources may include presentations, materials, and seminars that build awareness about healthy relationships, exploitation, online safety, and human trafficking.

## **RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

### **Procedures for employees and administrators**

The Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board recognizes the importance of establishing procedures for school board employees to respond in situations where a student:

- May be at risk of or is being sex trafficked
- May be targeting, luring, grooming or recruiting children and youth for the purpose of sex trafficking
- Is returning to school after they have been trafficked or involved in trafficking others

Accordingly, the board has established a procedure that will be followed by any school board employee who becomes aware of a student who is at risk of, or has experienced sex-trafficking (including the recruiting of others). This process is laid out in a flowchart that is available to all staff. See **Appendix C - Flow Chart: Responding to Incidents / Reports of Human Trafficking**. This flow chart identifies the board's Mental Health Lead as a point person to ensure proper referrals are made and steps are taken to foster the student's safety. The flow chart applies to all students, including those whose parents may not speak English, students who are 18 years or older, students who are 16 or 17 and who have withdrawn from parental control, and international students.

In addition, the board has created an additional resource for school leaders, which outlines a procedure for responding to cases where students are at risk of, or have experienced, sex trafficking. See **Appendix D - Procedure for School Administrators Responding to Sex-Trafficking in Schools**.

Of note: the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline has resumed operating 24 hours, 7 days a week. If someone is in need of assistance, please call 1-833-900-1010 or 911.

### **Transition meetings**

In a case where a student who is known to have experienced sex-trafficking (including the recruiting of others) is returning to an HSCDSB school and/or coming for the first time, transition meetings will be held prior to the student's arrival. The transition meeting will include, at a minimum, all relevant school staff, service agencies, and family members. In cases where a child is in care, the child protection agency will be involved to act as the guardian for the child, with foster parents being included in the process where possible. Representatives from First Nations communities may also be invited to be in attendance, where appropriate.



These transition meetings will be used as a means of ensuring the student arrives at school with the proper planning and supports in place. They will also be an opportunity to discuss the students' needs, experiences in education, social and/or academic challenges, and potential barriers to their education.

## **TRAINING FOR SCHOOL BOARD EMPLOYEES**

All employees of the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will receive ongoing training related to sex trafficking, in order to educate employees about the importance of their roles in ensuring student safety. A tracking system will be used to ensure the completion of training modules and employees will be warned in advance about the content of this training, in case it triggers those who have had a related traumatic experience. See **Appendix E - Training Topics Related to Anti-Sex Trafficking** to learn more about the content of these modules.

As an initial step, the board will devote a portion of its May 20, 2022 Professional Activity Day to the completion of this anti-sex trafficking training. Additional training resources to support staff with understanding and responding safely to sex trafficking will also be provided. See **Appendix F - Additional Helpful Resources Related to Anti-Sex Trafficking** and **Appendix G - Glossary of Terms**.

Training will be updated and delivered annually to allow employees to stay current with emerging issues relating to trafficking, including changes in community services and response. A slideshow will be posted on the board's website for all employees to access when needed throughout the school year. Principals will also review the information with their staff at the beginning of each school year.

In addition, the board will explore the feasibility of creating and distributing a document similar to the one used for responding to emergency situations and posting contact information in each school.

## **MEASURING SUCCESS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION**

This protocol has been developed based on the expertise and advice of a number of parties. It is the board's intention that this protocol be reviewed and revised iteratively to reflect the most current information and thinking.

Following the first year, the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board will review this protocol and potentially report to the Ministry of Education, upon the ministry's request, on their activities to achieve the expectations outlined in this policy framework. Beyond this first revision, the board agrees to review this protocol every five years, as is the cyclical requirement for all board policies and procedural guidelines.

The Ministry of Education will collaborate with school boards, as well as anti-human trafficking partners, to develop a performance measurement framework. This framework will monitor the effectiveness of training (e.g., whether staff feel they are more aware and more able to safely identify and intervene in situations where a student is suspected of being trafficked or trafficking) and whether the protocols respond to the needs of students.

Community anti-human trafficking partners and local agencies, such as child protective services like Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies, will be invited to participate in the reporting process to the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with school boards, to determine how the protocols have helped children and youth in care stay out of, or exit, human trafficking. This should be measured carefully with performance indicators on how the protocols are preventing trafficking in Ontario communities.