



5.8 Child Protection

The Board of Education believes that a child has a right to receive an education in an environment which is conducive to learning. This environment includes aspects of security which are both physical and mental in nature. To ensure the protection of children, the Board affirms that appropriate actions will be taken in any situation where the child may be at risk. The Board expects its employees to take seriously, comments made by children that may indicate abuse or neglect.

The Board expects employees to conform to the legal duties and responsibilities respecting a child in need of protection as set out in the provincial statutes.

Local Child Protection Protocol

1. Introduction

This is the local child protection protocol between the School District No. 19 (Revelstoke), the Ministry for Children and Families, Revelstoke District Office, and the Revelstoke Detachment RCMP. This protocol is not intended to replace the Ministry for Children and Families B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect (B.C. Handbook), but rather emphasize the need for an integrated approach protecting children at our community level. This protocol summarizes the major steps each agency would take in the reporting, assessing and investigating child protection reports of school children. (Where you are unclear on how to proceed, refer to the Handbook for more detail.)

2. Principles

These principles are based on the guiding principles of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, as set out in section 2 of the Act, and the general principles outlined in the Handbook.

- The safety and well-being of children are paramount considerations
- Children are entitled to protection from abuse, neglect, harm and the threat of harm
- Reporting of abuse and neglect needs to be done promptly

- Responses to reports of abuse and neglect need to occur promptly
- Responses to reports of child abuse and neglect should be sensitive to the needs and the cultural, racial and religious heritage of the children and families involved
- Children with disabilities and very young children may not be able to protect themselves, and are particularly dependent on adults for their safety and well-being
- All parties working with children are in a position of trust, and their conduct should reflect this trust
- Collaboration is an effective way to promote the best interest of children
- When sharing information for the safety and well-being of children, the information disclosed should only be used for those purposes, in accordance with applicable legislation, but not for other purposes

3. When a School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employee suspects a child needs protection

Section 14 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* **requires every person to report promptly to a child protection social worker when they have reason to believe a child needs protection** as set out in the following circumstances

- if a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or sexually exploited by a parent or another person; physical harm includes physical harm by neglect
- if the child is emotionally harmed by the parent's conduct; a child is emotionally harmed if the child demonstrates severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal and/or self-destructive or aggressive behaviour
- if the child is deprived of necessary health care
- if the child's development is likely to be seriously impaired by a treatable condition and the child's parent refuses to provide or consent to treatment
- if the child's parent is unable or unwilling to care for the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care

- if the child is or has been absent from home in circumstances that endanger the child's safety or well-being
- if the child's parent is dead and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care
- if the child has been abandoned and adequate provision has not been made for the child's care

When a teacher or other School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employee has a reasonable suspicion that a child may need protection the employee will carry out the following procedures.

STEP 1 Record accurately all information pertinent to making a report including:

- a. the name, age, date of birth, grade, address, telephone number of the child, and parents work phone numbers (unless this would cause delay)
- b. the names of the parents and/or guardians; and
- c. the reasons for concern and any relevant statements made by the child

NOTE: Information given by the child should be recorded verbatim.

STEP 2 School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employee is to then immediately inform the child's principal of the child protection concern. If there are reasons for which a School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employee deems it inappropriate to report the incident to the child's principal, the employee is to instead immediately inform the Superintendent of Schools and then continue through the reporting procedure. (This step should not be allowed to unduly delay reporting the matter to the Ministry for Children and Families.

NOTE: All personnel are reminded that they are not to investigate the nature of the concern at this or any other time (see page 14-16 B.C. Handbook).

STEP 3 The School District No 19 (Revelstoke) employee is to then call the Ministry for Children and Families office (837-7612) and ask to

Speak with an intake worker, saying “I am calling to report a possible child protection concern.” The information recorded under Step 1 should be provided to the Intake Social Worker and any concerns about the child’s immediate safety should be provided on any special concerns regarding the child’s functioning should be explained to the Ministry for Children and Families social worker. School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employees may be required during the assessment process to provide further information regarding school attendance, behaviour, and any other relevant background information. The employee shall not inform parents about the concern without the approval from the investigating social worker, as this may jeopardize the investigation, especially when a parent may be the abuser. Reports are to be made on the same day the employee has grounds to suspect a child protection concern. If the local office is closed, the employee is to call the Ministry for Children and Families Helpline for Children at 310-1234 (see page 16, B.C. Handbook).

NOTE: Responsibility for making a report to the Ministry for Children and Families rests with the person who has grounds to believe a child is in need of protection. This responsibility is not discharged by an employee reporting to any other person other than a Ministry for Children and Families Social Worker. (see page 16, 17, B.C. Handbook).

NOTE: Where the nature of the concern is such that a child may be harmed by returning home after school, the School District will provide a means for staff to supervise a child until the Ministry for Children and Families personnel can attend to the school.

4. When a Ministry for Children and Families Social Worker receives a report of a child needing protection

Upon receiving a report of possible child protection concern, the Ministry must assess the family situation and investigate as appropriate. When possible, the reporter will be notified whether the report has been accepted for investigation. Upon the conclusion of the assessment and/or investigation, the reporter can ask to be notified of the results of the investigation (see page 55, 56 B.C. Handbook)

It is important to note that it is the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Families to report a case of suspected physical or sexual abuse to the R.C.M.P. For a full outline of the consideration and steps in a child protection investigation, please refer to page 28-35 in the B.C. Handbook.

5. When a Ministry for Children and Families Social Worker request to interview a child(ren) at their school

When the Ministry for Children and Families is required to interview a child(ren), prior to the interview, the worker is to make a reasonable effort to inform the school principal and parents as to the intent, unless this may jeopardize the investigation. In instances where the child is interviewed without parental knowledge the MCFD Social Worker will notify the parent as soon as possible following the interview. School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) employees will be available to the Ministry for Children and Families worker and the R.C.M.P. to assist in any way as requested.

If a Social Worker comes to the school in order to interview the child(ren) involved, the school administrator is to cooperate by offering a quiet space in the school for the interview, providing proper identification has been presented by the social worker. Generally, children should remain in their class until the social worker attends the school and requests the child be brought for the interview. The social worker often needs to gather further information at the school prior to interviewing the child(ren). It can be very stressful for a child if they are already removed from class and have to wait for an extended period of time for the interview with a social worker.

School personnel should not insist on being present during the interview. The Social Worker, may, however, request someone be present in order to support the child(ren) or the child may request that a staff member be present for emotional support.

If a conflict arises between the school personnel and a social worker and remains unresolved, it then may be referred to the Superintendent of Schools and the Team Leader of the Ministry for Children and Families. (The “principles” outlined above shall guide all conflict resolution processes.)

6. If a School District 19 (Revelstoke) employee is suspected of abusing a child or children

The reporting procedure in Section B of this protocol, Steps 1,2 and 3 will be followed. In addition, the Principal is to immediately notify, by phone, the Superintendent of Schools.

If a social worker receives a report they will notify the Ministry for Children and Families Team Leader who will in turn notify the Superintendent of Schools and the RCMP.

The roles of the three key agencies:

- The Superintendent of Schools or designate will investigate the report on behalf of the School Board, and recommend appropriate action to the Board as part of the Superintendent's legal responsibilities.
- The Team Leader of the Ministry for Children and Families or designate will assess the report to decide how to respond to it, and commence an investigation if there is reason to believe that a child or children may need protection.
- The RCMP investigate the report to determine if a criminal offense may have been committed. The protection of the child is given the highest priority throughout the investigation; however, RCMP investigations take precedence in criminal matters related to child safety.

Coordinating the Response:

- a. Notification: Whichever of the three key agencies receives the report, they shall notify immediately the other two. For example, a police officer who receives such a report shall notify immediately the Superintendent of Schools and a social worker in the Ministry for Children and Families.
- b. Initial Planning: The Superintendent of Schools or designate, the Team Leader of the Ministry for Children and Families or designate, and the RCMP shall meet immediately to determine in detail their respective roles and responsibilities in the case; to decide upon any immediate steps which should be taken to assure the safety and well being of the children involved; and to arrange for the notification of the parents of the children involved.
- c. Child Safety: The three agencies will ensure that the child/or children are safe from harm during the investigation.
- d. Notification of Affected Parents: The Superintendent of Schools is responsible for ensuring that the parents of children who may have been affected have been notified. The RCMP will provide the necessary notification during the course of their investigation.
- e. Contact with the alleged offender: When the RCMP are conducting a criminal investigation, it is preferable that the RCMP make the initial contact with the alleged offender. Other investigators should facilitate this by not contacting the offender unless to do so is required to fulfill a legal responsibility.

- f. Notification of criminal proceedings: The RCMP should keep the Superintendent of School and the Team Leader of the Ministry for Children and Families informed of the status of the RCMP investigation and of decisions regarding the laying of and proceeding with charges.

- g. Notifying others of the actions of the School District: The Superintendent of Schools should ensure that the Ministry for Children and Families and the RCMP are notified of the recommendation and the actions taken by the School Board. Where a Board dismisses or disciplines a teacher or an administrative officer, the *School Act* requires that the Board report it without delay to the Ministry of Education and the Council of the College of Teachers giving the reasons.

Anne Cooper
Superintendent of Schools
School District No 19
(Revelstoke)

Kemp Redl
Regional Child
Protection Manager
Ministry for Children
and Families (Revelstoke)

Sgt. Art Kleinsmith
RCMP

Date

Date

Date