



# Call it Safe

A parent guide for dealing with  
harassment and intimidation  
in secondary schools

2003 Edition



**BCCPAC**

This guide is for parents of secondary school students and Parent Advisory Council (PAC) leaders. It will:

- ✓ answer some of the questions you may have about harassment and intimidation, and give you information on what you need to know and do to help your children
- ✓ provide information for your PAC to work with your school to help ensure that the school is safe.

This guide is also useful to others associated with the public school system who wish to understand parents' perspectives on harassment and intimidation, and engage parents' help in raising awareness and promoting effective awareness, prevention, intervention, and protection programs.

In this guide, “child” or “student” means any person under the age of 19; “parent” is used as it is in the *BC School Act*:

“parent” means, in respect of a student or of a child registered under section 13,

- a) the guardian of the person of the student or child,
- b) the person legally entitled to custody of the student or child, or
- c) the person who usually has the care and control of the student or child.

*Others not covered by this definition, such as members of the extended family or friends, may be acting as parents. This guide is for them as well as their families.*

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## What are harassment and intimidation?

*Gail and her friend Jane have spent a few minutes after class finishing some work and are gathering their belongings. When they reach the classroom door, they discover that a group of girls has gathered there. The hostile group glares menacingly at Jane. As the two friends pass through, Gail hears “loser” and other derogatory terms levelled at her friend. Unnerved, she and Jane leave as quickly as possible.*

### **Some examples of harassment and intimidation**

- ✓ name-calling
- ✓ unwelcome teasing
- ✓ locking in a confined space
- ✓ racist or homophobic slurs
- ✓ unwelcome touching
- ✓ threatening notes, letters, emails
- ✓ threatening words, actions or weapons
- ✓ taunting
- ✓ excluding from a group
- ✓ spreading rumours
- ✓ threatening or insulting graffiti
- ✓ stalking
- ✓ extortion

Students have the right to a safe, secure, welcoming learning environment. Teachers and support staff also have a right to a harassment-free environment, which is spelled out in collective agreements with school boards.<sup>1</sup>

Harassment is any behaviour or comment that is hurtful, degrading, humiliating or offensive to another person. Intimidation is the act of causing fear in order to force or influence someone to do, or not to do, something.

Indicators of harassment and intimidation may be obvious. For example, your child may have told you about a problem. However, harassment and intimidation can be less obvious or hidden. The following could be signs that your child is being harassed and intimidated...or is the harasser:

- ✓ Is your child complaining of being poorly treated?
- ✓ Have you noticed signs of changed behaviour? Sleeplessness? Anxiety?
- ✓ Is your child afraid to leave the house or go to school?
- ✓ Is your child talking about dropping out while remaining vague about the reasons.
- ✓ Is your child coming home with new clothes or other items, or money not accounted for?
- ✓ Is your child talking about responding to other students' behaviour in a way that may result in the school taking disciplinary action against your child?
- ✓ Have your child's grades dropped dramatically?

<sup>1</sup> Many organizations define harassment in their collective agreements. For example, Article E.2.2 of the Teachers' Provincial Collective Agreement (PCA) defines harassment as:

- sexual harassment; or
- any improper behaviour that is directed at or offensive to any person, is unwelcome, and which the person knows or ought reasonably to know would be unwelcome; or
- objectionable conduct, comment, materials or display made on either a one-time or continuous basis that demeans, belittles, intimidates, or humiliates another person; or
- the exercise of power or authority in a manner which serves no legitimate work purpose and which a person ought reasonably to know is inappropriate; or
- such misuses of power or authority as intimidation, threats, coercion and blackmail.

Left unresolved, harassment and intimidation in the school setting can:

- affect students' academic achievement
- undermine their attendance
- affect their physical, emotional, and mental well-being
- provoke retaliatory violence.

In many cases, the problems continue outside the school setting affecting not only children and families but also the greater community. In the extreme, suicide and other forms of serious violence against self or others can result. It is important for students, parents and families, school and district staff, and the community to recognize harassment and intimidation and work together to deal with it.

**The Statement of Education Policy Order describes the following as one of the goals of public schooling that is shared among schools, the family and the community:**

- **Human and Social Development—to develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative... to develop a sense of social responsibility, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.**

## **Who harasses?**

Anyone can harass. Harassment can occur in and out of the school setting and may involve:

- students
- teachers
- support staff
- administrators
- other adults (e.g., bus drivers, volunteers, parents)
- other youth (not attending school).

Harassment is learned behaviour that can be unlearned.

To understand more about who harasses and why, see the Ministry of Education's *Helping our kids live violence free: A parent's guide (for students in grades 8 to 12)*.

[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/live\\_vf/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/live_vf/)

**Students, staff and volunteers have the right to a safe, secure and welcoming learning and working environment. Acts of bullying, intimidation, discrimination or harassment must not be tolerated from anyone (for more information, see *BC Safe Schools and Communities Centre*, p. 18).**

***Philip has been trying to transfer out of his Social Studies class for three months without much success. He feels that his teacher is unreasonable and mean. He believes that the marking is biased, the put-downs are uncalled for, and certain students in the class are being favoured. After Phillip gave an answer in class today, the teacher responded aloud, in front of the whole class, "If you had a brain, you'd be dangerous!"***

## What parents can do

Our children need to be safe emotionally and physically. As the parent of a secondary school student, you will continue to monitor and supervise your child's activities. Aside from representing your children, your role will be to help them build the skills to act on their own behalf. When something goes wrong at school, they need to know where they can turn for guidance and support, and what action to expect. Parents and families can help children understand the importance of reporting harassment and guide them through the complaint and investigation process.

**"The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with parents."**

*United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Article 7, 1959*

### **Listen carefully to your child**

Many secondary school students are reluctant to have their parents and families involved. They may think:

- > you will make the situation worse
- > even with your help their concerns will be ignored by the school
- > they will suffer retaliation
- > the problem isn't that bad
- > they can handle the problem themselves.

**To help you to document your concerns, use the self-help guide on p. 10.**

Children will talk about the harassment when they know you will listen and help. As you listen and talk to your child, the conversation will help you determine your level of involvement. Consider the following questions:

- ✓ Does my child need my help or protection?
- ✓ How can I help my child stay safe?
- ✓ What information do I need?
- ✓ Where can I go for help?

### **Decide how you can help**

When your child's safety or ability to function at school is affected, intervention is vital. How you intervene is just as important. When talking to your child about reporting the situation, explain the difference between "ratting" and "reporting." Ratting or snitching is a negative label used by the harasser to discourage children from reporting. It takes courage to report. Reporting is done to help keep someone safe.

**If nothing is done, the problem will not go away. It will likely get worse.**

## Work with the school

Whether your child is the victim, a bystander, or harasser, there is a basic approach to dealing with the problem. First, contact the appropriate school staff and report the situation. In most cases:

**Approach the teacher** if the problem occurs in an area supervised by the teacher, e.g., in the classroom or gym changeroom.

**Approach the principal** if the problem occurs in less-supervised areas, such as in the hallway, at the lockers, bus stops, during extracurricular school activities, on the way to/from school or if the problem persists in the classroom.

**Approach the next level of authority** in your school district, if the problem is not resolved. This may be a district principal, assistant superintendent, or the district superintendent of schools.

You and your child can:

- ✓ ask how and when the person will investigate your complaint(s)
- ✓ ask when you can expect the person who receives your complaint to get back to you and what information to expect
- ✓ ask how the school, now that it is aware of the problem, is going to monitor the situation as it is investigated, e.g., supervision of the alleged harasser(s)
- ✓ emphasize the need for a prompt and effective response to improve your child's situation
- ✓ ask that a plan be in place to keep your child safe
- ✓ emphasize the need to keep your child's identity and personal information confidential to prevent retaliation
- ✓ explore, with the appropriate school staff, the services the school/district offers if your child is in need of emotional/psychological support
- ✓ discuss a variety of options for your child's safety.

***The principal of a school is responsible for administering and supervising the school including the general conduct of students.***

***School Act Regulation 265/89***

***Approaching the school system can be intimidating. If you are not comfortable approaching the appropriate staff at anytime, go to their supervisor.***

***Don't forget to keep detailed notes. Use the tearsheet on p. 10.***

***When advocating for your child, you want to know how and when the people in positions of responsibility are going to take action. If you need assistance, call the Advocacy Project toll-free line at 1-888-351-9834.***

***You may want to look in your community for groups or services to support you and/or your child. See the Resources section of this guide for some suggestions.***

**The BC Teachers' Federation Code of Ethics states:**

**"1. The teacher speaks and acts toward students with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities."**

**The code is a *model* for professional and ethical behaviour.**

***When you need to address the behaviour of an adult, you need to follow the complaints process available in your district. In the case of suspected child abuse, you have a duty under the law to report the matter promptly to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (see page 18 of this guide).***

**"When should a school report student misconduct to police?  
...school officials have a duty of care to protect students. This may include a duty to involve police in circumstances where student safety is threatened. ...  
Involvement of the police can emphasize that criminal misconduct at the school is a serious matter and is of concern to the community as a whole."**

***Keeping Schools Safe: A practical guide for principals and vice-principals, p. 144***

## **Use the right procedures**

Knowing the policies and procedures that guide actions and decisions in your school district will help you to understand what is appropriate for your child's circumstances.

Each school district should have policies and procedures to deal with harassment and intimidation. They are often linked to multiculturalism, anti-discrimination, anti-violence policies, and/or school codes of conduct.

These policies provide the framework for building a school community, that:

- demonstrates dignity, respect, and understanding of all people
- does not tolerate harassment, intimidation, or discrimination
- values the diversity that exists within its community.

Ask for copies of the safe schools policies in your district. Use them to support your efforts to help your child.

## **Gather support outside the school**

The school has the primary responsibility to act on your child's concerns about safety within the school setting. When and how the school involves outside agencies depends on how the school views the severity of the incidents. It also depends on the relationships and protocols your school/district has developed with outside agencies. Police in many communities in BC are working with schools and youth-serving agencies to prevent youth harassment and intimidation.

*If at any time* you believe your child is in danger, make a report directly to your local police. It helps to have a written record of the incidents and your actions to solve the problem.



## When your child is the victim

Work with your child to bolster confidence and find ways to deal with the problem. By the time you know that your child is being harassed, it is likely that he or she has tried many ways to solve the problem. Standing up to a harasser may make things worse.

Talk to your child about how the incident could be reported.

When your child is the victim of harassment, you may request that your child:

- ✓ be immediately referred to the person who has the authority and training to investigate the complaint
- ✓ be able to have a person of his or her choice present at all interviews
- ✓ be told how the investigation will be kept confidential
- ✓ be assured retribution for making a complaint will not be tolerated and be told how the school will deal with retribution if it occurs
- ✓ be provided with a recording or transcript of the interview or written statement if your child is interviewed by an investigator
- ✓ have a clear understanding of how the school will prevent further harassment
- ✓ remain at the school, and the harasser be transferred if necessary
- ✓ be provided with an educational program at an alternate location and/or re-entry plan if the fear of harassment and intimidation is preventing your child from attending school
- ✓ be provided with appropriate counselling to deal with the effects of the harassment
- ✓ be told whether the school will refer him or her to an outside agency (e.g., police, mental health) and for what reasons.

**Generally, it is not recommended that you contact the harasser or the parent of a harasser.**

***Helping our kids live violence free,  
Ministry of Education, p. 16.***

***As an example of process and protection, this is how teachers' work environment is protected:***

***Article E.2, PCA:***

***"The employer shall investigate the complaint. The investigation shall be conducted by a person who shall have training and/or experience in investigating complaints of harassment. The complainant may request that the investigator shall be of the same gender as the complainant, and where practicable the request will not be denied.***

***Remedies***

***d. If the harassment results in the transfer of an employee it shall be the harasser who is transferred, except where the complainant requests to be transferred."***

**The Youth Against Violence Line is a safe, confidential way for youth to pass on information, prevent crime, or ask for assistance. The number (within BC) is 1-800-680-4264. The Youth Against Violence Line is also available online through secure e-mail at [www.takingastand.com](http://www.takingastand.com).**

**“... we know now that peers spend a large proportion of their time passively observing... they are reinforcing the bully and giving the message that they approve of his or her actions.”**

**Paul O’Connell et al., “Peer involvement in bullying: insights and challenges for intervention.” *Journal of Adolescence*, 1999, 22: 437-452**

**Restorative justice programs can “provide conflict resolution and increased youth responsibility for actions...The goal is to reduce harm and minimize the likelihood that the student will engage in the unacceptable behaviour again.”**

**Special Programs Branch, BC Ministry of Education, *Focus on Suspension. A Resource for Schools*, p. 36**

## When your child is the bystander

Work with your child to develop the skill and courage to speak up. Many secondary school students are reluctant to step in when they see someone else harassed or intimidated. Similar to their reasons for not wanting their parents or families involved, they may believe:

- the harasser will turn on them
- they will make it worse for the victim
- the situation may escalate and they’ll get into trouble
- there will be no support from other students or staff.

Harassment affects everyone. It is up to *everyone* to create safety within the school setting. Silence only makes the problem worse.

When you encourage your child to speak out about harassment and intimidation, make sure the same safeguards are in place as should be for the victim.

## When your child is the harasser

Your child and the school need your support to effectively address harassment and intimidation, and to provide a safe environment for all students and staff. You can help by remaining calm and working with the school to identify and address the factors that motivate your child to harass others. You may also work with your child to find ways to make amends to the victim. Remember it is not your child who is unacceptable; it is the behaviour. Support your child in seeking fair treatment during any investigation or discipline process.

Students who harass and intimidate others may benefit from programs offered in the school district. These programs are more effective when parents support children in learning the life skills involved. Some of these programs include:

- harassment prevention
- anger management
- conflict resolution
- restorative justice
- adult mentoring
- counselling
- Saturday school.

Your school district and District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) have received a copy of *Focus on Suspension. A Resource for Schools* published in 1999 by the Ministry of Education. *Focus on Suspension* is intended to help schools develop strategies that focus on alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, and includes suggestions for prevention and intervention strategies, and information on programs for improving school-wide and classroom behaviour.

- ✓ In the event of an investigation or discipline process, including suspension, you will need to get copies of the policies that apply in these cases. For example:
  - The school district must provide an education program to suspended students under 16 years of age. The school district may provide that program in a variety of ways.
  - There may be services available to your child, such as psychological assessment or referral to an outside agency, that will help your child recognize the seriousness of the behaviour and keep it from happening again.
- ✓ Your child should be able to choose a support person who could be present at all interviews.
- ✓ You should be informed of any appeal procedure available to you. (See *Your Right to Appeal*, p. 9).
- ✓ If the school believes the police need to be involved, you or your child may wish to seek legal advice.
- ✓ If your child is arrested and detained under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* April 2003, the police must notify you.
- ✓ If being questioned by the police or other person in authority (the principal, for example) about a harassment incident, your child has the right to have an adult present and to choose that person.

**“Harassment policies should provide for a range of sanctions ... depending on the seriousness of the incident of harassment.**

**Examples of discipline include verbal and written apologies, a detention, training and education on the seriousness of the harassment, counselling, suspension and expulsion.”**

**Eric M. Roher, *An Educator’s Guide to Violence in Schools*, Canada Law Book Inc, 1997, p. 153**

**Section 76 (3) of the *BC School Act* requires that the discipline of a student, while attending school,...”shall be similar to that of a kind, firm and judicious parent, but shall not include corporal punishment.”**

## Your right to appeal

**Your District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) may have advocates or others who could help you. Help is also available through the BCCPAC Advocacy Project toll free message line at 1-888-351-9834.**

**You can get a copy of the appeals policy from your school or school district. Some Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) or District Parent Advisory Councils (DPACs) may also have them.**

**If at any time you feel you have been dealt with unfairly, you may contact the Office of the Ombudsman:**

**Call toll free 1-800-567-3247 (all of B.C.) 1-800-667-1303(TTY) or (250) 387-5855 for Victoria or (250) 387-5446 (Victoria TTY)**

**Website:**  
<http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca>

**Fax:**  
**Victoria: (250) 387-0198**  
**Vancouver: (604) 660-1691**

**Mail:**  
**931 Fort Street**  
**Victoria, BC**  
**V8V 3K3**

Appeal policies, like other policies, are different in every district. Make sure you have a copy of your district's most recent appeal policy and any forms that might go with it.

Section 11 (*Appeals*) of the *BC School Act* gives parents and/or students the right to ask the school board to review any decision school staff make, or fail to make, that "significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student." Every school district must have a policy on how parents and students can appeal; the decision of the school board following the appeal is final.

- ✓ Ask that your appeal be heard, and as soon as possible.
- ✓ Ask to be present in order to hear the information the staff member gives; you may request access to this information ahead of time.
- ✓ Ask questions about how the appeal hearing will be conducted:
  - How much time will you have to present your information?
  - Who will be there?
  - Will you be able to bring someone to support you?
  - Will there be a chance to ask questions of others?
  - Will others ask you questions?
- ✓ Ask for a copy of the minutes taken during the appeal.

If you believe, after your appeal at the local school board, that the process has been unfair, you or your child may complain to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can investigate the process and recommend a resolution but cannot overturn a decision. The Office of the Ombudsman has a complaint form that you can get by calling the office or downloading it from the website: [www.ombud.gov.bc.ca/complaint\\_form.html](http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca/complaint_form.html)

If you use the Self-help Guide on p. 10 to document your appeal to the school board, you will have the information necessary to complete the complaint form.



# Harassment and Intimidation Self-help Guide

*Work through this guide with your child*

Note details of the incident such as:

- Dates
- Times
- Places
- Who (if known)
- What effect has the harassment/intimidation had on your child?
- What policies, laws, etc. apply to this situation?
- What are your child's rights & responsibilities?
- What are the system's rights & responsibilities?

**1. Note details of the incident(s).**

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Possible information sources:

- School or school board office: information on policies, procedures, etc.
- Your local PAC or DPAC
- BCCPAC Advocacy Project:  
Call toll free within BC  
**1-888-351-9834**
- BCCPAC office:  
**(604) 687-4433**
- Local child- and youth-serving agencies. Check the Resources section of this guide for ideas.
- Community and school-based counselling services
- Mental health agencies
- BC Safe Schools and Communities Centre:  
Call toll free within BC  
**1-888-224-SAFE (7233)**
- Police
- Office of the Ombudsman

**2. State clearly what the issue is (to help you communicate your complaint).**

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**3. Talk with your child and list ideas for solving the problem.**

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**Actions taken:** *It is important to keep all of your information together for easy reference, including records of conversations and correspondence you have sent and received, etc. Attach another sheet if necessary.*

- Note details such as:**
- Who you talked to
  - When
  - How? (letter, telephone, fax, etc.)
  - Who is investigating the incident
  - What the investigator will do
  - What you agreed to do
  - When and how the investigator will get back to you
  - Do you need to call them back? When?
  - How the school will keep your child safe and identity confidential
  - What counselling is available should your child need it
  - If necessary, how your child's transition back into school will be handled
  - Who should you talk to if you or your child have further concerns?
  - Do you need to call the police?
  - Do you and your family need support?

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## The role of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

School and district policies on their own will not eliminate incidents of harassment and intimidation. Efforts to build and maintain a positive school climate where all participants demonstrate a respect for differences and diversity in individuals and groups require long-term planning, coordination, collaboration, training, supervision, tracking, and evaluation.

PACs are well-placed to hear from parents and students about their experiences with harassment and intimidation, and their level of satisfaction with the school's response. PACs can also seek out information about underlying conflicts and tensions among students, both in school and in the community. With this information, PACs can identify where these concerns are not isolated, and commit to addressing the problem with students and staff.

PACs can provide parents and students with information on how to deal with individual problems of harassment and intimidation. They can also:

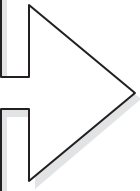
- ✓ assess what their school is doing to create and/or maintain a safe environment (see the section *How safe is your school?* p. 13)
- ✓ recommend the formation of a safe school committee
- ✓ participate on a safe school committee
- ✓ provide opportunities for parents and students to hear speakers knowledgeable about the issues surrounding harassment and intimidation
- ✓ work through their District PAC to support district-wide initiatives to advocate for safe school policies and promote effective prevention and intervention programs.

**A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may advise the board and the principal and staff on any matter relating to the school.**

***School Act, Section 8(4)***

## How safe is your school?

**For more information on assessing the safety of your school, refer to *Safe School Planning Guide and Focus on Bullying* (BC Ministry of Education and Ministry of Attorney General, now Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. A revised edition of the *Safe School Planning Guide* will be available Fall 2003. See also, BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and BC Ministry of Education *Focus on Harassment and Intimidation: Responding to Bullying in Secondary School Communities*.**

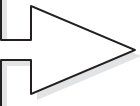


Evaluating what your secondary school is doing to create and/or maintain a safe and caring environment is a way to track where your school is working well, what needs changing, and what needs improving.

The answers to these questions will help you to establish the need for a safe school committee, or if one is already in place, to address the concerns that arise.

- To what extent do students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, and visitors feel welcome, cared about, and a part of life at our school?
- What is the Code of Conduct for students at our school? For adults, staff, volunteers? Are they displayed? What differences are there between the code for students and the code for adults, if any?
- Is it a safe environment for people to be themselves, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, or race?
  - ✓ Is homophobia a factor at our school? Is it a safe environment for people to be themselves, regardless of sexual orientation?
  - ✓ Is sexism an issue at our school? Is sexual harassment a concern? Is “lookism” prevalent?
  - ✓ Do incidents of racism occur at our school? How severe a problem is this?
- To what extent does our school respect diversity, on the whole?
- What incidents of harassment and intimidation have occurred in our school in the past year? two years? How were these incidents recorded and addressed? What follow-up was conducted?
- What instances of harassment between adults and students have occurred in our school? How were these incidents recorded and addressed? What follow-up was conducted?
- To what extent is awareness of harassment and intimidation being taught to students at our school? In what subject areas, if any?

***Lookism is a discriminatory attitude or behaviour toward someone on the basis of their appearance.***





- ❑ To what extent does our school teach social skills related to preventing harassment and intimidation or to intervening when it occurs?
- ❑ What opportunities does our school provide for staff, students, parents, and other members of the community to get together to discuss initiatives and responses to harassment and intimidation? Are these effective?
- ❑ What is our school's policy and process for intervening if there is a harassment and intimidation incident? In what way(s) have parents been informed and involved?

## What parents need to know: rights and responsibilities

Knowing the basic rights and responsibilities of everyone in the school community, including parents and students, will make it easier to work together solving individual concerns around harassment and intimidation, or addressing school-wide issues. The following information is not complete. Depending on the nature of the incident, legislation such as the *Youth Criminal Justice Act, April 2003* or the *Human Rights Code* may apply. Ask questions of those persons in a position to direct you to the laws, policies and processes that will apply to your child's circumstances.

### *Parents:*

- ✓ have the right and a responsibility to ensure your child is treated fairly at school
- ✓ have the right to be informed of your child's attendance, behaviour, and progress in school
- ✓ have the right to examine all student records kept by a board pertaining to your child
- ✓ are entitled to information about your school and district (such information helps you to take advantage of what is available for your child)
- ✓ may consult with the teacher or principal about your child's educational program. Conversely, you are required, if requested, to consult with the teacher or principal on your child's educational program
- ✓ have the right to appeal to the school board a decision, or failure to make a decision, by a school board employee that significantly affects the education, health, or safety of your child
- ✓ can take someone for support when dealing with the public school system. For example, you can take your spouse, a trusted friend, or if available in your district, a District Parent Advisory Council advocate
- ✓ have the right to belong to the school Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- ✓ can be held liable, with or separately from their children, for property of a board that is destroyed, damaged, lost or converted by an intentional or negligent act.

**“Parents have the right and responsibility to participate in the process of determining the education goals, policies and services provided for their children. They have a primary responsibility to ensure that children are provided with the healthy and supportive environment necessary for learning. They have a responsibility to shape and support the goals of the school system and to share in the task of educating their young.”**

***BC Ministry of Education,  
Statement of Education Policy Order***

*Students:*

- ✓ have the right to participate in an educational program between the ages of 5 and 19
- ✓ have the responsibility to participate in an educational program until at least the age of 16
- ✓ have the responsibility to comply with school rules, policies, and code of conduct
- ✓ may be suspended from school for refusing to comply with school rules, policies, and code of conduct, but up to the age of 16, must be provided with an education program while suspended
- ✓ over the age of 16, may be refused an educational program if not complying with school rules, policies and code of conduct, or not applying themselves to their studies
- ✓ have the right to consult with a teacher or principal about their educational program
- ✓ have the right to appeal decisions that significantly affect their education, health, or matters affecting safety
- ✓ can be held liable, with or separately from their parents, for property of a board that is destroyed, damaged, lost, or converted by an intentional or negligent act.

Besides the rights and responsibilities outlined in the *BC School Act*, Ministerial Orders and Regulations, children and youth have rights that apply through other provincial and federal legislation, the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and principles of natural justice.

For more information about the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, principals and boards, see *Building Partnerships in Schools*, a handbook published in 1996 by BCCPAC, the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association and the BC Teachers' Federation. You may be able to locate a copy through your school PAC, principal or district, or you can purchase a copy from the BCCPAC office. The *BC School Act*, Regulations and Ministerial Orders are also available in your school district, or can be obtained from the Ministry of Education (see p. 17 of this guide).

**“Students have the opportunity to avail themselves of a quality education consistent with their abilities, the opportunity to share in the shaping of their educational programs, and the opportunity to determine their career and occupational goals. They have the responsibility to make the most of their opportunities, to respect the rights of others, and to co-operate with fellow students in the achievement of their goals.”**

**BC Ministry of Education,  
Statement of Education Policy Order**

**Other rights that apply to students:**

- ✓ **the right to be treated with respect and dignity**
- ✓ **the right to be free from abuse and neglect**
- ✓ **the right to be informed of their rights and how to access them**
- ✓ **the right to be heard and have their views carefully considered**
- ✓ **the right to information about decisions that affect them.**

**“Rules are important for a safe and orderly learning environment and are also important in the formation of student attitudes. The School Act (Section 76(2) requires every school to inculcate “the highest morality”; rules and codes of conduct are one of the school’s chief means of carrying out this duty.”**

***Keeping Schools Safe: A practical guide for principals and vice-principals, p. 89***

## Recommended reading and viewing

BCCPAC. *Speaking up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools*. 1999.

BCCPAC and Open School. *Speaking Up! Parents Advocating for Students in Public Schools*. Video. 1999.

BCCPAC, BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association and BC Teachers' Federation. *Building Partnerships in Schools: A Handbook*. 1996.

BC Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. *A Guide to Aboriginal Organizations and Services in British Columbia*. 2000.

BC Ministry of Education. *Focus on Suspension. A Resource for Schools*. 1999.

BC Ministry of Education. *Helping our kids live violence free: A parent's guide (for students in grades 8 to 12)*. 2000.

BC Ministry of Education, *Performance Standards—Social Responsibility*. Available on line at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf\\_stands/social\\_resp.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/social_resp.htm)

BC Ministry of Education and BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. *Focus on Harassment and Intimidation: Responding to Bullying in Secondary School Communities. 2001*

A list of Ministry of Education publications available on line can be found at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs.htm>. The list includes resources such as: *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, Parent's Guide to Individual Education Planning (IEP), Manual of School Law, K-12 Policy Manual for BC Schools*.

BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Community Programs Division. *Taking A Stand. 2nd Edition*. 1998.

BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Ministry of Education. *Safe School Planning Guide*. 1999 (revised edition available Fall 2003).

BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association and the BC School Trustees' Association. *Keeping Schools Safe: A practical guide for principals and vice-principals*, as part of the BC's Safe Schools Initiative. June 1999.

Clark, Judith A. and Nicholls, Alan C. *A Guide to Schools Legislation in British Columbia. 2nd edition*. Eduserv. Inc. 1999.

Office of the BC Ombudsman. *Fair Schools Public Report No. 35*. May, 1995.

Rock Solid Foundation and Youth and Society Research Unit of the University of Victoria. *Rock Solid Children, Youth and Adults: Creating a Responsive Environment for the Prevention of Youth Violence*. Video. 1999.

Roher, Eric M. *An Educator's Guide to Violence in Schools*. Canada Law Book Inc. 1997.

Seddon, Cindi, McLellan, Alyson and Lajoie, Gisele. *How Parents Can Take Action Against Bullying*. Bully B'Ware Productions. Hemlock Press. 2000.

US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights and National Association of Attorneys General, Bias Crimes Task Force. *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime. A Guide for Schools*. January, 1999.

## Other resources

**The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA):** a non-partisan, non-profit, province-wide umbrella organization representing 85 multicultural and immigrant-serving organizations, and related organizations. Publishes a directory of multicultural and immigrant-serving organizations. Call: (604)718-2777, Fax: (604) 298-0747, Email: [amssa@amssa.org](mailto:amssa@amssa.org), Website: <http://www.amssa.org>

**BC Human Rights Commission:** investigates and mediates complaints of discrimination and promotes compliance with the Human Rights Code.

In Victoria: (250) 387-3710, Fax: (250) 387-3643

In Vancouver: (604) 660-6811, Fax: (604) 660-0195

Elsewhere in BC, toll free: 1-800-663-0876

Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD):

In Vancouver: (604) 660-2252, In Victoria: (250) 953-4911

**BC Ministry of Children and Family Development:** every region in the province has an office open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The office in your area is listed in the blue pages of the phone book. The ministry offers a variety of services to children and families in need, or in crisis. To report suspected physical or sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation, press 0 on your phone and ask the operator for BC Children's Help Line or call 1-800-663-9122 or TTY 1-800-667-4770. Ministry website: <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca>

**BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services:** responds to inquiries concerning issues and resources in multiculturalism and anti-racism; publishes a *Newcomer's Guide to British Columbia* in six languages, a directory of Ethno-Cultural, Multicultural and Immigrant Services Organizations in BC, and *Schools Responding to Racism: Guide for Parents*. Phone: (604) 660-2203, Fax: (604) 660-1150

**BC Parents in Crisis Society:** offers *Parent Support Circles* in different languages in communities around the province. The circles provide a safe environment where participants can share their frustrations and focus on improving communication, problem-solving and parenting skills. Phone: (604) 669-1616, Fax: (604) 669-1636, Toll free: 1-800-665-6880

**BC Safe Schools and Communities Centre:** a central source of information, resources, training, referrals, and examples of successful practices addressing safe school and community issues, including bullying and violence prevention. The Centre serves youth, parents, educators, police, youth-serving organizations, and community members throughout BC. The Centre is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. Call toll free with BC: 1-888-224-SAFE (7233). Website: [www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca](http://www.safeschools.gov.bc.ca)

**Boys and Girls Club:** offers *Parents Together* a self-help support program for parents experiencing parent/teen conflict; sponsored by the Boys and Girls Club in your community.

**Enquiry BC:** Call for assistance in directing your phone enquiry to the correct ministry or government organization.

In Victoria: (250) 387-6121

In Vancouver: (604) 660-2421

Elsewhere in BC, toll free: 1-800-663-7867

Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD):

In Vancouver: (604) 775-0303; Elsewhere, toll free: 1-800-661-8773

Enquiry Centre Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday

## Call it Safe

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**Families as Support Teams Society (FAST):** provides multi-generational self-help support groups; deals with violence, abuse, stress, and loneliness by targeting children, youth, spouses and seniors to come together as a multicultural multifamily; strengthens family relationships and the community by focusing on prevention and early intervention strategies. Serves all of BC. Phone: (604) 299-0005, Fax: (604) 299-5921

**Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks:** provides information about local youth in care network groups in your area. Call collect: (604) 689-3204

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP):** for more information, please contact your school district office and ask for the FOIPOP contact in your district, or call:

Ministry of Education Information and Privacy Office

PO Box 9144 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria, BC

V8W 9H1

Phone: (250) 356-7508, Fax: (250) 387-6315, or

Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner

PO Box 9038, Stn. Prov. Govt.

Victoria, BC

V8W 9A4

In Victoria: (250) 387-5629, Fax: (250) 387-1696

In Vancouver: (604) 660-2421

Elsewhere, toll free: 1-800-663-7867

**Immigrant Services Society of BC:** provides information and a service centre for immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking BC residents, helping with their settlement and integration into the community.

Phone: (604) 684-2561, Fax: (604) 684-2266

**Learning Disabilities Association of BC:** has information about an LDABC chapter in your area. Your local chapter can provide you with information about other resources for students with special learning needs.

# 204, 3402 27th Avenue

Vernon, BC

V1T 1F1

Phone/Fax: (250) 542-5033, Email: [lda-vernonbc@home.com](mailto:lda-vernonbc@home.com)

**Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG):** support group for parents with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered children. Provides education, community resources on homosexuality and advocacy for equal rights.

In Vancouver: (604) 421-8084 or (604) 468-1749

In Victoria: (604) 642-5171, Email: [PFLAG@gayvictoria.com](mailto:PFLAG@gayvictoria.com)

**People's Law School™:** an independent, non-profit, non-partisan society whose purpose is to provide British Columbians, especially those with special needs, with impartial services in English and other languages. Phone: (604) 331-5400, weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., after-hours you can leave a message, Fax: (604) 331-5401, Email: [staff@publiclegaled.bc.ca](mailto:staff@publiclegaled.bc.ca) website: <http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca/>

**Provincial Gay and Lesbian Contact Line:** provides information about services and resources in designated areas. Line access Monday to Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Other times message service available. "PRIDELINE BC" Toll free: 1-800-566-1170

**Youth Against Violence Line:** a safe, confidential way for youth to pass on information, prevent crime or ask for assistance. The number (within BC) is 1-800-680-4264. The Youth Against Violence Line is also available online through secure e-mail at <http://www.takingastand.com>.

## The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)

BCCPAC ensures a parent voice at the provincial level and helps PACs and DPACs act as advisors in their schools and districts.

British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils  
Suite 202, 1545 West 8th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC  
V6J 1T5  
Phone: (604) 687-4433  
Fax: (604) 687-4488  
Email: [bccpac@telus.net](mailto:bccpac@telus.net)  
Website: [www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca)

The BCCPAC Advocacy Project assists individual parents. Call the toll-free message line at 1-888-351-9834.

### Acknowledgments

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<http://www.gov.bc.ca/education>

