

What Schools Can Do to Deal with Restraining Orders - A Checklist for School Principals

This Checklist is designed to help school principals and staff deal with restraining orders issued to protect a student or the student's parent so as to keep them and their non-restrained parent safe on school grounds and in school buildings, rooms, and offices. The Checklist contains a number of practical guidelines that schools can follow to let the community and their students know the school cares about making sure that all children have a safe place to learn. The suggestions in this Checklist are based on laws enacted to protect survivors of domestic violence from further abuse. However, the issuance of a restraining order is not limited to situations of physical or sexual abuse. Such an order may be made in a variety of circumstances where persistent behaviour which can reasonably be characterized as molesting, annoying, or harassing has occurred.

- Send a form letter to all parents. Describe how the school is committed to helping traumatized children learn that domestic violence or other behaviour which can reasonably be characterized as molesting, annoying, or harassing can traumatize or otherwise harm children.
- Say that where there is a restraining order protecting the child or parent, the school invites the protected parent or parent of the protected child to bring a copy of the order and a photo of the parent subject to the order to the school principal and to meet with the principal.
- Say what "personal information" can be released without a parent's consent unless the parent notifies the school not to release the information without his or her consent.
- Collaborate with parents who have restraining orders and help them meet the safety needs of themselves and their children.
- Meet with a parent who has a restraining order and review each of the terms of the order with the parent so that the meaning of each term is mutually understood.
- Place a copy of the order in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR).
- Provide copies of the order to key school personnel who may have contact with the parent who is under the restraining order.

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- Note the expiration date of the order.
 - Have a conversation with the parent about whether he or she has any particular safety-related requirements for methods of communication between school personnel and him or her.
 - Have a conversation with the parent about his or her plans concerning extending the order when it is set to expire.
 - Have a conversation with the parent about how, within the terms of the order, the school can best support the order being complied with.
 - Discuss with the parent whether and how school personnel should communicate with him or her about violations of the order.
 - Discuss and implement a secure means for communicating the information developed in these conversations to key school personnel.
 - Make school personnel who have regular or frequent contact with the parent or child available to the parent, at the parent's request, to discuss the terms of the restraining order and the parent's and child's safety needs.
 - Develop and implement a school procedure whereby key school personnel inform the principal:
 - ▶ if a student or the student's parent is subject to a restraining order;
 - ▶ if they are contacted by the restrained parent; and
 - ▶ if they observe the restrained parent in or near the school.
 - Develop and implement a procedure whereby, at the parent's request, a dated note is placed in the student's record indicating that the parent wishes to be informed if the parent contacts the school or comes into or near the school.
 - Review the school "personal information" pertaining to the child with the parent. Offer the opportunity to request that the information not be released without his or her prior consent, and honor requests not to release "directory information" that pertains to the child.
 - Honor a parent's request not to release personal information pertaining to the child.