

## Guide to Important Considerations:

### ► Trauma

The Guiding principles of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* are responsibility, equity, restorative and relationship building, and clarity and consistency. Section 1 of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* is based on the guiding principles of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* in five key areas<sup>1</sup>:

- Trauma
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice
- Age and Stage of Development
- Impact of Suspension on Well-being and Achievement
- Mental Health and Addictions/Well-being

Understanding the potential impact of contributing factors when a student exhibits unacceptable behaviour(s) helps determine appropriate responses and the development of individualized interventions and supports.

There is a wealth of knowledge, resources and expertise within our system to build a shared understanding of the importance of these considerations. These abbreviated guide sheets are intended to build upon the **Important Considerations** outlined in the **Guide to Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours**. The considerations help us broaden our understanding and enhance our learning as we apply the Code of Conduct. In addition to the abbreviated guide sheets, administrators may also refer to the *Three Braids* professional learning resources, which are part of a multifaceted approach to increase understanding, skills, and competencies related to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. These resources focus on the dynamics of racism and discrimination, intersectionality, human rights legislation and its implications, and how to recognize and respond to acts of racism and discrimination in a culturally responsive way.

The Teaching Support Team (TST) can strengthen the school's capacity to support student well-being and achievement by assisting teachers in developing strategies to meet the needs of their students. The Student Planning Team (SPT) can support the identified well-being and achievement of individual students. The TST/SPT can review the important consideration when supporting students.

#### When Considering Unacceptable Behaviour:

- Interpret behaviours in light of any of the multiple intersecting considerations for all students and families, including their age and stage, trauma, mental health/addictions, disabilities or their diverse cultural or linguistic identities.
- Use student documentation to identify support needs and adjust expectations.

<sup>1</sup> *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviour* (pages 1–2).

# Trauma<sup>2</sup>

Recognize that trauma can influence behaviour, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Behaviours that may seem defiant or disruptive could stem from a **fight, flight, or freeze** response cued by past trauma. In these cases, an assumption of intent could be misguided.

Inter-generational/historical trauma may have occurred. Some students and their families have experienced harmful interactions with public education. Not all cultures and worldviews have historically been represented and welcomed in public education.

Trauma-informed practice is a **universal precaution** as staff will likely encounter students affected by trauma. Prioritize student safety, choice, and control without needing detailed trauma histories.

Trauma-informed services for children, youth and their families/guardians are provided in ways that recognize the universal need for children’s or young people’s physical and emotional safety and build self-efficacy and basic self-regulation skills. Trauma-informed practices create relational and culturally safe ways of determining the need for trauma-specific interventions, and involve parents/guardians in respectful, non-traumatizing ways.

The experiences and effects of trauma among children and youth are **gendered**. Boys are more likely to experience physical assault, physical bullying, and physical threats, and are slightly more likely to witness physical violence while girls are more likely to experience sexual victimization, psychological abuse, internet harassment, and emotional bullying.

**Children 0–6 years:** may recreate trauma in play or have nightmares

**Children 1½–6 years:** may act out aggressively

**Children 7–12 years:** may report reliving trauma and have difficulty expressing sadness or anger

**Youth 13–18 years:** likely to react by expressing feelings of fear, guilt, and isolation

**Youth experiencing homelessness:** often experience trauma before leaving home; may be re-traumatized on the streets

**Trauma-informed programming and services** for children and youth are provided in ways that create a safe and trustworthy environment to build on and support the youth establishing a sense of self, create opportunities for the youth to achieve power and control, and create relational and culturally safe ways of determining the need for trauma-specific interventions.

How to Help	<p>Align expectations with emotional regulation abilities.</p> <p>Seek root causes of dysregulation.</p> <p>Promote ongoing staff learning in trauma-informed approaches.</p> <p>Review the <i>Important Considerations: Mental Health/Addiction and Well-being</i> as these challenges can increase the exponential risk for students.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Adapted excerpts from IWK, NSH document 2015, pg. 11–15 “Trauma-Informed Practice in Different Settings and with Various Populations”