

External Review of the Halifax Regional School Board's Support of Rehtaeh Parsons

Terms of Reference

Purpose: An independent, external review of Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB), and associated agencies' support of the Parsons case. Out-of-province independent experts will be engaged to conduct the review as a review panel.

The review will focus on the circumstances in the Parsons case and pathways and barriers to coordinated care for students needing mental health and substance abuse treatment, with consideration for interaction with the justice system.

The purpose of the review is to determine whether policies and procedures related to bullying, cyberbullying and sexual violence were followed in the Parsons matter, to examine policies, procedures, and support mechanisms, and to make recommendations to ensure the safety and well-being of all students, as well as to identify issues that may have a negative impact on students and their mental health.

Scope: The scope of the external review is as follows:

1. Were all HRSB policies, procedures, training and guidelines respecting bullying, cyberbullying and sexual violence followed in the Parsons case?
2. Are the existing HRSB policies, procedures, training and guidelines respecting bullying, cyberbullying and sexual violence adequate?
3. What support services are in place for students who self-identify, or are reported to be, facing issues of bullying, cyberbullying and/or sexual violence from or within:
 - a. The Halifax Regional School Board?
 - b. The IWK Health Centre?
 - c. The Capital District Health Authority?
 - d. The police?
4. To what extent are the support services identified in response to Question 3 coordinated, and when are they best serving students as independent and/or integrated care providers?
5. What is the level of understanding of staff within the HRSB about the support services identified in response to Question 3?
6. What are the required reporting procedures within the HRSB related to bullying, cyberbullying and sexual violence? This includes HRSB and school procedures for investigating both formal

complaints and informally-raised concerns related to student well-being, as well as internal communication protocols related to sharing information about students who may be experiencing problems related to mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

7. Are policies and procedures in place to track and continue to provide support to students who transfer between schools, or families of schools, both within HRSB and within the province? If so, what changes should be made to increase their effectiveness and staff's awareness of their existence?

8. What interaction exists between staff within Health Authorities and/or the IWK Health Centre, and school boards where a student receives care or undergoes a hospitalization to ensure appropriate supports are in place when the student transitions back to or re-enters the class or school system?

9. What methods are in place to provide student-specific information and updates to primary teaching and support staff, while respecting individual privacy concerns and privacy laws?

10. What is the expected level of knowledge on the part of school staff of indicators of crisis used to help identify students who may be experiencing issues related to severely disruptive behavior, particularly in cases where it is affecting the students' wellbeing and/or mental health.

Process: The review panel will report to the Honourable Marilyn More, Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as part of her work to co-ordinate Nova Scotia's response to the tragic events that led to the death of Rehtaeh Parsons. The review panel will provide regular updates to Minister More with respect to the status of the external review.

It is intended that as issues are identified to the Minister, steps may be taken immediately to implement solutions to reach the intended outcomes.

The panel will work closely with staff from HRSB, the Departments of Justice, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health & Wellness, and any other relevant department or agency, to gather any information necessary for the review process.

The review will not impact any ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding.

Timeline: Interim report by May 10, 2013; final report by June 14, 2013.

Product: The review panel will submit a concise final report, including specific recommendations, to Minister More no later than June 14, 2013. The report will answer the questions set out above, and provide recommendations to address gaps and/or deficiencies with the current policies, procedures, programming and protocols within the Halifax Regional School Board, and regarding its co-operation and interaction with the above-named departments and agencies.