

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board

Anti-Sex Trafficking School Board Protocol



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Believing, Achieving, Serving

June 15, 2022

PURPOSE

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol (HWCD SB Protocol), reflects the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (HWCD SB) Mission and Vision, as well as the Board's commitment to providing Christ centred, safe, healthy, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments where students feel connected, valued, empowered and engaged. The HWCD SB Protocol includes the HWCD SB principles and practices of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in its development and response to The Policy/Program Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols (PPM166) which sets a strong foundation for Ontario school boards to build local anti-sex trafficking protocols.

The HWCD SB will collaborate with community partners, HWCD SB staff, parents/guardians, and HWCD SB students to leverage their respective expertise and interest in assisting the HWCD SB to prevent, identify, and recognize sex trafficking, as well as to develop responses to facilitate early and appropriate intervention and support.

Catholic faith-based school environments, HWCD SB policies, programs, services all serve to foster welcoming and engaging school environments that lead to positive student experiences. The HWCD SB invites families and community as partners involved in students' learning. The HWCD SB strives to establish spiritually, emotionally, physically, and psychologically safe school environments, essential to successfully nurturing positive student experiences.

With the integration of the Gospel teachings of Jesus Christ in all facets of school life, and in their interactions and contact with students, HWCD SB teachers and other HWCD SB school and board staff are well positioned to support student safety and well-being. Staff teach and promote healthy relationships, educate on prevention of various forms of harm, notice troubling changes in behaviour, and connect with students as caring adults. By training staff to recognize the signs of sex trafficking, they will be better equipped to identify the cues, and to safely intervene in suspected incidents of a student being trafficked or involved in trafficking. The HWCD SB, in collaboration with community expertise, can also serve as a key member in helping survivors of trafficking heal and rebuild their lives, in helping to prevent re-victimization, and in supporting students on a healing trajectory towards positive outcomes.

The HWCDSB has enlisted input from HWCDSB staff, parents/guardians, the Diocese of Hamilton, as well as various Hamilton community experts, in the development of the *HWCDSB Protocol*, and will continue to seek input in the prevention and early intervention strategies, and in the coordinated follow-up actions to help protect vulnerable youth from predatory exposure and victimization of human trafficking.

The *HWCDSB Protocol* and the accompanying *HWCDSB Anti-sex Trafficking Procedures (HWCDSB Procedures)* as well as resource materials will serve to build capacity and knowledge in the increased awareness of human trafficking, and in the identification of human trafficking in schools. School personnel, particularly those staff who are in daily and/or frequent contact with students, will be trained in recognizing the signs of human trafficking, and have knowledge in the support pathways available for students who may be involved in human trafficking.

The *HWCDSB Protocol* reflects a co-ordination with stakeholders in a united purpose against sex trafficking and responding to the effects on the victim and survivor.

DEFINITION OF SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking is a form of sexual exploitation and is a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada. It can include recruiting, harbouring, transporting, obtaining or providing a person for the purpose of sex. It involves the use of force, physical or psychological coercion or deception. Human trafficking, which includes sex-trafficking, is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide.

In Canada:

- **95%** of victims of police-reported human trafficking were women and girls.
- **22%** of police-reported victims of human trafficking are children under the age of 18.5.
- **The majority** of all police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada occur in Ontario.
- Most victims / survivors of human trafficking in Canada are **trafficked by someone they know**.

In Ontario, the vast majority of police-reported cases of human trafficking involve sexual exploitation (sex trafficking). Most individuals who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation are women and girls, but all people may be targeted. Anyone can be at risk of being trafficked; however, there are specific risk factors that make some groups more vulnerable. Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of persons trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Canada. Traffickers identify a person's vulnerabilities and then target those vulnerabilities to gain trust to form a connection and attachment.

When working with children and youth, the terms "sexual exploitation" and "human trafficking" for sexual exploitation are often used interchangeably; however, it should be noted that they are two separate Criminal Code offences. When a minor is involved in the sex trade, they are not a prostitute or sex trade worker, but a sexually exploited child or youth. [...] Therefore, the term

“sexual exploitation” can be used to describe all instances in which youth exchange sexual acts for money, drugs, shelter, food, clothing or anything of monetary value. The term, “sexual exploitation” can be used regardless of whether there is a trafficker or if there are other circumstances which prompt a youth to engage in the sex trade. (from *Guide for Supporting Trafficked Persons - Hamilton's Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition – HHTC*)

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

1. HWCDSB Board and School Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The HWCDSB and all schools within the HWCDSB have an integral role in combatting sexual exploitation of children and youth. Teachers and other staff, will be equipped through regular training, with the awareness and knowledge, appropriate tools, and necessary skills to recognize signs of sex-trafficking and to be able to respond in order to protect children and youth. In their daily interactions with students, teachers are strategically available to educate on prevention and to promote healthy relationships, notice troubling changes in behaviour, and connect with students as caring adults.

With the support of specialized staff within the HWCDSB, including but not limited to the HWCDSB school social workers, HWCDSB child and youth workers, the HWCDSB Indigenous Education Lead, and the HWCDSB System Equity Officer, school personnel are positioned to facilitate early intervention. With training regarding supportive pathways, school staff will be able to link students and survivors with culturally responsive resources and supports. At the same time, education can also serve as a key connection in helping survivors of trafficking heal and rebuild their lives.

All students in the HWCDSB have a right to learn, participate, belong in a Catholic school community that is Christ centred and fosters spiritual well-being as well as mental wellness, and physical, social, emotional, and psychological safety. All student in the HWCDSB have a right to be secure from sexual exploitation at school and in the broader school community. Caring adults within schools can promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking, and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting impacted persons to supportive services.

2. Roles for HWCDSB Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

HWCDSB Catholic School Councils, the HWCDSB Catholic Parents Involvement Committee, the HWCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee, and various HWCDSB Board Committees such as the Anti-Racism Permanent Committee, and the Bullying Prevention, Intervention, and Follow-up Steering Committee, along with parents/guardians and caregivers are key partners in the development, implementation, and review of the *HWCDSB Protocol*. Care will be taken with parents/guardians, families, and caregivers prior to engaging with them regarding anti-sex trafficking matters, to ensure sufficient supports are available, whether seeking input or in sharing a disclosure. Outreach to Indigenous parents and guardians, as well as outreach to Black and racialized parents/guardians, will be trauma-informed, and recognize historic and systemic barriers that may impact their participation. Every effort will be made to reduce cultural and/or

linguistic barriers when reaching out to HWCDSB parents/guardians and caregivers about this work.

3. HWCDSB Student Input

HWCDSB students are at the centre of this work and will be involved in efforts to create awareness and develop actions against sex trafficking. The HWCDSB Catholic Student Councils, HWCDSB Catholic Students Presidents Council, various school-based student groups and other students will be invited to participate, review, and inform the HWCDSB anti-sex trafficking protocol. The HWCDSB recognizes that students with lived experience, if willing and appropriately supported through trauma-informed approaches, could share their story and insights as part of efforts to build awareness and empower students. Prior to any awareness raising and prevention strategies, including initiatives that may include persons with lived experience, consultation will occur with the appropriate HWCDSB staff, including but not limited to the following: the HWCDSB adult faith animator; Indigenous education lead; manager: social work services; mental health lead; HWCDSB system equity officer; the superintendents of education responsible for the following areas: religious education and family life, safe schools, and special education, to ensure that a trauma-informed and identity focused approach is utilized. Further, parent/guardian consent will be obtained.

All students in the HWCDSB have a right to learn, participate, belong in a Catholic school community that is Christ centred and fosters spiritual well-being as well as mental wellness, and physical, social, emotional, and psychological safety. All students in the HWCDSB have a right to be secure from sexual exploitation at school and in the broader school community. Students within schools can promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help to reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking, and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting to a caring adult in the school.

4. Build Multi-Sectoral Relationships with Community Organizations

The HWCDSB recognizes the important contribution of community organizations and agencies that have expert knowledge in anti-sex trafficking and interest in child and youth safety, including parishes within the Diocese of Hamilton, and faith-based organizations. The HWCDSB will work in collaboration with community organizations and agencies for education, training, interventions, and supports for students and staff to work towards eradicating sex-trafficking in the HWCDSB and in the Hamilton community. These efforts will be responsive to diverse students and the needs of the local school communities. Appendix A includes a list of community agencies who have provided input and will be invited to continue to support the HWCDSB in the implementation work. The list is not exhaustive and the HWCDSB will work with additional organizations not currently identified in Appendix A.

5. Safe Interventions

HWCDSB caring adults promote a sense of student belonging, increase protective factors, help to reduce risk factors associated with sex trafficking, and support early intervention through identification and appropriate response, including connecting impacted persons to supportive services, both within the school and in the community.

School board employees will receive regular anti-sex trafficking training, relevant to their role and appropriate to the level of expected response. HWCDSB employees, to the extent of their role, will be trained to identify the signs of sex trafficking and to safely respond to disclosures. The responses will be culturally relevant and responsive to diverse student populations, and support the immediate physical and emotional safety needs of students. Training will emphasize how to respond to immediate dangers and the need to avoid actions that will make an individual's situation worse or more unsafe. Training will be provided via a variety of modes, and staff will be provided with resources, an awareness of community supports, and an awareness of the pathways to the appropriate HWCDSB staff and community agencies to ensure that the interventions are safe. The training for HWCDSB employees, new and existing, will be tracked and available throughout the year.

6. Respect for Confidentiality, Privacy, and Informed Consent

The HWCDSB will ensure that the privacy of all students identified or impacted by sex-trafficking will be protected and respected under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*; the *Ontario Human Rights Code*; the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*; the *Education Act*; and the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*. In addition, full and informed consent from victims and survivors will be sought, whenever possible, prior to action taken.

All staff will learn about the requirement to respect confidentiality. All staff will learn that in situations of disclosure, they and the student fully understand how the student's information will be used and with whom it may be shared.

Parents/Guardians and relevant agencies e.g., child protective services, Hamilton Police Services, etc., will be informed about a disclosure, unless the student is 18 years or older; 16 or 17 years old and has withdrawn from parental control; it is determined that in doing so would put the student at risk of harm from a parent/guardian of the student, such that the notification is not in the student's best interest.

7. Build School-based Prevention

The *HWCDSB Protocol* complements existing prevention efforts in HWCDSB schools, through knowledgeable and caring staff, curricula, and professional development including the teaching of consent; healthy relationships, and healthy sexuality. Catholic faith teachings, e.g., the dignity of the human person, rights and responsibilities; etc., are integrated in all areas of a student's school experience: academics, co-curricular, experiential learnings, etc., and support the prevention and intervention of child exploitation. HWCDSB Catholic school teachers will continue to utilize curriculum-based learning as well as programs and materials currently in place to address anti-sex trafficking, and also to promote personal safety, positive mental health and well-being, and resiliency. Through training, a focus will include the awareness and understanding of the historical and social context of sex trafficking and that intentionally implemented prevention strategies, that are responsive to the needs of students, play a significant role in the prevention of sex trafficking.

8. Promote Equitable and Culturally Safe Responses

The *HWCDSB Protocol* reflects the HWCDSB mission to enable all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model. It is predicated on Catholic faith teachings, a human rights-based, non-judgemental, culturally responsive, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed approach to raise awareness in the areas of preventing, identifying, and responding to sex trafficking.

9. Catholic Faith Teachings

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The *HWCDSB Protocol* reflects Catholic faith teachings and answers the Church’s call to combat human trafficking: “The Catholic Church intends to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human beings” (Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking, 2018). The *HWCDSB Protocol* promotes the Catholic Social Teachings of “Life and Dignity of the Human Person”; “Call to Family, Community, and Participation”; “Rights and Responsibilities”; and “Preferential Option for the Poor and Marginalized”.

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENT: HWCDSB ANTI-SEX TRAFFICKING PROCEDURES (HWCDSB PROCEDURES)

The HWCDSB will develop an accompanying *HWCDSB Anti-sex Trafficking Procedures* document to support the implementation of the actions found in the *HWCDSB Protocol*. The *HWCDSB Procedures* document will include the following components:

1. Strategies to Raise Awareness in Preventing, Identifying, and Responding to Sex Trafficking

The *HWCDSB Anti-Sex Trafficking Procedures (HWCDSB Procedures)* document will include culturally safe strategies to raise awareness about sex trafficking with students, school board employees, parents/guardians, and the broader school community. The *HWCDSB Procedures* will be created by HWCDSB staff, with input from parents/guardians, students, and with knowledgeable community organizations with relevant expertise.

The *HWCDSB Procedures* document will include staff training information: training will be provided both in-person and online, in a variety of modes, to accommodate participation, accessibility, and renewal/review opportunities [e.g., live sessions (in-person or online), recorded sessions retained on the HWCDSB LMS and/or Teams sites, webinars, self-directed modules, etc.]. The *HWCDSB Procedures* will include information pertaining to the response required for school and board activities (e.g., field trips, overnight excursions, board-sponsored sporting events and board-operated before- and after-school programs).

The *HWCDSB Procedures* will include sections specific to the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents/guardians, and students.

Through consultation with the Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, as well as with other appropriate agencies, e.g., newcomer support, the *HWCDSB Procedures* will address the barriers to participation that Indigenous, Black, newcomer and other parents/guardians may face.

Within the *HWCDSB Procedures* diverse methods will be used to create awareness: e.g., letters/emails, HWCDSB School Messenger, student handbook, posters, parent/guardian information sessions, Catholic School Council meetings, school/school board social media accounts, HWCDSB website. Information will include support and resources such as the phone number for the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline to raise awareness about the supports and referrals it offers.

Included in the *HWCDSB Procedures* will be:

A process to raise awareness among parents/guardians about:

- cyber-safety;
- signs where a student is being targeted, lured, groomed, trafficked or is trafficking another student;
- pathways to accessing help via various sources including but not limited to HWCDSB school and school board personnel, community providers, support hotlines, etc.; and,
- reporting concerns to HWCDSB school and/or school board personnel, as well as to appropriate community organizations. A process for anonymous reporting, and a process for HWCDSB responding to concerns.

A process to raise awareness among students about:

- their ability to access support and safely report their own experience and/or situation of being trafficked;
- signs a student is being targeted, lured, groomed, trafficked or is trafficking another student;
- how to bring concerns about luring, grooming, recruitment or exiting sex trafficking to the school without fear of reprisal, through various modes, including anonymous reporting.

The prevention of recruitment of students for sex trafficking through HWCDSB curriculum-based learning: Catholic faith precepts such as the dignity of the human person and other Gospel teachings, healthy relationships, consent, mental health and well-being, coping skills, personal safety and online safety; and, through collaboration with the expertise of local community-based organizations and survivors.

The applicability of the HWCDSB Internet and Technology Policy to deter potential situations involving students who could be at risk of sex trafficking and other online threats, while using school board-provided technology.

The *HWCDSB Procedures* will also include guidance for responding from a Catholic, faith-based and trauma-informed/culturally responsive lens to address the needs of:

- students who are being trafficked, particularly those students with special education needs; mental health needs; social or emotional needs; or those with language/cultural barriers; international students; students who are in care, receiving care or in customary care arrangements;
- students who may be involved in the recruiting of other victims;
- students who are returning to school after they have been involved in a trafficking situation;
- students 18 years or older or who are 16 or 17 years old and have withdrawn from parental control;
- parents/guardians, particularly those who may live overseas and/or may not speak English or French.

The *HWCDSB Procedures* will include guidance on:

- responding to disclosures and supporting the student's immediate physical and emotional safety;
- the requirements related to the duty to report a child in need of protection under Section 125(1) of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and under Policy/Program Memorandum 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection;
- the requirement around legislated privacy and confidentiality when responding to a suspected or confirmed instance of sex trafficking;
- the process of notifying appropriate school/school board contacts and parents/guardians, as applicable;
- the process for school administrators to communicate and collaborate with community-based service providers, local police services, local Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous child and family well-being agencies, as applicable and/or required by law, in responding to situations of suspected or confirmed sex trafficking of students;
- the pathways to referring all affected students to supports, including those indirectly affected, as needed;
- the appropriate interventions, supports and/or consequences, consistent with legislation, as well as with the HWCDSB Safe School Policy, including progressive discipline and consideration for mitigating circumstances when determining interventions, consequences, and supports for students involved with trafficking other students.
- monitoring and following-up on incidents reported;
- documenting suspected or reported sex trafficking situations and response procedures that were implemented; and,
- information on culturally responsive and trauma-informed supports available to school board employees responding to sex trafficking situations.

The *HWCDSB Procedures* will outline the legal obligations of the HWCDSB in their Duty to Report. Where there are concerns a student may be in need of protection, inclusive of situations where a child is at risk of, is being or has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, school board employees must meet their obligations under:

- The Education Act
- The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017
- The Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996
- Policy/Program Memorandum 9: Duty to Report Children in Need of Protection

Further, on June 1st 2021, the government passed new legislation (Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021) that amended the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* to more explicitly add child sex trafficking to the circumstances when a person has a duty to report a child who may be in need of protection to a child protection agency such as Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton.

There will be a designated contact person within the HWCDSB who is familiar with the school board anti-sex trafficking protocol and can support school board employees with response procedures.

The *HWCDSB Protocol* and the *HWCDSB Procedures* will be posted on the HWCDSB public website and will be available in hard copy upon request. Further, upon request and to the extent possible, the materials will be translated in other languages, and will be compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The HWCDSB will develop accompanying anti-sex trafficking resources specific to staff, parents/guardians, and students.

The resources will include important information for the prevention, identification, and responding to sex trafficking of students.

The resources will contain the following information:

- indicators of students at greater risk for sex-trafficking;
- the particular vulnerabilities experienced by Indigenous and Black students, due to systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, and discrimination;
- the particular vulnerabilities experienced by children and youth in care, newcomer students, students with disabilities, students experiencing socio-economical challenges, students who experience bullying, and students who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+
- general indicators of a sex trafficked person, e.g., physical, behavioural, attitudinal, etc.

2. Training for HWCDSB School Board Employees

All HWCDSB school board employees, including teachers, administrators, and other school staff, will be provided with anti-sex trafficking training. Training will take a tiered and purposeful approach, consistent with roles and responsibilities. For example: awareness level training being offered to all school board employees; more in-depth training being provided to school administrators, system leaders, and specific school staff such as guidance counsellors, student success teachers; and student support services staff including but not limited to social workers, psychometrists, child and youth workers, etc. Classroom teachers to receive specific training such

as recognizing signs of sex-trafficking, integration of prevention strategies within curricula, and knowledge of reporting procedures.

Within the *HWCDSB Procedures* and resources materials, the following elements for HWCDSB staff training will be included:

- raising awareness on preventing, identifying, and responding to sex trafficking;
- key definitions, common misconceptions, and myths about sex trafficking;
- tactics used for online luring, grooming, and recruitment;
- supports available to students and affected staff, including culturally responsive supports;
- help for staff to understand and safely respond to sex trafficking;
- roles and responsibilities of school board employees;
- tracking and documenting annual training sessions;
- availability of training opportunities throughout the year for new and existing HWCDSB employees;
- identification of the various agencies and community partners who have expertise in anti-sex trafficking training, support services, etc.;
- commitment to updating the training, to stay current with emerging issues relating to trafficking and changes in community services and response.

3. Accountability and Evaluation

Within the *HWCDSB Procedures* and resources materials, the following elements will be included:

- The *HWCDSB Protocol* will be reviewed, at minimum, every five years.
- The HWCDSB will report to the Ministry of Education, upon request, the Board's activities with respect to the *HWCDSB Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol*.
- The HWCDSB will collaborate with their community partners, e.g., the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, the Hamilton Police Services, Sexual Assault Centre, Hamilton and Area (SACHA), in reviewing performance indicators and measuring outcomes in preventing children and youth from sex-trafficking, exiting from sex trafficking, etc., within the Hamilton community.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board acknowledges the contributions of the following in the development of the draft *HWCDSB Protocol*:

Dufferin Human Trafficking Service Providers Committee

Durham District School Board

Halton Catholic District School Board- permission to use
HWCDSB Special Education Advisory Committee

York Catholic District School Board

Hamilton Community Agencies participating in the development of Hamilton school boards anti-sex trafficking protocol

Further Consultation will be sought with:
HWCDSB Anti-Racism Permanent Committee
Black community organizations
Indigenous community organizations

Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol Development

Collaborations included meetings with the following Hamilton Community Agencies and Organizations:

1. Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton
2. Children's Aid Society of Hamilton
3. Centre De Sante Communautaire: Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Team
4. Good Shepherd Women's Services
5. Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition
6. Hamilton Police Services: Crime Prevention Branch; Human Trafficking Unit
7. Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
8. Interval House
9. John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area
10. Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services: Youth Justice Services
11. Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton and Area (SACHA)
12. YMCA Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford: Anti-Human Trafficking Initiatives

School Boards:

1. Conseil Scolaire Viamonde
2. Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique
3. Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
4. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board