

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE – AP324-3

Safe Physical Interventions for Student Behaviours Causing a Risk of Injury

Area: Student Services
Policy Reference: Workplace Violence (PO324)

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1. Purpose

Effective prevention strategies, safety interventions, and regular program reviews help minimize or eliminate injury risks for staff and students. This administrative procedure provides a consistent response to injurious, including self-injurious, student behaviour. It recognizes that when safety is an issue there may be situations where physical intervention may be necessary as a last resort to support the safety for all.

2. Definitions

Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) (*Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis (ONTABA)*) – A systematic method of assessment for obtaining information about the purposes (functions) a problem behavior serves for a person; results are used to guide the design of an intervention for decreasing the problem behavior and increasing appropriate behavior.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) (*Ontario Human Rights Commission*) – a working document that includes the specific educational expectations for the student, an outline of the special education programs and services to be provided for the student, and a statement of the methods by which the student’s progress will be reviewed.

Student Safety Plan (*Government of Ontario: Workplace Violence in School Boards – A Guide to the Law*) – a plan developed for a student whose behaviour is known to pose an ongoing risk to themselves, other students, workers or other people in general. It can serve as a crisis-response plan that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the workers in dealing with specific risk of injury behaviours.

3. Procedures

3.1 General Procedures for Ensuring a Positive School Climate

3.1.1 In accordance with the Education Act and its Regulations, the final decision with respect to safe physical intervention (in compliance with s.43 of the Criminal Code of Canada) rests with the principal/designate. It is expected that all staff members resolve situations involving unsafe behaviour by using the least intrusive strategies, and these measures may include, but are not limited to:

- a) establishing consistent, positive school and classroom rules and routines;
- b) reinforcing behaviour that is consistent with school and classroom rules and routines;
- c) identifying antecedents of aggressive behaviour in order to prevent the behaviour from occurring; and
- d) teaching appropriate replacement behaviours that are socially acceptable alternatives to aggression and verbal escalation.

3.1.2 For some students with special education needs, these strategies will be part of the student's IEP. The IEP describes the objectives and strategies to be used to help the student increase positive and appropriate behaviours, and decrease behaviours that interfere with learning, self-control, and social interaction.

3.2 General Procedures for Safe Physical Interventions

3.2.1 Safe physical intervention may be necessary for students as outlined in their Safety Plan, or in situations where student behaviour presents a safety risk to themselves or others.

3.2.2 When, in spite of prevention and intervention strategies, a student isn't able to self-regulate and the behaviour continues to escalate, staff must continue to assess the situation. If the student may injure another person, harm themselves, attempt to leave a supervised area and put their safety at imminent risk, or cause significant property damage that could result in injury, staff must decide whether to physically intervene and seek assistance immediately.

3.2.3 Safe Physical Intervention will not be used:

- a) as a tool to manage uncooperative behaviour;
- b) as a form of punishment;
- c) as a means to inflict pain;
- d) as a means to prevent the destruction of property unless the destruction poses a serious, imminent and acute risk of physical injury to students and/or others;

- e) as a means to stop a student from trying to escape a situation, when the escape is not putting themselves or others at risk.

3.2.4 Staff should make all reasonable efforts to support a student with self-regulation when they are escalated. The goal is to diffuse, not to trigger or escalate behaviour. Discipline and consequences should be addressed when the student is de-escalated and re-engaged in learning.

3.2.5 In making a decision regarding physical intervention, the following factors must be considered:

- a) whether the student's behaviour presents an imminent safety risk to self or others;
- b) whether there are alternatives to improve safety (e.g., can staff move the other students to safety without physically intervening, is it safe for staff to move away from the student, rather than physically intervening);
- c) the student's previous history;
- d) the staff/student relationship;
- e) staff training and experience;
- f) the physical characteristics and/or abilities of the staff/student (e.g., age, size, health factors);
- g) the availability of support;
- h) the nature of the physical environment; and
- i) whether or not the use of physical intervention techniques will escalate the level of risk.

3.2.6 Physical intervention should only be used as a last resort and in the least restrictive manner, after all other strategies have been exhausted, and only when there is an imminent risk of serious injury to self or others. Physical intervention will be used to manage student behaviour only to the point where the student no longer creates/poses an imminent risk of serious injury to self or others. If the student returns to an escalated state posing a risk to self and others, the physical intervention should be employed again.

3.2.7 Escorting Students

- a) To escort a student means to accompany the student from one location to another without the use of force or without restricting a student's movements. The student may be reluctant to move, but is not forcibly moved against their will. This may include:

- i. Walking beside the student;
- ii. Holding the student's hand or with a hand on the student's arm or shoulder; or
- iii. Providing gentle guidance, but not force.

3.2.8 Physical interventions include a range of block, contain and release techniques, as outlined in Behaviour Management Systems (BMS). These interventions are used to reduce the risk of injury to the student and others, and/or to escort them to a safe space. Whenever possible, a first priority is to remove the target of a student who is striking, kicking, grabbing or biting to avoid injury. When a student is unable to de-escalate despite staff using preventative BMS strategies, use of BMS physical intervention strategies may be a necessary response to strikes, kicks, grabs or bites from a student (i.e., student initiated physical aggression). It is important that the methods used do not result in pain or injury to the student.

3.2.9 As a preventative measure, students who exhibit signs of escalation may be escorted to a safe space, as predetermined by their Safety Plan, where the educator continues to support and visually monitor them. Students should never be locked in a room, nor should staff hold the door shut when a student is on the other side of the door. If a student has not de-escalated, use appropriate safety blocking strategies, environmental barriers, and PPE to protect against strikes or aggression.

3.2.10 When a student cannot be willingly escorted to a safe location, the current area should be made as safe as possible (e.g., remove students, objects, possible projectiles etc.).

3.2.11 Calling 9-1-1 for emergency assistance by police and/or medical services is a measure of last resort and should be considered only when a student's unsafe behaviour and/or physical attributes pose an immediate and serious risk of injury to the student or others, and when Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) strategies are not sufficient to manage the risk safely.

3.3. Procedures for Safe Physical Interventions as Outlined in a Safety Plan

3.3.1 Physical intervention may be a necessary component of a Safety Plan for a student where known behaviours present a safety risk to the student or others. Physical Intervention is the last resort within a hierarchy of prevention and intervention strategies outlined in the Safety Plan. The Safety Plan must clearly state the purpose of physical intervention and the conditions of its use. The plan is developed by school staff in consultation with, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Student (if appropriate);
- b) Parents/Guardians;

- c) Student Services personnel; and
- d) Community Agency personnel (as appropriate).

3.3.2 A Safety Plan that includes physical intervention will outline the following details/procedures:

- a) Signs that the student's behaviour is escalating and will present an imminent safety risk;
- b) Who will act as lead and who will assist in containing the student;
- c) A contingency plan for staff absences;
- d) Intervention techniques to be used;
- e) Safety/protective equipment required;
- f) How the student's condition will be monitored;
- g) Monitoring the well-being of staff during and after the physical intervention to ensure they are safe and not injured; and
- h) How it will be determined when to discontinue the physical intervention during the de-escalation phase.

3.3.3 Whenever possible, only those staff members identified in the Safety Plan should participate in a physical intervention. If a physical intervention occurs, staff are to document the intervention in the Safe Schools Incident Reporting tool on MyDCDSB.

3.4 Unanticipated Emergency Physical Intervention

3.4.1 The decision to use physical intervention in an unanticipated emergency situation is a matter of professional judgment. In making the decision whether to use physical intervention, the following factors must be considered:

- a) Imminent risk of injury to self or others;
- b) Options available other than a physical intervention to maintain safety;
- c) Student's Safety Plan;
- d) Availability of external support (e.g., parents/guardians, police);
- e) Characteristics of the staff member and the student (size, age, strength, gender);

- f) Previous history of the student (special education needs, patterns of behaviour, health, etc.);
- g) Staff training, connection with the student and willingness to intervene; and
- h) Physical setting.

3.5 BMS – Staff Training and Responsibilities

- 3.5.1 BMS Training program is the only recognized program used for safe physical interventions in the DCDSB. BMS was developed by the Ontario Educational Services Corporation (OESC) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education as a response to the need expressed by educators throughout the province for a behavioural intervention program that was effective and tailored to the requirements and realities of school settings.
- 3.5.2 Staff who intervene with a student who poses a physical risk of injury to self or others are potentially vulnerable to personal injury themselves. To reduce the chance of injury to staff, the board trains staff on the use of BMS in both prevention and intervention strategies that are most likely to support a student who poses a risk of injury.
- 3.5.3 BMS Training will be offered to educators and administrators working directly and regularly with students who pose a significant risk of injury. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that staff who are most likely to work with students who pose a risk of injury receive BMS training or updated recertification.
- 3.5.4 In addition, the principal will make personal protection equipment (PPE) available for staff as necessary and appropriate. Principals considering the use of PPE to reduce risk of injury should contact their Student Services Coordinator or Supervisor of Educational Assistants.

3.6 Documentation of Safe Physical Interventions

- 3.6.1 All physical interventions must be reported verbally to the principal/designate on the day they occur.
- 3.6.2 In any situation in which a physical intervention is used, staff must indicate it on the Safe Schools Incident Reporting tool on MyDCDSB. In these situations, an automatic debrief of the situation is required with the principal/vice principal. This will also trigger a review of the Safety Plan and consultation with the student, parent and staff directly involved with the student.

3.7 Debrief and Follow-up

3.7.1 All physical interventions place stress on staff and students. Each individual responds to these incidents in a way that is unique. Review and debrief strategies will vary with the nature of the school, program and staff allocations. The intent of the debrief is to inform the school's response to situations where physical interventions occur and to review and revise prevention/intervention strategies, safety plan and/or IEP as appropriate.

3.7.2 Should a physical intervention be used, follow up must include:

- a) Assessment of any injuries and appropriate action;
- b) Designation of who will follow up and support the student;
- c) Communication with school administration;
- d) Communication with parents/guardians;
- e) A debrief process for staff involved and students who witnessed the incident (see debrief guidelines 3.7.1); and
- f) Forms to be completed (as applicable):
 - i. Safe Schools Incident Application
 - ii. Workplace Injury Form (Parklane)
 - iii. OSBIE Report of Accident (for student injury)

3.7.3 In addition to informing parents/guardians there are three (3) types of debriefs that should occur following a physical intervention.

- a) Student Debrief – There must be readiness on the part of the student to participate in the debrief. This debrief must be facilitated in order to accommodate the needs of the student. The parent or guardian of the student must be invited to attend during this process. The purpose of this debrief is to:
 - i. Gain an understanding of the incident from the student's perspective;
 - ii. Validate and empathize with the student's feelings;
 - iii. Discuss any unresolved emotional distress about the incident;
 - iv. Discuss alternative responses for similar situations that might occur in the future; and
 - v. Consider how to repair and restore any relationships harmed by the incident.

- b) Staff Debrief – The staff debrief must be led by the principal or designate and preferably occur on the same day as the incident, whenever possible. The purpose of the staff debrief is to:
 - i. Assess the staff’s ability to support the student in a positive manner;
 - ii. Gain an understanding of the incident from the staff member’s perspective;
 - iii. Validate the staff member’s feelings;
 - iv. Discuss any unresolved emotional distress about the incident;
 - v. Evaluate the effectiveness of the response; and
 - vi. Discuss alternative responses for similar situations that might occur in the future.

A summary of the debrief is to be recorded on the debrief form within the Safe Schools Incident Report (SSIR) by the principal or designate.

- c) Observers Debrief – Debrief of observers may include other students, staff, volunteers and/or members of the public who witness the intervention. Students who witness a physical intervention may not understand the situation and/or may require a debrief with a focused message regarding maintaining safety at school while protecting the dignity of students and staff. The principal should ensure that messaging is age-appropriate. The principal must not disclose any private student information during the debrief.

3.8 Use of Regulation Rooms

3.8.1 Considerable caution must be exercised in the use of regulation rooms as a method of managing inappropriate behaviour on an ongoing basis;

3.8.2 In a situation where extreme behaviour occurs and there is an imminent safety risk, it may be necessary to escort a student to a regulation room;

3.8.3 If a regulation room is used:

- a) The student must be under continuous supervision by an adult who is present to support and visually monitor them;
- b) The student must be monitored for signs of de-escalation until the imminent risk of safety has subsided;

- c) A Safe Classroom Audit (see Appendix A) must be performed to identify hazardous objects that could harm or injure the student; and
- d) It must not be locked, which includes holding the door shut.

A regulation room is a safe space that a student may utilize to de-escalate.

3.8.4 If a student cannot be escorted to a safe place or a regulation room under their own volition, then the student should be left where they are and the place made safe by removing the other students, objects, projectiles etc. It may be safer to leave the student where they are with one or two adults than try to escort the student to another room.

3.9 Confidentiality

3.9.1 Due to the sensitive nature of situations that involve physical intervention, it is imperative that the confidentiality of the situation is maintained. The privacy rights of the students, staff and parents/guardians involved must be respected. A breach of confidentiality by a staff member could be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Sources

- 4.1 Behaviour Management Systems Practitioner Workbook
- 4.2 [Child Youth and Family Services Act](#)
- 4.3 [Criminal Code of Canada](#)
- 4.4 [Education Act](#)
- 4.5 [Policy/Program Memorandum 140: Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis \(ABA\) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders \(ASD\)](#)

5. Appendices

Nil

6. Related Policies and Administrative Procedures

- 6.1 [Workplace Violence Policy \(PO324\)](#)
- 6.2 [Workplace Violence – Students Administrative Procedure \(AP324-2\)](#)