

Complimentary Information to the Multisectoral Agreement for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse or Serious Neglect

Intended for School Personnel

The Multisectoral Agreement for Child Victims of Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse or Serious Neglect² is a commitment by the signatory ministries and organizations, including the Ministère de l'Éducation, to work together to guarantee better protection for children who are victims of abuse or severe neglect when there is reasonable cause to believe that their safety or development is compromised and that a criminal offence has been committed against them.

Objectives of the Multisectoral Agreement:

1. Guarantee better protection for children, centered on the child's best interest.
2. Ensure priority treatment of targeted situations.
3. Intervene in a concerted and effective manner.
4. Limit the repetition of the victim's testimonies.
5. Define the socio-judicial intervention procedure and the roles and responsibilities of each partner based on the types of situations.
6. Promote continuous communication of information between the various partners while respecting confidentiality rules.

The Multisectoral Agreement sets out a socio-judicial intervention procedure for partners and collaborating organizations. Depending on the situation and the need, school organizations are called upon to participate in this procedure for situations covered by the Multisectoral Agreement. The socio-judicial procedure begins when a report is made to the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) or when a situation is brought to the attention of the police.

Rights and Obligations

- **Reporting is an obligation** governed by the Youth Protection Act (YPA).
- School personnel, in the performance of their duties, have an obligation to report all situations covered by the YPA.
- The YPA protects from prosecution people who report or help a child, when acting in good faith.
- **The identity of the person making the report cannot be disclosed without their consent.**
- **All adults are obliged to help and report without delay to the DYP** the situation of a child who is a victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or serious neglect, without presuming that another person has already taken the necessary steps to ensure the child's protection.
- A disclosure to the police does not necessarily result in a prosecution or criminal conviction.

¹ The terms "aggression" or "violence" are generally used in the Ministère de l'Éducation documents. This leaflet, which complements the Multisectoral Agreement, uses the term "abuse" in accordance with the definitions in the Multisectoral Agreement's Practice Guide (pp. 16-17), on which it is based.

Role of School Personnel

School personnel, including support staff, have the responsibility to contribute to a safe and healthy learning environment, so that every student can develop their full potential, free from any form of intimidation or violence. A person working in a school environment:

- **must take seriously any allegation or information** indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or serious neglect, **and report the situation without delay to the DYP.**
If in doubt about the need to report, the person consults DYP who will determine the appropriateness of the report.
- **must not attempt in any way to verify the alleged facts** with the child or the person under suspicion, to avoid interfering with the police investigation or the DYP's assessment.
- must keep all information on the child's situation confidential and provide the necessary support and guidance until the DYP or the police intervenes.
- may keep confidential the fact that they are reporting the situation to the DYP. They may also, under the seal of confidentiality, inform the school principal. In addition to ensuring the necessary follow-up with the person responsible for applying the socio-judicial procedure in their organization, this person may have other information to support the allegation.

Attitudes to Adopt When a Child Discloses a Situation

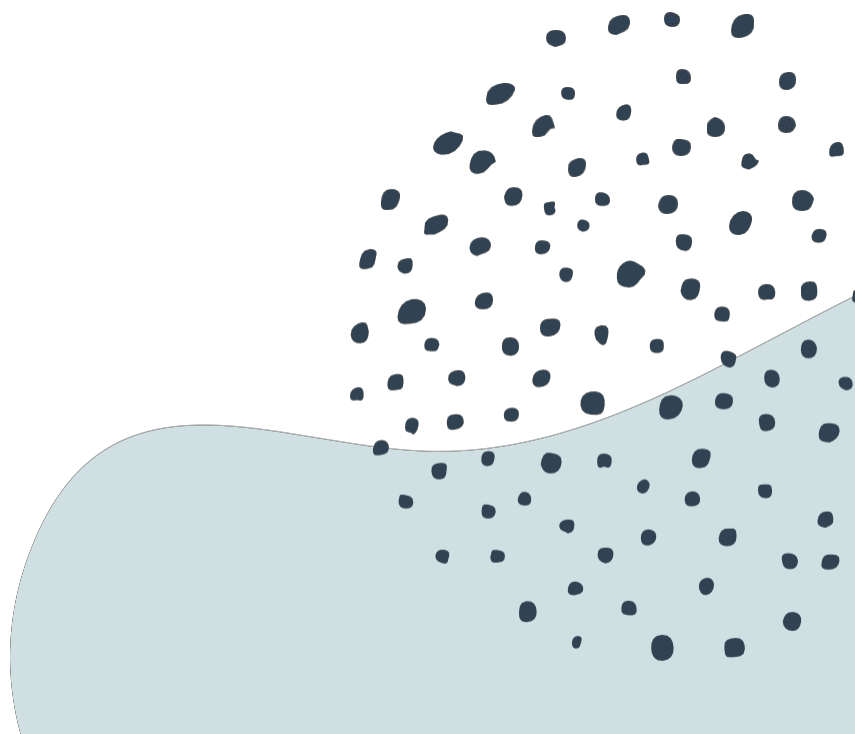
1. Remain calm.
2. **Take** any disclosure of information from a child **seriously.**
3. Let the child recount events in their own words, respecting what they are comfortable saying. Take note of what they say and avoid questioning them.
4. **Give priority to listening and openness, avoiding any judgment** of the child or the person presumed to have committed abuse or neglect.
5. **Reassure the child** that they have done the right thing by telling you about the situation and thank them for their trust.
6. **Inform the child that you must share the information with a trusted adult to get help.**

Information to be sent to the DYP in the event of a report

School personnel, including those bound by professional confidentiality are legally authorized to communicate confidential information when reporting to the DYP. They must transmit all relevant information in their possession, including:

- the identity of the child.
- the identity of the child's parents.
- the identity of the person alleged to have committed the abuse or severe neglect.
- the contact information of these people.
- all relevant information concerning the situation that could compromise the child's safety or development and aimed at ensuring the child's safety.

At this stage, it is important not to question the child, while paying attention to any other information related to the report. If necessary, **contact the DYP again.**



Details for School Administrations

As part of its roles and responsibilities, the school administration must implement and coordinate a wide range of actions aimed at ensuring the quality of the school climate, so that students and staff can develop in a positive, healthy, safe, and caring environment. Within the framework of the Multisectoral Agreement, the school administration may be called upon to work in close collaboration, particularly in situations of abuse or serious neglect in an institutional context.

Institutional Context

Under the Multisectoral Agreement, in the school network, "institutional" refers to a situation that occurs in the school environment and involves an adult or a student in a position of authority or trust over another student (school counsellor, coach, minor assistant coach, etc.).

If such a situation arises, the school administration, which is subject to the BSR's reporting obligations, must immediately contact the individual at the school board responsible for the application of the socio-judicial procedure in their school's Multisectoral Agreement.

Generally, the collaboration of the school community is required when the situation calls for it. More specifically, the person in charge of applying the socio-judicial procedure, designated by the school organization, will be responsible for collaborating and communicating with partners and the school administration, where applicable.

In the public sector, the person responsible for applying the socio-judicial procedure is designated by a school service centre or school board. In private schools, the principal generally plays this role, but may also designate another person for this purpose.

Socio-Judicial Intervention Procedure

The socio-judicial intervention procedure for situations covered by the Multisectoral Agreement specifies in detail the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners and collaborating organizations involved. It enables each partner to obtain all the information available and necessary to make informed decisions. The socio-judicial procedure comprises five stages:

1. **Reporting** a situation to the DYP, which may lead to the initiation of socio-judicial proceedings. In this case, the intervention team is made up of a representative of each partner (DYP, police and DPCP) and, when necessary, a representative of the school where the institutional abuse or neglect occurred, i.e., the person designated by their organization and responsible for applying the socio-judicial procedure.
2. **Liaison and planning.** This stage initiates the mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation between all partners and collaborating organizations to protect the child and respond adequately to the child's needs for help.
3. **Investigation and assessment.** This stage serves to verify the validity of the alleged facts and to gather evidence. The person in charge of the police investigation and the DYP agent conducting the assessment must consult with the partners who will be performing an administrative investigation before they do so.
4. **Decision-making** based on sharing the information gathered. In an institutional situation, the school is called upon to contribute to the discussions, both regarding the choice of protective or assistance measures that can be taken with regard to the child victim, and the administrative or disciplinary measures that could be taken against the person presumed to have committed the abuse or serious neglect.
5. **Implementation of actions and feedback** on each partner's actions according to their area of responsibility. Transmitting information at this stage will ensure consistency between actions to be taken and follow-ups.