

## Gender-Based Violence & Sexual Misconduct Policy

### PREAMBLE

Gender-based violence and sexual misconduct is complex, underreported, and pervasive in our society, and can have serious and long-lasting impacts on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness of an individual and their families.

Gender-based violence and sexual misconduct exists on a continuum from discrimination and harassment to sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and related misconduct that targets a person because of gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Gender-based violence and sexual misconduct is rooted in unequal power relations and biased social constructions of gender. It disproportionately affects individuals who are Indigenous, racialized, persons with disabilities, and those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. The internet and online environments have increased opportunities for exploitation, including among youth. This policy recognizes historical and intergenerational factors linked to colonization and residential schooling that add complexity and vulnerability to those that experience gender-based violence and sexual misconduct.

Freedom from gender-based violence is an inherent human right.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education is committed to safe, supportive, and inclusive learning and work environments, free from gender-based violence and sexual misconduct in any form across all district schools, facilities, district-related activities, and online environments involving district-affiliated individuals.

It is the responsibility of all School District staff and the expectation of the school community to promote an environment that is free of gender-based violence and sexual misconduct and to be knowledgeable about this policy and associated procedures.

This policy applies to gender-based violence and sexual misconduct incidents at all district schools and sites, and to gender-based violence and sexual misconduct occurring at any district-related activities or in circumstances where such conduct could have a negative impact on the school environment, including online activity outside school hours or premises.

### DEFINITIONS

- **Gender-based Violence (GBV):** Any unwanted behaviour targeting a person based on gender, gender identity, or gender expression. This includes verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, financial, or sexual conduct and may occur on a continuum from discrimination to sexual violence or misconduct.

- ***Sexual Violence and Misconduct:*** Any sexual activity or behaviour that occurs without voluntary and informed consent. This includes actions that are physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, or financial, and that target a person's sexuality. Sexual violence can be threatened, attempted, or completed and may involve one or multiple incidents, and can occur between strangers, peers, or intimate partners, including online.
- ***District-Related Activity:*** Any activity at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school environment, including online behaviours created outside of the school setting.

Additional definitions included in Appendix A.

## OBJECTIVES

The Board is committed to:

- A safe and secure learning and working environment free from gender-based violence and sexual misconduct.
- Preventative education and organizational practices that promote a culture of consent, safety, and respectful relationships.
- Individuals who have experienced gender-based violence and sexual misconduct receiving trauma-informed and culturally responsive support.
- Protecting the privacy and dignity of individuals involved in accordance with human rights, legislation, privacy laws, and educational standards.
- Accountability through clearly defined roles, training, and documented processes for education, reporting, investigation, discipline, and remedial measures.

Legal Reference:

British Columbia School Act  
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
BC Human Rights Code

Adopted: June 2026

## APPENDIX A - Definitions

**Coercive control:** describes a pattern of abusive behaviour used to control or dominate another person through repeated acts that disempower or make the other person feel “trapped” in the relationship. Examples include repeated acts of humiliation, intimidation, criticism, gaslighting, isolation, monitoring, jealousy, exploitation, manipulation, playing “mind games” and/or other weaponizing behaviours.

**Consent:** means the active, voluntary agreement to engage in a specific sexual activity at a particular time. Consent must be given actively, willingly, and continuously throughout all sexual activity. Any sexual activity without consent is sexual assault. Consent cannot be assumed or implied; silence or the absence of “no” is not consent. A person who is impaired by alcohol or drugs may not be capable of giving consent. Consent cannot be obtained through threats, fraud, deception, or coercion, and it can be withdrawn or revoked at any time. A person who is unconscious cannot give consent. A person may also be unable to give consent due to their age (under 12), an age difference between the people engaged in the sexual activity, or because one person is in a position of power or authority over the other.

**Cultural Safety:** refers to policies and practices that are respectful of diverse cultural identities, values, and lived experiences of individuals and communities. It involves ensuring that policies do not perpetuate harm, discrimination, or marginalization and instead actively support the dignity, empowerment, and safety of all individuals, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Cultural safety incorporates an acknowledgment of intergenerational trauma.

**Emotional abuse:** happens when a person repeatedly uses words, threats, or actions to control, frighten, isolate, embarrass or undermine another person, or to take away their self-respect. It is also called psychological abuse. It can include:

- put downs, name calling or insults
- frequently yelling or raising one’s voice at the other person
- ongoing criticism, blaming or mocking the other person
- controlling behaviour, including stopping someone from seeing friends or family
- preventing the other person from practicing their religion, faith, or culture, or expressing their own opinions
- destroying someone’s personal belongings, hurting pets, or threatening to do so
- bullying, intimidation or humiliation
- making false or unsupported accusations, including accusations of flirting, cheating, or being interested in someone else
- threatening:
  - to harm the other person, themselves, or someone important to that person
  - to share intimate images, private information, or secrets
  - to withhold love and affection from the other person
- gaslighting or playing mind games

**Gaslighting:** is a form of psychological manipulation that usually happens over time and causes a person to question their own memory, judgment, or sense of reality. It can lead to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty about one’s emotional or mental stability, and dependence on the person causing the harm.

**Gender-based Violence:** any unwanted behaviour targeting a person based on gender, gender identity, or gender expression, and which behaviour may be verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, financial, or sexual.

**Sexual Violence and Misconduct:** Is any sexual activity or behaviour that happens without a person's consent. This can include unwanted or unwelcome actions that are physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, or financial, and that target a person's sexuality. Can be threatened, attempted, or carried out, and may happen once or repeatedly. Can happen between strangers, between students or co-workers, or between people in a relationship, and can happen in-person or online. Includes:

- Sexual assault
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Threats of harm to oneself or others
- Threats or pressure to engage in sexual activity
- Coercive or controlling behaviour\*, including gaslighting
- Stalking
- Indecent or sexualized exposure
- Voyeurism
- Trafficking
- Sharing or threatening to share intimate and/or sexually explicit images or personal information without consent
- Creating, showing, or distributing pictures or materials that are degrading or of a sexual nature
- Sharing or threatening to share private information about a person's sexual history or sexuality without their consent

**Homophobia:** refers to attitudes or actions based on fear, dislike, or lack of acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or Two Spirit people. These attitudes are often rooted in traditional beliefs about gender or sexuality.

**Indecent or Sexualized Exposure:** refers to intentionally exposing one's genitals in public.

**Intersectional (Intersectionality):** refers to how a person's lived experiences are shaped by the interaction of different social positions that can result in privilege or oppression. These may include sex, sexual identity, gender identity or expression, Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, or faith. These interactions are rooted in and shaped by interconnecting systems of power such as colonialism, racism, homophobia and transphobia, ableism, and patriarchy.

**Misogyny:** means the belief or attitude that men and masculinity, are more valuable, powerful, or naturally dominant than women and femininity.

**Peer-to-peer:** means interactions between children or youth who are close in age or stage of development.

**Physical abuse:** is the intentional use of force against someone without their consent. It can cause pain or injuries that may be long lasting. Physical abuse can include:

- pushing or shoving
- hitting, slapping, or kicking
- pinching or punching
- strangling or choking
- spitting or biting
- stabbing or cutting
- throwing objects at someone
- damaging someone's property
- holding someone down
- other acts that hurt or cause physical harm

**Sexual Assault:** is any sexual contact without the other person's consent and can range from unwanted kissing or sexual touching to forced sexual intercourse (also known as rape).

**Sexual Abuse:** describes any situation where a person is forced, pressured, or manipulated into unwanted sexual activity, and can include being forced to look at or watch sexual images or acts.

**Sexual Exploitation:** occurs when someone uses a position of power, authority, or trust for sexual purposes, and can include, but is not limited to, situations involving blackmail.

**Sexual Harassment:** refers to any unwanted sexual behaviour which contributes to an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or uncomfortable learning or work environment. It can happen in person or online, and may include, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual comments, flirting, advances, or propositions
- Requests for sexual favours
- Unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature (such as touching, grabbing, pinching, or brushing up against a person)
- Sexually suggestive, obscene, or degrading comments or gestures, or name-calling
- Sexual jokes or remarks
- Leering, staring, or catcalling
- Stalking or cyber-stalking
- Sharing or displaying sexual images, videos, or livestreams, including material involving sexual violence
- Creating AI generated sexual images of another person
- Unwanted questions or remarks or rumours about someone's sex life, appearance, clothing, gender expression or sexual orientation
- Promises of rewards (spoken or implied) in exchange for complying with a sexual request
- Intimidation, such as blocking or cornering someone in a sexual way
- Microaggressions of a sexual nature

**Stalking:** involves repeated unwanted attention that makes someone feel uncomfortable or afraid, and can include repeatedly following, watching, or communicating with someone over time

**Trafficking:** involves recruiting, housing, controlling, or transporting a person for the purpose of sexually exploiting them or enabling their exploitation.

**Transphobia:** refers to attitudes or actions that deny, disrespect, or violate the existence and human rights of trans people.

**Trauma-Informed:** means recognizing how trauma affects the brain and a person's life and responding in ways that avoid re-traumatization. A trauma-informed approach prioritizes safety, choice, empowerment, and respect, acknowledges that healing looks different for everyone, and rejects myths and stereotypes about victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

**Two-Spirit:** is a term used to describe an Indigenous person who embodies both masculine and feminine qualities, often involving a spiritual, cultural and gender identity outside the Western gender binary.

**2SLGBTQIA+:** is an acronym that stands for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual, and the '+' recognizes that there are many more gender and sexual identities as well.

**Victim/survivor:** refers to a person who has experienced gender-based violence and/or sexual misconduct.

**Voyeurism:** means watching someone for sexualized purposes without their knowledge and consent, including but not limited to while they are undressing, naked, or engaged in sexual or other private activity; includes "up-skirting".