

## **G. THE PASTORAL RESPONSE OVERVIEW**

### **G.2 GUIDELINES, PROTOCOLS, AND CONSIDERATIONS**

We must always remember that we have before us a unique individual – a person of God; they are not a label. Focus on each child as a loved individual. Our ultimate goal is to model and teach Jesus' commandment to "...love God with your whole heart... and your neighbour as yourself."  
(Luke 10:27)

#### **PROTOCOLS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

The following are intended as general principles, protocols, and suggested communication strategies to be employed for all pastoral issues referred to in *Section H: Specific Issues in Human Growth and Development: Pastoral Response Guidelines*.

#### **1. IF A STUDENT CHOOSES TO DISCLOSE SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

- 1.1 Staffs are expected to familiarize themselves with CISVA policies regarding the student code of conduct, anti-bullying, student abuse/neglect, and school clubs and organizations.
- 1.2 If a student disclosure involves imminent or continuing harm to him or herself, or others, it needs to be discussed and explicitly addressed right away. The Administration and/or the Counseling Department should be notified immediately.

#### **2. SPEAKING TO THE ISSUE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

The staff member can assure the student that disclosure will be treated with sensitivity. However, do not promise confidentiality unconditionally. (See 1.2 above).

Confidentiality must be respected at all times unless disclosure is required for reasons of:

- Student safety;
- Parental or professional intervention and guidance; and/or
- Legal obligations.

#### **3. PHYSICAL SPACE FOR MEETING**

Any physical space for meeting together must be safe for both student and staff member. It should allow confidentiality without compromising safety. Typically the space is a classroom with a windowed door accessible to a hallway or a public space during non-instructional time, the regular school day or after school. Never meet in a non-student space or outside the school building. Do not act alone in situations where you are feeling uneasy.

#### 4. COMMUNICATION

1. Listen with compassion.
2. Allow the student to set the pace of the dialogue and be patient. His/her speaking should make up the bulk of your first meeting.
3. Stay calm. You may feel shock or anger at what the student is saying, but staying calm you allow him/her to know it is okay to talk about the issue.
4. Body language and reflective listening:
  - Use open body language (no crossed arms, no barriers between you, sit facing each other, make appropriate eye contact).
  - Respond with affirmatives, clarifiers, restatements, etc. indicating you are actively listening.
5. Do not make assumptions about the student's feelings or interests.
6. Any information that we offer must reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.
7. Know when to involve a more experienced/knowledgeable colleague:
  - e.g., counselor, priest, etc.
  - e.g., "Can we go together to...?"
8. It may be necessary to speak with colleagues or other resource people to gain more information. When doing so, it is essential to discuss things in ways in which the student cannot be identified unless #1.2 above applies. This would be ancillary to notifying your administrator. (See Section F.1 Policy 405).
9. Use respectful and appropriate language regarding sexuality. Avoid colloquial terms or euphemisms.
10. Educators need to be professional in all communication. Particular care is required when responding to emails or other electronic communication. (See Section F.5 Policy 429).
11. The student's method of disclosing may be problematic. They may disclose non-verbally, by written or electronic means. Disclosure may be direct (email, etc.) or indirect (journals, piece of prose/art, etc.). The teacher should always engage the student by asking the student if there is something they wish to talk about.
  - e.g., "I read your poem. What led you to write about that?"
12. If it is necessary to inform authorities regarding this situation, tell the child what will happen next.

**13. CURRICULUM LINKS**

If possible, reference the curricular links so that you know what students have/should have covered in various subjects. (e.g., Religion/Science)

**14. IMPLICIT TRUST**

If the student is initiating disclosure or dialogue, trust in you is already assumed. Be aware and sensitive to the existence and nature of that trust; respond with care and faithfulness

**15. LIMITATIONS AND BOUNDARIES**

Remember that you are a staff member and do not necessarily have training as a counselor. Recognize that *even after above safety and confidentiality issues have been covered*, discussions with students will inherently have limits and boundaries which may include, but are not be limited to, your own bias and comfort. See *Ministry of Education Teacher Regulation Branch: Teaching Standards*.

**16. DOCUMENT THE ENCOUNTER**

Keep a record of the date and the factual details of the conversation.

**17. REPORT**

Report to your administrator or school counselor, even if only to tell them, without elaborating, that you met with the student. Keep them updated on any further developments.

**18. ESTABLISH A TIMELINE**

Suggest that you connect again in a timely manner as determined by the nature of the issue. Make sure to do the follow up.