

**CHILDREN IN NEED OF PROTECTION:
REPORTING POLICIES IN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS**

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A clear, well defined policy can help empower school personnel to make informed decisions on how to handle cases of suspected child abuse. This article presents an analysis of (N = 64) school board child abuse reporting policies and procedures in Ontario and explored what training, resources, and support school boards state they will provide to help teachers recognize and report cases where a child may be in need of protection. The results showed that, while most boards had documentation, the amount of information provided by each school board varied greatly, with documents ranging from 1 page to 155 pages long. An analysis of the documents revealed a lack of clear expectations around training and support to assist teachers in reporting child abuse. Policy recommendations are proposed based on the results of the online search.

Introduction

In Ontario, the Child and Family Services Act (1990) requires all professionals who work with children, including teachers, to report children who may be in need of protection to child protective services, otherwise known as Children's Aid Societies (CAS). Additionally, the Ontario Ministry of Education's Policy Memorandum No. 9 gives school boards the authority and responsibility to create their own policies, administrative procedures, and professional development on reporting child abuse as long as they do not conflict with the reporting requirements of the Child and Family Services Act (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). Because school boards are each responsible for creating their own policy, it is possible that in-

service teachers are being provided with different levels of resources and support across the province.

Definition of “Child in Need of Protection”

Under s. 37 (2) of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act (1990) a child is deemed to be “in need of protection” where the child has suffered, or will likely suffer from physical harm, sexual harm, emotional harm, or neglect. A child is also considered to be in need of protection if the child suffers from a mental, emotional, or medical condition and the child’s caregiver refuses, or is otherwise unable to consent to, treatment that would remedy the condition. In addition, a child is deemed to be in need of protection if the child is under the age of 12 and has injured or killed someone, or has caused serious damage to another person’s property. Finally, a child is in need of protection if he or she has been abandoned by his or her caregivers, or if the caregivers have died. For the purpose of this paper, the term “child in need of protection” is used to encapsulate all the types of harm that a child may experience. In addition, the term “abuse” is used throughout the paper. The Child and Family Services Act (1990) states that when abuse is “used in reference to a child, it means to be in need of protection within the meaning of clause 37 (2).”

Context and Significance

Annually, approximately 733,000 reports of suspected child abuse are made to Children’s Aid Societies in Canada. Teachers report 24% or ~175,900 of these cases (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008). Teachers are in a unique position to notice child abuse due to the extensive amount of time that they spend with their students and, therefore, are able to notice

small changes in student behaviour and physical appearance. However, researchers that have studied teacher reporting practices speculate that teachers fail to report between 50 to 85%, or ~88,000 to ~148,000 suspected cases to authorities (Beck, Ogloff, & Corbishley, 1994; Dombrowski, Ahia, & McQuillan, 2003). Consequently, children in need of protection may not be receiving the care that they need.

In an attempt to understand why teachers may not report, researchers have analyzed perceived teacher deterrents to reporting (Kenny, 2004), in-service teacher knowledge of child protection legislation (Beck et al., 1994; Hinkelmann & Bruno, 2008; Kenny, 2004; Tite, 1993, 1994; Walsh & Farrell, 2008) , and the level of training that pre-service teachers receive on recognizing and reporting abuse (Goldman, 2005, 2007; Hodgkinson & Baginsky, 2000; McKee & Dillenburger, 2009; Rossato & Brackenridge, 2009). These studies revealed that, while teachers may theoretically be in an excellent position to report abuse, there are several individual factors that can influence whether a teacher decides to report, such as a teacher's sex, personal experience, years of teaching experience, and the specific characteristics of each case (Beck et al., 1994; Kenny, 2001; McKee & Dillenburger, 2009). Researchers have found that female teachers report abuse more often than their male counterparts (Kenny, 2001; Yetman, 2007), that teachers with more years of teaching experience tend to report more (Beck, 1994), and that teachers perceive physical abuse to be easier to recognize than other forms of abuse (Beck, 1994; Tite, 1993, 1994; Reyome & Gaeddert, 1999). Being able to identify when abuse has occurred to a child is the first step to stopping the abuse from reoccurring. However, if teachers are unable to recognize children who are in need of protection, or do not feel that the abuse is serious enough to warrant a report, the child will continue to live in an environment where abuse occurs.

Researchers have also argued that reporting is hindered when teachers are not adequately educated on child abuse issues (Beck et al., 1994; Hinkelmann & Bruno, 2008; Kenny, 2001; Walsh et al., 2008). Researchers claim that in order for teachers to be prepared they should have “adequate knowledge of the legal definitions, clinical presentations of child abuse, an understanding of the various types of abuse, and the ability to discriminate between typical child behaviors and common indicators of [abuse]” which can be obtained by requiring teachers to receive training in this area. Beck et al. (1994) and Walsh and Farrell (2008) advocate for in-service educators to receive regular and consistent training, access to relevant resources, and increased administrative supports. Kenny (2001) argued that training should include informing teachers about child abuse reporting laws and procedures so teachers “understand their duty and legal obligation to report” as well as “proper reporting protocol” (Kenny, 2001, p. 90). Such training needs to allow for “experiential exercises and hypothetical situations to help teachers develop the skills necessary to report abuse and attend to their concerns regarding their fears of making a false report” (Kenny, 2001, p. 90). Training requirements such as the ones outlined above would help better prepare teachers to report suspected cases of abuse.

Moreover, teachers can face ethical dilemmas that may stop them from making reports (Yetman, 2007). Researchers (Dombrowski et al., 2003; Gallagher-Mackay, 2014; Laskey, 2012; Tite, 1993) report that teachers have developed a distrust of the child protection system’s capacity to secure an improved situation for child victims. Gallagher-Mackay’s (2014) qualitative analysis of (N = 38) people who are involved with child welfare (educators, mothers, and child protection workers) in Ontario found that educators still acknowledge noncompliance with mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect by teachers. She reported that teachers “articulated their understanding of the obligation to report as a factor to be weighed as part of

their overall intellectual and emotional concern for what was best for the children in their care, rather than as a specific rule that required compliance.” Teachers have complained that CAS caseworkers put children at risk for further harm due to delays in investigations or that CAS does not do anything when the abuse has been reported (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004). These beliefs arise out of differences in priorities between teachers and caseworkers. Teachers have been told to report all cases of suspected abuse; however, within child protective services, a need has arisen to limit caseloads (Ainsworth, 2002; Scott, 2006) due to insufficient funding (Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies, 2009). In 2009, 49 CASs faced funding shortfalls of \$67 million, which greatly affected their capacity to deliver the services required by legislation. This lack of funding results in child protective services producing policies and procedures that are designed to reduce the number of reports accepted and to focus resources on the most serious cases, thus creating differences in what is viewed as reportable abuse between teachers and caseworkers (Alvarez et al., 2004). In order to improve the relationship between teachers and CAS, leaders of the two organizations need to create opportunities for teachers and CAS caseworkers to have frank and open discussions about the roles of and responsibilities of all parties involved.

Researchers have argued that teacher reporting can be improved by providing teachers with appropriate resources and supports (Tite, 1993) such as reader-friendly, explicit school board policies (Crosson-Tower, 2013; Dombrowski & Grischler, 2006; Kenny, 2004). If teachers are not aware of the school’s reporting procedure, or if the policies are not explicit and reader-friendly, it can result in teachers misunderstanding their role and responsibilities surrounding reporting suspected abuse, potentially causing cases to go unreported or mishandled. In addition, the design of school board policies can have an impact on the factors which have been shown to

influence teacher reporting. For example, policies can include information on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse, how and when teachers will receive professional development on child abuse issues, and the role and responsibilities of Children's Aid Societies.

The only Ontario-based quantitative research on teachers' duty to report suspected abuse was published almost twenty years ago by Tite (1994). The study revealed that almost 40% of teachers' surveyed (N = 500) were unaware of whether their school board had a child abuse policy (Tite, 1994). Of the teachers who reported their school boards did have a reporting policy, many were unable to articulate the document's definitions of abuse, with one teacher reporting that "I only know they have a policy; I have never seen it or heard what it contains" (Tite, 1994, p. 93). During the same time frame, another quantitative study by Beck (1994) revealed that over half of the respondents from a survey (N = 500) mailed to teachers in lower mainland British Columbia were also unaware of the proper procedures when reporting child abuse. Ten years after the implementation of mandated reporting, research by Tite (1994) and Beck (1994) revealed that many teachers were still unaware of their reporting requirements. As an examination of school board policies has yet to be formally conducted, the current study addresses this dearth in the literature.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided the study:

- 1) What school board policies are in place in relation to child abuse in Ontario?
- 2) What is the content of these policies?

This paper is organized into four sections. First, I provide information on the legislation in Ontario that requires teachers to report suspected child abuse and discuss why policies are

needed at the school board level. Second, the method for completing the policy analysis is provided. Third, findings are presented from the empirical analysis of all English-speaking, public (N = 31), Catholic (N = 29), and geographically isolated school authorities (N = 4). Finally, recommendations are made to inform future policy development.

Legislative Review

The first piece of child protection legislation in Ontario was implemented over 200 years ago and has been under a continual process of modification as a result of changes to public attitudes, attention of mass media, and legislative priorities throughout the years (Brade, 2007). After confederation, section 92 (10) of the Constitution Act (1867) gave each province the power and responsibility to fund and create legislation concerning matters pertaining to civil and property rights, which includes matters of child welfare. Therefore, child welfare services fall under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial authorities in Canada and, as a result, each province and territory has different legislation pertaining to child protection interventions. In Ontario, child protective services are handled by Children's Aid Societies (CAS). The societies receive funding from, and are under the supervision of, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS).

Teachers' responsibilities for mandatory reporting fall under section 72 (1) of the Child and Family Services Act (1990) which stipulates:

If a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable grounds to suspect one of the following, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a child welfare agency.

“One of the following” refers to the types of abuse that a child can experience. Furthermore, subsection 72 (2) states that the duty to report is an ongoing obligation. If a professional has

already made a report to a CAS, but has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is still in need of protection, that person must make a further report to the Society. Subsection 72 (3) of the Act provides that every person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection must make the report directly to a Children's Aid Society, and must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf. Subsection 72 (4) of the Act makes it an offence for persons performing professional or official duties with respect to children to fail to report a child who, they suspect, may be in need of protection, with clause 72 (5)(b) expressly identifying teachers and school principals as such persons. Professionals can be fined \$1,000 for non-reporting. Subsection 72 (7) states that the professional's duty to report overrides the provisions of any other provincial Act. Finally, subsection 72 (7) provides legal protection to those who make reports of suspected abuse in good faith. In the simplest terms, professionals must report all cases of suspected abuse directly and immediately to a Children's Aid Society and must continue reporting whenever there is new cause to suspect abuse. The professional must report that a child is or may be in need of protection even when the information is supposed to be confidential or privileged. The professional cannot be charged by the alleged abuser if the investigation reveals there was no abuse, provided the report was made in good faith; however, the professional can be fined if he or she fails to report suspected abuse.

School boards are guided by Policy Memorandum No. 9 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). The policy stipulates that all directors of education, secretaries of school authorities, directors of provincial schools, and principals of elementary, secondary, and provincial schools must ensure that:

All staff members are aware and understand the relevant sections of *The Child and Family Services Act*, particularly the requirement to report suspected cases of children in need of protection . . . and school board policies and procedures on reporting suspected cases of children in need of protection

conform to the provisions of *The Child and Family Services Act*. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001)

While the Child and Family Services Act (1990) legally requires all school personnel to report suspected abuse; the above policy reveals that school boards have a clear responsibility to educate teachers about their role and responsibilities on child abuse and to ensure conformity between school board policies and the Act. In addition, it is considered professional misconduct under the Ontario College of Teachers Act (1996), regulation 437/97, to “fail to comply with the member's duties under *The Child and Family Services Act*.” A professional misconduct charge can result in a member’s teaching certificate having conditions and limitations placed on it, or being suspended or revoked. These policies and legislation provide the legislative framework to explore the child abuse reporting policies in school boards in Ontario.

Method

In Ontario there are 72 school boards and 11 school authorities. School boards are categorized into French (N = 12) or English-speaking (N = 60) boards. Due to language restrictions, French-speaking school boards (N = 12) were excluded from the analysis. English-speaking boards are further categorized into public (N = 31) and Catholic (N = 29) boards. School authorities were created by the Ministry of Education to administer to smaller, more isolated schools (N = 4), hospital-based schools (N = 6), and the Provincial Schools Authority (N = 1). To find an appropriate sample size, Raosoft, an online sample size calculator, was used in the study (www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html). For a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ and confidence level of 90%, 64 school boards needed to be analyzed. Therefore, all English-speaking public boards (N = 31), Catholic boards (N = 29), and geographically isolated school authorities (N = 4) were included. The Provincial School Board (N = 1) that caters to students who are deaf, blind,

deaf-blind, or have a specific learning disabilities was excluded from the analysis. As the focus was on the education sector, hospital-based school authorities (N = 6) were also excluded from the analysis. Because all English-speaking schools were included in the analysis, the current study is considered a census (see Appendix A for list of boards and links to documents).

Data Collection

The study involved a web-based search to discover each board's policy documents on reporting suspected abuse. If it was discovered that a school board did not have a publicly available policy on its website, that information was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. If a school board's policy was unable to be found online, the school board office was contacted by telephone to inquire about the status of the policy. If it was discovered that a school board did not have a policy, or if the board considered the policy to be an internal document, the information was entered into Excel. In both instances, I considered the school boards to have no publically available policy and excluded them from the future content and thematic analyses.

The policy analysis framework used in this study was adapted from Crosson-Tower's (2013) framework which was designed as a tool for Massachusetts educators to use in order to improve their school's reporting protocols. The framework was adapted to fit a Canadian context as well as to include additional questions raised from the literature. The adapted framework contains fourteen questions which are divided into eight sections about the education system, legal system, document properties, information dissemination, procedures, and community partnerships (Table 1).

Table 1
Policy Framework

Section	Question
Education	How many school boards have documents in place in relation to child abuse in Ontario?
Legal System	What legislation does the document reference? Are key legal terms defined?
Document Properties	How often are the documents reviewed or updated by the board? What types of documents currently exist? How long are the documents?
Document Dissemination	How and when will the information in the documents be disseminated to key actors (teachers and parents)?
Procedures	What types of procedures are included? Which staff becomes involved in the reporting process? What information does the reporter need to know in order to report? Who is responsible for following-up, monitoring, or receiving feedback from CAS once the report is filed?
Support Systems	What support systems are provided?
Training Opportunities	What commitment exists to provide training?
Community Relationships	Who is involved in the collaborative process?

Note. Adapted from “Designing and Implementing School Reporting Protocols: A how-to manual for Massachusetts educators,” by C. Crosson-Tower, 2013, p. 4. Boston, Mass, US: Children’s Trust Fund.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was utilized to track relevant website links, calculate frequencies, and to find descriptive statistics on the data in relation to the questions within the policy framework. The policies were then entered into and analyzed using NVivo, a qualitative software program to aid in recording codes, themes, and overarching patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Open codes were used to find emergent themes in the analysis.

Findings

The following section is organized according to the sections from the policy analysis framework in Table 1: education, legal system, document properties, information dissemination, procedures, support systems, and community relationships.

Education

Of the 64 school boards, 14% (N = 9) did not have publically available policies. One school board had its documentation under review. Therefore, 54 of the chosen school boards were examined using the policy analysis framework.

Legal System

The Child and Family Services Act (1990) was cited by 53 of the 54 school boards with public documentation, with the other school board alluding to it but not directly citing it. Approximately two-thirds (63%) (N = 40) of school board policies provided definitions for legal terms used within the documents. The most common definitions were for the terms: *child*, *child in need of protection*, *employee*, *caregiver*, *reasonable grounds*, and *sexual misconduct*. Figure 1 shows the percentage of boards that included additional information concerning a teacher's duty to report under the Child and Family Services Act (1990).

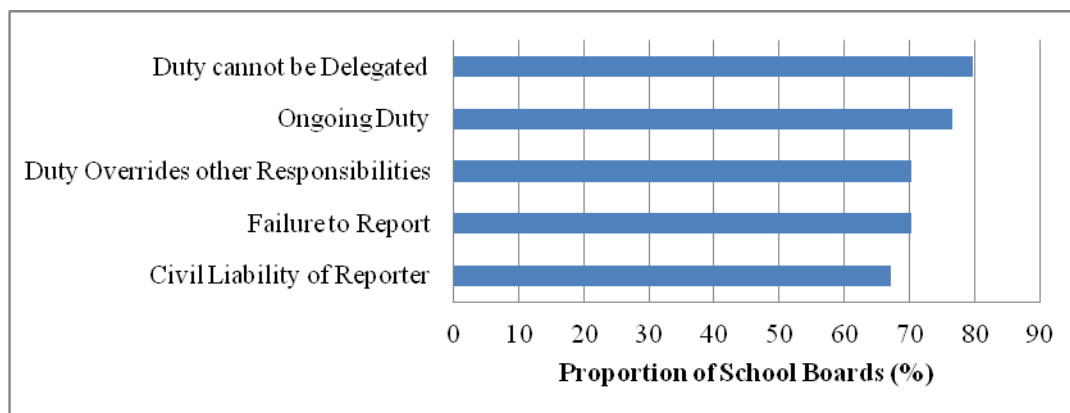


Figure 1. Requirements under *The Child and Family Services Act* (1990) cited in school board policies.

Eighty-four percent of boards informed their staff that they had a legal duty to report. Progressively fewer boards informed their staff that the duty cannot be delegated to another individual, the duty to report is ongoing, and that the duty overrides other responsibilities. Thirty percent of school boards did not inform its staff that they face legal penalties for failing to report suspected abuse. Moreover, 33% of boards did not inform their staff that they would be protected from civil liability upon making the report.

Document Properties

The subsection on document properties reports the findings related to document review timelines, the types of documents school boards had, and the length of documents.

Document review and updates. Of the boards, 42% (N = 28) had reviewed or updated their documents within the past five years; however, only 19% (N = 12) of boards provided a review timeline for their documents.

Types of documents. There are four types of documents in school boards across Ontario. A board could have any combination of policy, administrative procedures, regulations, or joint

protocol documents. Figure 2 shows the percentage of school boards with different combinations of document types.

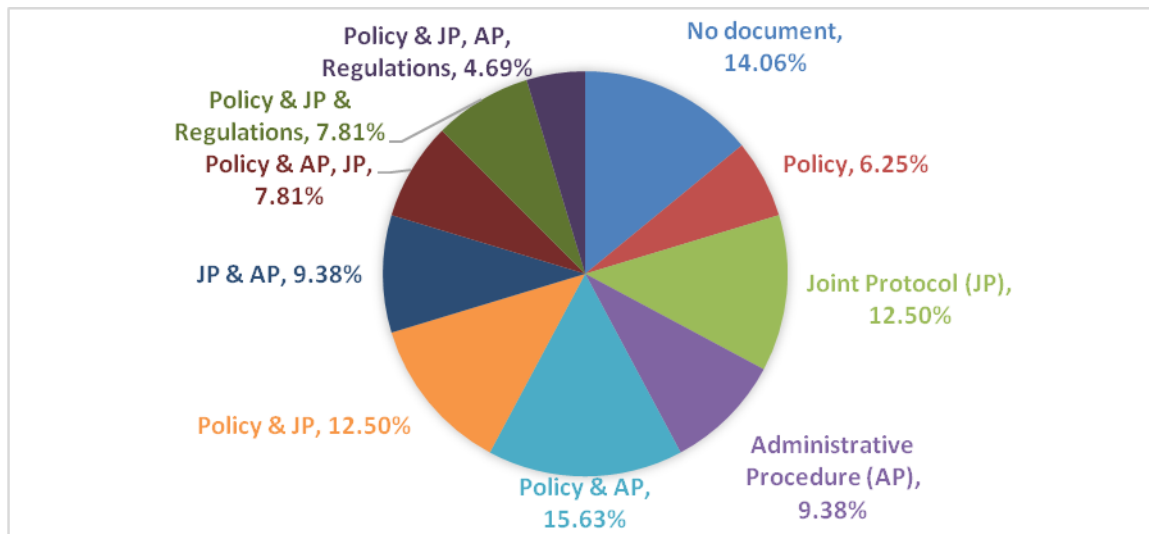


Figure 2. Percentage of school boards with each type of document.

Thirty-three boards had policies; a policy was defined as a document that contains a principle which guides organizational decision making. Twenty eight boards had administrative procedures; administrative procedures (AP) provide direction that is consistent with the organization’s policy. Six boards had regulations; regulations are rules that are enforced by an organization. Thirty-three boards had joint protocols; joint protocols (JP) are written procedures agreed upon by more than one organization. Typically, in the case of child abuse, the parties are school boards, CAS’s, and police. Examples of each type of document are included in Appendix B.

Length of documents. Table 2 shows the measures of central tendency of document page length.

Table 2
Measures of Central Tendency of Document Page Length

Document Type	Min.	Max.	Median	Mode	Mean
Policy	1	16	2	1	3
Administrative Procedure	1	41	9	7	13
Joint Protocol	7	155	21	21	32
Regulation	1	4	1	1	2

Table 2 reveals that joint protocols were much larger than the other types of documents.

Document dissemination. Approximately 41% (N = 26) of the boards stated in their policies that they would review their documentation with school personnel on annual basis, with even less (20%) (N = 13) stating that parents would be informed of the teacher’s duty to report at the start of each school year.

Procedures

The following subsection includes findings on the types of procedures school boards had on child abuse, and the persons involved in making a report.

Types of procedures. Almost all boards with publically available documents (81%) (N = 52) included procedures to follow if school personnel suspect that a child is in need of protection from a caregiver. Just under half (44%) (N = 28) included procedures to follow if the suspected offender is an employee or contractor of the board. Two boards even included procedures to follow if the suspected offender was a superintendent or director of the board. Thirty-six percent of school boards included procedures to follow if the abused student was over 16, while 25% of boards included procedures if the abuser was another student within the school.

School personnel involved in the reporting process. The analysis revealed that the most suggested person to consult with prior to making the report was the school’s principal (78%)

(N = 50). Sixty-three percent of boards also included the superintendent (63%) (N = 40) as a person to consult. Approximately 39% (N = 25) of the board policies stated that the school personnel could speak with another employee if they were unsure if their suspicions warranted making a report. Other suggested people to consult were guidance counselors, special education resource teachers, past teachers of the suspected victim, or a public health nurse. In addition, 16% (N = 10) of board policies stated that school personnel could consult with a school-based social worker.

Over half of the school board policies (55%) (N = 35) informed its employees regarding information that should be provided via a telephone conversation with the society. For example, policies stated that the reporting employee should provide his or her name and position as well as general information on the student such as the student's name, date of birth, name of parents, sibling information, home address, and telephone numbers. Policies also included that the reporting employee must provide details about the disclosure or suspicion: such as, what the student said and to whom, when and where the incident occurred, name of the alleged offender, and a brief description of any injuries or marks. Moreover, policies stated that if there was to be an investigation the reporting employee should ask the CAS intake worker for the time and location of the interview with the student, who is responsible for contacting the student's parents, and what information can be shared with the effected student and parents. Finally, policies informed employees that they should take note of the intake worker's name and contact information and to ask whether the situation would be investigated. If an investigation was deemed likely, the reporting employee was instructed to ask for the time and location of the interview with the student, to find out who is responsible for contacting the student's parents, and request to know what information, if any, might be shared with the affected student and

parents. Telephone numbers to local societies were included in 42% (N = 27) of procedures. Of the boards, 61% (N = 39) provided forms to fill out when school personnel are required to make a report. In addition, 17% (N = 11) of boards stated that a follow-up letter would be sent to the society that received the report. Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic's Policy included an example letter for its teachers. The reporting teacher is charged with writing a one page letter to the CAS worker that the teacher reported to asking the CAS worker to confirm that the report had been made and to provide information concerning the resolution of the matter. The teacher must make a copy of the letter for the principal's records as well. If the society decided not to investigate, 11% (N = 7) of boards stated that the reporting employee should make a note of the date, time, and name of the intake worker.

Support Systems

Lists of behavioral and physical indicators of abuse were included in 27% (N = 17) of board documents as a resource for teachers to use when they are concerned that a child may be in need of protection. Additional resources detailing how to properly respond to students that disclosed abuse were provided in 23% (N = 15) of school boards documents. Teachers in 53% (N = 34) of boards were informed how to keep personal records on the child. After making the report, 11% (N = 7) of board policies advised its employees to take time to process personal feelings. For example, Durham Catholic School Board stated that teachers should "contact support staff if necessary" (p. 3), while Niagara Catholic School Board stated that the teacher should "talk to someone you trust about your feelings" (p. 18). Eight percent of board policies (N = 5) informed personnel that supports are available through the boards' Employees' Assistance Program.

Training Opportunities

Across Ontario, 31% (N = 20) of school board policies stated that ongoing professional development opportunities for staff were provided. Currently, training is being administered by different sources. Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board stated that superintendents are responsible for ensuring school administrators receive yearly in-service training with regard to the Child and Family Service legislation and general administrative procedures. Principals would then be required to pass on the knowledge to other school personnel during a staff meeting in September. School boards such as Halton Catholic have decided to use their local Children's Aid Society as a resource for the in-service training of board employees regarding the protection of children. Of the school boards that did claim training would be provided, the level of information given on what the professional development entailed varied depending on the board. Algoma School Board stated that it sanctioned professional development seminars and workshops devoted to child abuse, as well as specialized training opportunities; however, no information was given on who would provide the training or how often the training would be provided. School boards such as St. Clair Catholic and Lambton Kent have stated that training would be provided to staff on an annual basis.

Community Relationship

Prior to making the report, 61% (N = 39) of the boards suggested the employee should consult with an intake worker with their local Children's Aid Society. Approximately 52% (N = 33) of board policies included processes to follow if CAS decided to interview the child at the school. Of the board policies, 36% (N = 23) included clear roles and responsibilities for staff and outside agencies such as CAS and local police forces. After the report was made to a society,

45% (N = 29) of boards included information on how the reporting employee would be updated about the case. For example, Durham School Board's joint protocol states "the C.A.S. will attempt to provide feedback to the referral source . . . The person making the referral from the school is encouraged to contact the C.A.S. worker for an update if feedback is not forthcoming" (p. 17). While Grand Erie and Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic's joint protocol stipulates that "at the conclusion of an investigation, CAS will forward an outcome letter to the employee/volunteer with a copy to the Facility Administrator (school principal or appropriate department supervisor) outlining the results of the investigation" (p. 1).

Discussion

School Board Documents Need to Be Updated

The relationship between joint protocols and collaboration. Teams function best when everyone understands their roles and responsibilities; therefore, school boards are urged to develop clear, well defined joint protocols with local CAS. Half of the school districts that were analyzed already had joint protocols in place. Joint protocols are developed in response to the specific difficulties that have arisen when service divisions and agencies such as school districts, Children's Aid Societies, and local police forces are required to work together. Morris and Wates (2006) authored a knowledge review to see how policies and practice address the needs of parents who are disabled. In combination with analyzing a survey completed in 2002 of 200 local authorities in England, the researchers developed a good practice survey and sent it to 40 local authorities in Wales and Northern Ireland. Focus groups were also held with five agencies. The researchers found that developing joint protocols was an important part of the process of achieving joint-working between agencies. A report by Kearney, Levin, Rosen, and Sainsbury

(2003) focuses on the policies and practices that promote integrated services to families that experience alcohol, drug, and mental health problems. The authors also state that creating joint protocols is an essential step to building partnerships and put forth that “the collaboration required to produce them [protocols] is also a model for good working practices in applying them” (p. 4). Table 3 provides the steps to successfully implement a protocol.

Table 3
Steps to Successfully Implement a Protocol

Before	During	After
Identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desired outcomes • key stakeholders • relevant legislation • what is already in place and what still needs to be integrated • gaps in working together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include instructions and role requirements • Be authoritative • Include legislation, policy, and procedure • Be easy to use • Be specific about new ways of working together and address key issues (sharing of resources) • Encourage organizations to work together for the good of the families affected by abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate protocol • Train employees • Measure effectiveness • Keep protocol up-to-date

Note. Summarized from “Families That Have Alcohol and Mental Health Problems: A Template for Partnership Working,” by P. Kearney, E. Levin, G. Rosen, and M. Sainsbury, 2003, Social Care Institute of Excellence.

Joint protocols allow local school boards and Children’s Aid Societies to set clear expectations for team members, and help to increase communication and trust between school personnel and CAS caseworkers.

Content of Documents

One can reasonably assume that procedures on reporting child abuse were created with the intended result of improving teacher reporting, which will, in turn, prevent children from

being further abused. This means that teachers need to be provided with enough information to successfully guide the teacher through the entire reporting process. The analysis revealed many school boards left out information that could have been beneficial to teachers who were required to report. School boards should include more comprehensive procedures that include a variety of abuse scenarios. For example, less than half (42%) (N = 27) of the boards included procedures to follow if the suspected abuser was a school employee, while 70% (N = 45) of school boards did not include abuse reporting procedures pertaining to students over the age of 15. Teachers need to be aware of the procedure to follow when the implicated person is another teacher, as the Child and Family Services Act (1990) overrides a teacher's responsibility to provide the implicated employee with a copy of an adverse report or any information about the report if the employee was alleged to have sexually abused a student. An adverse report is usually required under the regulations made under the Teaching Profession Act (1990), subsection 18 (1). If a teacher was not aware of the Child and Family Services Act's (1990) ability to override legislation and had informed the implicated teacher of the report prior to the CAS investigation, the implicated employee would have an opportunity to destroy evidence that would be instrumental to the case. Teachers also need to be aware of the school procedures to help children who have been abused but are over the age of 15 as the Child and Family Services Act (1990) only covers children from 0–15 years old. If a student who is over the age 15 of discloses they have been abused "the principal/designate will advise the student to report the abuse to the Police Service, and to consult with appropriate community agencies . . . With the student's permission, the Principal/designate may make the contacts for the student" (Ontario North East, p. 6). However, if there are siblings "who might be at risk, the principal, and/or the person with this knowledge, shall notify the Police and the Children's Aid Society" (Durham Catholic, p. 5).

School board policies should also include information on keeping personal records on the child (53%) (N = 34), telephone numbers of local Societies (47%) (N = 30), common indicators of abuse (27%) (N = 17), and how to respond to students that have disclosed abuse (23%) (N = 15). These topics are meant to support teachers in recognizing and coping with disclosures of abuse. Personal records serve two purposes. First, notes may provide the teacher with enough information that warrants the teacher to suspect that the child is being abused. Second, this information can be subpoenaed in court if a case arises; therefore, records must only contain facts, observations, and direct conversations with the alleged victim. Less than 30% of board policies contained lists of common abuse indicators. As a result, many Ontario teachers may not know what to look for, especially in cases that are emotional or sexual in nature as symptoms of these types of abuse have been reported by teachers as not being easily identifiable. By themselves, behavioral or physical indicators do not prove abuse; however they do reveal that closer attention needs to be paid to the child in case he or she is in need of protection. In addition, it is essential for teachers to understand how to properly respond to students that have disclosed they were abused, as several major child abuse cases have been dismissed in court because it was decided that the initial interviewers had biased the children (Crosson-Tower, 2003). Providing teachers with the above resources may help alleviate some of the stress that accompanies making a report by removing the fear of the unknown. However, these resources can only be of use if the teacher is informed and is knowledgeable about the policy and how to access it prior to making a report of suspected abuse. Teachers can be informed of their board's policy during board sanctioned training opportunities.

Minimal training stated in policy documents to help teachers understand their role and responsibilities. Many researchers have argued for teachers to receive regular and consistent

training on child abuse (Beck et al., 1994; Dombrowski & Grischler, 2003; Kenny, 2001, 2004; Tite, 1993, 1994; Walsh & Farrell, 2008). It was found that approximately 70% (N = 44) of school board policies did not include information on how or when teachers would receive professional development on child abuse. This does not mean that professional development on child abuse was not occurring in schools; however, as policies are intended to provide the rules and guidelines of an organization, a lack of information in the policies on professional development may result in administrators overlooking the need for such training.

Lack of stated supports for teachers in policy documents. It was discovered that only 10% of school board policies provided information on the available supports to help teachers cope emotionally after making a report of suspected abuse, with only 8% of school board policies informing teachers that they could receive assistance through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Of the boards that did mention supports, most suggested that the reporting employee discuss their feelings with a colleague or someone they trusted. It has been shown (Skinner, 1999) that professionals who make reports of abuse can experience a multitude of negative consequences such as extreme nervousness, anger, and hopelessness. If school boards provide effective support networks, both within and beyond the school context, a teacher could be provided with a greater level of confidence in his or her ability to cope. Therefore, school boards should consider increasing the level of organizational supports provided for teachers.

Increased support could be accomplished through a variety of measures. First, school boards should ensure that all employees are aware that they are able to receive counselling through the board's employee assistance program (EAP). This can be accomplished by first updating the board's policy to include a clause stating that supports are available to the teacher through the board's EAP. Next, boards can remind teachers by sending an email through the

board's email listserv and by providing a verbal reminder at a school meeting at the beginning of the school year. Thirdly, school boards could hire a social worker for a school or for a family of schools. These social workers would work as a resource for teachers prior to, during, and after making a report of suspected abuse. For example, if a teacher is unsure of whether their concerns warrant making a report, the teacher would be able to discuss her concerns with the social worker. While this consultation would not remove the teacher's responsibility to report, the social worker could help guide the teacher through the process of reporting in order to ensure procedures were followed correctly. The school social worker could also serve as an emotional support to the teacher after the report by offering counselling services to the affected teacher. Finally, the school social worker could work as a bridge to Children's Aid Societies. For example, if a child and their family were being investigated by CAS, the school social worker could work with CAS to help develop a school plan to better support the affected child and family. In addition, the school social worker would be responsible for updating the child's teacher or reporting employee about the status of the case.

Lastly, child protection teams or crisis teams can be formed. The Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (OCAN), Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, and the Department of Health and Human Services in the United States of America (Goldman, Wolcott, Kennedy, 2003) provided 3-year grants to develop and implement projects that addressed child abuse identification, prevention, and treatment in collaboration with preschool, elementary, and secondary school boards. The projects identified that enlisting school staff in efforts to prevent and intervene in cases of child abuse improved outcomes for these children. The teams would be composed of various professionals within the school and may include the principal or vice principal, teachers, the school social worker (if employed by the board),

educational assistants, and other school staff. The team would be dedicated to responding to child abuse reports and other school-based crises. As previously mentioned, the school social worker or child protection team would not remove the reporting teacher's duty to report suspected abuse; instead, the team would be responsible for supporting the reporting teacher before, during, and after making the call to CAS. In addition, the team would be responsible for collaborating with local CAS in order to create a school safety/success plan for the abused child. By bringing together professionals from different perspectives, children can be better served because team members have specific roles and expertise.

Lack of Communication With Parents

Eighty percent of school board policies failed to state how they would inform parents of the school's duty to report suspected abuse. One board stated that its document would be shared if the parents asked to see it; however, it did not state that it would inform parents of the board's duty to report prior to a case occurring. This is disconcerting, as it has been argued that by providing parents with "fair notice of the school professional's duty to report" it will help to "mitigate feelings of betrayal and guilt following a report being made" (Dombrowski & Grischler, 2006, p. 236) . Therefore, school boards need to inform parents of the board's roles and responsibilities regarding reporting child abuse by ensuring that notices are sent to parents at the start of every school year outlining the board's responsibilities to report suspected abuse. This notice could be included in the school's September newsletter and could also provide a list of parenting resources for those who might require them. This information should also be included on the school's website. Additionally, schools can take a preventive approach to stopping abuse by holding parenting seminars for parents. These seminars could cover topics on

parenting skills such as appropriate child discipline, and could occur during parent/teacher night, or on another occasion when parents are most likely to be at the school. Parents would be reminded of the school's duty to report during the seminars. These options enable schools to become more effective partners in the attempt to stop abuse.

Limitations of Study

Just because something is not written in the policy documents does not mean that it is not being done at school. Information on topics such as professional development, or policy review procedures may be kept in a separate policy or document which was not read for the analysis. For example, St. Clair Catholic School Board stated that "there are corresponding procedures relating to hiring, staff training, responding to students with special needs, investigating employee misconduct, and cooperating with appropriate investigative agencies (St. Clair Catholic School Board, p. 1). Likewise, just because something is written within the document does not mean that it is actually happening within schools. Further research is needed to evaluate how these policies are understood and implemented and to try to increase professional capacity to address child abuse cases.

Conclusion

Child abuse is a multifaceted topic that is fragmented across international, federal, and provincial agencies. Reporting abuse affects the child, the child's family, the person who made the report, and society as a whole. As the researcher for the current study is a teacher, the question of how to stop child abuse was more narrowly framed by asking what the teacher and wider education system can do to help stop abuse. Throughout the province it appeared that

many school board policies, government documents, and even CAS websites failed to include valuable information to help inform teachers of their role and responsibilities in reporting suspected abuse. Minimal supports and training were reported to be in place to assist teachers in reporting child abuse within school board policy documents. Of the school boards that did state training would be provided, the level of detail provided varied depending on the board and the parties responsible for training the board's teachers. While the policy analysis revealed that there are some supports stated to be available for teachers, more work is needed to see how supports are implemented and to discern the subsequent effect on teacher's reporting practices. More work is also needed to outline what academic support (in addition to socio-emotional supports) children need that have been victims of abuse.

To conclude, children depend on many adults as they grow up—parents, teachers, other community members. A child needs food, clothing, shelter, as well as love and attention. Children deserve to be safe and, if caregivers cannot provide that safety, educators must intervene in order to help vulnerable youth. The system has a responsibility to help children who are in need of protection. Teachers are already committed to improving the lives of the students in their classrooms and, with the proper training, teachers could do even more to support at-risk youth.

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Appendix A:

List of Analysed School Districts and Links to Documents

School District	Avg. Daily Enrollment	Link to Documents
Thunder Bay Catholic	7396	http://www.tbcdsb.on.ca/files/u16/604_Child_in_Need_of_Protection_0.pdf
Kenora Catholic	1355	http://www.kcdsb.on.ca/upload/documents/ap315-safe-schools-child-abuse-january-2012.pdf
Keewatin-Patricia	4491	http://www.kpdsb.on.ca/SiteAdmin_PDF/Policy/310.pdf ; and, http://www3.kpdsb.on.ca/boardInformation/docs/policies/310B.pdf
Northwest Catholic	1,113	http://www.tncdsb.on.ca/new/resources/PRO%20H01%20Child%20Abuse%20Reporting%20Procedures.pdf
Lakehead	8862	http://www.lakeheadschoools.ca/sites/default/files/docs/policy_procedures/6040_Reporting_of_Children_Need_Protection_pol.pdf ; and, http://www.lakeheadschoools.ca/sites/default/files/docs/policy_procedures/6040_Reporting_of_Children_Need_Protection_pro.pdf
Rainy River	2338	http://www.rrdsb.com/sites/www.rrdsb.com/files/brrdadmin/policies/section4/4%2000%20Reporting%20Suspected%20Child%20Abuse.pdf ; and, http://www.rrdsb.com/sites/www.rrdsb.com/files/brrdadmin/procedures/section4/4%2000%20Reporting%20Suspected%20Child%20Abuse.pdf
Superior-Greenstone	1424	http://www.sgdsb.on.ca/upload/documents/510---suspected-child-abuse-june-10-09.pdf
Superior North Catholic	637	N.A.
Ontario North East	7096	http://docushare.dsb1.edu.on.ca/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-15512/2.1.3.pdf

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Northeastern Catholic	2108	http://www.ncdsb.on.ca/board/pdfs/pm/F-07.pdf
Nippissing-Parry Sound Catholic	2691	http://www.npsc.ca/media/69965/s_10.0_-_prevention_of_abuse_and_protection_of_students_from_potential_abuse.pdf
Huron-Superior Catholic	4393	http://www.hscdsb.on.ca/Userfiles/companies/1/file/POLICIES/Students/8000.pdf
Algoma	9159	http://www.adsb.on.ca/uploads/info/listings/6.02.ChildAbuseReportingPolicy.pdf
Near North	9565	http://www.nearnorthschools.ca/board/Administrative%20Guidelines/Partnerships/School%20and%20Children%27s%20Aid%20Society%20Protocol.pdf
Rainbow	12604	http://www.rainbowschools.ca/boardroom/Policies/POL6.09.pdf
Sudbury Catholic	5754	N.A.
Simcoe County	48207	http://www.scdsb.on.ca/Board/Procedures%20Documents/A7620_Children-in-Need-of-Protection.pdf
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic	12433	http://www.scdsb.on.ca/Board/Procedures%20Documents/A7620_Children-in-Need-of-Protection.pdf
Trillium Lakelands	15847	http://tldsbc.ca/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=319&cf_id=30
Bluewater	15933	http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/director/policies/BP_6850-D.pdf ; and, http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/director/Procedures/AP_6850-D.pdf
Bruce-Grey Catholic	3347	Document emailed to researcher using researcher's Queen's University email account.
Upper Canada	26044	http://www.fixcas.com/social/finalVersion01.pdf
Eastern Ontario Catholic	12590	http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca/policies/B2-15_Duty_to_Report.pdf ; and, http://www.fixcas.com/social/finalVersion01.pdf

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Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic	13294	http://www.pvnccdsb.on.ca/uploads/104/Doc_635062951210230276.pdf ; and, http://www.pvnccdsb.on.ca/uploads/104/Doc_635062951036740276.pdf
Kawartha Pine Ridge	31124	http://kprcontentlibrary.kprdsb.ca:8080/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-1121/ES-1.1%20Safe%2c%20Caring%20and%20Restorative%20Schools.pdf ; and, http://kprcontentlibrary.kprdsb.ca:8080/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-955/ES-1.1.4%20Safe%2c%20Caring%20and%20Restorative%20Schools%20-%20Child%20in%20Nee.pdf
Ottawa Catholic	35657	http://www.ottawacatholicschools.ca/images/policies/Section-F-4/OCSB-Policy-F-4-22.pdf
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic	10699	http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/policies/Policies%20Document%20Library/S-2008-02-1%20Child%20in%20Need%20of%20Protection%20Policy%20Statement.pdf ; and, http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/policies/Policies%20Document%20Library/S-2008-02-1%20Child%20in%20Need%20of%20Protection%20Policy%20Statement.pdf
Renfrew County Catholic	4216	Document emailed to researcher using researcher's Queen's University email account.
Renfrew County	8848	http://www.rcdsb.on.ca/uploads/83/Doc_634931738953920805.pdf ; and, http://www.rcdsb.on.ca/uploads/83/Doc_635065407866342785.pdf
Hastings and Prince Edward County	14763	http://www.hpedsb.on.ca/ec/policiesprocedures/archive/Administrative%20Procedures/300%20Students/Procedure%20325%20Reporting%20Child%20Abuse.pdf

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Ottawa -Carleton	66467	http://www.ottawacatholicschools.ca/images/policies/Section-F-4/OCSB-Policy-F-4-22.pdf
Limestone	19038	http://www.limestone.on.ca/board/documents/procedures/AP-341.pdf
Niagara Catholic	21467	http://www.niagaracatholic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Family-and-Children-Services-Board-Protocol.pdf
Dufferin-Peel Catholic	79713	http://www.dpcdsb.org/NR/rdonlyres/968A5950-6EC9-41F5-AC7D-B146380BA78C/121578/0653.pdf ; and, http://www.dpcdsb.org/NR/rdonlyres/FDCCFC92-A298-4DF9-8DB6-550D085FC677/123937/ChildinNeedofProtection.pdf ; and, http://www.fixcas.com/social/CAP2002.pdf
Peel	143015	http://www.fixcas.com/social/CAP2002.pdf
Toronto	234828	http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Policies,ProceduresForms/Detail.aspx?docId=281
Durham	64874	https://www.intranet.durham.edu.on.ca/Applications/DDSBPPI.nsf/0/8525751600711c4f852566330067b625/\$FILE/Child%20Abuse%20Guidelines.pdf
Toronto Catholic	85195	http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Pages/S17.aspx ; and, http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Documents/Other/Procedures%20for%20the%20Investigation%20and%20Reporting%20of%20Child%20Abuse.pdf
Durham Catholic	21122	http://www1.dcdsb.ca/images/DCDSB/CEC/lizbeckstead/Policies/PO607%20Student%20Protection.pdf
Halton	55078	http://www.hdsb.ca/Policy/ChildAbuseProcedure.pdf

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Halton Catholic	28521	http://www.hcdsb.org/Board/Policies/PoliciesProcedures/II-20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Protection%20of%20Students.pdf ; and, http://www.hcdsb.org/Board/Policies/PoliciesProcedures/VI-32%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Protection%20of%20Students.pdf
York Region	111827	http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/pdfs/p&p/a/policy/610.pdf
York Catholic	52218	Document under review
Upper Grand	31195	http://www.ugdsb.on.ca/uploadedFiles/policies/502.pdf
Lambton Kent	21385	http://www.lkdsb.net/Board-Info/Policies/Child%20Abuse%20Policy.pdf
Grand Erie	24967	Document emailed to researcher using researcher's Queen's University email account.
Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic	9293	Document emailed to researcher using researcher's Queen's University email account.
Waterloo Catholic	20009	https://www.wcdsb.ca/AP_Memos/PDF/APS020.pdf
St. Clair Catholic	8492	http://www.st-clair.net/Data/Sites/1/media/public/Policies/3.13%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect.pdf
Windsor-Essex Catholic	21027	http://www.wecdsb.on.ca/pdf/policies/SC08.pdf ; and, http://www.wecdsb.on.ca/pdf/policies/PrSC08.pdf
Thames Valley	69179	http://www.tvdsb.ca/files/filesystem/policydocs%5Cchild_abuse_&_protection.pdf ; and, http://www.tvdsb.ca/files/filesystem/Reporting%20Suspected%20Child%20Neglect%20Abuse%20Procedure.pdf
Wellington Catholic	7630	http://www.wellingtoncssb.edu.on.ca/DistrictOffice/Policies/Documents/P.SMW.G.1%20Child%20Abuse%20and%20Protection.pdf

Children in Need of Protection: Reporting Policies in Ontario School Boards

London Catholic	18399	http://www.ldcsb.on.ca/Board/policies/Section%20J%20%20Students/J-5-02-Children-in-Need-of-Protection%202010.pdf
Huron-Perth Catholic	4156	http://www.huronperthcatholic.ca/Portals/0/Policies/3D11.pdf
Avon Maitland	15171	http://yourschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/pdf/admin_procedures/students//346-Children%20in%20Need%20of%20Protection.pdf
Waterloo	58040	http://staff.wrdsb.ca/policyprocedure/files/2012/07/AP1490-Child-Abuse1.pdf
Greater Essex County	33815	N.A.
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic	27002	N.A.
Hamilton-Wentworth	27002	N.A.
Niagara	34617	N.A.
James Bay Lowlands	177	N.A.
Moose Factory Island	600	N.A.
Moosonee	275	N.A.
Penetanguishene Protestant	250	N.A.

Appendix B:
Examples of Document Types

Type of Document	Link to example
Policy	http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Pages/S17.aspx
Regulations	http://www.tcdsb.org/Board/Policies/Pages/S17.aspx
Administrative Procedure	http://www.hdsb.ca/Policy/ChildAbuseProcedure.pdf
Joint Protocol	http://www.niagaracatholic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Family-and-Children-Services-Board-Protocol.pdf