



UNLEARN ANTISEMITISM

PARENTS' GUIDE: NAVIGATING ANTISEMITIC
INCIDENTS AT SCHOOL



Parents' Guide: Navigating Antisemitic Incidents at School

What should parents do if their child experiences antisemitism at school?

Take time to talk to your child about the incident, gently probe to gather the facts, and listen to their feelings.

If your child has experienced or witnessed an antisemitic incident at school, **inform their teacher and / or principal as soon as possible.**

Antisemitic incidents have been reported at schools across Ontario, with harmful impacts on students, teachers, and school communities.

Organizations like [CIJA](#) can help you access additional community-based support, but **it is essential that, as a first step, you report any incident to your child's school.**

What should your school do?

Ontario's Ministry of Education has established several policies to address hate in the school environment. Here are some relevant excerpts to support parents of children who have experienced or witnessed antisemitism at their school.

Provincial Code of Conduct

The Province of Ontario has a [code of conduct](#) governing the behaviour of everyone in schools. It requires all members of a school community to "respect and treat others fairly, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability."

No member of a school community may "engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviours motivated by hate or bias."

School boards are responsible to develop effective intervention strategies and respond to all infractions related to the standards for respect, civility, responsible citizenship, and safety.

Boards are also responsible to provide opportunities for all staff to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to promote student achievement and wellbeing in a safe, inclusive, and accepting learning environment.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

For Students

In Ontario, schools are required to implement a [bullying prevention and intervention plan](#), which must:

- Include a comprehensive strategy to address incidents of bullying, including appropriate and timely responses
- Require that programs, interventions, and other supports be made available for students who have been bullied, witnessed incidents of bullying, or engaged in bullying
- Include procedures to allow students to report bullying incidents safely and in a way that will minimize potential reprisal

School Boards must ensure that all their employees take all allegations of bullying seriously and act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner when responding to students who disclose or report bullying incidents.

For Parents

A school board's bullying prevention and intervention policies must include a culturally relevant and accessible communication and outreach strategy to provide:

- Information on whom parents can contact with questions or concerns
- How parents can access more information about bullying prevention and reporting
- A clear path for parents to follow should they need to report bullying including:
 - Where a parent can file a report and with whom
 - What steps will be taken following a report made by a parent
 - A process a parent can follow if they are not satisfied with the school's response

Following a serious incident, the principal must notify parents of the involved students, except in certain circumstances, and must invite the parents to discuss supports for their child.

Progressive Discipline

[Progressive discipline](#) uses a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and promote and foster positive behaviours.

When inappropriate behaviour occurs, disciplinary measures should shift the focus from solely punitive to both corrective and supportive. Schools should apply a range of interventions, supports, and consequences. In some circumstances, short-term suspension may be effective. In the case of a serious incident, the student's long-term suspension or expulsion may be required.

Principals must suspend a student, and consider referring that student for expulsion, for any incident under subsection [306\(1\) of the Education Act](#), including bullying, that is motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor (e.g., socio-economic status, or appearance).

Boards must ensure that all employees who work directly with students – including administrators, teachers, and other school staff – respond to any student behaviour that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate if, in the employee’s opinion, it is safe to respond to it. The purpose of responding is to stop and correct it immediately so that the students involved can learn that it is unacceptable.

School boards must provide supports for all students who are affected by serious student incidents and all inappropriate behaviour and for those who engage in these types of incidents. In responding to any incident, board employees who work directly with students must act in a timely, sensitive, and supportive manner.

A board employee who becomes aware that a student may have engaged in a serious incident must report the matter to the principal promptly, by no later than the end of the school day. The principal must investigate all reports submitted by board employees.

Religious Accommodation

As part of [their equity and inclusive education policy and implementation plan](#), boards must include a religious accommodation guideline in keeping with the Ontario Human Rights Code, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed (e.g., religion) and imposes a duty to accommodate.

Accordingly, boards are expected to take appropriate steps to provide religious accommodation for students and staff.

Data Collection

[Boards are required](#) to collect and analyze data on the nature of hate and / or bias-motivated incidents to inform board policies and board and school improvement plans. They are also required to report annually to the Ministry of Education the total number of these incidents.

You are not alone

If your child experiences antisemitism at school, they are not alone. They are not the only ones having this experience, and there are dedicated people and resources available to assist you and them.

Teachers and school administrators are there to help. So are many community-based organizations that can assist you in navigating this process and providing additional support to your child and family. Please contact [CIJA](#) to learn more.