



June 24, 2014

A message to families about the anti-bullying online reporting tool

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to supporting students to feel safe and accepted in their schools and communities. Last year we heard from over 1,000 students, parents and residents about bullying in Saskatchewan. As well, the Ministry of Education has reviewed the actions that other provinces have taken and researched what approaches are most effective in combating bullying. In November 2013 we released *Saskatchewan's Action Plan to Address Bullying and Cyberbullying*. The action plan can be accessed here: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/live/education-learning-and-child-care/anti-bullying>.

A key component of the plan was to expand options for students across the province to report bullying incidents. The Ministry of Education is pleased to announce that children and youth will be able to report bullying incidents anonymously through a mobile-enabled online tool. The tool can be accessed through SaskTel's "I Am Stronger" website, <http://iamstronger.ca/> using a computer or mobile device. The website also provides information and resources that would be of interest to families.

As a government, we understand the importance of engaging with students, parents, schools, school divisions, school community councils and agencies in the community. Since bullying-related incidents often originate at school or impact other students, school divisions/schools are included as first responders. However, we recognize that bullying behaviour is a complex issue, for which there are no quick fixes, and welcome the involvement of families in working toward solutions.

The anonymous online reporting tool will not be a replacement for emergency services. It will be made clear on the website that if the matter is urgent in nature or if it is a life-or-death situation, the person in crisis should contact 9-1-1 immediately.

When reporting a bullying incident it is mandatory to identify the school and community. Voluntarily, a student may share more personal information including name and contact information as well as the expressed consent to be contacted. Space is also available for a more detailed incident reporting.

At the ministry, we are pleased to provide the children and youth of our province with this valuable service. While the response to a reported bullying incident will reflect the policy and practices within each school division, it is important that provincial access is consistent.

Included in this letter are several frequently asked questions. If you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Gabel, Director of Programs for the Student Achievement and Supports Branch at 306-787-1843 or at kevin.gabel@gov.sk.ca.

Q: Where will children and youth go to report a bullying incident?

A: Children and youth can go to the “I Am Stronger” website and click on the “Report” tab.

From here they can choose to submit an online report.

Q: What information do the students have to report?

A: When a bullying incident is reported, there are two sections to complete. The first part is mandatory and requires the school and community to be identified. The second part is voluntary and allows for the sharing of more personal information including name and contact information as well as the expressed consent to be contacted. Space is also included for more detailed incident reporting.

Q: What happens once a report is made?

A: When an online report is submitted, it will be redirected to personnel in the school division where the report originated.

Q: Is the online reporting tool appropriate in a crisis situation?

A: The anonymous online reporting tool will not be a replacement for emergency services. It will be made clear on the website that if the matter is urgent in nature or if it is a life-or-death situation, the person in crisis should contact 911 immediately.

For children and youth that need to talk with someone immediately, contact information and a link for Kids Help Phone will be readily available on the “I Am Stronger” website. Kids Help Phone provides free, anonymous and confidential phone and online professional counselling for youth 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Q: How is the privacy of children and youth protected?

A: Under the *Local Authority Freedom of Information Act* (LAFOIP), school divisions have the ability to collect private information about students. Before a student is able to share any personal information on the form, they will have to provide consent to be contacted. They will also be informed that the information being gathered is only being used to help resolve the situation and will not be used for other purposes.

Q: Will there be access to the online reporting tool during school breaks?

A: Through coordinated efforts between school divisions and the Ministry of Education the online tool will remain active during extended school breaks. The government is also working with a third party to enable Saskatchewan children and youth to report bullying incidents by phone or text. It is anticipated this service will be launched in fall 2014.

Q: Will all schools in the province be involved with the online reporting tool?

A: Yes. At the time of its launch, all provincial school divisions will have access to the online tool and an invitation will be extended to Saskatchewan independent and First Nations schools.

Q: What languages can the online reporting tool support?

A: Students will be able to report bullying incidents in English and in French.

As a government, we are pleased that so many families have offered their support and we look forward to future opportunities to work together as the implementation of the action plan continues.

Sincerely,



Dan Florizone