



# **PROTOCOL**

BETWEEN

**RAINY RIVER DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

AND

**RAINY RIVER DISTRICT WOMEN'S  
SHELTER OF HOPE**

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

The Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope and the Rainy River District School Board are committed to supporting decisions made by abused women at the Women's Emergency Shelter of the Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope. We are also committed to ensuring that children who reside at the shelter are welcomed into the school environment and provided with care and compassion within that environment.

The Rainy River District School Board and the Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope are committed to ensuring, to the best of our ability, the safety and security of abused women and their children within the environment of the school and the shelter. We recognize the special needs of abused women and their child/ren and are committed to working with abused women to ensure that those needs are recognized, communicated, and respected. Safety for abused women and their child/ren is our primary concern.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RAINY RIVER DISTRICT WOMEN'S SHELTER OF HOPE:**

### 1.1 When mothers and child/ren arrive at the Women's Emergency Shelter:

The mother will decide, for reasons of safety and security, whether her children will return to their original school in the Rainy River District, attend school in Atikokan, or make other arrangements for the provision of schooling for the duration of their residency. The importance of their child/ren's education will be emphasized.

### 1.2 Emergency shelter staff will discuss with the mother:

- the location and names of schools in Atikokan and within the District
- transportation arrangements and schedules available
- safety and security issues for her and her child/ren
- who to contact at school to determine what the child/ren need to bring with them to school, e.g. supplies and fees
- who to contact at school regarding registration, safety, and security issues

### 1.3 Emergency shelter staff will:

Inform the mother that it is her legal obligation to cause her child/ren in her custody to attend school. Where safety and security risks prevent this, the mother will be encouraged to contact the principal of the home school as soon as possible, to indicate that the children are safe and in her custody.

- 1.4 Emergency shelter staff will provide the mother with information relating to the custody of her child/ren and make referrals to legal counsel when appropriate.
- Mothers will be made aware that if there is no custody and access order, schools must provide both parents access to the child/ren.
  - Mothers will be made aware that if there is a custody/access order, schools must adhere to those orders and copies of custody/access orders should be provided to the principal of the appropriate school.
- 1.5 Emergency shelter staff will inform the mother that once she registers her child/ren at school, it is her responsibility to notify the school of absences, special circumstances, etc.
- 1.6 Emergency shelter staff will inform the mother that in order for them to speak on her behalf with school officials, she must sign a release of information form. Staff will inform school officials whether or not this form has been signed. Information to be shared with the school may include discharges, forwarding addresses, extended absences, safety concerns, etc. If the mother does not want school to contact the old school, this needs to be relayed to the current school, and the mother will be encouraged to provide as much educational background information about her child/ren as possible to the school.
- 1.7 When mothers and their child/ren leave the Emergency Shelter and the child/ren have been enrolled at school during their stay:
- Mothers will be made aware that it is her responsibility to notify the school that her child/ren will not be returning to school.
  - Emergency shelter staff will encourage the mother to return any school texts or equipment or the emergency shelter staff will return these items to the school.
  - The forwarding address of the mother and her child/ren will be supplied to the principal with the permission of the mother.
  - In order to effect consistent communication between the School Board and the Emergency Shelter, the Executive Director of the shelter is designated as the appropriate contact person for the shelter.
  - The Executive Director or designate will be the contact person for the Director of Education regarding any concerns or issues in relation to the established protocol.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATORS:**

- 2.1 It is recognized that in order to provide for the safety and security of children, principals need to be kept aware of any situation that could put the child/ren and mothers at risk. This information should be provided to the principal by the mother. In the short term, the safety and security of the enrolling child/ren will take precedence over scholastic program requirements.

- 2.2 In the short term, should educational records be required and written authorization has been completed by the mother, principals will verbally communicate with each other, information pertinent to determining the child/ren's current academic situation. In the longer term, normal procedures for the transfer of school records should apply.
- 2.3 Copies of court orders regarding the custody and access of children will assist principals in keeping the child/ren safe. These copies will be securely filed in the child/ren's Ontario Student Record.
- 2.4 Should the principal need to contact the mother at the shelter, the principal will call the shelter and leave a name and number, requesting that the call be returned by the mother. In an emergency situation, the principal will speak to the Executive Director or designate.
- 2.5 Principals will ensure that the child/ren's re-entry to the school is completed as smoothly as possible.
- 2.6 With the permission of the mother, the principal will inform school personnel of any issues that may be relevant to the safety and security of the child.
- 2.7 Any information shared by the mother and/or the child/ren is to remain confidential and shared only with other personnel as required for issues of safety and security, or as mandated by law.

### **STUDENT RE-ENTRY:**

- 3.1 When a mother is planning to leave the shelter, and return to her community of origin, and registers her child/ren in her custody in their original school, the following process should be followed:
  - ❖ *Women's Shelter of Hope staff will encourage the mother to contact the principal regarding the planned re-entry date, or staff will contact the principal regarding the planned re-entry date on behalf of the mother should she provide written permission to do so.*
- 3.2 Women's Shelter of Hope staff will encourage mothers to provide principals with copies of any relevant custody and access orders.
- 3.3 Women's Shelter of Hope staff will encourage mothers to provide principals with any information regarding safety and security issues.
- 3.4 Women's Shelter of Hope staff may discuss issues as outlined in 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 with the principal, should the mother provide them with written permission to do so.

- 3.5 The Women’s Shelter of Hope can and will provide follow-up and outreach support services to women and their child/ren, subsequent to them leaving the emergency shelter, and subsequent to the woman making such a request. An emphasis will be placed on the importance of an expedient re-entry into school.

**DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT:**

We, the undersigned, agree that in order to effectively work towards ending violence against women, while considering the best interests of the child/ren, we must work collaboratively, and we therefore affirm our commitment to this Protocol.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director  
Rainy River District Women’s Shelter of Hope

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Education  
Rainy River District School Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date