

## Appendix E

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1. **How do I know what to report?**

Your responsibility is to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse, not clear-cut evidence. You will not always have this evidence, but your close contact with children will sometimes lead you to believe or to be suspicious that something is happening to the child that could be abusive.

#### 2. **What if a superior disagrees?**

If a superior disagrees with your suspicions and decision to report, it is still your responsibility to report to CAS. The reporting protocol of the Board does not prohibit you from reporting directly. Your School Board's policy supports your responsibility to report directly to the CAS

#### 3. **What happens if I do not report?**

If you do not report your suspicions, the child could possibly remain in an abusive situation and, if you are a professional or school official, you could be liable for a \$1,000 fine and/or one year in jail.

#### 4. **What happens if I report a case and it turns out that it is not abuse?**

There are no consequences to legitimate reporting and you are protected in this if your suspicions are based on reasonable evidence. A CAS worker will help you with your suspicions and will not proceed with an investigation unless they feel that it is legitimate. It is not your responsibility to determine that child abuse has occurred; that is the responsibility of the police and the Children's Aid Society.

#### 5. **Does the CAS have the right to interview a child in school without the parents' knowledge or permission?**

Absolutely, yes. It is the part of the investigative process. Interviews always begin with the victim, witnesses, and the offending adults are always interviewed last. During school hours the child is in the care of the school and is in a place of safety.

#### 6. **What do I do if a child says, "if I tell you something, will you promise not to tell anyone else?"**

Sometimes we make deals with children that are inappropriate. All children must know that we respect their confidence, however, there are times when things must be reported. There are some deals you cannot make with children.

#### 7. **What happens after a report is made to the Children's Aid Society?**

The Children's Aid Society will contact the referral source and attempt to clarify the information being reported. The information may be shared with the police for a joint investigation. The role of the CAS is to determine child safety while the role of the police is to investigate any criminal acts. The CAS role



will be to help the family alleviate any pain or harm they are suffering and to help develop a plan to solve problems that they may be experiencing.

### **8. As a teacher, what if I suspect a colleague of abuse?**

The CFSA takes precedence over other legislation including the Teaching Profession Act (TPA) and its regulations. Regulation 18(1)(b) states that teachers must furnish a member with a copy in writing of an adverse report. In all cases where teachers report their suspicions of abuse of a child by a member of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, they are advised to contact the provincial or local OECTA office for advice and direction in regard to compliance to 18(1)(b) as well as other issues. No teacher should advise his or her colleague of the report to the CAS before obtaining this advice.

### **9. How can the school be of help to an abused child?**

This is an extremely important concept for professional educators to understand. Child abuse is a betrayal of trust. In the long run, if not detected, it is very harmful to children. It deals with distorted relationships and the real harm done to children is that they form relationships that are diminished and distrustful, often leading to dysfunctional adult lifestyles. The school's role is to:

- believe the child when he/she reports abuse;
- support the child through the process by being a friend and showing that you care;
- get them help that they need to resolve their crisis;
- stand by them during their time of crisis;
- be aware of their emotional needs at this time.