
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019EDUC0120-002248
Nov. 21, 2019

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Student safety increased through school-police partnerships

VICTORIA – A stronger partnership between schools and police is helping keep more B.C. students safe.

A new collaborative and comprehensive resource for use by schools and police is intended to ensure consistent practices are followed provincewide and will help to proactively identify risk, guide interventions and provide supports for students when they need them most. RCMP and municipal police chiefs from throughout B.C. gathered at the Parliament Buildings on Nov. 21, 2019, to stand united against school violence.

“Student safety is our number one priority, and by working together with our education, law enforcement and community partners, we are taking important action today to support young people earlier before they are tempted to go down a pathway of crime and violence,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “Our government continues to be the only province in Canada with a comprehensive provincial strategy for addressing and responding to harmful and threatening behaviour. We want all B.C. students to learn in a safe environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation and violence.”

The new guidelines build on the expanded provincial Erase (expect respect and a safe education) strategy, designed to foster school connectedness, address bullying, prevent violence and provide support to school districts during serious incidents. As part of Erase, designated safe school co-ordinators have been established in every B.C. school district and independent school to prevent and respond to student safety issues, including gang involvement, possession of firearms and acts of violence. Many of these co-ordinators are part of multi-disciplinary safe school teams that include police partners.

A 2017 report from the Illegal Firearms Task Force highlighted the need for the K-12 education and law enforcement sectors to improve co-ordination and facilitate the sharing of information where safety concerns outweigh rights to privacy. In response, the ministries of Education, and Public Safety and Solicitor General collaborated on the development of a new set of provincial school-police guidelines in consultation with education, community and police partners. These include Safer Schools Together, the North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, school district safe school co-ordinators in Kootenay Lake and Vancouver, and municipal police departments, including Abbotsford, Nelson, Victoria and Vancouver, as well as Surrey RCMP and “E” Division RCMP headquarters.

“Police play a vital role in supporting and enhancing the efforts of schools and their communities to be safe places in which to learn and to work,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “In addition to responding to and investigating school-related incidents, police are primary partners for schools in addressing school-related safety

concerns. B.C.'s new guidelines will enhance these partnerships and improve information sharing between schools and police — to keep students and their school communities safer.”

In addition to strengthening school-police partnerships, the provincial school-police guidelines will help promote shared safety procedures, increase information sharing and support the development of local community violence threat risk assessment (VTRA) protocols — a multilevel process of assessing the risk of a threat of violence in a school environment or elsewhere.

The guidelines will be integrated into provincial Erase strategy training sessions focused on school district staff, police officers and community partners, and will also support the Erase K-12 gang and gun violence prevention initiative. A number of quick reference tools have been developed for use by police and school district representatives that can be downloaded from the Erase website. Additional online resources will be launched in 2020.

Quick Facts:

- B.C. is recognized nationally and internationally for its Erase strategy, which was launched in 2012. During the 2018-19 school year, Erase was expanded to be a more comprehensive resource to better represent the issues facing youth and school communities.
- The expanded Erase includes new funding for school-based gang prevention initiatives and enhanced mental wellness programs for students, parents and educators. Erase is also focused on supporting students of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- As part of the provincial Erase strategy, all B.C. school districts and many independent schools have participated in VTRA training with community partners. Over 20,000 educators and community partners have been trained to date.
- Development of the new provincial school-police guidelines was supported with a \$1.12-million investment from the Province. The investment was announced on March 12, 2019, as part of a broader action plan to prevent gang and gun violence.

Learn More:

To view the new provincial school-police guidelines, *Maintaining School Safety: A Guide for School and Police Personnel in B.C.*, and download related resources, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase/school-safety>

To learn more about Erase strategy resources for students, parents and education professionals, visit: www.erase.gov.bc.ca

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about school-police partnerships

Ted De Jager, president, B.C. Association of Chiefs of Police —

“This protocol is a great step forward to improve communication and collaboration between police and education partners in our shared commitment to build on current safety initiatives. We are very encouraged by this protocol and look forward as chiefs of police in B.C. to this key partnership, as we all work together to enhance the safety in our schools.”

Kevin Godden, superintendent, Abbotsford school district —

“The students and families of our community have been the benefactors of a long-standing and positive relationship between the district and the Abbotsford Police Department. As a consequence of this relationship, we have been able to successfully share information to allow us to proactively plan co-ordinated responses to crisis events, as well as effectively respond to them when they occur. It is a consequence of this relationship and commitment to safety that we were able to respond effectively to the tragedy in our community in 2016, and have been able to avert several potentially dangerous events over the last few years. The new provincial school-police guidelines are a positive and welcomed step to improving the co-ordination and training of district and police staff to keep children safe in our school communities.”

Theresa Campbell, CEO, Safer Schools Together —

“School safety is a shared responsibility that requires a commitment to co-operation, collaboration and communication. We are pleased and excited to see the announcement of these guidelines. Schools and police must have a common understanding of each partner’s roles and responsibilities when engaged in violence threat risk assessments. Through the Erase strategy, government, schools, police and other service providers are working collaboratively to share pertinent information about an individual who may be on a pathway to violence, radicalization or a risk of harm to themselves or others. These collaborative multi-disciplinary teams will continue to help ensure public safety, timely intervention and support.”

Jody Langlois, associate superintendent of schools, School District No. 39 (Vancouver) —

“Strong relationships between schools and police are vitally important to ensuring student safety. I am so pleased the provincial school police guidelines will soon be available for widespread use and will help ensure a consistent approach to preventing violence in schools provincewide.”

Del Manak, chief, Victoria Police Department —

“Maintaining school safety is a priority for police departments throughout the Province of

British Columbia. These guidelines are a major step forward in ensuring school safety across the province.”

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