



Niagara Catholic District School Board  
**DISCONNECT FROM WORK POLICY**  
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

200 – Human Resources

No 203.5

Adopted Date: September 27, 2022

Latest Reviewed/Revised Date:

### Guiding Principles

The Niagara Catholic District School Board (the “Board”) Disconnecting from Work Policy is built upon the following principles

- a. To support and encourage employee health and wellness.
- b. To utilize effective and successful practices that support a healthy work-life balance.
- c. To support the right of employees to disconnect from work by significantly reducing the practice of work-related meetings and communications after-hours, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages.
- d. Uninterrupted time away from work improves an employee’s physical and mental well-being.
- e. To ensure this program is applied in a manner consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code and any other applicable legislation, Collective Agreement or Terms and Conditions.

### DEFINITIONS

**Disconnecting from work**” - not engaging in work-related activities or communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

**“Employee”** - any person employed by the Board in the province of Ontario, whether employed on a permanent or contract, full-time or part-time basis.

**“Out-of-Office Notification”** - an automatic response message in email, or a voicemail greeting, which states, at a minimum, the following:

*“I have disconnected from work and will be unable to respond to your message until my return to work on DATE at TIME. If your matter requires attention before then, please contact NAME at CONTACT.”*

**“Regular Hours of Work”** - the normal hours of work for the Employee as determined by their immediate supervisor and the respective collective agreement, terms and conditions of employment, or employment contract. It is understood that Employees may have different Regular Hours of Work depending on their position and the Board facility in which they work.

### PROCEDURES

Subject to the terms outlined in this Procedure, Employees are permitted to disconnect from work outside of their Regular Hours of Work.

Employees are encouraged to send emails and voicemails during their Regular Hours of Work. All employees should avoid sending work-related communications after hours (between the hours of 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Monday to Friday and all-day Saturday and Sunday) unless the matter can be reasonably constituted as an emergency or a significant event that calls for immediate action.

## COMMUNICATION OUTSIDE OF WORK HOURS

The Board wishes to provide Employees reasonable flexibility and so does not prohibit sending emails or voicemails outside of their Regular Hours of Work; however, asks that Employees:

- (i) be aware that the recipient(s) may feel compelled to answer outside of business hours emails “right away” and thus encourages that realistic response time expectations be conveyed to the recipient(s);
- (ii) be aware that pursuant to this Policy, Employees may have disconnected, and therefore may not review a message left outside of that Employee’s Regular Hours of Work; and
- (iii) strongly consider using the Send Later option in Outlook 365 or the Delay Send option in Outlook Office such that the email is received by the recipient(s) during their Regular Hours of Work.
- (iv) Employees should be mindful of scheduling meetings with colleagues that are outside of the participating Employee’s Regular Hours of Work, it being recognized that in exceptional circumstances meetings outside of regular working hours may occur.

## EXCEPTIONS DUE TO CRITICAL OR TIME-SENSITIVE ISSUES

Under normal circumstances, employees will not be expected to engage in work-related communications after hours, during their scheduled vacation time or while on leave.

There will be circumstances where exceptions to this Policy are required due to critical or time-sensitive operational issues.

In the event that during their workday an Employee is aware, or is made aware, of a critical or time-sensitive operational issue that may require attention after the end of their workday, the Board requires that the Employee remain available and monitor their work communications after the end of the workday, and respond as appropriate to ensure operational needs are met.

All emergencies that call for immediate action after hours will be sent using the term “**URGENT**”.

## ARRANGING FOR COVERAGE TO MONITOR COMMUNICATIONS

In the event that an Employee will be unable to monitor their office communications for one (1) or more business days, they are expected to:

- (i) arrange for another Employee to assume responsibility for or oversight of their work; and
- (ii) enable an Out-of-Office Notification in their Board email and voicemail systems.

## EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYEES IN SCHOOL/DEPARTMENTAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Certain employees/employee groups may have alternate work hours or be required to be available in accordance with their job description or collective agreements/terms and conditions.

Employees in school/departmental leadership positions are generally expected to monitor their incoming messages outside of their Regular Hours of Work, in order to ensure that all matters are managed within an appropriate time frame, considering the nature and urgency of each issue.

## ADMINISTRATION OF THIS POLICY

The Employer expressly reserves the right to change, modify or delete portions of this Administrative Operational Procedure without notice.

**Adopted Date:**

**Revision History:**

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