

## Niagara Catholic District School Board Student Parenting Policy Resource Guide

*We are all children of the one God. We are brothers and sisters to each other. Our respect for each person's human dignity is the basic principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Our human rights flow from our dignity as human persons. The right to life from conception to natural death is the basic human right*

*– Fundamental Principles of Catholic Social Teaching - Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario  
January, 2013*

### RESOURCE GUIDE

#### THEOLOGY

All staff within the Niagara Catholic District School Board must support students in understanding the Catholic teaching of respect for life from the time of conception. The three most important positions to establish with regard to human life in the context of pregnancy are:

- *The humanity of the embryo/foetus.*

Most students will agree that a child in the womb at term has rights equal to those of a child after birth, but there is more difficulty convincing students that an embryo has the same rights in the first trimester. Discussion of the issue should not be based simply on physical features such as cell structure, heartbeat, development of limbs, and movement. Rather, the issue is the essence of the embryo in the womb. If the child is a human being at birth, it is also a human being three months, six months, and nine months before birth.

- *The value of the foetus' life over other values.*

Even when students agree that the foetus is a human being, they may still think that there are reasons good enough to justify ending the life of the child in the womb. Our Catholic tradition is convinced that no reason justifies the ending of a human life before birth. In the case of teenage pregnancy, the profound distress of the students involved and of their families is not an adequate reason for ending the life of the child in the womb. Further, we must face the reality that abortion, especially when the pregnant person is young, may entail medical and psychological risks. Abortion may not end the student's profound distress, but may indeed increase it.

- *The value of the pregnant woman's life.* Motherhood involves a special communion with the mystery of life as it develops in the womb. In light of the "beginning", the mother accepts and loves as a person the child she is carrying within her womb. The unique contact with the new human developing within her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings - not only towards her child, but every human being - which marks the woman's personality. (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*)

## DISCLOSURE

Board personnel most likely to be involved in dealing with a student disclosure of a pregnancy or a possible pregnancy are: chaplaincy leaders, teachers, school nurses, support staff and administrators.

In such situations, staff members have a responsibility to:

- **The student who has made the disclosure, female or male.** Staff members must strive to provide an environment that is confidential, supportive, affirming and accepting. The role of the staff member is to provide assistance in the way of information, insight, support and possible referral.
- **The child in the womb.**  
Staff must uphold the Catholic Church's teaching regarding human life. This includes respect for the sacredness of life from conception.
- **The student's family.**  
Staff, in consultation with the Principal, School Administration and the school support team will make a concerted effort to assist the student in informing family members as soon as possible after it has been ascertained that a student has conceived or fathered a child. When the student's health is in immediate danger, a family member or a guardian must be told.

Members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board are therefore encouraged to respond compassionately, as Jesus would in such situations. We are grateful for the support of the trusted person who responds to the needs of a student in accordance with the principles outlined in this Resource Guide.

## ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

A student's right to privacy should be safeguarded whenever possible. In all cases, the staff member's first efforts will be directed toward encouraging the student to involve a family member. When the student's health is in immediate danger, a family member or guardian must be told. Staff must be cognizant of their responsibilities where a student expresses his/her fear about parental rejection or potential self-destructive behaviour.

It is imperative that a staff member not exceed the limits of his/her own competence. If a person is unsure about the psychological state of a student or about the Catholic Church's teachings he/she will consult the school Principal or another professional in guidance, student services, the school chaplaincy leader, or Public Health nurse while continuing to preserve the student's right to confidentiality.

- After it has been ascertained that a student is pregnant, and after the student and family have made some initial decisions about dealing with the situation, it is appropriate for the staff member to encourage the student and the family to inform the school Principal once the situation has stabilized. The identity of the student must be protected even if the staff member needs guidance from the Principal regarding the Board's Parenting Policy.

The Principal requires similar respect for confidentiality if he/she chooses to seek the guidance of senior administration.

## **THE ROLE OF STAFF**

### ***For a Student Who Discloses***

Confirm the situation. Ask, "Has it been confirmed?"

Assess feelings. It is important to know his/her physical and emotional state.

"How are you feeling?" would be a good question to draw this out.

Confirm her/his network of support. "Who else knows that you've come here today?"

### ***Support for a Student who is Pregnant or has Fathered a Child***

Create a loving and affirming environment (i.e. be welcoming and non-judgemental).

Allow the student to express their feelings (i.e. towards the relationship and responsibilities. Feelings may vary from remorse and fear to exuberance.... remember feelings are neither positive nor negative, they just are).

Discuss the issues involved (i.e. possibility of adoption, support systems, prenatal care, financial planning, continuation of education, attitude of the other parent, day-care considerations etc.).

### ***Support for Student who has had a Miscarriage/Stillbirth***

Confirm situation. Ask, "What have you experienced?" "Have you sought medical attention?"

Assess feelings. It is important to know her physical and emotional state. "How are you feeling?" would be a good question to draw this out.

Assess her existing network of support. Ask, "Who else is helping you with your loss?"

Continue to offer the student your on-going support.

Inform the student of the availability of other support systems.

### ***Support for a Student who becomes Pregnant as a result of an assault***

For a student who is under the age of 16, the pregnancy and assault should be referred to the Family and Children Services Department in the presence of the student.

For a student who is 16 years of age or older, the assault and pregnancy, with consent of the student, should be reported to the Niagara Regional Police.

### ***Support for a Student who is Giving Birth or who has Given Birth***

Encourage the student to continue her education by providing options (i.e. resuming classes, home study or on-line learning).

Provide student with available information about support services (See Appendix III Support Agencies within the Niagara Region).

Encourage the student to seek support from her faith community in order for the student and her child to experience a sense of belonging.

Encourage the student to maintain relationships within her family and extended family.

With student permission, refer the student to the Child/Youth nurse for support with parenting issues.

Up to five hours per week of Home Instruction will be provided to the student, before, during or after the pregnancy, for as long as the student for either medical or emotional reasons requires it.

***Support for a Student who has Fathered a Child***

Provide a loving, affirming environment and psychological and religious guidance.

Encourage the student to accept his responsibility - in taking part in the decision-making process, providing financial support and caring for the child.

Encourage the student to seek counselling if he needs to deal with feelings of anger, helplessness or remorse.

## Appendix II

Support is available.

### Psychological Support

Family and Children Services  
(FACS)  
Board CYW  
Local Hospital  
Parent's/Guardian's Employee  
Assistance Program  
Pathstone Mental Health

### Medical Support

School Nurse  
Health Services Department  
Pre-Natal (Outreach)  
Family Doctor

### Religious Support

School Chaplaincy Leader  
Parish Priest

## Appendix III

### Community Resources to Support a Student Who is Pregnant or Has Given Birth

The student should be encouraged to seek the counsel of their parish priest.

i) Birthright of Niagara – 905-685-1913

ii) Niagara Life Centres

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| St. Catharines | 905-934-0021   |
| Welland        | 905-735-9934   |
| Grimsby        | 905-309-0944   |
| Toll Free      | 1-800-263-3630 |

iii) Regional Niagara Public Health Department - Sexual Health Program

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| St. Catharines | 905-688-3762   |
| Niagara Falls  | 905-356-1538   |
| Welland        | 905-735-5697   |
| Port Colborne  | 905-871-6513   |
| Toll Free      | 1-800-263-7248 |

### Pre-Natal Care Information

i) Regional Niagara Public Health Department - Healthy Babies, Healthy Children

|                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| St. Catharines        | 905-688-3762   |
| Niagara Falls         | 905-356-1538   |
| Welland/Port Colborne | 905-735-5697   |
| Fort Erie             | 905-871-6513   |
| Toll Free             | 1-800-263-7248 |

## **Housing Information**

- i) Bethlehem Housing Project 905-641-1660
- ii) Elisha House 905-735-9934  
Pregnancy and Family Support Centre After Hours Crisis Line: 289-823-2424  
48 Burgar Street, Welland
- iii) Hannah House Maternity Home 905 353-8552  
4761 Chrysler Ave Niagara Falls
- iv) Niagara Homeless Initiative 905-980-6000

Will co-ordinate access to emergency housing throughout the Niagara Region.

- v) Niagara Regional Housing  
Main office: St. Catharines 905-682-9201
- vi) YWCA of Niagara Falls 905-357-9191 ext. 4025

## **Emergency Shelters**

- i) Gillian's Place of St. Catharines 905-684-8331 (can call collect)
- ii) Women's Place of South  
Niagara 905-356-5800 (can call collect)  
Welland 905-788-0113 (can call collect)

All shelters provide emergency shelter for abused women with or without children.

## **Pre-Natal Housing**

- i) Bethlehem Place 905-641-1660
- ii) St. Martin's Manor (Hamilton) 905-575-7500 ext. 311
- iii) Salvation Army Grace Haven  
(Hamilton) 905-522-7336

## **Emergency Crisis Service**

- i) Rapid Response 1-800-263-4944  
  
(Pathstone Mental Health)

- ii) Distress Centre of Niagara
  - St. Catharines 905-688-3711
  - Grimsby/West Lincoln 905-563-6674
  - Fort Erie 905-382-0689
  - Welland 905-734-1212

**Adoption Counseling Services**

- i) Family and Children's Services 905-937-7731
  - St. Catharines Toll Free 1-888-937-7731

**Financial Assistance**

- i) Community Services Department 905-980-6000

Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division All inquires for financial assistance, pre and post delivery are directed through the above number.

**To Help You be a Good Parent**

- i) Family and Children's Services 905-937-7731
  - St. Catharines Toll Free 1-800-937-7731
- ii) Parent Direct Niagara- online parent directory  
[www.parentdirectniagara.ca](http://www.parentdirectniagara.ca)
- iii) Parent Talk Information Line 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7555
- iv) Regional Niagara Public Health Department-Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
  - St. Catharines 905-688-3762
  - Niagara Falls 905-356-1538
  - Welland/Port Colborne 905-735-5697
  - Fort Erie 905-871-6513
  - Toll Free 1-800-263-7248
- v) Port Cares (Port Colborne) 905-834-3629
- vi) Family Counselling Centre 1-888-937-7731

**Day Care Services**

- i) Adolescent's Family Support Services of Niagara
  - Strive Niagara
  - St. Catharines 905-646-1146
  - Welland 905-735-1465

- ii) Regional Municipality of Niagara

Social Services Department  
Toll Free

905-980-6000  
1-800-263-7215

**Information about Continuing your Education**

- i) Please contact your school Principal or Guidance Department regarding your options.
- ii) Adolescent Family Support Services  
905-646-1146

**Information Regarding Sexual Assault**

- i) Niagara Region Sexual Assault  
Centre (CARSA) 905-682-4584 (24 hr.)