



Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation

Announcing a new safe schools resource

A dynamic new resource package will be distributed to English language schools across Ontario in May. The resource provides schools and their communities with a comprehensive guide to the building and sustaining of a safe and violence-free school environment for children and teens. The printed material and accompanying CD-ROM and video are being distributed to over 4,000 elementary and 900 secondary schools. This unique tool will enable schools to assess their needs, access resources, involve parents and the community and, most importantly, help make every school a safe and welcoming place.

"The emphasis throughout is on the long term and building a realistic, sustainable strategy that will benefit all involved," said Dr. Peter Jaffe, Co-Director of the Project and Academic Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. "Schools everywhere place very high emphasis on the building of safe schools but the principals we have surveyed often feel the need for consultation on where to start and how to build a strategy that is right for their school."

Entitled *Sustainable Strategies for Safe Schools*, the resource package has been developed by the Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children at the University of Western Ontario.

Where to start, how to plan and prepare and how to sustain a long-term safe school strategy are all key features of a guide that was developed in consultation with an advisory council of provincial educators and funded by a three-year \$589,200 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. *Sustainable Strategies for Safe Schools* starts with a practical checklist which allows schools to assess their own needs, requirements and establish goals.

"The spirit of collaboration and determination displayed by the groups involved to create a safer learning environment impressed the Ontario Trillium Foundation," said L. Robin Cardozo, CEO of the Foundation. "We're pleased that a Foundation grant has played such a key role in helping to engage people in this process."

Participating schools are asked to establish action teams and to provide answers to 40 key questions involving everything from recognition of harassment and bullying issues, awareness of school based

violence prevention initiatives, how much parents understand safe school policies and procedures and the confidence they have in the school's ability to act on issues of reported violence within the school community.

Working with 23 schools from 4 pilot boards across Ontario, the resource guide was developed to assist schools to establish milestones of achievement that go into the building and sustaining of a successful safe school environment. It establishes the key areas of growth awareness from simple acknowledgement of a problem with low profile within the school community through to a full fledged safe school program in which the students, staff, parents and the community are fully involved.

With leadership from previously mentioned agencies, the resource guide was developed in consultation with a provincial advisory council that included representation from the Ontario Principals' Council, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Thames Valley District School Council, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Ontario Ministry of Education as well as the four Ontario pilot schools boards – the Thames Valley District School Board, Toronto District School Board, Limestone District School Board and Rainbow District School Board.

"You don't learn to run a marathon in a single day," said Dr. Jaffe. "It takes time to train, to understand and set realistic goals and objectives that are right for your school. Sustainable Strategies seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge and the practical problems of implementation that face so many schools today."

View the resource on the internet at www.crvawc.ca/SafeSchoolsCD/

To request a resource package contact:

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