

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

RATIONALE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) encourages partnerships that reflect the Board's mission, vision and core commitments, are supportive of the Board's strategic goals and objectives and enhance the learning of our students.

Parents/guardians may request that third party professionals/paraprofessionals provide services in schools. Alternatively, a request to provide such services may come directly from a third-party professional/paraprofessional or an agency or service provider associated with such a professional/paraprofessional. These services may include consultation (such as at a case conference), observation, and demonstration.

Third party professionals/paraprofessionals may be employees of other agencies or self-employed. Because they are not Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board employees, issues of accountability and quality of service arise. This procedure will address publicly and privately funded third party professionals/paraprofessionals providing services in schools.

As a result of the recent Provincial Discussion Tables (PDT) agreement, school boards are required to develop a local protocol for partnerships with external agencies. Policy/Program Memorandum 149 provides direction to school boards concerning the review and/or development of a local protocol for partnerships with external agencies for the provision of services in Ontario schools by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals.

This directive does not apply to those services provided under the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 81 – Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings.

TERMINOLOGY:

Funding: Third party professionals/paraprofessionals may provide their services through either:

- Publicly funded agencies at no cost to the pupil's family; or alternatively
- On a fee for service basis, the cost of which may or may not be covered by insurance available to the student's family.

Types of Services: Third party professionals/paraprofessionals with whom the staff of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board currently collaborates include individuals with a variety of backgrounds and expertise such as:

- educational professionals such as teachers who provide after-hours tutoring for children and adolescents;
- legal professionals such as lawyers; police officers;

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

- medical/health care professionals such as audiologists, nurses, occupational therapists, ophthalmologists, otolaryngologists, paediatricians, physicians, physiotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychological associates, and speech-language pathologists;
- social service professionals such as child and youth workers, social service workers and social workers;
- paraprofessionals such as behaviour therapists, Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) therapists, communicative disorders assistants, educational assistants, personal support workers and community special services at home workers.

Description of Services: There are essentially six different ways in which the collaborative relationship between the staff of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and third-party professionals/paraprofessionals can be operationalized:

Consultation: Assessment feedback and remedial strategies are shared with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board school staff by the third-party professional/paraprofessional through a written report or in a face-to-face meeting, usually at the student's school.

Observation: The third-party professional/paraprofessional observes the student in the school setting to obtain information to assist with the assessment process.

Demonstration: The third-party professional/paraprofessional demonstrates for Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board staff a strategy or technique that s/he is providing for the student to determine if the same strategy or technique could be adapted and utilized in the school setting. The principal of the school makes the final determination concerning the utilization of the strategy/technique in the school setting.

Direct Therapy: The third-party professional/paraprofessional provides face to face therapy, treatment or counselling for a student. Direct therapy services are only provided under the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 81 – Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings.

Individual Program: The third-party professional/paraprofessional provides the school with an individual program designed for a specific student who has special needs and issues.

Group Program: A third party professional/paraprofessional agency proposes a program that is to be delivered to students within the school setting and usually within the instructional day.

If there are questions regarding a type of service, and clarification is needed, the principal shall contact his/her Superintendent of Schools and/or the Superintendent of Special Education/Student Services.

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

Should a parent/guardian or volunteer request to provide any of the above services i.e., demonstration, the principal shall refer to the Volunteer Participation in Board Activities Policy. The services are not to be in conflict with any provisions of the collective agreements with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board staff.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 The principal is responsible for the organization and management of the school, per the Education Act.
- 1.2 The principal will ensure that the procedures outlined in this directive are followed when working with third party professionals/paraprofessionals.
- 1.3 Third party professionals/paraprofessionals will provide their current affiliation and/or qualifications prior to providing service. The Principal may ask for references if deemed appropriate.
- 1.4 Supervision of third party professionals/paraprofessionals is to be provided by staff from the external agencies, who are members in the relevant regulated college.

2.0 Guiding Principle

- 2.1 Duplication – The services that third party professionals/paraprofessionals are proposing to provide are not to be in conflict with any provisions of collective agreements with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board staff. Third party professionals/paraprofessionals are expected to demonstrate how the services to be provided enhance, but do not duplicate, current services provided by Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.
- 2.2 Equity – Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to ensuring that all policies, guidelines, and operating practices actively demonstrate a respect for the principles of anti-classism and socio-economic equity. The principal should assess the proposed third-party professional/paraprofessional involvement in relation to Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Equity Policy and Supporting Guidelines are followed.
- 2.3 Conflict Resolution – The student's progress and well-being must be the primary focus of all parties. It is essential that any conflict that arises during the process be communicated to the school principal in a timely manner, such that conflicts can be addressed and resolved quickly. Effective communication is the key to resolving conflicts as they arise. If the conflict cannot be resolved at the school level, system level staff may also be called upon to provide assistance.

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

- 2.4 **Liability Insurance** – The principal will need to ensure that third party professionals/paraprofessionals carry their own insurance to ensure against civil litigation alleging incompetence, professional errors, omissions or charges laid by professional colleagues or parents/guardians. Assurance will need to be secured that the third-party professional/paraprofessional is covered while working on Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board property.
- 2.5 **Conflict of Interest** – Employees of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board occupy positions of great public trust and they are expected to conduct themselves with personal integrity, ethics, honesty and diligence in the performance of their official duties. The onus is on each employee to anticipate and avoid conflicts of interest. Employees have a duty not to engage in any business or transaction, or have any financial or other personal interest, that is, or that may reasonably appear to others to be, incompatible and in conflict with the performance of the employee’s official duties. Where employees have a financial or personal interest that might present a conflict of interest in connection with their official duties as Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board employees, they shall report this conflict, in writing, to their immediate supervisor and the Superintendent of Special Education/Student Services.
- 2.6 **Informed Consent** – The third-party professionals/paraprofessionals will need to provide to the principal, upon request, documentation of informed, written consent by parents/guardians to provide service as identified under Section 4.1.
- 2.7 **Payments/Fees** – Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will not reimburse third party professionals/paraprofessionals for services/fees/costs/materials.
- 2.8 **Confidentiality** – It is agreed that confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, the Education Act and the Child and Family Services Act.
- 2.9 **Risk Management** – The third-party professionals/paraprofessionals will be limited to their role as outlined in description of services contained in this directive. The third-party professionals/paraprofessionals that have direct contact with a student or group of students must provide proof of a vulnerable sector screening check.
- 2.10 **Space and Material Resources** – The need for space and material resources by the third-party professionals/paraprofessionals must be clearly articulated and approved by the principal or designate. Space for Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board staff to execute their duties will be ensured prior to offering space to third party professional/paraprofessional providers.

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

- 2.11 Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Code of Conduct – All third-party professionals/paraprofessionals that provide services on Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board property are required to review and comply with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Code of Conduct Policy. The principal will provide a copy of Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Code of Conduct Policy to all third-party professionals/paraprofessionals that provide services on school property.

3.0 Role

- 3.1 Effective communication is the key to building relationships of mutual trust and cooperation. Everyone shares the same goal: to provide the best possible educational opportunity for the student. Therefore, families are encouraged to inform the school when they are working with a third-party professional/paraprofessional.
- 3.2 The parent/guardian of a pupil may request to have a third-party professional/paraprofessional provide services within the school setting. Such requests will be administered in accordance with the following steps:
- 3.2.1 the school principal has primary responsibility for dealing with such matters and therefore, all requests must be referred to him/her;
 - 3.2.2 where the request initially is made to someone other than a teacher, the person receiving the request shall inform the teacher who in turn shall refer the request to the principal; where the request is made directly to the teacher, the teacher shall refer it to the principal;
 - 3.2.3 following the receipt of such referral, the principal or his/her designate will communicate, as may be appropriate, with the parent/guardian of the pupil to obtain full details of the proposed service to be provided within the school setting; in the course of such dealings with the parent/guardian, the principal will obtain any required authorizations, signed by the parent or guardian, necessary to permit the principal to deal directly with the professional/paraprofessional;
 - 3.2.4 the principal will obtain from the parent/guardian and/or the third-party professional/paraprofessional such information as is necessary to properly assess the request and to respond to it;
 - 3.2.5 the principal will consult and coordinate with school-based staff and/or relevant system-based staff, as appropriate, during the process of obtaining information and assessing the request;

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

4.0 Conflict Resolution

- 4.1 Partnership agreements will contain a process and time frame for resolution of conflicts that arise in the course of the working relationship. The conflict resolution process must identify potential areas of conflict such as, but not limited to, a change in resource requirements, project timelines, and a change in personnel or school administration associated with the partnership (refer to HWDSB's A Guide to Educational Partnerships pg. 65).

5.0 Termination Procedure

- 5.1 Partnership agreements can be terminated by any of the partnering organizations with appropriate notice of termination.
- 5.2 Specifics related to the termination of partnerships must be detailed in the partnership agreement.
- 5.3 The process and time frame for termination of a partnership will be included in the written partnership agreement.
(refer to HWDSB's A Guide to Educational Partnerships pg. 66).

6.0 Reporting

- 6.1 The principal will complete the on-line Third-Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals Program Form for those requests that (s)he has approved. This form is available on HWDSB's Intranet under Special Education/Student Services.

7.0 System Committee

- 7.1 A joint school board / PSSP / COPE committee will be established, the purposes of which will be to annually review:
 - 7.1.1 the directive and its implementation;
 - 7.1.2 programs and services that are being delivered by school board professionals/paraprofessionals;
 - 7.1.3 programs and services that are being delivered by third party professionals/paraprofessionals; and
 - 7.1.4 the information obtained through the on-line reporting form.

Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professionals/Paraprofessionals

- 7.2 The committee may also, if deemed necessary, request copies of individual partnership agreements to review in order to obtain additional information.
- 7.3 The committee shall communicate to schools annually a list of programs reflecting evidence-informed services.