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## **Foreword**

The Ministry of Education is committed to helping each child achieve his/her highest potential. Its policies and practices are aimed at giving the nation's children the necessary knowledge, skills and values to enable them to lead happy and productive lives. In meeting that mandate, it is vital that our schools are seen as environments that effectively cater for their individual needs and where they are accepted and supported. Our schools should live up to the highest expectations and promote our children's right to safe and secure learning environments in which they can participate and develop to their fullest, while being protected from all potentially harmful influences.

To that end, the Ministry of Education has been working to foster a culture of safety and security within all of its institutions. This document furthers that process by clearly outlining standards and guidelines which, when effectively implemented, will significantly enhance our schools' capacity to meet this objective. This protocol on safe school environments should not be seen as an end onto itself, but should be regarded as a dynamic, evolving instrument, capable of adapting to our changing school environments while adhering to the core objective of ensuring the safety and security of the country's children.

This document outlines clearly the roles our school managers, teachers, students, parents and the wider community should effectively play in ensuring our schools are zones of safety. It overtly recognizes the fact that all stakeholders have key roles to play in meeting this mandate. More importantly, it emphasizes the need for school safety and security to be imbedded into the overall management structures of all of our institutions.

Key Units within the Ministry of Education such as School Welfare and Guidance and Counselling, as well as the Policy Implementation and Monitoring Unit, will continue to provide the necessary support to our schools as they apply these standards and guidelines to their practices and processes. Other on-going curricular interventions and school-based programmes such as the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE), the promotion of Child-friendly Schools, the School Mentoring programme, Students' Councils and effective Parent-Teachers Associations will contribute significantly in further instilling the safe school culture. Our education stakeholders, particularly UNICEF, must be commended for their continued support of our efforts to strengthen and improve the education system.

The true value of this document will only be realized if schools effectively implement the practices recommended. As such, I make a special appeal to all of our schools to allocate specific time and attention to studying and understanding the proposed standards and guidelines and ensuring they are effectively infused into the operations of every

school. The safety and security of our nation's students and teachers is vital if we are to realize our broader national developmental objectives. I am confident that this will be done and in the process our schools will emerge as the highly effective, supportive and progressive environments.

*Shaik Baksh*

**Minister of Education**

**September 2011**

## **Introduction**

The Ministry of Education recognizes the need to inculcate a culture of safety and security in all schools. The ultimate objective is to provide safe and secure school environments which will better enable teachers to fulfill their main duty of delivering the curriculum and students to concentrate on learning. Safety in schools is of paramount importance and necessary in supporting the all-round development of each child, giving him/her the opportunity to learn and achieve in a nurturing environment.

To that end, the Ministry has taken the lead in establishing clear guidelines and expectations for all practitioners which should enable them to take appropriate action where necessary. It is vital that all schools have a common understanding of these expectations and adhere to these norms. Achieving this end requires that every school develops a School Safety Plan which is aligned with the broader guidelines. The effective development of such a plan will be a collaborative initiative involving the entire school community. Ultimately, it is the involvement of the community and all education stakeholders which will be the essential element in creating and maintaining safe and secure school environments.

School records reveal that there are instances of disruptive behaviour. Many of these take place within the school or within the vicinity of the school and involve students and staff members. The advent of gangs within our schools have compounded the situation; largely contributing to the overall disregard for school rules and undermining the authority of teachers. In addition to misdemeanours, which are usually dealt with at the level of the schools' administration, there have been a few incidents which are criminal in nature and have required the involvement of other agencies.

In other instances, there have been cases where issues unrelated to the school itself have found their way onto the schools' premises. Incidents involving individuals who have informal relationships with the school, such as vendors and other community members, have also had implications for school safety. These clearly underscore the fact that partnerships are needed to address the issue of safe schools and administrators need to be fully aware of the options which are available, and the acceptable and expected action which should be taken.

## **Zero Tolerance in Guyana's Education System**

The Ministry of Education has taken a decision to adopt a zero-tolerance approach in relation to indiscipline in schools.

### **What is zero tolerance?**

Zero tolerance is the policy of applying laws or penalties to even minor infringements in order to reinforce its overall importance and enhance deterrence.

- **Sanctions are mandatory with limited discretion**

The school is directed to report the offence to the Department of Education, including School Welfare Services according to the *Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools*. The school must also apply sanctions to the offender, whether directly or through the established procedures – depending on the type and severity of the offence. Every offence must be reported and punished since warnings are not part of the zero tolerance concept.

- **Sanctions are predetermined and consistent**

Sanctions which are applied to an offender are decided upon before the offence is committed and do not take into account the circumstances under which the offence was committed. As outlined in the *Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Disciplines in Schools*, sanctions are applied by offence and not according to circumstances.

## **Establishing a secure and safe school environment**

Disruptive behaviour has become a concern of teachers since it not only affects students and teachers but invariably detracts teachers from their main duty of delivering the curriculum and students from concentrating on learning. Therefore, safety in schools is of paramount importance and necessary to support the all round development – affective, cognitive, psychological - of each child, giving him/her the opportunity to learn and achieve in a safe and nurturing environment.

This has caused the Ministry of Education to draft security and safety policy guidelines to enhance the safety and success of all children and the teachers who serve them. Achieving this end requires that every school develops a SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN. Development of such a plan is not limited to the school alone but must necessarily be a collaborative initiative involving the entire school community.

### **The role of the school Administrator**

In Guyana young people are legally required to attend school until the age of 16 years, as such, the Head of schools have a corresponding duty to provide children with a safe, secure, and peaceful environment in which learning can occur.

The Headteacher is accountable for safety and security in the school. His/her role includes planning for and administering the day-to-day security and safety arrangements at the school as outlined in the Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools (2002).

Some of the functions of the Headteacher in maintaining such an environment are as follows:

#### Establishing Security and Safety Committee

The Headteacher is directed to establish a Security and Safety Committee comprising staff members and members of the Parent Teachers Association/ School Boards to aid in formulating, executing, monitoring and appraising the security and safety operations of the school. The Committee must forge links with relevant stakeholders. Security and Safety must be on the agenda of all Staff Meetings.

### Assessing the Safety of the School

The Headteacher should conduct a detailed school safety assessment to determine the state of safety within the school. This assessment is an essential step in developing a safe-school plan. It includes a survey of school facilities, staff availability for supervision, a survey of staff, parents, and students to determine their views and recommendations regarding school violence. After analyzing the collected data, school administrators can verify and enrich the information through discussions with the teachers, parents, students and interested parties.

### Establishing Tracking and Recording Systems

Headteachers should establish tracking and recording systems of inappropriate/negative behaviours along with procedures for teachers and other staff to immediately report all incidents to the Department of Education. Received information should be categorized according to the name of the violator, the type of violation, the time and place the incident occurred, and the school's response to it. The said information must also be documented in the Misdemeanour Book and Log Book. Information should be periodically shared with all concerned parties. **This system will enable school personnel to identify students who have demonstrated various forms of inappropriate behaviours, and to respond with an appropriate intervention or referral.** It will also enable school personnel to identify times and places where such incidents are most likely to occur.

### Communicating Strategies

Headteachers should provide opportunities, e.g. through Staff Development Sessions, for all staff to acquire the knowledge, skills and values necessary to develop and maintain a violence-free school environment. Therefore, regular sessions on problem solving/conflict resolution, the importance of student/teacher communication, substance use prevention and tips on identifying potential problematic students who may exhibit negative behaviours.

Headteachers should work with all school personnel to create a climate of school ownership and pride. Students, parents, staff members, and members of cooperating community agencies will feel that they are important parts of the school community. This



feeling of inclusion will be accomplished by their involvement in the development and implementation of the safe-school plan.

### **The role of the school staff**

Teachers are expected to keep accurate misdemeanor records and always inform the Headteacher of observed disruptive behaviour. The entire staff of the school must be sensitized in recognizing the signs of anti-social behaviour.

Teachers must

- provide consistent and firm guidelines and rules regarding student behaviour.
  
- teach and model pro-social behaviour since these are important as the teaching of academic subjects.
  
- display diligent and impartial behaviour when supervising students. They should be consistent and prompt whenever the need arises to sanction unacceptable behaviour.
  
- participate in the development of a school safety plan. They must also play a responsible part in the implementation of such policies by promptly and consistently reporting incidents of negative behaviour.
  
- make use of teaching methods such as, simulation and field trips to emphasize that negative behaviour does not benefit the individual.
  
- create a warm and nurturing classroom climate.

- develop a daily routine but remain flexible. Students often misbehave if they do not know what they should do and when.
  
- cater for the different learning styles of students.

It is expected that all staff members and students will interact with each other with mutual respect.

### **The role of students**

**The Headteacher is directed to engage students in a security and safety campaign in the school.** The campaign should promote students' alertness in relation to matters of security and encourage them to convey pertinent information about security and safety risks to school personnel. Students must be informed and consulted about the security and safety rules, their rights and responsibilities and the consequences associated with the non-compliance of these rules.

- Students should develop a sense of responsibility for contributing to the improvement of school order and safety. They should participate actively in the planning, implementation, and enforcement of disciplinary policy and programmes.

This can be aided through the work of the Student Council/ Prefect/ Monitor Systems as these bodies are responsible for:

- fostering better relations among students
- assisting the Headteacher and staff in formulating and upholding school rules and policies
- promoting good behaviour by influencing and encouraging students to adhere to school rules and policies
- participating in the general maintenance and upkeep of the school and its premises

### **The role of parents and guardians**

Parents are critical stakeholders in attaining a secure and safe school environment.

The Headteacher is expected to involve parents in drafting and reviewing the security and safety procedures of the school. Security and Safety must be on the agenda of all Parent Teachers Association Meetings.

- As a result, parents should be familiar with the School Safety Plan, Code of Conduct and the Disciplinary Policy of the school. They should recognize that they too are responsible for monitoring the behavior of their sons, daughters and neighbours. In fact, the Headteacher must ensure that parents are aware of the contents of the Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools.

### **The role of the Police and Fire Services**

The Headteacher is expected to establish a protocol for co-operation with the officers-in-charge of the nearest police and fire stations.

The Ministry of Education strongly recommends that Headteachers organize regular educational programmes with the Schools Welfare Unit, (including Guidance and Counselling), Ministry of Human Services and the police to conduct enlightening and motivational discussion sessions with students.

### **The Role of Other Education Personnel – District Education Officer, School Welfare/Guidance and Counselling Officers**

The Headteacher is expected to establish and maintain a good working relationship and collaborate with all national and local government agencies that can assist the school with security and safety issues. Headteachers are specifically directed to network with emergency response agencies to establish co-ordinated emergency management plans, including the Police and Fire services, health providers and hospitals and other responders.

### **Emergency Drills and Preparation Plans**

The Headteacher is expected to plan and execute emergency drills on a monthly basis, (i.e. fire drills and evacuation procedures). These procedures must be well-documented and published.

As stated in the *School Records and Documents*, the entire school must be involved in each drill and lockdown - all teachers, students and ancillary staff. The entire school should be aware of these procedures with signs conspicuously displayed at various points of the school plant.

Each drill must be recorded using the prescribed format. (See page 96 of *School Records and Documents*).

### **Designation of emergency points and procedures**

The Headteacher is directed to establish assembly points and exits to be used in the event of an emergency. Teachers and students should be au fait with the assembly point and the manner and order in which they should vacate the premises. The effectiveness of this would only be realised through constant practice.

## Recording and reporting requirements

In Guyana, the law governing the public education system is the Education Act, Chapter 39:01 and the appropriate Regulations. These outline the requirements as it relates to the recording and reporting expectations for schools.

One of the main reporting and recording requirements stipulated by The Ministry of Education is that public educational institutions are required to keep records and make these available for inspection as the need arises. A list of all such records is contained in the *School Records and Documents*. This document provides guidelines that would aid/improve accountability in the Education System.

Some of the records contained in the aforementioned document have direct bearing on the maintenance of safe school environment.

Key records include:

### **Misdemeanour Book**

This record reflects wrongdoings by students which warrant disciplinary action by the school administration.

- Such offences must be reported to the Headteacher designate who would rule on the type of disciplinary action to be administered.
- The disciplinary action to be administered must be informed by the provisions in the *Manual on the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools*.
- Entries must be made immediately after disciplinary action is administered/meted out. Such entries must include time, date, site and names of witness(es).

### **Log Book**

This is a permanent record which reflects the daily activities within the school.

- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that the Log Book is maintained. In the absence of the Headteacher, the most senior teacher for the management of the plant shall make the necessary log entry/ies.
- Any serious act of indiscipline on the part of students, teachers and/or member(s) of the public must be entered in the School's Log Book.

### **Child Development Index Card**

This card forms part of the system of continuous assessment in each school.

- A card must be kept for each child.
- It reflects a student's progress in relation to academic performance, conduct and behaviour, among other things.

The preceding documents can be used as tools for managing students' behaviour. However, it is imperative that students understand that these permanent records (e.g. Child Development Index Card and Progress Report) guarantee consequences for inappropriate and disruptive behaviour. It is hoped that students would therefore come to the realization that behaviour which threatens the security and safety of the school environment will have a negative impact on their future within school and beyond.

## **Searches in Schools**

### **Definition**

In a school, a search is defined as a keen examination of a person, his/her belongings or school premises/grounds.

### **What constitutes a search?**

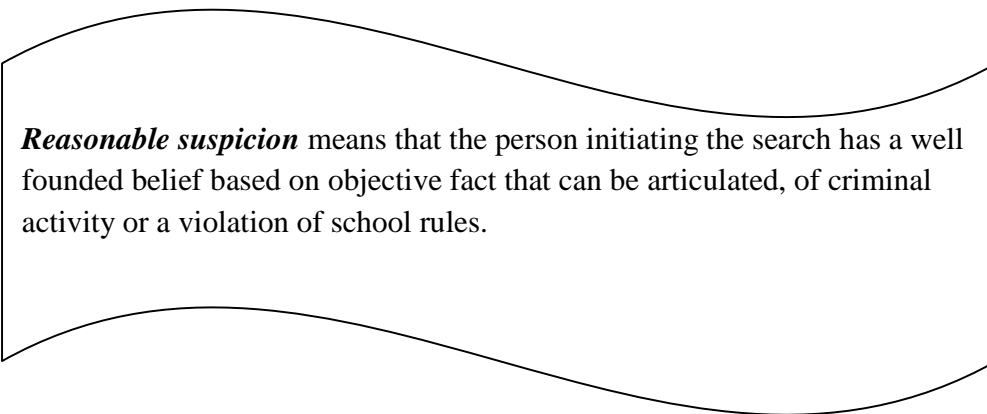
- ❖ Examining personal items or places that are in the open and exposed to public view
  
- ❖ Physically examining or patting down a student's body or clothing, including the student's pockets
  
- ❖ Opening and inspecting personal possessions such as purses, haversacks/backpacks, bags, books, note/net books, laptop bags and closed containers
  
- ❖ Handling or feeling any closed, opaque item to determine its contents when they cannot be identified by item's shape or external physical properties.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **When to conduct a search?**

Before conducting a search *reflect* on the following:

- Is there reasonable suspicion?



- Did you receive a tip from a student, staff member or a reliable member of the school's community?
- Is there a serious threat to the safety and security of the school?

***If yes to any of these, then proceed to search, adhering to acceptable measures outlined by the Ministry of Education.***



## The Conduct of Searches and Seizures

### Search of Locker, Bag, School Premises and Seizures

- Locker searches in school and dormitory should be routinely conducted by the school in collaboration with Department of Education staffers, such as, Schools Welfare Officers and District Education Officers and members of Parent Teachers Association/ School Board.
- Searches should be scheduled and unscheduled.
- Locker and bag searches must be conducted by at least two members of the committee; one must be a teacher (House Parent for the residential schools). The search must be conducted in the presence of the learner whose bag or locker is being searched.
- A learner whose bag or locker is to be searched must be informed of this intended action by the person who will conduct the search.
- **It is the duty of the learner to open/unlock his/her locker or bag and take out the contents.**
- Any prohibitive substance, object, weapon or electronic device found in the learner's locker or bag must be seized and reported to the parent, Department of Education and/or law enforcement agency if necessary.
- The law enforcement officer either gives instructions as to what must be done with the prohibitive article or he/she takes command of it.
- Routine searches must be conducted of washrooms, classrooms, laboratories and school grounds.
- A record of any prohibitive substance, object, weapon or electronic device found on a learner must be made in the **Misdemeanours Book** and **Log Book**. A written report must be forwarded *promptly* to the Head of Department of Education. The parent/guardian must be notified immediately.

N.B:

**If the support of the Police is sought, the Police personnel should not be involved in the search, unless it is a body search.**

**The law enforcement officer should be dressed in civilian clothes and if applicable his/her weapon should be concealed.**

### **When a body search is deemed necessary?**

- When a school believes or has reasonable suspicion that a learner has concealed on his/her person any prohibitive substance, weapon, or electronic device which he/she has **refused to hand over on request, then a body search is requested.**

Additionally, a full body search is deemed necessary if the child/person is visibly under the influence of a prohibitive substance as stated above (e.g. red eyes, slurred speech, unsteady movements, etc) or is displaying behaviours that are deemed to be hostile and rebellious in nature.

*(Taken from Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools 2002 with some modifications).*

### **Body Search and Seizure**

The Headteacher/District Education Officer should be the persons authorized to request the intervention of law enforcement officers.

The parent/guardian of a learner who is to be searched must be notified. The parent/guardian must also be informed of the findings of the search. In the case of residential schools, the dormitory mother/father acts as the parent.

A body search of a learner must be conducted **only by a law enforcement officer** in the presence of the Headteacher or teacher designated by him/her (ensure gender parity).

**Tips members of the Search Party should observe:**

- ✓ Always **watch** the hands of the learner being searched.
- ✓ Always have a witness.
- ✓ The searcher and witness should be of the same gender as the student being searched.
- ✓ Give students a chance to surrender item(s) being sought.
- ✓ If possible, keep search discreet by removing a student to a private area (e.g. Headteacher's office).
- ✓ If a body search is being conducted, the law enforcement officer in the presence of teacher/School Welfare Officer must request student to remove outer clothes\_e.g. shoes, socks and empty pockets.

**Strip searches are not appropriate for schools.**

## **Regulating access to school - movement and assembling**

Schools need to control access to the learning environment if security and safety are to be realised. School safety efforts should take into account the features of the school and the surrounding community. Safety measures should include maintaining a strong school visitor policy and limiting school entry points.

### **Control of school Plant**

A secure boundary is of primary importance to school security. It will reduce and allow the effective management of most unacceptable behavioural problems that can be anticipated.

The boundaries of the school should be clearly defined and must offer a protected and controlled environment for students. The school's boundary includes its rules governing conduct and behaviour and the structures around the physical plant.

In order to strengthen the objective of effective control, the Ministry of Education/ Departments of Education will assist schools without fences or those with inadequate fencing to have a secure boundary fence. The Parent Teachers Association and Alumni should also assist by mobilizing resources.

### **Understanding the boundaries**

The Headteacher has the right to control the movement and gathering of students, especially during instructional time. The school should assist students to develop a sense of the existing boundaries, respect for personal space, the etiquette of manoeuvring in public spaces and proper group behaviour while in public.

### **Guidelines**

#### **✓ Establish, Maintain and Control Entrance and Exit**

The Headteacher is directed to establish entry and exit points and identify same using appropriate signs. Provision should be made for the physical monitoring of the entry and exit points. If not in use, these points should be closed and secured. Electronic methods could be used to boost the physical monitoring.

✓ **Rules for movement and gathering**

The Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions governing the movement and assembling of students within the school.

Older students should not have unsupervised private access to younger students while on school premises, except siblings or other close family members.

✓ **Develop, Implement and Monitor the School Access Policy**

The Headteacher is directed to develop and implement policies in relation to accessing the school's compound and the operations of entry and exit points. Operating hours, prohibited items, dress code, manner of behaviour, vending, visitors' access and searches should be taken into consideration when drafting the policy. The public should be made aware of the policy and staff members, parents and students should be notified through sensitization sessions throughout the school year.

✓ **Off-limit areas**

The Headteacher is directed to designate off-limits or restricted zones/areas to students. These zones/areas must be easily identifiable by clear markings. Some such areas include, staff rooms, isolated or unsupervised areas of the school plant, maintenance and storage areas. Toxic materials (e.g. toxic markers, agricultural, laboratory and cleaning chemicals) must be kept inaccessible to students at all times.

Areas where students are allowed to gather freely should also be subjected to some limits. Therefore, the Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions in relation to where, when and how students gather.

The Headteacher is also encouraged to establish and mark the following zones/areas:

- Quiet zones
- No assembling zones
- No loitering zones
- No sitting zone

### **School Access Policy – Operating Times**

The Headteacher is directed to establish the operating times for access to the school plant, taking into consideration the following:

- *The opening Time* – The beginning of the school day.
- *The General Entry and Exit Periods* – At the beginning/end of the school day/session there will be a heavy flow of traffic therefore, arrangements should be put in place to monitor entrance/exit points. The teachers, members of the Student Government/Prefect Body/Monitors have a major role to play here.
- *The General Teaching/Class Period and Scheduled Breaks* – The entrance and exit points should be locked and monitored.
- *Co-curricula Periods* – Students should be monitored when they are at break, on the play ground, using the library/library corner, in club meetings etc.

### **Movement and gathering during class time**

The Headteacher is directed to ensure that all classes are supervised by a teacher during instructional time. As such, teachers' non-attendance must be kept to a minimum. Students moving about or assembling during instructional period must get permission from a teacher.

No student should be allowed to leave the school's premises without the written consent of the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.

### **School Access Policy – Students**

- Access to the school's premises before opening time and after the closing time must be by way of a **written permission** from the Headteacher.
- Students arriving subsequent to the General Entry Period, **although late, must be allowed to enter the school**. Such students can be sanctioned by the school. Entries must also be made in the late attendance register.

- Written permission from the Headteacher or a senior member of staff must be given to any student desirous of leaving the school plant between the Opening time and the end of the Session (morning or afternoon).
- Students who are suspended must not leave the school plant until the end of a session unless in the company of a parent/guardian.
- Suspended students should not be allowed onto the school's plant without written permission from the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.
- At the end of the school day any student who is not prohibited by the Headteacher or other teachers from leaving, such as students on detention, can exit the school's plant.

### **Navigating public space**

The Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions in relation to how students access facilities within the school and how they behave when they assemble.

It is expected that students:

- access a service by queuing up in an orderly manner
- do not block entrances, exits, doorways, corridors and walkways
- walk in single file on the right hand side of walkways and corridors
- give way to senior and physically challenged persons
- be cognizant of their noise level when engaged in movement or assembly (when assembled)
- pay the appropriate courtesies to officials at formal gatherings
- standing correctly when reciting or singing the National Pledge and Anthem

## **Teachers and Students in public places**

Headteachers are directed to set clear rules and sanctions in relation to the conduct and associations of students in uniform, off the schools premises and in public places. Any pupil who is attired in the school's uniform is a representative of the said school, whether he/she is on or off the schools premises and as such, should conduct him/herself worthy of attending the institution. Reports of misconduct by gangs and cliques off the school's premises (e.g. bus park) should be treated as though it occurred on the school's premises.

**Teachers are also expected to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the profession.**

## **School Access Policy – Visitors**

### **Gaining Access**

- Any person who is not a member of the staff, or a student would be deemed a visitor. Such persons would be granted entry by the Headteacher or a senior member of staff. Person(s) monitoring the gate must make entry in the visitors' register regarding the visitor's name, purpose of visit, person being visited. In the case of vehicular traffic, particulars of the vehicle should also be noted.
- **The Headteacher/ Senior Teacher present at the time of the visit should request photo identification/ letter of authority issued by the Regional Education Officer/ Ministry of Education.**
- No police officer is allowed to enter the school and arrest a teacher **or** student during the school session, unless that person poses immediate danger to the other members of staff and/or students. ***If a student is arrested a teacher MUST accompany the student to the Police Station and the parent should be informed immediately.***

**Please note:**

**If in doubt, the Headteacher should make contact immediately with the Supervising District Education Officer/ Regional Education Officer before giving permission to the visitor to conduct business.**



## **Movement**

- Upon entry to the school plant, all visitors must report to the Headteacher's office. Visitors granted permission to move around the school's plant should be accompanied by a staff member, if possible. Visitor's badges should be worn by visitors who would be moving around the school plant for an extended period and a Log entry made which must include the identification number of the visitors.

## **Supervision of movement and assembling**

- The Headteacher is required to provide security and supervision for the school, staff and student population during instructional and co-curricula periods. Teachers must be assigned to supervise students during all co-curricula activity.
- It is expected that Level/Flat Supervisors and Class teachers will be assigned to strategic points to observe the movement of students at the beginning of the day, after assembly or break and also at the end of the day.
- Permission, in writing, from the Headteacher must be granted for any activity conducted on the school's premises after the dismissal of school. Headteachers should ensure that no student remains on the school's premises after the Closing Time.

## **Electronic surveillance of movement and gathering**

- The Ministry of Education supports the use of electronic surveillance cameras to monitor the assembling and movement of students where necessary.

The following should be stipulated when contracting the service providers:

- All recorded material is the property of the school
- Recorded materials should be stored and disposed of in a safe manner.
- **Students' privacy should at all times be protected. Cameras should not be installed in changing rooms and bathrooms. In the case of a sexual assault, an**

**incident involving self inflicted injuries and drug abuse by a student, the school and/or service provider owe a duty of conscience to the said student.**

- Recorded materials should only be accessible to Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers.

#### **Access and movement of press personnel**

- Personnel from the press should not be allowed onto the school plant. They should not be permitted to move about, record footage or conduct interviews.

(Be reminded that the Headteacher **is not permitted to speak to the media** unless so instructed by the Department of Education or Central Ministry).

#### **School Security Personnel**

The Ministry of Education/ Regional Administration must institute a 24 hour security system using able-bodied guards.

Security guards/watchmen should be exposed to training in the area of school security procedures. They should also be well acquainted with their roles.

#### **Shutdown procedures**

The Headteacher is required to establish procedures relating to checking and locking of all enclosed parts of the school plant. Students who are still at school at the Closing Time should be asked to leave. If the Headteacher or any other teacher is of the opinion that a child would be put at risk if asked to leave the school premises, then he/she should be escorted to the police station and the parent/guardian notified. If this occurs frequently with the same child the matter should be brought to the attention of the School's Welfare Department.

### **Co- Curricula Activities after school**

All students involved in approved co-curricula activities should bring written letters of consent from their parents/guardians.

The Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions as it relates to co-curricula activities after school. Students should be supervised at all times during these activities.

### **Students on school premises after Closing Time**

Students who are still at school after the Closing Time should be asked to leave, if involved in approved co-curricula activities. The school would be accountable for any student who remains on the premises after Closing Time.

### **Sport and entertainment events**

All school sponsored activities, for example, Fairs, Fun Days, Tea Parties, Fashion Shows, should be approved by the Headteacher and the Department of Education. These activities should be conducted under the watchful eyes of the school staff and/or members of the Parent Teachers Association/ School Board.

The Headteacher is therefore directed to set clear rules and sanctions as it relates to the content of such activities (appropriate dress, music etc.) and students' behaviours during the staging of these activities.

The Headteacher and staff are expected to ensure that outdoor play areas and equipment are safe and in good repair.

In instances where the school is hosting a large scale event, an emergency preparedness plan should be operational in the event of an emergency.

### **Protests**

Protest action by students and/or teachers on the schools premises or in the vicinity of the school is prohibited. Especially if such action causes:

- disruption to smooth running of the school,
- obstruction on roadway/walkway

- invasion of school premises

The Headteacher is directed to establish clear rules and sanctions relating to students protesting on/off the premises of the school while being attired in the school uniform.

The names of teachers involved in protest action on/off the premises of the school would be forwarded to the Department of Education and the Teaching Service Commission for appropriate disciplinary action.

## **Managing possession of weapons and illicit substances**

### **Establishing a drug and contraband free school environment**

A zero tolerance approach has been adopted by the Ministry of Education as it regards weapons and illicit substances on the school's premises.

The Laws of Guyana stipulate that a child under the age of 10 cannot be held criminally responsible for an illegal act; however, he/she can be subjected to different orders intended as intervention measures. As such, the age of a child should not rule out reporting incidents of concern to the Schools Welfare Officers within Departments of Education and the police. The School Welfare Officers in turn can seek support from the Child Care and Protection Services. The Ministry of Education urges Heads of schools to make the most of the resources of the police in controlling weapons and illicit substances in schools across Guyana.

The Headteacher is directed to take a **zero tolerance approach** to the possession of contraband items by students. Possession of these items must be reported to the Schools Welfare Unit, the police and the parents of defaulting students must be notified.

The Headteacher is directed to notify all parents in writing of the school's zero tolerance stance relating to the possession of contraband items and persuade them to pay closer attention to the activities of their children.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Setting Rules and Sanctions**

**The Ministry of Education has set unambiguous rules and sanctions governing the items which are prohibited from the school plant. (See *Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools 2002*).**

#### **Operational definition of the term contraband**

Contraband refers to all items forbidden by the school rules. For example, harmful drugs, alcohol, weapons, tobacco products, equipment used for smoking and pornographic material in whatever form (books and cell phones).

### **Contraband – Weapons**

Weapon refers to any item that can cause injury to a person. For example, guns, knives, razors, sharpened umbrella bones, ice picks, chains, broken glass and pieces from discarded furniture such as legs of benches, desks and chairs.

### **Contraband – Alcohol, Tobacco and Dangerous Drugs\***

The Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Health and PAHO/WHO has declared schools as NO SMOKING ZONES for all persons within the domain of the school, including members of staff and the visiting public.

Headteachers are directed to notify teachers, parents, students and canteen operators of this course of action and set clear rules and sanctions for breaches.

Headteachers are also directed to stringently forbid the sale of alcohol and drug related items at any school-related activity, be it on or away from the schools premises (See Circular No. 5/2009).

The school should be cognizant that students now ‘sniff’ glue, markers etc and overdose on prescriptive medications and cough syrups. As such, staff members should monitor students closely. Hence, continuous Staff Development training is key in order for teachers to be vigilant in the recognition of signs that students are using drugs.

\* See Appendix C for a list of dangerous drugs.

### **Contraband – Obscene Publications**

Headteachers should set clear rules and sanctions for the possession, sale, trafficking, distribution, circulation, publication or broadcasting of inappropriate content in electronic or physical form on the schools premises.

In the event of an adult transmitting the content to minors, or seems to suggest trafficking, or an attempt at moral endangerment and perversion, the Headteacher must report the matter to the police.

If the Headteacher or staff is aware of unsuitable content involving a child, they should report the matter to the Schools Welfare Unit and/or police. **Under the Protection of Children Act 2009, person(s) exposing children to obscene materials commit(s) an offence.**

The Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Education, for all persons, staff members and students, using school-owned ICT, for example, computers, digital imaging, recording devices and school internet service. Head teachers should put systems in place to ensure that the necessary filters and restrictions are in place on all school computers where possible.

Students today are using cell phone technology to engage in pornographic activities. They are recording pornographic movies, taking indecent photos and transmitting same via Bluetooth from phone to phone. The use of cellular phones during class sessions and student assembly is prohibited by the Ministry of Education, (See Circular No. 7/2007). The “NO CELL USAGE” sign should be conspicuously displayed in strategic areas of the school plant. Sanctions for defaulters are outlined in the above mentioned circular.

Electronic devices including cameras, MP3 players, Game Boys etc. are now widespread in schools and, as such, Headteachers are directed to set clear rules and guidelines for their use/ non-use.

# **Monitoring gangs, associations and anti-social cliques**

## **Creating a school environment free of gangs and anti-social cliques**

The Headteacher has the overarching responsibility to control the associations of students in order to maintain discipline and create a conducive, learning atmosphere.

Gangs and cliques are a very important part of the social bonding of school life. However, problems arise when these very groups develop into groups that support violence and delinquency and eventually hinder learning.

Headteachers are instructed to be vigilant and to intervene at the first sign of anti-social behaviours by these groupings.

## **Guidelines**

### **Approving formal associations**

The Headteacher is directed to set a formal process for recognizing clubs, groups and special associations within the school. All clubs, groups and special associations operating within the school must have the approval of the Headteacher, which should not be unreasonably withheld. Formal associations may direct appeals of adverse decisions by the Headteacher to the Ministry of Education/ Departments of Education for review.

### **Identifying gangs and cliques**

The Headteacher is directed to use the indicators below in order to identify anti-social gangs and cliques.

- All groups, associations or cliques that seem to use or encourage anti-social, violent, disruptive or delinquent behaviour.
- Any grouping of students who seek to identify themselves by a gang name, dress, emblem, tattoo or particular behaviour and violate the rules of the school or threaten the general discipline and order of the school.



### **Anti-social gangs and cliques prohibited from schools**

The Headteacher is directed to set clear rules and sanctions, in approval with the Ministry of Education, prohibiting the formation of and membership in gangs and anti-social cliques within the school.

### **Duty to record and report gang activities**

Teachers are expected to be vigilant to the signs of gang operations which may include graffiti, regular assembling of students and unusual patterns of behaviour. It is the duty of the teacher to record and report on the conduct of the students under their care. The Schools Welfare Unit and police should be notified if gangs are suspected to be involved in criminal or dangerous behaviour.

### **Proactive approach and early intervention**

Headteachers are directed to develop a broad range of proactive strategies in preventing the formation of anti-social gangs and cliques. Some of which include, developing programmes, competitions, clubs and teams to cater to diverse sets of talents and special interests that would make each child feel as though he/she belongs to the institution.

Headteachers must be vigilant if anti-social gangs and cliques are to be detected in their early stages and interventions necessitated. Such interventions must include the parents, and where necessary, Schools Welfare Officers and the police.

Interventions should also be specifically targeted at gang leaders and at-risk members in order to harness and channel their leadership quality in the right direction.

### **School gangs with links to community gangs**

School gangs affiliated with a community gang should be reported to the Schools Welfare Unit and if necessary the police, by the Headteacher.

### **Gangs that threaten the operations of the school**

The Headteacher should report to the Department/ Ministry of Education without delay gangs that threaten the operations of the school. That is to say, gangs that pose a threat to the teaching/learning process, as well as, the schools population.

### **Acts of violence committed by gangs**

Anti-social gang related activities should take precedence over individual acts and should be reported by the Headteacher to the Schools Welfare Unit and/or the police. These gang related activities include:

- Violence against a person(s) with/without a weapon
- Destruction to property
- Transportation or sale of contraband items
- Moral endangerment of other students
- Gang rape
- Any activity forbidden by the laws of Guyana

# **Maintaining a safe and secure physical environment**

## **Maintenance of infrastructure for security and safety**

A safe and secure school environment not only entails conformity to rules but also cleanliness and care for the infrastructure. A well maintained school plant (clean, orderly and hygienic) will encourage students to be respectful of authority and rules. If the compound of the school is well maintained students will most likely not litter nor deface the walls of the school with graffiti.

The Headteacher should pay special attention to littering, garbage disposal, influx of unwanted animals etc. and notify the Department of Education about any damage to the school building.

## **Guidelines**

### **Natural Surveillance**

The observation of the school environs without the use of electronic devices is termed natural surveillance. This technique can be used to improve the safety and security of the school.

Headteachers can use the following to take advantage of this very important technique:

- ✓ Removing obstacles that prevent a clear line of vision.
- ✓ Ensuring off-limit areas are locked or clearly labelled.
- ✓ Ensuring there is adequate lighting.
- ✓ Ensuring entrance and exit areas are free of obstacles.

### **Ownership of space**

Headteachers are encouraged to assign 'ownership of space' to some students. These students would be responsible for safeguarding their space. As such, they would report persons who litter, deface the property of the school, engage in anti-social behaviours etc. Internal competitions can be organized, e.g. best kept classrooms, child- friendly

classrooms etc. The Student Councils/ Student Government, Health / Environmental Clubs are all agencies within the school which can help to make the school more secure.

### **Designation of emergency points and procedures**

Headteachers are directed to establish assembly points and exits to be used in the event of an emergency. Teachers and students should be au fait with the assembly point and the manner and order in which they should vacate the premises. The effectiveness of this would only be realised through constant practice.

### **Pedestrian safety**

The Headteacher should collaborate with the Police Force to ensure that Pedestrian Crossings and if necessary, 'speed humps/ sleeping policemen' are strategically placed in the vicinity of the school. Teachers should teach/ reinforce the Kerb Drill to every learner, be it nursery, primary and secondary.

## Violence Prevention in the Curriculum

Violence prevention should be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum for students from Nursery to Secondary. Schools should develop or build on programmes and activities that will enable all students to achieve the following:

- Understanding of different cultures
- Commitment to peace and social justice
- Development of skills necessary for getting along well with others and being a responsible citizen
- Respect for human rights
- The building of healthy, harmonious relationships
- Development of conflict resolution skills

Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) should form part of the curriculum offered by schools. The HFLE curriculum was developed with an aim of teaching students “critical life skills that are necessary for applying values, becoming independent thinkers and actively participating, responsible citizens”. As such, headteachers should ensure that HFLE is taught in the school. Headteachers are encouraged to invite resource persons to make presentations at special assemblies, house meetings, Parent Teachers Association Meetings etc.

The delivery of HFLE utilizes approaches that will create a non-threatening environment in the interaction between teachers/facilitators and students.

The methodology utilized in the delivery of HFLE in the curriculum should be one that fosters the development of life skills and maximizes student learning and behaviour change.

HFLE should be timetabled as one double period per week for Grades 7 – 9, however, it is important to note that **Grades 10 & 11 should also be exposed to Health and Family Life Education.**

## **Dealing with the Aftermath of an Incident**

Schools, along with the support of the Schools' Welfare Department, must develop short and long term strategies to follow up on violent occurrences. These strategies should encompass:

- Promoting the security and healing of the victims
- The inclusion of parents/guardians in the healing process
- Careful planning for the rehabilitation and re-entry of the perpetrators
- Supporting the ongoing education of the perpetrator
- Supporting the well-being and security of witnesses by ensuring confidentiality
- Addressing the root cause of the problem that resulted in the violent incident.
- Addressing and minimizing the impact on the school's community.

## **Early and Ongoing Identification for Prevention of Violence**

Schools should establish guidelines to prevent violence, since there will always be some students who need additional support to prevent them from becoming involved in antisocial behaviours. The violence prevention guidelines should try to address the root causes of violence.

Headteacher and staff should:

- ❖ Ensure that children at risk of being bullied and the perpetrators of such acts are identified and helped at the earliest possible stage.
- ❖ Help students develop appropriate social and other coping skills, rather than labelling them.
- ❖ Identify and assist students who are faced with challenges or disabilities that could increase their potential to become victims and/or aggressors.
- ❖ Capitalize on the strengths of at-risk students, thus empowering them to develop a healthy self-concept and appropriate interpersonal skills.
- ❖ Collaborate with Schools' Welfare/Guidance and Counselling Officers.

## **Conclusion**

A Safe School is one which has a welcoming and pleasant climate. It is a place of learning where students, teachers and ancillary staff, work and learn without the fear or threat of violence. They are all aware of the expected course of action in the event of emergencies. Even further, they should have strong bonds established with their communities and the necessary support structures to address eventualities. Schools must communicate effectively with their Departments of Education and other relevant units within the Ministry of Education. It is vital that every individual is given an equal opportunity to thrive without fear of victimization.

This type of environment is absolutely necessary if effective teaching and learning is to take place. As such, a collaborative effort is needed among the school's population, parents, community leaders, 'sister' ministries and law enforcement agencies. The guidelines captured herein should be shared with all members of the school's community and be implemented and reinforced throughout the school year.

Through greater awareness and sensitization of all education stakeholders we can collectively ensure that our schools become safe and productive environments. By extension this will ensure that our schools would produce better citizens who are adequately prepared to effectively contribute to the development of our country.



## **Appendix A**

### **Safe and Sanitary School Environments**

**Extract from – *Guyana: Education Sector policy on School Health, Nutrition and HIV & AIDS***

Every education institution shall foster and maintain a social climate and physical environment wherein health, well being, non-violence and safety are an important part of everyday work and learning. Such an environment should be:

- A place of safety, free of any form of stigma, discrimination or violence in which the human rights of all students and employees are protected.
- A place in which rigorous procedures relating to hygiene and school health are followed in accordance with national and international norms.

### **Creating an Environment Free of Stigma, Discrimination and Violence**

#### **Preventing stigma and discrimination**

All education institutions shall adhere to a code of conduct that contains clear guidelines for employees and students concerning ethical behaviour at the educational institution, including the unacceptability of behaviour that discriminates against or stigmatizes any member of the institution on any basis. In particular, the code shall make abundantly clear that any stigmatization of or discrimination against persons living with HIV, a person associated with someone living with HIV (including orphans and vulnerable children), or a person perceived as living with HIV shall not be tolerated under any circumstances and shall result in the application of the maximum sanctions available.

### **Preventing abuse at the school/workplace**

The code shall also clearly identify expectations concerning staff/students interactions and relationships, consistent with the provisions of the Second Schedule of the Teaching Service Commission and the Public Service Commission's regulations. The underlying principles of the code shall be:

- Mutual respect and trust
- Cognizance of unequal positions of authority between teachers and students, senior and junior employees
- Adherence to the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Non-Violence**

Administrators and other employees (teaching and non-teaching staff) shall make reasonable attempts to maintain an environment free of violence and intimidation. No administrator, teaching or non-teaching staff, employee or student should engage in, or tolerate, the physical or verbal abuse of others within the institution for any reason. Incidents of such behaviour shall be subject to the rules governing behaviour at the education institution, contractual obligations of employees, and national law.

# **Creating a Hygienic Environment**

## **Universal Precautions**

Administrators, other employees and students shall follow universal precautions, in order to avoid accidental exposure to blood or high-risk body fluids. Necessary equipment for the implementation of universal precautions shall be provided to schools by the MoE. The institution shall also have a post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) procedure in place, including counselling and guidance for the employee or student and access to anti-retrovirals (ARVs). Access to PEP shall be provided to members of the education sector at their nearest medical facility.

## **First Aid**

First Aid kits and necessary protective equipment (for example latex and heavy duty-gloves) shall be available emergency use at all places of employment at all times according to universal standards. All employees and students, especially physical education instructors and technical/vocational education teachers, shall complete an approved first aid and injury prevention course that includes implementation of infection control guidelines.

## **Management of sharp instruments**

Where sharp instruments must be used for work or educational purposes, use of these items shall be carefully monitored and controlled. The administrators are responsible for ensuring that there is no unauthorised or unsupervised use of sharps, and that any found on institution property are removed and safely stored.

## **Employees and students with open wounds**

Any wound that is bleeding or discharging shall be kept covered. Any employee or student with wounds which cannot be covered shall, as a precaution, be asked to stay away from the educational institution until the wound has healed or may be covered, unless the education institution receives a certificate from a physician that states that the employee or student does not pose a risk and may return to the institution.

## **Creating a Sanitary and Safe Environment**

In line with existing policies and guidelines for the Government of Guyana (including the Education Act, Non Academic Standards, Circulars and SSRP Preventative and Maintenance Manual), schools, Departments of Education, Regional Democratic Councils, and MoE shall have a responsibility to create a safe and sanitary environment in which:

- Smoking is not permitted
- Drug and alcohol abuse are prevented
- Gender segregated sanitary facilities and clean water points are installed in appropriate ratio to the number of children and maintained in good working order
- Janitorial cleaning supplies are provided
- Asbestos is not used in school buildings
- Buildings are suitably maintained and constructed
- Space-per-child ratio, appropriateness of furniture, and class size are maintained
- Canteen policy and food safety regulations are upheld
- Suitable firefighting equipment is provided
- Emergency/evacuation drills are practised regularly
- Facilities for students who are disadvantaged or who have special needs are provided (such as suitable ramps for children who use wheelchairs).

## **Appendix B**

### **Checklist for a safe and secure school**

*This checklist should be completed at the beginning of each school term.*

**Check the box at each item that has been completed.**

- Signals for various drills are easily recognized.
- All staff members are instructed of their specific duties during a crisis.
- The school has a plan for managing a crisis.
- Obstacles to movement have been removed.
- The school is hazard free.
- Fire prevention arrangements have been checked.
- There are procedures for responding quickly to unsafe situations.
- The school board, teachers, students, parents and community are involved in efforts to keep the school safe.
- There is a conflict-resolution module offered in the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum in which students participate.
- Students who have concerns about safety received help or are referred to appropriate persons/providers for help.
- Teachers are encouraged to set examples of positive emotional health.
- The school has fair, firm and consistent disciplinary policies.
- Safety is intertwined in all aspects of school life – physical education, play, the classroom etc.

## Appendix C

### Types of Commonly used substances

#### Marijuana

**Other Names:** Pot, Reefer, Grass, Weed, Dope, Ganja, Mary Jane, or Sinsemilla , hundred dollar bag

**Description:** Similar to dried parsley with stems and/or seeds, rolled into cigarettes or cigars

**Status:** ILLEGAL

#### Cocaine

**Other Names:** Coke, Snow, Nose Candy, Flake, Blow, Big C, Lady, White and Snowbirds

**Description:** White crystalline powder

**Status:** ILLEGAL

#### Crack Cocaine

**Other Names:** Crack, rock, freebase

**Description:** White to tan pellets or crystalline rocks that look like soap

**Status:** ILLEGAL

#### Heroin

**Other Names:** Smack, Horse, Mud, Brown sugar, Junk, Black tar, and Big H

**Description:** White to dark-brown powder or tarlike substance

**Status:** ILLEGAL

#### Tranquilizers/sedatives

**Other Names:** Valium, Librium, Miltown, Serax, Equanil, Miltown, and Tranxene

**Description:** Tablets or capsules

**Status:** LEGAL PRESCRIPTIVE MEDICATIONS

## **Ecstasy**

**Other Names:** MDMA (methylenedioxy-methamphetamine), Adam, clarity, ecstasy, Eve, lover's speed, peace, STP, X, XTC

**Description:** Tablets

**Status:** ILLEGAL

## **Cough medicine**

**Other names:** cough syrup, syrup

**Description:** Liquid

**Status:** LEGAL

## **Alcohol**

**Other names:** (3 forms): beer, wine, liquor (names can be found under various promotional labels/ branding)

**Description:** liquid

**Status:** LEGAL

## **Tobacco**

**Other names:** **puff, pinch**, (names can be found under various promotional packaging & labels/branding)

**Description:** Cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, pipes

**Status:** LEGAL

## **Appendix D**

### **Facts on suicide**

1. People who talk about suicide frequently do attempt and commit suicide.
2. Most suicidal people are ambivalent about their death wish.
3. Asking people about suicidal intentions will not cause them to commit suicide.
4. Suicide rarely happens, without warning.
5. Once a person is suicidal, he/she is not necessarily suicidal forever.
6. Suicidal tendencies are not inherited.
7. Not all suicidal people are crazy.
8. Suicide occurs in both the upper and lower socio-economic classes.

### **Alleged motives for suicides**

1. Misunderstanding with wife/husband
2. Domestic problem
3. Family quarrel
4. Rebuke by parents
5. Arguments with in-laws
6. Frustrated with life
7. Pregnancy
8. Under the influence of alcohol
9. Ailing for a long time
10. Insanity



## **Behavioural Changes**

- ❖ Giving away prized possessions
- ❖ Sudden decline in achievement and participation in school
- ❖ Withdrawal from relationships
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating, apathy and hopelessness
- ❖ Abrupt mood and behaviour changes
- ❖ Running away, promiscuity and other delinquent behaviour
- ❖ Sudden improvement in mood and behaviour after long periods of depression
- ❖ Preoccupation with death

## **Suicidal clues**

### ***Verbal messages indicating HOPELESSNESS***

- ❖ “I just want to give up”
- ❖ “I don’t feel like trying anymore”
- ❖ “I want to sleep forever”
- ❖ “I can’t go on this way”
- ❖ “Things are going to be different soon”
- ❖ “My family would be better off without me”

## References

Child Care and Protection Agency Act, 2009

Protection of Children Act, 2009

Status of Children Bill No. 5 of 2009

Schools Records and Documents, 2007

Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools, 2002

Desk Manual for School Administrators, 2005

Child Friendly Schools Evaluation – Country Report for Guyana, 2009

Protocol for Preventing and Responding to School Crisis including Law Enforcement Response

Framework for School Boards, Violence – Prevention Policies