

Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance - v.1

Purpose: this guidance is to support school administrators to communicate effectively with families after an incident and provide guidance on internal reporting within the Department of Education. Proactively sharing information with families ensures they remain confident that their children are safe and secure while at school. When sharing information, we must maintain the privacy and dignity of all staff and students involved in the incident.

School administration will seek to:

- Ensure that families are informed in a timely manner when incidents occur.
- Provide assurance to families and the wider school community that the safety and security of students is a top priority.
- Promote factual understanding of a potentially concerning incident that has occurred at the school or in a setting connected with school-sanctioned activities.
- Support staff in their work.

Guidance:

Incidents at school can range from minor to critical incidents. The communications response should be proportional to the severity, or perceived severity, of the incident. The guidance in this document is based on 5 categories of incidents: minor, concerning, major, critical and incidents or allegations of abuse/harm. If you are unsure what category your incident falls into, contact your Superintendent or Executive Director for guidance.

Disclosure of personal information:

Communications to the public and families must not include any personal information (e.g., of students, staff, or other persons). If any member of the public wishes to obtain further information on an incident, they should submit an ATIPP request:

<https://service.yukon.ca/forms/atipp-request>

Examples of minor incidents include:

- A student accident that causes injury
- Student physical contact that causes injury
- An injury or medical emergency
- Escalated behaviours that result in a Workplace Risk Assessment (WRA) form with a low or medium severity

Examples of concerning incidents include:

- Escalated behaviours that result in a Workplace Risk Assessment (WRA) form with a high severity
- Escalated behaviours that are witnessed by large groups of students
- Fights between students
- Assaults of students or staff, by students, that are witnessed by other students
- Physical restraint of a student by school staff

Examples of major incidents include:

- The fire department attends the school (aside from planned drill)
- Uniformed police attend the school and exercise the use of force or make an arrest of a student, staff member, or individual
- Evacuation of the school
- Lockdown or "hold-and-secure"
- Bomb threat
- School closure (or potential for school closure)

Examples of critical incidents include:

- Serious injury, critical illness or death of a student or staff member
- Acts of significant violence at the school

Examples of incidents or allegations of abuse/ harm include:

- Potential and/or actual abuse/harm of a student by a staff member/adult in the school community

Minor incidents

Who to communicate with

- Only the family of the students directly involved should be contacted.
- Classroom teacher communicates directly to the family of the students involved. A phone call is recommended as first approach and email if contact is not made. Communications should occur before the end of the school day or shortly thereafter.
- If this is a repeat incident, or if disciplinary/restorative action is required, the school administration will communicate instead of the teacher. In this situation, school administration will ensure their Superintendent/Executive Director is aware of their intended approach.

What information to include

- ✓ Nature of the incident
- ✓ Time and date
- ✓ How it was addressed
- ✓ Any next steps to be taken

Reviews/approvals

- ✓ No further approval beyond school to communicate directly with parents/guardians in this case.
- ✓ School administration should keep their Superintendent/Executive Director informed of their intended approach.

Example communication:

Phone:

Hi <parent/guardian name>,

This is <name> calling to let you know about a physical altercation between <child> and another student on the playground today. The students were <action of school staff>. <Provide update on situation and any next steps recommended>.

Email:

Dear <parent/guardian name>,

I am writing to let you know about a physical altercation between <child> and another student on the playground today. The students were <action of school staff>. I would like to have a discussion about the incident and work together on some actions and support for <student>. Please let me know a convenient time to talk.

Sincerely,

Teacher

Concerning incidents

Who to communicate with

Administration

- The Principal must make the Superintendent/Executive Director and Director, Community Relations and Engagement aware of the incident and the intended approach to communicating with students, staff and families.

Students and families

- Follow Minor incidents above
- School administration should consider targeted, wider communications to families of students who witnessed the incident.
- Communication will be sent by the school's administration before the end of the school day.
- Further advice can be sought from Superintendent/Executive Director and Director, Community Relations and Engagement (or designated Communications Analyst).

What information to include

- ✓ Nature of the incident
- ✓ Time and date
- ✓ Steps taken to ensure the safety of students/staff
- ✓ Any next steps
- ✓ Contact name for questions/concerns

Reviews/approvals

- ✓ Any communication sent must be reviewed and approved by a Superintendent/Executive Director.

Example communication:

Dear Parents/Guardians of Grade #,

I am emailing you to let you know about an incident that occurred at school today. At 10 a.m., a student's behaviour became escalated to the point where they struck and injured a school staff member. Staff followed our school's emergency plan – they safely removed the other students from the classroom and kept students away from the escalated student. Some students may have seen the staff member receiving treatment for their injury.

No students were physically harmed; however, witnessing the incident will impact each student differently and a team of school staff will be working to debrief the incident with the students.

Our school administration will also be reviewing the incident and working with those directly involved to determine next steps.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss supports your child may need, please feel free to contact the school principal at email.address@yukon.ca.

Major incidents

Who to communicate with

Administration

- The Principal must notify the Superintendent/Executive Director and the Director, Community Relations and Engagement as soon as possible.
- The Superintendent/Executive Director must notify the Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools and Student Services, and School Council Members or School Board Trustees.

Students

- Staff must discuss the incident with students before the end of the day and refer any students who may need support to the school’s administration.

Families

- Communication should be sent to the entire school community ASAP, but no later than 5 hours after the incident has concluded.
- If a long delay is anticipated to develop an approved communication, a short communication acknowledging the incident may be sent to indicate more details will be forthcoming. (Superintendent/Executive Director is made aware of this intended approach)
- If the Principal is unable to notify the school community, the Superintendent/Executive Director should be contacted, debriefed, and responsible for coordinating the communication.

What information to include

- ✓ Nature of the incident
- ✓ Current level of risk or threat to students
- ✓ Steps taken to ensure the safety of students/staff
- ✓ Contact for questions or concerns
- ✓ Information on supports and services for families

Reviews/approvals

- ✓ Any communication sent must be reviewed and approved by a Superintendent/Executive Director.

Example communication:

<u>Preliminary communication</u>	<p>Dear Parents/Guardians of NAME OF SCHOOL:</p> <p>I am emailing about an incident that occurred at the school today. All students and staff are safe and there is no risk of injury or harm. At 1 p.m., we had to evacuate the school. Students were led outside safely. We were able to return to the school within 30 minutes. I will follow up with more details later today after we have more information about the incident.</p> <p>Sincerely, School Principal</p>
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Active incident communication

Dear Parents/Guardians of NAME OF SCHOOL:

You are receiving this email because the school is currently in a “hold and secure.” This means that students must remain in their classrooms while regular instruction continues.

All students and staff are currently safe and there is a low risk of injury or harm. The RCMP have advised us that they are dealing with a situation at a home near the school. To be cautious, they have requested that the school be placed in this hold and secure.

We will follow up when the hold and secure has been lifted. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at email.address@yukon.ca or our Superintendent or Executive Director at email.address@yukon.ca.

Sincerely,
School Principal

Follow-up / or main communication

Dear Parents/Guardians of NAME OF SCHOOL:

I am emailing to let you know about an incident that occurred at the school today. All students and staff are currently safe and there is no risk of injury or harm.

At 1:15 p.m., an individual trespassed on school property and the school was placed in “hold and secure” (where students are required to remain in their classrooms while instruction continues and school outer doors are locked and no one is to exit or enter the school building during the duration of the “hold and secure.”).

At 1:30 p.m., the RCMP attended to the situation and arrested the individual without further incident. Staff effectively managed the situation to keep students away from the individual in accordance with our school’s emergency plan.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly at email.address@yukon.ca or email our Superintendent or Executive Director at executive.director@yukon.ca.

Sincerely,
School Principal

Critical incidents

Who to communicate with

- Follow Major incident guidance above.
- Refer to Response to Critical Incidents (9.06 in School Procedures Handbook) or Violence Threat Risk Assessment [VTRA] (9.05 in School Procedures Handbook).

What information to include

- ✓ Follow Major incident guidance above.
- ✓ Consider meetings with small or large groups of students/families to fully communicate and debrief the incident.

Example communication:

- Follow Major incidents guidance.
- Communications should include supports and services available at the school and through other agencies. This may include helpful resources and materials.

Incidents or allegations of abuse/harm

Who to communicate with

RCMP/ Child and Family Services

- Required reporting under the [Child and Family Services Act](#)
- Provide as much detail as possible (nature of incident/allegations, time and date, observations or suspicions, other students and staff who may be impacted, etc.)

Department of Education Administration

- School administrator must inform Superintendent/Executive Director
- Superintendent/Executive Director must inform Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools and Student Services and Director of Human Resources, when appropriate.
- Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools and Student Services must inform Deputy Minister, Senior Advisor, Director of Human Resources, Director of Community Engagement and Relations, and Director of Policy
- Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools and Student Services, and Director of Policy and Partnerships, and Director of Public Community Relations and Engagement (or designate) coordinates briefings and communications with other departments or agencies (e.g., Health and Social Services, Justice, RCMP) for information sharing (including communications advice)

Human Resources/YAEP

- Superintendent/Executive Director will inform Human Resources Consultant to assess the need for a workplace investigation, when appropriate
- The Human Resources Consultant will consult with Labour Relations, when applicable.
- If an investigation is required, Yukon Association of Education Professionals will be notified to allow for employee representation.

Students/families/school staff/school board/school council

- The Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools and Student Services will coordinate with RCMP, Family and Children's Services, Public Service Commission, Justice and Executive Council Office to consider the approach for communicating with students, families, school board/council and school staff based on:
 - Any ongoing investigation
 - An assessment of the rights, privacy legislation and dignity of staff and students

What information to include

- ✓ Nature of the incident
- ✓ Time and date
- ✓ Steps taken to ensure the safety of students/staff;
- ✓ Any next steps
- ✓ Supports available to students and families (at school and in community)
- ✓ Contact name for subsequent questions/concerns or to provide more information

Resources to support families:

Reference "Supports for Yukon students and families"
and/or

Contact: Community Liaison Coordinator or Executive Director of Inclusive Policy and Practice

References:

- Student Protection Policy: Preventing and Responding to Harm by Adults
- [Violent Threat Risk Assessment \(VTRA\) Protocol](#)
- Workplace Risk Assessment (WRA) Procedure
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NCI/NVCI) Procedure
- Critical Incidents Response Guidelines