

## ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY, POLICE, ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS, OR COLLEGE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS What to do if it happens to you ...

Allegations and related investigations can be extremely stressful and isolating. As your union, we are here to support and assist you through the process. Counselling and additional support are also available through your Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) if an EAP is available in your board.

### Has someone made an allegation against you?

- Even allegations that appear to you to be frivolous or entirely false can result in Children's Aid Society (CAS) and/or criminal investigations. Many can also result in discipline by your school board and complaints to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) or College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE).
- At the first hint of any allegation against you that could potentially lead to a criminal charge or investigation by the CAS, you should refrain from responding to the allegation or making any statements about it and should instead **immediately** contact the provincial office of ETFO for advice and support.
- If you are still at the school, find a place in the school where you can make a private call to ETFO. Ask your administrator to allow you to use the office phone to make the call, if necessary.

### DURING OFFICE HOURS

If you are contacted by the police, CAS, OCT, or CECE regarding an allegation made against you:

- DO NOT participate in or consent to an interview.
- Make no statement to anyone regarding the allegation or charges.
- Say, "I am willing to co-operate, but I am unable to comment until I contact my Federation and legal counsel."
- Get the name, title, and contact information for the police officer or CAS worker who has contacted you.
- Call Professional Relations Services (PRS) at 1-888-838-3836 or 416-962-3836 and state that your call is urgent.

You will be put in touch with the PRS staff on call who will provide you with the necessary assistance, including legal counsel, if deemed appropriate, and contact information for you to access additional support through your EAP if it is available in your board.

### "AFTER HOURS" - EMERGENCY LEGAL ASSISTANCE

What is an emergency?

- Police are on the scene or on the way.

- You are facing criminal charges for an alleged criminal offence directly related to the performance of your professional duties.
- You are at risk of being arrested and/or incarcerated.

### What to do?

Call: 1-888-838-3836 or 416-962-3836

### After Hours

- A voice message will provide the necessary instructions to put your call through to an operator. You will be asked a few important questions.
- Where appropriate, a lawyer will be contacted and you will be connected immediately.

### Working with School Staff

- When a member is accused of abuse or assault and is either reassigned or placed on leave by the school board, the school steward may be called upon to reassure staff colleagues that due process is being served and that the Federation is assisting the member.
- It is the responsibility of the principal, on behalf of the school board, to provide staff with specific advice for responding to student, parent, and media enquiries relating to the colleague who is being investigated or accused of a criminal offense.
- You should refrain from providing any comments on the situation and should instead direct any such enquiries to the school principal.
- If you are contacted by anyone as a potential witness to the alleged conduct, you should contact PRS for advice.

### Supporting your Colleague

- The stress factors on a member facing allegations are enormous and should not be underestimated.
- If possible, staff should attempt to maintain regular communication with the member; this will help reduce the acute sense of isolation and despair, especially if the colleague has been suspended.
- Your colleague will have been advised not to make *any* statements about the allegations or the circumstances surrounding their case and you should be careful not to ask him or her any questions about the case or otherwise encourage a discussion about it. Making such statements, even in confidence, could be detrimental to your colleague's case.
- If your colleague has not yet contacted PRS for assistance, you should urge them to do so immediately and remind them not to make any statements about the allegations until they have obtained advice from PRS.
- You should also remind your colleague that additional counselling and support may be available through your EAP.

**For further information, contact your local ETFO president or PRS staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836.**

JM:SC