



May 25, 2016

Ref: 187779

To: Independent Schools

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development have recently released best practice guides on information sharing regarding child and youth mental health and substance use in British Columbia (see attached).

These resources have been developed in response to requests for information that supports improved understanding and application of British Columbia's privacy legislation for practitioners, individuals and families who access the mental health and substance use system of care.

These guides are intended to serve as a reference tool for service providers so they may comply with relevant legislation and policies, while feeling empowered to share information appropriately and in a timely way across service providers to enhance continuity of care with families.

In addition to these guides, fact sheets have been developed to help inform families and service providers of their rights to information, their responsibilities around disclosing personal health information, understanding requests for information and other topics (see attached).

The Ministry of Education welcomes these guidelines as they align with the ERASE Bullying Strategy, and will support schools in their day-to-day work. As you know, educators and administrators play a key role in supporting children and families coping with mental health issues. Information sharing between agencies, such as schools, hospitals, police, child and youth mental health, and primary care staff—is critical to providing wraparound supports to those who need it, and is an integral component of our violence threat risk assessment community protocols.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner has been very clear, that life trumps privacy. We have seen firsthand the benefits of information sharing in our violence prevention work with the K–12 sector; we need to ensure our service providers understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to information sharing.

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As leaders in your schools, I am asking you to share these guidelines within your school and with your service providers, to work together to explore ways of putting these guidelines into practice with your community partners. It is our hope these resources will be a first step in supporting service providers in sharing information appropriately across services and with families.

We will continue to work with the Ministries of Health, and Children and Family Development over the coming year to support service providers, as they engage with these resources through knowledge exchange activities related to information sharing and privacy issues across our sectors.

If you have any questions about the guides or accompanying fact sheets, then please contact the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA-BC) at privacy.feedback@cmha.bc.ca.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lisa Dominato, Acting Executive Director, Integrated Services and Safe Schools by phone at (604) 817-3635, or by email at Lisa.Dominato@gov.bc.ca.

Sincerely,



Dave Byng
Deputy Minister

Attachments