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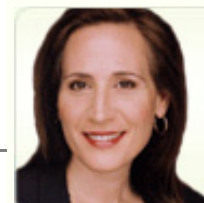
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PREMIER
DALTON MCGUINITY**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 123****Issued under the authority of the Deputy Minister of Education**

Date of Issue: February 2, 1999 **Effective:** Until revoked or modified

Subject: **SAFE ARRIVALS**

Application: Chairs of District School Boards and School Authorities
Directors of Education
Secretaries of School Authorities
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Purpose

A safe-arrival program is a system of procedures which are performed together with daily school attendance taking. Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's safety. Safe-arrival programs are a mechanism that parents and schools can use to account for any pupil's unexplained failure to arrive at school.

While recognizing that many exemplary programs are currently in place, this memorandum seeks to encourage safe-arrival programs in all elementary schools in Ontario. It suggests the exercise of local discretion in the design and implementation of the programs in order to take into account the unique circumstances of every school. Such unique circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the number of staff available to implement policies, the size of the student body, and the age of the pupils, as well as the geographic conditions in the vicinity of the school, the kind of transportation used by pupils to travel to school, and the communication methods available in the area.

This policy/program memorandum is not intended to alter the law as it exists with respect to any duty of care or standard of care of school boards, school



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authorities, directors of education, principals, teachers, Director of Provincial Schools Branch, or other officials and staff.

Policy and Objectives

In order to promote the safety of our pupils, each district school board, each school authority, and the Provincial Schools Branch are requested to develop a policy statement applying to each elementary school within their jurisdiction for the development and implementation of a safe-arrival program. It is suggested that the policy statement be issued by May 31, 1999, for schools to begin implementation of a program at the start of the 1999-2000 school year with full implementation by the end of October 1999.

This policy is intended to provide that:

- all elementary schools have procedures in place that are conducted in conjunction with daily school attendance-taking procedures and that aim to account for any pupil's unexplained failure to arrive at school through reasonable efforts to make timely contact with parents, guardians, or caregivers;
- safe-arrival programs are developed and implemented by schools with advice from school councils, band councils, parents, volunteers, and other community

members;

- the design of specific procedures reflects local needs and the particular circumstances of the school and the community;
- schools, parents, school councils, band councils, and communities work cooperatively for the successful development and implementation of safe-arrival programs;
- safe-arrival programs are designed to be flexible, with a view to achieving overall effectiveness, efficiency, and economy.

Guidance on the Design of Safe-Arrival Programs

It is suggested that safe-arrival programs be designed to reflect the following characteristics with respect to program delivery and information and communications. The following characteristics are intended to provide guidance in the design of any safe-arrival programs that are developed.

Program Delivery

- The program should be delivered in a manner that complements other school and community safety programs and initiatives.
- The roles and responsibilities of parents, pupils, the school, school councils, volunteers, and others should be clearly identified and documented, and broadly

communicated to all those who have an interest in safe-arrival programs.

- The roles and responsibilities of parents and guardians, at a minimum, could be defined as involving the following:
 - Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's safety. Safe-arrival programs are a mechanism that parents and schools can use to account for any pupil's unexplained failure to arrive at school;
 - Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for communicating planned pupil absences or lateness to the school on a timely basis. Their reports could be reconciled with information obtained through classroom attendance-taking procedures to identify any unexplained absences that require prompt follow-up contacts;
 - Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for providing the school with complete and current emergency information to enable the school to make any necessary follow-up contacts.
- Programs should take into account

both normal, recurring circumstances and unusual events and conditions. For example, regular procedures could be modified on days when pupils are likely to arrive late because of inclement weather or bus cancellations.

- Programs should take into account that a language other than the language of instruction may be used in the absent pupil's home.
- Programs should specify the steps that are to be taken when a follow-up contact cannot reasonably be made.
- Individuals involved in delivering the safe-arrival program should receive appropriate training and supervision.
- Programs should be reviewed periodically to confirm their effectiveness.
- Parents and volunteers can make a tremendous contribution to the delivery of these programs. Efforts should be made to develop this potential and to enlist the aid of parents and volunteers to help reduce demands on the time of school administrative staff.

Information and Communications

- Information about the scope and features of the school's safe-arrival program, and about the roles and responsibilities of all interested

parties, should be communicated clearly and effectively by the principal to school staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, pupils, school councils, and all volunteers and others in the community who have an interest in the matter.

- There should be a reliable method for parents, guardians, and caregivers to communicate planned pupil absences or lateness to the school on a timely basis, particularly outside school hours. For example, a voice-messaging system and, if appropriate, a telephone device for the deaf (TTY/ TDD) may have to be installed.
- A reliable system of documenting key information could be developed and maintained. Subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, key information could include:
 - a log of calls from parents or others who report absences or lateness;
 - names and current telephone numbers, in order of priority, of parents, guardians, caregivers, or other individuals to be notified in case of an unexplained pupil absence;
 - parental consent for school staff and/or volunteers to make these contacts, in accordance with the

requirements of the
*Municipal Freedom of
Information and Protection
of Privacy Act*;

- a log of actions taken by
school staff in accordance
with the provisions of the
safe-arrival program.

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