

TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE FROM LEAVING ITS MARK

VIOLENCE

PREVENTION AND
RESPONSE GUIDE TO STOP
VIOLENCE AGAINST
EDUCATION STAFF

For workers in education

SEPTEMBER 2025

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Foreword

The Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ), in collaboration with its school sector federations,¹ has always been actively involved in preventing and combating bullying and violence. Over the years, it has taken numerous actions: offering training, developing tools, organizing conferences, conducting surveys and investigations, establishing partnerships, participating in political debate, etc.

The CSQ has always favoured an approach that combines defending its members—who must be able to work in a healthy and safe environment—with the importance of educating and raising awareness among young people about bullying and violence, while taking into account the particularities of the educational environment.

In 2012, following the adoption of Bill 56, which introduced plans to combat bullying and violence in schools, the CSQ (2012), in collaboration with the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES), produced the guide *La violence laisse des traces. Il faut s'en occuper! (Violence Leaves Its Mark. Let's Act Now!)*, intended to support education staff.

Nearly 15 years later, given the extent of violence observed in educational institutions, the CSQ considers it essential to propose a new guide, adapted to the current reality. This guide aims to support communities in their prevention, intervention, and support efforts, both for staff members and students.

The CSQ and its federations warmly thank all those who contributed to the development of the guide with their experience, insightful ideas, and sound advice.

¹ Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSE-CSQ), Fédération du personnel de soutien scolaire (FPSS-CSQ), Fédération du personnel professionnel de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ), Fédération du personnel de l'enseignement privé (FPEP-CSQ).

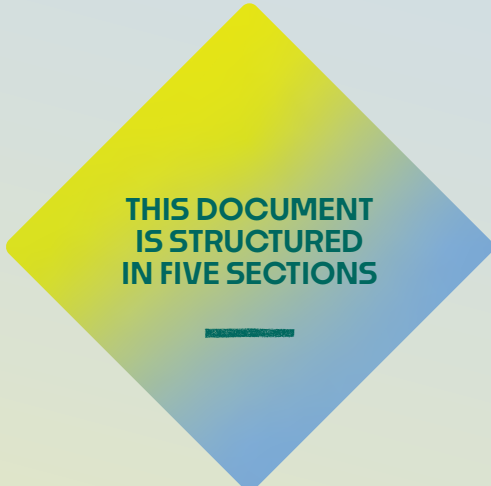
Introduction

Violence in educational institutions is becoming increasingly prevalent in the public sphere. Students and school staff are regularly exposed to it or suffer its direct or indirect consequences, which fuels a climate of insecurity. Many are trying to understand the causes of this worrying surge of violence in our institutions—a phenomenon that goes far beyond the school setting.

One fact remains: whether physical, psychological, or sexual in nature, or whether it takes the form of harassment or intimidation, violence leaves scars—and sometimes even causes trauma—that disrupt the quality of life of victims, both personally and professionally.

This guide is designed for all education professionals. It aims to provide useful information on violence in schools and is intended for all teaching, professional, support, and administrative staff.

Prevention, awareness, response, and support are everyone's business. Every worker, as well as the school system,² plays a key, decisive role in the fight against violence. In order for the initiatives implemented in these settings to be successful and for a healthy and safe climate to be established, sufficient human and financial resources must be deployed.



**THIS DOCUMENT
IS STRUCTURED
IN FIVE SECTIONS**

- 1** Recognizing the different forms of violence in school settings.
- 2** Understanding the causes and consequences of this violence.
- 3** Implementing concrete actions to prevent violence and take action.
- 4** Knowing the rights and obligations regarding health and safety at work.
- 5** Understanding how the Union can support education staff when they are victims or witnesses of an act of violence.

² The term *school organization* used in this guide includes school service centres and school boards.

1. Recognizing Violence in School Settings

When we think of violence in educational institutions, the first thing that comes to mind is violence between students or toward staff. In fact, staff may also be confronted with other types of violence in the course of their duties, namely from parents, colleagues, superiors or other individuals within the organization. Given this multitude of possible situations, it is important to clarify what this guide refers to.

1.1 THE DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

There are several types of violence, and each can take various forms,³ making it difficult to define. However, defining violence is essential to ensure a common understanding of the phenomenon and an appropriate response.

According to the World Health Organization (cited in Institut national de santé publique du Québec [INSPQ], c2025a), violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

In schools, violence is defined as “any type of unwanted behaviour that is perceived as hostile and harmful, undermining the physical or psychological integrity of [another] person, their rights, or their dignity” (INSPQ, c2025b). This definition applies to violence experienced or committed by both students and staff.

Finally, the *Education Act* (EA) also proposes a definition aimed at establishing a common language for setting and achieving educational goals in line with the school’s mission. Under this act, violence is defined as follows:

Any intentional demonstration of verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual force which causes distress and injures, hurts or oppresses a person by attacking their psychological or physical integrity or well-being, or their rights or property. (Québec, 2025d)

This definition brings together several key concepts. It highlights the power dynamics and the intentional nature of the act, and it considers the context, the individuals involved (students, parents, and adults at the school), the possible forms of violence used, and the consequences resulting from such behaviour.

The concept of intentionality, although sometimes questioned, provides useful insights that help to better target the appropriate response with the student. That being said, any act of violence committed against staff, whether intentional or not, must be taken seriously, as the effects can be just as harmful. In all cases, an appropriate response is required.

Although imperfect and constantly evolving, this definition has the advantage of providing school workers with a common understanding of the phenomenon they are called upon to address.

³ According to the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), types of violence refer to the groups against which violence is committed, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, or the setting in which violence occurs (e.g., schools). Forms of violence refer to the nature of the acts committed.

1.2 VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Although the lack of discipline in students requires a great deal of energy from staff, it should not be confused with actual situations of violence. The same applies to conflict, which arises when two or more actors (individuals, groups, or organizations) are in opposition or disagreement over interests, values, objectives, or resources they perceive as incompatible.

More specifically, violence in schools can take many forms, and the methods used by those who commit acts of violence change and evolve over time. Violence can be perpetrated by students, parents, colleagues, or even school administrators.

In order to better understand and recognize the many forms of violence in the educational environment, the most common manifestations are described below.

1.2.1 Physical Violence

This type of violence harms a person's physical well-being. It can cause injuries and leave long-term physical and psychological scars.

Examples of Physical Violence		
Biting	Choking	Spitting
Shoving	Throwing objects	Pulling hair
Hitting	Scratching, scraping	Hitting a wall or object
Slapping	Pinching	

1.2.2 Verbal Violence

Verbal violence is often used to intimidate, humiliate, or control another person. It can be intended to create tension in the other person, to keep them in a state of fear.

Examples of Verbal Violence		
Shouting, yelling	Hurling insults	Threatening
Cursing at someone	Making offensive, degrading, or humiliating comments	Using aggressive language in communications (e.g., phone calls, emails)

1.2.3 Psychological Violence

Psychological violence generally aims to exert control over a person (Gouvernement du Québec, c2025a). It manifests itself in contemptuous or humiliating attitudes or comments that influence a person's perception of their own worth. It is sometimes expressed through punitive behaviour, which consists of ignoring the other person or refusing to communicate. This form of violence is subtle and is not always verbal. The terms *intimidation* and *harassment* are frequently used to describe this type of aggression.

Intimidation is defined as behaviour intended to frighten, threaten, or coerce a person into acting against their will. Harassment, on the other hand, is a form of intimidation that is repeated over and over again against the victim.

It involves abusive behaviour committed unilaterally by one or more people, in the form of actions, gestures, words, or writings directed at an individual. When repeated, this behaviour damages the psychological or physical integrity of the victim, who generally feels powerless toward such a situation.

However, a single act of intimidation can be enough to cause harm to the victim. It is therefore essential to take action at the first signs in order to prevent escalation into harassment.

In such situations, victims often find it difficult to defend themselves. A power struggle then arises, in which the person or persons who committed the aggression seek to denigrate or discredit the targeted individual.

Examples of Psychological Violence		
Making demeaning, humiliating, offensive, or rude comments	Criticizing someone persistently	Making verbal, written, or physical threats
Spreading rumours or false allegations	Discrediting someone and making them doubt themselves (denigrating them)	Blackmailing
Isolating a person (ignoring their presence, distancing them, not speaking to them)	Preventing someone from expressing themselves (interrupting them, forbidding them from talking to others)	Vandalizing, sabotaging, stealing

1.2.4 Sexual Violence

Currently, the most widely used definition of this form of violence is that found in the *Act to prevent and fight sexual violence in higher education institutions*. According to this definition, sexual violence “refers to any form of violence committed through sexual practices or by targeting sexuality, including sexual assault [. . .] including that relating to sexual and gender diversity.” (**Québec, 2025j**)

Examples of Sexual Violence		
Expressing unwanted sexual interest (comments, hints, jokes)	Using sexist, homophobic, or transphobic insults, or making crude remarks	Disseminating images with sexual connotations by any means (technological or otherwise)
Making unconsented physical contact	Making phone calls or sending text messages, sexting, or emails with sexual connotations	Committing sexual assault
Pursuing or staring at someone insistently	Making unwanted touching	

1.2.5 Cyberviolence

Cyberviolence or *cyberbullying* refers to the use of social media or other digital tools to undermine the dignity of others. According to Shaheen Shariff (2008), a researcher at McGill University, this form of violence refers to “the use of digital technologies and communication platforms to exercise power and control through intimidation, harassment, humiliation, or exclusion of an individual or group.” Her research particularly highlights the vulnerability of young people and marginalized populations to these new forms of violence.

Examples of Cyberviolence		
Sending hurtful or threatening emails, text messages, or posts on social media	Photographing or filming someone in an embarrassing situation and sharing photos or videos with others without their knowledge or permission	Disseminating information about someone with the intent of causing them harm or compromising their sense of security
Spreading rumours, secrets, or gossip on social media, via email, or via text message	Using someone’s password to access their social media account in order to post embarrassing or offensive content	

1.2.6 Incivility

Incivility, often perceived as less extreme or direct, can still constitute a form of violence. It is often defined as a behaviour, whether conscious or unconscious, that violates the rules of civility, mutual respect, or social norms.

Although incivility may seem trivial at first glance, when repeated, its effects can be as significant to individuals and communities as other forms of violence ([Cortina et al., 2017](#); [Cahyadi, Hendryadi and Mappadang, 2021](#); [Schilpzand, De Pater and Erez, 2016](#)).

Examples of Incivility		
Insulting others, being impolite	Engaging in disruptive behaviour (e.g., making noise, obstructing or systematically interrupting others)	Raising your voice, shouting, using sarcasm
Making offensive gestures	Making provocative, condescending, or hurtful comments	Using capital letters in written exchanges
Using a cell phone in class at an inappropriate time	Being disrespectful to someone, lacking good manners	

2. Understanding Violence in Educational Settings

In recent years, education staff have noticed a significant increase in violence in schools. This trend is confirmed by the INSPQ, which reports a 20% increase in cases of violence against school staff over five years (2019 to 2024), including vocational training and higher education ([Pelletier et al., 2025](#)).

According to this study, the increase in violent acts is most pronounced in secondary education, reaching 78% during the same period, while the trend appears to be declining in primary education, after a sharp rise following the pandemic. It is estimated that more than one third of students will experience at least one episode of violence during their studies ([Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: chapter 7](#)). There has been a 41% increase in violence against support staff between 2018 and 2024.

A survey conducted by the Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (FSECSQ) among 7,300 members in April 2025 reveals that 52% of respondents reported having experienced violence since the start of the 2024–2025 academic year.

Finally, a survey report published by the Fédération du personnel professionnel de l'éducation du Québec (FPPE-CSQ) ([2025](#)) highlights that 47% of professional staff have experienced verbal violence from students and that 67% have witnessed students assaulting teaching or support staff in the previous six months.

In order to prevent violence, respond effectively when it occurs, and support victims, witnesses and perpetrators, it is essential to fully understand its causes, forms, and consequences.

2.1 EXPLANATORY FACTORS

A multitude of factors can explain why some people commit acts of violence. Whether social, family-related, environmental, or individual, these factors often interact and are part of a complex developmental process. Without providing an exhaustive list, some of these factors are presented here to demonstrate this complexity.

2.1.1 Social and Family Factors

Violence is a phenomenon that is part of life in society. What happens outside institutions undoubtedly influences what happens inside them. Depending on the era and location, the society in which we live may tend to become more peaceful or more violent. Furthermore, within a community, some groups could be more exposed to violence than others.

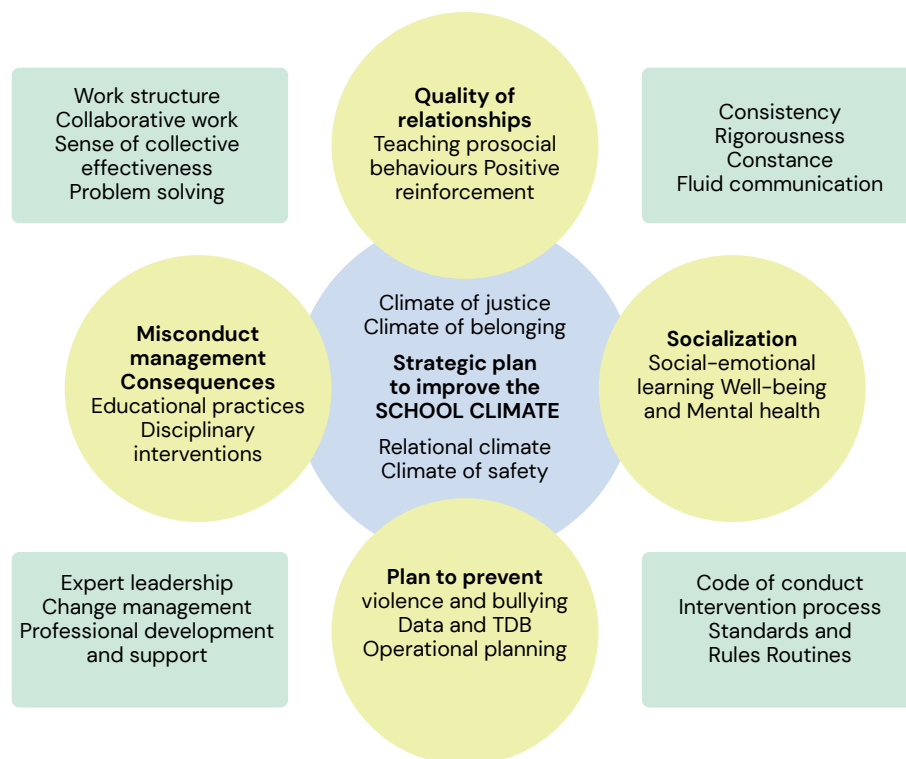
Media coverage, misuse of social networks, and political discourse on violence—often instrumentalized—can fuel feelings of violence and incite certain individuals to commit violent acts. Another worrying example is the resurgence of street gang activity, which, thanks in particular to social media, is succeeding in recruiting increasingly younger minors and inciting them to engage in violent behaviour (Gouvernement du Québec, c2025b).

We can also mention the growing role that screens play in our lives. In this respect, a recent study (Université de Sherbrooke, 2024) reveals a link between screen use by young children and emotional excesses. The more time young children spend on screens, the more they are likely to encounter difficulties in their social relationships, such as difficulties in suppressing aggressive behaviour (Québec, 2020). Few sociological studies have been conducted on violence in schools. Nevertheless, some young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and living in unsafe neighbourhoods spend more time in front of screens (Québec, 2020), which can potentially harm their social development.

Family factors have also been identified. Young people who live in dysfunctional families, families where violence is present, or who are abused are more likely to adopt violent behaviours themselves. Socioeconomic insecurity, lack of discipline or parental supervision, and lack of consistent support also are among the factors that may have some influence (Plourde, 2014).

2.1.2 Environmental Factors

The quality of the educational environment at a school is recognized as having an influence on the level of violence. The school climate plays a particularly important role. If it is positive, it promotes a greater sense of belonging, which contributes to reducing acts of violence. Conversely, a climate that is perceived as negative can amplify them (Plourde, 2014). Research has identified the main components of such a climate, as shown in Figure 1.



Collective approach to individually support students and school staff

Figure 1 — *Implementation of the strategic plan to improve school climate and socialization*

Source: Morissette, Bowen and Levasseur, 2025.

The school climate is influenced by both relational and organizational factors. On the **relational** level, to fully understand how violent behaviour can develop within the school, it is important to pay attention to social dynamics: the quality of communication between students, between staff members, and between students and staff members; the strength of emotional bonds between individuals; and the presence or absence of a spirit of revenge, a culture of competition among peers, or false accusations (**Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: chapter 7**).

At the **organizational** level, several factors are essential. These include the implementation of policies, equitable distribution of tasks, effective collaboration, relevant training, and sufficient staff to address all these organizational aspects as well as the needs of students for guidance and support that might not otherwise be met (**Protecteur du citoyen, 2022**). Finally, the physical environment must also be considered. Overcrowding in schools, for example, can increase tensions and encourage violent behaviour (**Wheeler, 2025**).

2.1.3 Individual Factors

Among students, individual factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, or low self-esteem can increase the likelihood of experiencing or committing acts of violence. Observable physical, psychological, or behavioural differences may make some students more vulnerable (**Plourde, 2014**). Rejection and isolation are also likely to cause a young person to engage in violent behaviour, such as bullying.

Staff members may also be victims of violence because of personal characteristics such as their ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or even physical appearance. Studies show that teachers with fewer years of experience are at greater risk. A lack of adequate training and preparation to handle violent situations can also make staff more vulnerable.

2.2 DOCUMENTING FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

The many forms and manifestations of violence, as well as the multitude of explanatory factors, make it difficult for staff in the field to interpret. The number of incidents reported can therefore vary considerably from one school to another, making it difficult to obtain an overall picture.

However, to better understand violence, it is essential to have an accurate picture of the situation in each school. Both reporting and recording acts of violence are essential to enable targeted and effective interventions.

Regardless of the seriousness of the act and the age of the student who commits it, all acts of violence must be reported.

2.3 THE CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE

Violence in schools has significant repercussions, both for victims and for the entire school community. Identifying, understanding, and reporting violent acts are essential steps to mitigate their impact.

2.3.1 Consequences for the Victim and the Workplace

Violence can have physical and psychological consequences for the victim. Its negative effects can also have repercussions in the workplace.

Consequences of Violence	
Physical consequences for the victim	▶ Sleep problems ▶ Fatigue ▶ Headaches and stomach aches ▶ Palpitations ▶ Digestive problems
Psychological consequences for the victim	▶ Increased stress and insecurity ▶ Feelings of incompetence ▶ Emotional distress ▶ Depressive episodes, depression ▶ Lower self-esteem ▶ Fear of judgment ▶ Frustration ▶ Professional burnout ▶ Suicidal thoughts ▶ Drug, alcohol, or medication use
On the victim's work in the workplace	▶ Absenteeism ▶ Leaving the profession ▶ Fear and mistrust of students, parents, colleagues, or management ▶ Decreased motivation ▶ Loss of credibility with students, parents, colleagues, and management ▶ Isolation ▶ Increased relationship conflicts ▶ Loss of meaning, lack of enthusiasm and commitment to the task or relationships

2.3.2 Consequences for School Organizations

Several consequences of violence in the educational setting can be observed at the organizational level. It is important to address these issues and take action to limit the negative effects that can affect students and adult victims and influence the school climate and relationships with parents.

Among these negative consequences related to the organization, we can observe, for example:

- ▶ High rates of absenteeism and staff turnover;
- ▶ A decline in team cohesion;
- ▶ An increased risk of errors in the performance of daily tasks.

When it comes to harassment and bullying among colleagues, the existence of cliques can undermine the overall atmosphere and interpersonal relationships. Aggressive behaviours between staff members also have a significant negative impact, as does the breakdown of trust between the employees and the employer. Damage to the image or reputation of the school can also be an important side effect to consider, especially since restoring that reputation can take years.

3. Defining the Roles and Responsibilities of Each Individual

Violence in the educational setting is sometimes considered an individual problem. However, there are many factors that explain violence, and the responses to it must therefore be multifaceted.

Addressing violence and its harmful consequences is a shared responsibility. Governments must implement social policies that support vulnerable families and help prevent violence in society. This responsibility also falls to those involved in education, both those who work in schools and those who support them. Finally, the Minister of Education holds a central role in providing clear guidelines (e.g., strategies, action plans), allocating sufficient human and financial resources, and documenting the phenomenon of violence to help institutions better understand and respond more effectively.

More specifically, the *Education Act* (EA) ([Québec, 2025d](#)) and the *Act respecting private education* ([Québec, 2025c](#)) define the responsibilities of each party.

Responsible	Responsibility
Minister of Education	▶ Ensure quality in the educational services provided by school service centres (section 459 of the EA) ▶ Provide and regulate the carrying out of information and prevention activities related to safety at school (section 457.5 of the EA and section 112 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ By regulation, prescribe or limit the application by school authorities of certain measures relating to safety at school and to the safety and well-being of students and the safety and integrity of their property (section 457.5 of the EA and section 112 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Modify or revoke a permit where its holder does not use the means at his disposal to put an end to behaviour that could reasonably pose a threat to the students' physical or psychological safety (section 119 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>)

Responsible	Responsibility
School service centres or school boards (EA) Private education institution (<i>Act respecting private education</i>)	▶ See to it that each of its institutions provides a healthy and secure learning environment (section 210.1 of the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Support the principals of its institutions in their efforts to prevent and stop bullying and violence (section 210.1 of the EA) ▶ Allocate resources according to the needs of the institutions (section 275 of the EA) ▶ Enter into agreement with a police force, including how to intervene when an act of bullying or violence is reported to them, as well as establish a mode of collaboration for prevention and investigation purposes (sections 275 and 214.1 of the EA and section 63.9 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Enter into an agreement with a body in the health and social services network for the provision of services to students after an act of bullying or violence is reported (section 214.2 of the EA and section 63.10 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Transfer or expel a student at the request of the school administration, for just and sufficient cause after hearing the student and their parents (section 242 of the EA) ▶ Suspend a student when such a sanction is necessary to put an end to acts of bullying or violence or to compel the student to comply with the institution's rules of conduct (section 63.6 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Inform the regional student ombudsman in charge of accountability when a student is transferred or expelled in order to put an end to acts of bullying or violence (section 242 of the EA)
Governing board (EA) Private educational institution (<i>Act respecting private education</i>)	▶ Adopt the school's educational project (section 74 of the EA) ▶ Adopt the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan (section 75.1 of the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Is responsible for approving the rules of conduct and the safety measures proposed by the school (code of conduct), and the operating rules of the centre (sections 76 and 110.2 of the EA and section 63.3 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Evaluate, each year, the results achieved by the school with respect to preventing and dealing with bullying and violence (section 83.1 of the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Inform parents and students on procedures for reporting, or registering a complaint (section 75.1 the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>)

Responsible	Responsibility
Principal (EA) Private educational institution (<i>Act respecting private education</i>)	▶ Assist the governing board (sections 96.13 and 110.13 of the EA) ▶ Approve the measures selected to achieve the objectives and targets set out in the educational project (which may include means to ensure a healthy and safe environment) (sections 96.15 and 110.12 of the EA) ▶ See to the implementation of the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan (section 96.12 of the EA) ▶ Coordinate the development, the review and, if necessary, the updating of the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan and ensure its development with the members of the institution's personnel (sections 96.13 and 110.13 of the EA and sections 63.1 and 63.4 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Promptly deal with any report or complaint concerning an act of bullying or violence and communicate with their parents (section 96.12 of the EA) ▶ Set up an anti-bullying and anti-violence team and designate a school staff member to coordinate its work (sections 96.12 and 110.13 of the EA and section 63.5 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Consult with staff members, inform the school service centre or the school corporation of improvement needs and organize training activities (sections 96.21 and 110.13 of the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ See that school staff members are informed of the school's rules of conduct, safety measures and anti-bullying and anti-violence measures, and of the procedure to be followed when an act of bullying or violence is observed (section 96.21 of the EA and section 63.5 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>)
School staff	▶ Participate in the work of the governing board (section 42 of the EA) ▶ Participate in the development of proposed anti-bullying plans, rules of conduct and safety measures (institutions), and operating rules (centres) (sections 77 and 110.2 of the EA and sections 63.1 and 63.3 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Collaborate in implementing the anti-bullying and anti-violence plan and see to it that no student in the school is a victim (section 75.3 of the EA and section 63.5 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Attend training activities on sexual violence (section 75.1 of the EA and section 63.1 of the <i>Act respecting private education</i>) ▶ Propose to the administration the means to achieve the objectives and targets set out in the educational project (e.g., means to ensure a healthy and safe environment) (section 96.15 of the EA)

Responsible	Responsibility
Student	▶ Conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner toward their peers and school service centre personnel, and contribute to creating a healthy and secure learning environment (section 18.1 of the EA and section 63.3 of the Act respecting private education) ▶ Take part in civics and anti-bullying and anti-violence activities held by their school (section 18.1 of the EA and section 63.3 of the Act respecting private education) ▶ Take good care of the property placed at their disposal and return it when school activities have ended (section 18.2 of the EA)

4. Taking Action to Prevent Violence

As explained in Part 2 of this guide, many causes of school violence originate outside educational institutions. However, school staff (including administrators, teachers, professionals, and support staff) can make a positive contribution to preventing and reducing violence. In this context, collaboration among staff members is essential. Depending on their roles and responsibilities, various collective or individual actions can be carried out to prevent violent behaviours or mitigate their consequences.

As with any social issue, prevention remains crucial. A strictly repressive approach can only solve part of violence-related problems ([Debarbieux, 2008](#)). That is why several courses of action and collective preventive strategies are proposed in this section.

This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it intended that all staff members carry out all of these actions. Each community is invited to identify its priorities and mobilize the necessary resources to ensure that they are successful.

The importance of early intervention is well established. Research shows that the quality of educational environments plays a decisive role in the emergence and persistence of aggressive behaviour, as well as in its prevention and reduction ([Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: chapter 7](#)).

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES, PLANS, AND MEASURES

Staff members, according to their respective responsibilities, have a role to play in developing guidelines and mechanisms to support violence prevention and response, in particular. For example:

- ▶ policies and codes of conduct;
- ▶ anti-bullying and anti-violence plans for the school setting;
- ▶ school rules of conduct and safety measures, and operating rules for the centre;
- ▶ response, emergency, and follow-up measures, procedures, or protocols;

- ▶ raising awareness, active communication of these measures, and student involvement in their implementation;
- ▶ staff participation mechanisms;
- ▶ stronger links with school authorities, school councils, and school boards of trustees, as well as with community resources.

Suggested goals:

- ▶ Take collective action on the school climate.
- ▶ Prevent and reduce situations of violence in schools.
- ▶ Improve feelings of safety and belonging at school.
- ▶ Promote healthy interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and social support among school staff and students.

In educational institutions, anti-bullying and anti-violence plans, rules of conduct (schools), and operating rules (centres) are developed with the participation of staff members before being submitted to the governing board for adoption or approval (section 77 of the EA and section 63.4 of the *Act respecting private education*).

For more prevention tools, see the C.E.F.E.R. model: Five characteristics to describe caring adult behaviour in schools ([Beaumont, 2023: 23](#)), the 9 principles and key actions for creating a positive school climate and preventing and reducing violence and bullying ([Beaumont, 2023: 31–32](#)), multi-tiered systems of support ([Beaumont, 2023: 33](#)), including the 3 × 3 model ([Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024: 68–69](#)), as well as proposals for practices specific to preschool and elementary school, some of which may also apply to secondary school ([Potvin et al., 2017](#)).

4.2 CONCERTED AND COMPLEMENTARY PREVENTIVE AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS TO COUNTER VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Certain prevention practices are linked to the role and relational approach of school staff and the development of students' socio-emotional skills, depending on each person's roles and responsibilities.

The quality of meaningful social relationships, both with adults at school and among students, forms the basis of a sense of belonging in the educational setting. This sense of belonging in turn influences academic motivation, particularly when students perceive the school as a predictable, reassuring, safe, and supportive environment ([Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: 214](#)).

4.2.1 Values, Attitudes, and Actions that Contribute to Well-Being at School through Universal Intervention Practices⁴

Suggested goals:

- ▶ Promote better understanding of students.
- ▶ Develop positive relationships, autonomy, and a sense of competence in students.

See the summary table of developmental characteristics related to socio-emotional learning for students aged 4 to 17 ([Beaumont, 2023: 12–16](#)).

4.2.2 Initiatives or Programs Aimed at Reducing and Preventing Violent or Aggressive Behaviours

Various programs and initiatives promote the development of socio-emotional⁵ skills and social abilities, such as communication, cooperation, assistance, sharing, empathy, behavioural self-control, peaceful conduct, interpersonal problem-solving and conflict resolution, cognitive regulation, expected behaviours and modelling.

The constructive use of situations and behaviours is also an avenue that can be explored for the prevention and reduction of violent behaviours ([Beaumont, 2023: 32](#)). In this sense, one could, for example:

- ▶ Pay attention to even subtle signs of lack of well-being among students;
- ▶ Reinforce expected behaviours in groups;
- ▶ Consider behavioural mistakes as opportunities for social learning;
- ▶ Promote graduated educational interventions based on student maturity, severity of the act, and respect for the dignity of all;
- ▶ Support the development of digital literacy, particularly to prevent cyberbullying ([Québec, 2019](#)).

⁴ They are intended for all students and “enable proactive and regular support, in addition to preventing difficulties. They emphasize, particularly, the development of personal and social skills by all, as well as the expected behaviours at school and in the classroom” ([Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024: 17](#)). They “form the basis of preventive action because they reduce the frequency of problematic behaviours and their negative impact on the classroom. They also enable the vast majority of students to adapt to the school requirements and achieve significant progress in terms of behaviour” ([Potvin et al., 2017: 7](#)).

⁵ Social and emotional skills describe a “set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable individuals to identify, express, understand, use, and regulate their own emotions in order to adapt their behaviour in real-life situations” (Espejo-Siles et al., 2020, cited in [Beaumont, 2023: 9](#)). These mechanisms “facilitate the control of aggressive reactions and enable the implementation of more appropriate behavioural solutions” ([Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: 214](#)).

School team meetings help enrich the analysis of situations and facilitate dialogue on the appropriate actions and strategies to implement. The frequency of these meetings should take into consideration the needs of each setting.

4.2.3 Prevention and Intervention Practices for Students Requiring Additional Support

Several practices can be implemented to support students who need extra help, depending on the roles and responsibilities of staff members. For example:

- ▶ Specific and targeted intervention practices (tier 2 of the multi-tiered systems of support) (**Potvin et al., 2017: 7; Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024: 17**) involving the relevant staff members, such as support and measures, response plans, teaching strategies, intensification of certain interventions already existing, etc.;
- ▶ Collaboration between designated staff members of different categories and partners involved with students (school team, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary collaboration between school staff [**Fédération des professionnelles et professionnels de l'éducation du Québec, 2024**], consultation with the health and social services network, etc.);
- ▶ Referencing or encouraging the student to participate in awareness-raising or group support workshops (anger management);
- ▶ Participation in individualized measures for the student (tier 3 of the multi-tiered systems of support) (**Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024 : 18**) (personalized or intersectoral intervention plan, student protocol, adapted psychosocial support, etc.);
- ▶ Encouraging family involvement and providing support as needed.

Participation in the analysis of students' abilities and needs is an essential step.⁶ The contribution of all relevant staff members, including professional and support staff, is essential to developing an accurate understanding of the student's abilities and needs.

⁶ It allows the detection and understanding of the emergence or absence of adjustment difficulties, behavioural issues, language disorders, or other factors in students (**Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: 212**).

4.2.4 Continuing Education, Professional Integration Activities and Support

Providing training and support that is properly tailored to the needs of the staff helps them become familiar with many of the aspects, content, and intervention strategies covered in this guide, while also boosting their confidence and improving their effectiveness in prevention and during a crisis.

The CSQ's *Guide de prévention et d'intervention contre la violence envers le personnel de l'éducation : la violence laisse des traces. Il faut s'en occuper! (Guide to Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Education Staff: Violence Leaves Its Mark. Let's Act Now!)* (2012) proposes a number of intervention practices and training topics related to violence, including difficult clientele, recognition of different forms of violence, warning signs of violent events, actions to adopt in case of violence, pacification of violent situations, conflict resolution, communication techniques, and safe physical interventions.

5. Taking Action on Violence

If the socioeducational environment does not respond quickly to inappropriate behaviour and does not offer proactive solutions, violence will have a tendency to recur. Although some measures can help break this vicious circle, prevention remains the best solution (Laforest, Maurice and Bouchard, 2018: 215). However, to be successful, measures for students must also take into account the influence of other environments on the students' lives (Beaumont, 2023: 8).

Despite prevention efforts, some incidents of violence can still occur. To handle the crisis properly, various options can be considered, depending on the nature of the situation, potential for danger, alert level, and the development of the crisis (see Figure 2).

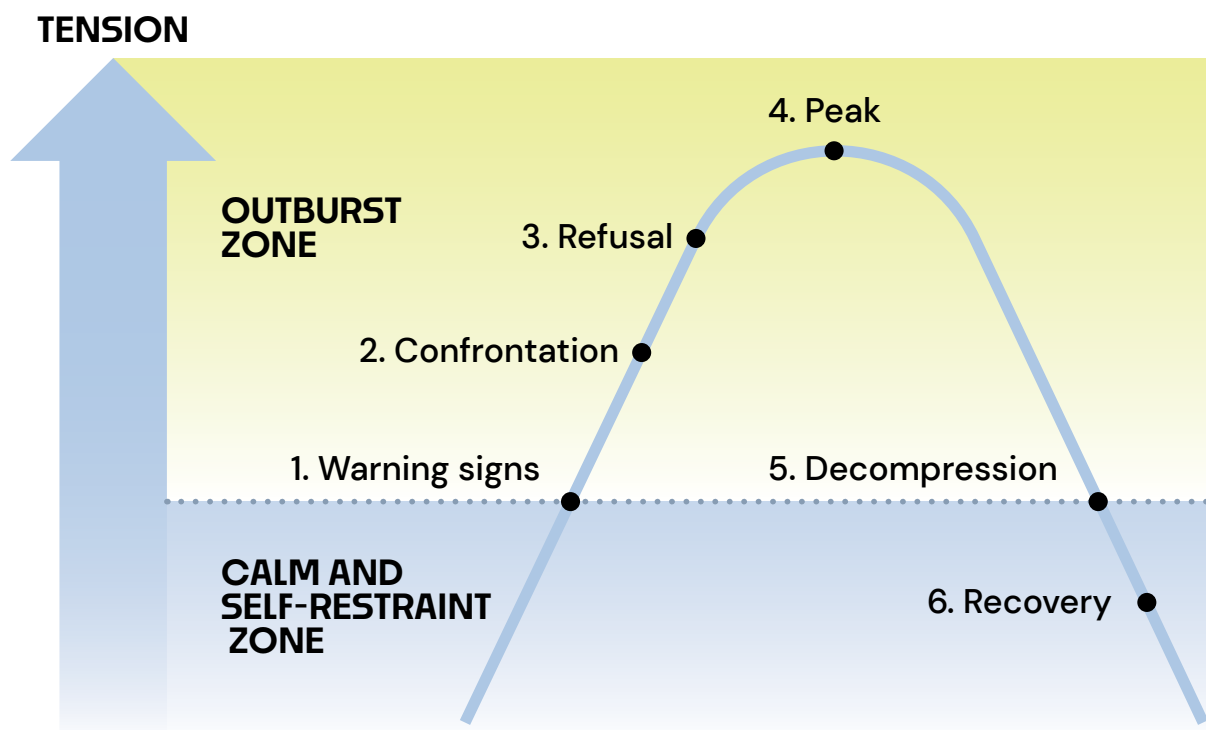


Figure 2 — The various stages of a violent crisis (or aggression)

Source: CENTRALE DES SYNDICATS DU QUÉBEC (2012). *Guide de prévention et d'intervention contre la violence envers le personnel de l'éducation : la violence laisse des traces. Il faut s'en occuper!*, La Centrale, 40 pages.

When choosing specific actions and measures, it is crucial to take into account the ethical principles, security goals, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. The following section features the measures that are recommended or not recommended, depending on the circumstances and how the crisis unfolds.

5.1 DE-ESCALATION MEASURES

Suggested goals:

- ▶ Slowing down behaviour escalation.
- ▶ Acting as soon as possible.
- ▶ Avoiding the crisis.
- ▶ Restoring calm.

5.1.1 Identifying and Recognizing the Warning Signs of Disorganization or Behaviour Escalation

Disorganization or behaviour escalation in students can lead to dangerous behaviours. It can be useful to understand the triggers and warning signs.

Triggers	Warning Signs
▶ Feelings of injustice or of losing control ▶ Emotional factors (the situation looks like an unpleasant situation encountered in the past, causing them to experience strong emotions again) ▶ Acute stressors (pain, intoxication, intense fear, situational crisis, etc.) ▶ Pain or physical health problems ▶ Accumulation of frustrations	▶ Exaggerated behaviour, or significant changes in the person's behaviour: head or shoulders thrown back to impress, intense eye contact, hands on hips, pointing finger, etc. ▶ Psychomotor agitation: pacing, arm or hand movements, shaking, etc. ▶ Physiological reactions: rapid breathing, sweating, flushed or pale face, etc. ▶ Signs of frustration: complaints, raised voices, aggressive body language and facial expressions (compressed lips, clenched fists, etc.)

Symptoms of the student in crisis

- ▶ Emotional tension or substantial agitation
- ▶ Aggressive communication and absence of social inhibition (e.g., cursing, shouting, insulting)
- ▶ Conditional collaboration or reluctant participation
- ▶ Psychological intimidation
- ▶ Loss of control
- ▶ Destructive behaviour (e.g., throwing or breaking objects)
- ▶ Active resistance
- ▶ Blow, physical aggression, or aggravated assault
- ▶ Exceptional threat

Source: MASSÉ, Line, Martine VERREAULT and Claudia VERRET (2011). *Mieux vivre avec le TDAH à la maison : programme pour aider les parents à mieux composer avec le TDAH de leur enfant au quotidien*, Montréal, Chenelière Éducation, 552 pages.

Once the tense or disruptive behaviour has been identified, it is recommended to take the student aside and address them in private, if possible. This practice promotes collaboration and prevents the student from receiving special attention in front of the class, which would risk perpetuating the disruptive behaviour (**Québec, 2015: 67**).

5.1.2 Using De-Escalation and Return to Calm Strategies

When confronted with violence, some strategies can help promote de-escalation and return to calm (**Commission scolaire Maguerite-Bourgeoys, 2016: 5354; CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale, n. d.**). For example:

- ▶ remind them of the rules of conduct and of expected behaviours;
- ▶ provide simple instructions and involve the student in the search for solutions;
- ▶ maintain a safe physical distance with the student and other persons present;
- ▶ try to validate the emotions of the student, without excusing their actions and verbal aggression;
- ▶ remove the student from the room (preventive withdrawal) and give them a moment to calm down (if necessary and possible);
- ▶ regain control of the group;
- ▶ plan a moment with the student to discuss the incident with the intention of promoting prevention and accountability.

5.2 RESPONSES TO A VIOLENT SITUATION

Here are some avenues for reflection and potential measures to implement when a violent situation arises.

Pause and Reflect

- ▶ Evaluate the risks, assess the level of danger posed by the student, and determine your own capacity to respond, to ask for support or to take over, if necessary.
- ▶ Consider the context and the seriousness and frequency of the acts.
- ▶ Refocus on your own role and follow the established procedures (emergency measures, school protocol, etc.).

Secure, Respond, and Take Action

- ▶ Reach out to the student in crisis.
- ▶ Announce your actions, intentions, and movements to the student.
- ▶ Secure the environment by removing objects from the vicinity.
- ▶ Ensure the safety of the group by keeping the student away, if possible.
- ▶ Apply the measures provided for in the student protocol (response plan, control measures), code of conduct, anti-bullying and anti-violence plan, and school protocol (removing the student or the students from the room, withdrawal or isolation, informing the parents, etc.).

Control measures should only be used as a last resort, in cases of risks or imminent dangers that do not allow for alternative measures. It is recommended to refer to the Reference Framework for Control Measures in Schools (**Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024**).

The goal of the Reference Framework for Control Measures in Schools ([Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024](#)) is to:

- ▶ contribute to a safe and healthy school environment;
- ▶ provide further details about the process of planning and applying control measures;
- ▶ encourage school organizations to implement preventive measures and alternative measures;
- ▶ reduce, and in some cases eliminate the use of control measures.

It is highly recommended to refer to the CSQ's *Guide de prévention et d'intervention contre la violence envers le personnel de l'éducation : la violence laisse des traces. Il faut s'en occuper!* (2012: 25–31), which lists the individual response practices that are recommended or not recommended in a crisis, and the key factors for making these practices successful.

6. Supporting the Students and Staff Members Following a Violent Situation

6.1 MEASURES FOLLOWING A VIOLENT SITUATION

Taking Action

- ▶ Give the student some time to calm down in a safe place and meet them when they are ready to talk.
- ▶ Go over the situation with the student and adapt your actions according to their needs and circumstances (**Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail [CNESST], 2023**):
 - encourage emotional expression;
 - apply measures that are appropriate in an educational context;
 - seek the collaboration of the student and involve them in the process of finding solutions, making things right, or commitments;
 - offer a meeting to implement or modify an action plan.
- ▶ Talk to the other students in the class: go over the events, answer questions, encourage emotional expression, etc. (all staff members involved, according to the school protocol).

- ▶ Notify the parents about the situation and involve them in the process of finding solutions and in following up on the student's commitments.

Studies have shown that school staff experience a high degree of stress ([Agyapong, 2024](#)) and that there is a need to implement resilience strategies ([CNESST, 2023](#)) in order to develop adaptation capacities and protective and supportive factors during and after stressful situations.

Ensuring Follow-Ups

- ▶ Take time to reflect personally on the measures that have been put in place.
- ▶ Analyze the collected information, circumstances, unmet needs, triggers or precipitating factors to promote understanding of the event, learn from it, and identify preventive support measures and other actions to implement, adjust, or strengthen.
- ▶ Make sure all workers taking care of the student have been informed to ensure all the means of action are consistent, and adapt the plans and protocols of the student instigator ([Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, 2024: 73-75](#)).
- ▶ Evaluate and adjust the school protocol, if necessary, which might entail adapting measures to better meet the students' needs, reinforcing workplace security, verifying the availability of the designated emergency response personnel, etc.
- ▶ Make sure there is a follow-up on the well-being and self-regulation of the students and staff involved a few weeks after the event.

6.2 SUGGESTED PRACTICES DURING SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION⁷

Several studies have shown the ineffectiveness of suspension as a punitive measure to eliminate inappropriate behaviour. In fact, it may lead to a more difficult relationship between the school, the student, and their parents ([Bernier, 2024; Girard, et al., 2011](#)).

⁷ Adapted from Girard (2024).

Prevention practices implemented in the settings⁸ are a viable alternative to suspension, including external suspension, although the latter is still used today. In this context, some practices help reduce the potential negative consequences associated with the suspension of students.

Maintaining a Link with the Student, Despite the Event or Repeat Offences.

Management

- ▶ Clarify the reasons behind the suspension with the student and their parents and let them express themselves.
- ▶ Explain the reintegration process and the expected behaviours to the student and their parents.
- ▶ Encourage parent collaboration and ensure their support for the measures implemented.
- ▶ Ensure the student and their parents are welcomed once the suspension is over.

Staff Members Assigned to the Student

- ▶ Plan to send homework to prevent the student from falling behind.
- ▶ Designate a person to keep in contact with the student and plan time in the schedule to this effect (to call, supervise their work or mark assignments, etc.).
- ▶ Consult with each other to adjust the protocols and the student's plans when necessary.
- ▶ Talk with the student and their parents about proposed modifications or support measures.
- ▶ Reassure the student when they return, by reminding them about the difference between their behaviour and who they are as a person.
- ▶ Support the student with their efforts in making amends where appropriate.

⁸ Please refer to Part 4 of the present guide.

7. Collaborate with the Parents and External Partners

All education stakeholders recognize that collaboration is essential to meet the needs of students and support their development. Collaboration between schools, families, and community partners plays a key role in the well-being and educational success of students, even if the conditions needed for this collaboration are not always present (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation [CSE], 2024: 1).

There are tools available to help establish a culture that promotes a good relationship between families, schools, and communities, and reflect on potential measures to implement (Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative du Québec, 2013; CSE, 2024: 14-18).

The opportunities for collaboration between school staff and various stakeholders working with young people can help promote the prevention of violence, facilitate measures, and improve guidance.

7.1 FAMILY

Parents are the first educators of their children. Their involvement, participation, and ability to communicate with the school are all determining factors as their children move up through the school system (Doucet, Utzschneider, and Bourque, 2009). Trust and positive communication between the school and families are essential to a fluid, fruitful collaboration for the benefit of the student.

That being said, this collaboration must be based on mutual respect and draw on actions planned at the school (Deslandes, 2010: 2). When measures are taken in a violent context, the support of parents can considerably reinforce these measures and the resources being allocated.

Although parents are not required to disclose information about the student and the family environment to organizations and school staff (health and social services requests and follow-ups, reports, etc.), this information can help provide better follow-ups about the student's academic progress and better collaboration with the school team (Picard and Leclerc, 1993: 22).

The Fédération des comités de parents du Québec (n. d.) created the *Guide pour accompagner les parents dont les enfants sont confrontés à des situations de violence ou d'intimidation en milieu scolaire*. This Guide helps parents solve and prevent problems of violence or intimidation by working closely with the school setting. It identifies the roles that parents can play, the remedies available, and the behaviours to be adopted.

7.2 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK

Collaboration between the education network and the health and social services network is supported through the Agreement for the Complementarity of Services between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (**Québec, 2003**).⁹

This agreement includes partnerships between the public health departments, the centres locaux de services communautaires (CLSC), the centres intégrés de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) and the centres intégrés universitaires de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS), including youth protection services and centres. Collaboration between these different stakeholders can be crucial in preventing situations of violence in schools and supporting effective measures.

The deployment of the agreement and the availability of practices and services to families vary depending on the region. These initiatives are intended to ensure greater consistency in actions, as well as continuity and complementarity of services between home, school, and social services.

The available programs and services include:

- ▶ local psychosocial, mental health, and rehabilitation services: the “École en santé” approach, ÉKIP, Aire ouverte, OFF-TRAIL program (anxiety and adjustment disorders), service pathways, youth outreach teams (EIJ), etc.;
- ▶ collaboration with rehabilitation centres for youth with adjustment difficulties (drug addiction, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres) and others (observation, evaluation, sharing of tools, etc.);
- ▶ requirement to report to the Director of Youth Protection (DPJ) in cases referred to in the *Youth Protection Act* (**2025f**) (abandonment, neglect, psychological ill-treatment, exposure to domestic violence or sexual or physical abuse, or if the child has serious behavioural disturbances) (**Québec, ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2024**).

Schools are encouraged to collaborate with the health and social services network in situations where specialized measures with the student are necessary (individualized service plan [ISP] or individualized and intersectoral service plan [IISP]).

⁹ This agreement defines the specific and joint responsibilities of the two networks to promote continuity and policy coordination so that “all young people have access, at the required time, to the services they need” (**Québec, c2025**).

Intervention Plan (IP)

In the education and health and social services networks, in accordance with the *Education Act* and the *Act respecting the governance of the health and social services system* (Québec, 2025e), a student with handicaps, social maladjustments, or learning disabilities (HSMLD) must have, if their academic progress justifies it, an IP adapted to their needs and designed to help coordinate the necessary measures to support their educational success (Québec, 2004).

Individualized Service Plan (ISP)

A second type of plan, in the health and social services network, is developed when a user must receive long-term health and social services requiring the participation of other professionals (Québec, 2005). Together with the parents and the child, all the help and support resources involved define the required services and the objectives being pursued.

Individualized and Intersectoral Service Plan (IISP)¹⁰

Combining the IP and the ISP of the two networks gives rise to the individualized and intersectoral service plan (IISP) and improves the quality of responses to the needs of a young person (Québec, 2005).

7.3 PUBLIC SECURITY

In view of the rise of community violence committed by youths (Moreau et al., 2024), police presence is increasingly required in schools for specific situations (emergency responses, arrests, investigations) or service agreements (prevention, community relations, etc.) with educational organizations.

Collaboration can take place with the police services (neighbourhood police, city police, Sûreté du Québec), community relations officers or local police officers attributed to the school institution.

The Provincial Consultation Panel on Violence, Youth and the School Environment has developed a frame of reference to guide interventions at the local and regional level while offering guidelines to police presence in schools.

Please refer to [Police Presence in Educational Institutions: Frame of Reference](#).

¹⁰ See also the popularization tools and regional frameworks of your school organization about the IISP, including: [Centre de services scolaire des Laurentides \(2024\)](#); [Centre intégré de la santé et des services sociaux de Chaudière-Appalaches \(2022\)](#); [Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec \(2011\)](#).

Prevention and collaboration projects or programs with police forces are determined based on the priorities targeted by school organizations and can take several forms, including:

- ▶ classroom visits;
- ▶ social media posts and sharing of images;
- ▶ law enforcement and compliance (breakage, complaints, threats, and assault).

The Youth Criminal Justice Act for Students from 12 to 17 Years Old

The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) ([Canada, 2025](#)) is intended to hold youth offenders accountable while recognizing their greater dependency, need for guidance and support and level of development and maturity. This Act ensures the rights of young persons are protected.

Recourse to the Act can be followed by work, orders, or mediation measures for the student. This may include the use of psychosocial and rehabilitation response services (DYP).

Please refer to [Loi sur le système de justice pénale pour les adolescents – Les adolescents contrevenants](#) (in French only).

7.4 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Collaboration between school staff and community organizations helps create a safety net for students through various initiatives ([CSE, 2024](#)).

Depending on their mission, these organizations participate in an individual or collective capacity, and sometimes in joint planning. Their voluntary approach, geared toward supporting young people and their families, makes them essential to counter violence.

The initiatives of these community organizations are based on a voluntary approach. This applies to both their work with children, young people, and families, and their collaborations with school stakeholders about violence-related issues.

As a result, numerous school organizations have established memorandums of understanding with various partners, including youth centres, maisons de la famille, CJE's (carrefours jeunesse-emploi), street outreach workers, organizations that work to prevent youth from dropping out of school, etc. These informal "under supervision" gathering places can welcome students outside the school schedule (lunch hour, evening, and weekend). Certain measures and respites are also offered to some students in some specific contexts (suspension, adaptation measures, etc.) to reduce the impact on their educational path.

Community organizations also provide a way of contacting, supporting, and involving parents, while ensuring collaboration with social care professionals at school (namely the My Family and My Community programs).

8. Occupational Health and Safety Rights and Responsibilities

Violence in the workplace, regardless of its origin or the shape it takes, can have a significant impact on the physical and psychological health of both victims and witnesses. The following two laws are particularly useful to know:

- ▶ the *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) ([Québec, 2025g](#)), on prevention;
- ▶ the *Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases* (AIAOD) ([Québec, 2025h](#)), on compensation for employment injuries and their consequences.

The AOHS states that every worker **has a right to working conditions that have proper regard for their health, safety and physical and mental well-being**. The purpose of this act, as described in section 2 of said act, is the elimination, at the source, of dangers to the health, safety and physical and mental well-being of workers.

This right is also recognized in the *Charter of human rights and freedoms* ([Québec, 2025a](#)) and, although formulated slightly differently, in the *Civil Code of Québec* ([Québec, 2025b](#)), which adds the concept of dignity. Moreover, the *Act respecting labour standards* (ALS) ([Québec, 2025i](#)) specifies that every employee has a right to a work environment free from psychological harassment, and that employers must take reasonable action to prevent psychological harassment from any person and, whenever they become aware of such behaviour, to put a stop to it.

In practical terms, these rights create obligations for both workers and employers.

8.1 WORKERS RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

According to section 49 of the AOHS, workers have some **obligations**, namely:

- ▶ Take the necessary measures to ensure their health, safety or physical or mental well-being;
- ▶ See that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical or mental well-being of other persons at or near their workplace;
- ▶ Participate in the identification and elimination of risks of work accidents or occupational diseases at their workplace.

Employers have the legal responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy workplace, as laid out in the AOHS. However, by also imposing obligations on workers, the Act makes it a shared responsibility. Each person has the duty to ensure their own safety while contributing to the safety of their colleagues.

Participating in the identification of violence-related risks and collaborating to eliminate them is one of the most effective prevention strategies. Entering all incidents of violence in the register, whether one is a victim or a witness, provides a better understanding of risks and makes it easier to prioritize actions while taking into consideration the level of recurrence and the seriousness of the consequences.

In addition to the right to working conditions that have proper regard for their health, safety and physical and mental well-being, the AOHS also gives workers what is commonly called the *right of refusal* (AOHS, section 12). This is the right to refuse to perform particular work if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the performance of that work would expose them or another person to danger to their health, safety or physical or mental well-being. However, this right is limited if their refusal to perform the work puts the life, health, safety or physical or mental well-being of another person in immediate danger or if the conditions under which the work is to be performed are ordinary conditions in their kind of work (AOHS, section 13).

Nevertheless, the right of refusal can be considered as a last resort when a situation persists, since it can facilitate the participation of external stakeholders authorized to evaluate the level of risk and identify measures to make the tasks safer.

8.2 EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

Section 51 of the AOHS describes the general obligations of the employer, including preventing violence. This section also contains a subsection specifically on violence. On this point, the employer must:

- 16° take the measures to ensure the protection of a worker exposed to physical or psychological violence, including spousal, family or sexual violence, in the workplace and take any other measure that may be determined by regulation to prevent or put a stop to sexual violence.

Other employer obligations laid out in section 51 of the AOHS can contribute to preventing violence toward staff, including:

- 1° see that the establishments under their authority are so equipped and laid out as to ensure the protection of the worker.
- 3° ensure that the organization of the work and the working procedures and techniques do not adversely affect the safety or health of the worker.
- 5° use methods and techniques intended for the identification, control and elimination of risks to the safety or health of the worker.
- 9° give the worker adequate information as to the risks connected with their work and provide them with the appropriate training, assistance or supervision to ensure that they possess the skills and knowledge required to safely perform the work assigned to them.

The employer's obligations are a call to action for situations that put staff at risk. In education, for example, an employer could have to modify the organization of work more than once during a school year if it risks being a source of violence for workers. The same applies to the layout of the workplace and the working procedures and techniques (for example, offering training to better respond to violence and implementing emergency and communication plans).

These obligations have been confirmed many times over by CNESST inspectors, namely the importance of ensuring that all workers receive the training and information required to safely carry out the work assigned to them.

A work analysis is essential to detect the risks linked to possible incidents of violence. Depending on the case, the employer or the establishment must:

- ▶ carry out this analysis in collaboration with the health and safety committee, the health and safety representatives, and all workers;
- ▶ give workers adequate information as to the risks associated with their work;
- ▶ ensure appropriate training and supervision (for example, control measures [time-out]);
- ▶ ensure access to the workplace is controlled at all times;
- ▶ prepare and update, on a regular basis, an emergency response plan and make it available to all workers;
- ▶ hold simulation exercises regularly;
- ▶ adopt a policy on civility, harassment, and any other forms of violence, and make it available to all workers and persons involved with the school;
- ▶ organize information, education, and awareness-raising activities regularly (as stated in the policy);
- ▶ impose the penalties (laid out in the policy) against persons responsible for undesirable behaviours, if necessary.

8.3 IN CASE OF VIOLENCE

When prevention is not enough, it is crucial to take action rapidly. Supporting the victims and witnesses is essential, as is implementing measures so that the situation does not happen again.

If the incident of violence causes a disability, the AIAOD offers protections to victims. The Act defines industrial accident as “a sudden and unforeseen event, attributable to any cause, which happens to a person, arising out of or in the course of their work and resulting in an employment injury to them” (**Québec, 2025h**) (an injury or a disease). The fact that an event is foreseeable in theory (for example, disorganization or a student with a pervasive developmental disorder) does not diminish, in any way, its sudden and unforeseeable character when it happens in reality.

Reporting an incident of violence can facilitate the recognition of employment injury and the payment of some indemnities by the CNESST. Hesitating to turn to the Commission is often a mistake because the rights under the AIAOD are frequently more advantageous than many others, especially in the long term.

All incidents of violence should be investigated or, at the very least, be subject to an in-depth analysis to identify the causes and determine the measures to implement to prevent the incident from recurring. The health and safety representatives (HSR) in your setting are appointed by the AOHS to respond to these requests and carry out inspections in the workplace.

The AIAOD also provides for indemnities for other consequences of an industrial accident, such as an indemnity for bodily injury in cases where it causes severe permanent physical or mental impairment, and an indemnity covering in part the repair or replacement of eyeglass frames or damaged clothing. The cost of medical aid for an employment injury, like medications, physiotherapy, and psychotherapy, among others, is assumed entirely by the CNESST when the latter accepts the claim. In the event your claim is refused, you should contact your union immediately. It will be able to guide you with the contestation.

9. Obtaining the Support of Your Union if You Are a Victim or a Witness of Violence

If you are a victim of violence or a witness, ask for help. Your union is there to support, guide, and advise you.

The CSQ and its federations work to defend their members and are committed to the following principles, among others:

- ▶ defending fundamental freedoms and human rights;
- ▶ fighting against all forms of discrimination;
- ▶ promoting and defending the rights of children and youth, and the fulfillment of their rights to health and education;
- ▶ fostering quality of life in labour unions and activist circles, specifically by eliminating sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, various forms of harassment, and all forms of violence;

On the basis of these commitments, your union is your best ally. It is there to:

- ▶ support you through its union representatives and through preventive activities in the workplace;
- ▶ assist you in certain procedures aimed at repairing any harm you may have suffered (for example, representation in a grievance arbitration tribunal);
- ▶ ensure that you are represented before the school organization, according to the policies and practices in force;
- ▶ guide you toward other resources that could help you with other issues. For example, the CNESST, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ) and Crime Victims Assistance Centres (CAVAC);
- ▶ conduct an investigation to determine, after an incident of violence, the causes and appropriate prevention measures to prevent the situation from happening again;
- ▶ ensure that the resources deployed by the employer deliver the expected outcome.

For union actions, the best guarantee of success is if all persons involved report any incident of violence that causes injury to workers in education. In this regard, the union encourages victims of violence to report these situations, and it ensures its support to put an end to such actions.

Finally, it is important to note that the employer has the obligation to keep a register of minor accidents and of accidents that do not lead to an absence from work, to the extent, of course, where these events are brought to their attention. The union also has the right to receive a copy of this register. Moreover, a sick leave following exposure to violence can lead to a better indemnity from the CNESST than with salary insurance.

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2509-04 D14454A