September 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* 2017 (CYFSA) is the governing legislation for many provincial programs and services for children and youth. The CYFSA obligates the reporting of concerns about children who may be "in need of protection". As is the Board's practice, we will continue our duty to ensure your child's safety this year.

Within our school system, **every person** who has reason to believe that a child is or may be abused or neglected **must** report his/her suspicions directly to the Children's Aid Society.

The definition of "child in need of protection" because of suspected child abuse or neglect has been expanded for Children's Aid Societies. The law says:

- School staff does not have a choice if they suspect that a student is or may be in need of protection. Staff must report their suspicions to a Children's Aid Society.

- Staff can be fined $5000.00 for failing to report that a student is or may be in need of protection.

- When a report is made to Children's Aid Society, school staff is required to share information about their concern which might otherwise be confidential.

- It is not the school's responsibility to investigate suspicion, evaluate the situation or assign blame.

- Parents and guardians need to be aware that it is not necessary for school staff to be sure or to have proof "that a student is in need of protection". The law says that school staff must only have reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse or neglect. *"Reasonable grounds"* is defined as being what the average person would expect given his or her training, background, and experience.

The Halton Catholic District School Board is **committed** to meeting the legal requirements of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act. The safety of our students is a sacred trust.

Yours very truly,

C. Jack-Caldeira
Superintendent, Special Education Services

J. Acheson, MSW, RSW
Acting Chief Social Worker