

EDUCATION FACT SHEET

Your Child's Privacy in School

Ontario's information and privacy laws set the rules for how your child's personal information is collected, used and disclosed.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION?

Personal information includes information that identifies a person, such as a name, address, and phone number. Other examples include:

- school photos, videos and other digital recordings
- health information
- student records

YOUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Ontario's public and separate schools are required by law to protect your child's personal information, and to follow strict rules when collecting, using and disclosing this information.

YOUR RIGHT TO ACCESS RECORDS

Under Ontario's access and privacy laws, students and parents are entitled to copies of the students' own records.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Ontario's public and separate schools are required to:

- notify you when they are collecting personal information, including the reason for the collection and who to contact with questions



- ensure student information is secure and protected
- provide parents and students access to their information
- get consent before disclosing your child's personal information for reasons unrelated to schooling, except in certain situations, including when making a report to a children's aid society

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does the school use my child's photos?

School pictures are used for administrative purposes, which may include:

- posting notices about students with severe allergies in staff areas
- helping supply teachers to identify students when they enter a classroom for the first time
- helping principals and vice-principals deal with incidents in and around the school

Am I entitled to copies of my child's school records?

Yes. Students and parents can request the information by contacting the school directly. In some situations, the school may suggest you make a formal freedom of information request (in writing) to the school board.

Why would the school need my child's health information?

School staff may need your child's health information to address medical needs, develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and plan for medical emergencies.

Your child's name, birth date, grade, name of parents or guardians, home address and phone numbers may be shared with the local public health unit, under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*.

Can teachers release my child's information to the police?

Schools have an obligation to disclose personal information when required by law.

A school may disclose personal information to a law enforcement agency to aid an investigation if it has reasonable basis to believe an offence has occurred.

Can teachers share my family's personal information with a children's aid society?

If a teacher or principal suspects that a child under the age of 16 is in need of protection, they are required by law to immediately report the information to a children's aid society.

They may also provide personal information to support an investigation.

If the child is 16 or 17 years old, a teacher may still report suspicions to a children's aid society, but is not required to by law.

My child's teacher has several different social media accounts. Is he allowed to post pictures or tweets about my child?

Teachers have a professional responsibility when it comes to using social media and should seek consent before posting identifiable information about a student.

Inappropriate use of social media by a teacher may result in disciplinary proceedings before the Ontario College of Teachers, civil action, or even criminal charges. Inappropriate use of social media includes:

- posting student work that contains identifiable information without consent
- posting photos or videos of students without consent
- tweeting about a student in a way that discloses their personal information without consent
- disclosing confidential information about the school, students or colleagues

For more information about the collection, use and disclosure of your child's personal information, contact your school principal or the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario at info@ipc.on.ca.