

**Letter to the Minister of Education, Informing him of the Consequences of mental health to**

**School Age Learners**

Student Name

Program Name

Title of Course

Instructor Name

5/25/2021

**Letter to the Minister of Education, Informing him of the Consequences of mental health  
to School Age Learners**

May 24, 2021

The Honorable Stephen Lecce

438 University Ave, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

Chairs of District School Boards

Director of Education

School Authorities

**RE: COVID-19 impact on the school Age Children between age 14 and 19**

I am writing on behalf of Ontario human right commission.

I hope this letter finds you and your team safe and healthy, and we thank you for ongoing efforts to provide continuity of learning of students during the covid-19 pandemic.

The OHR welcomes the announcement of the government school safety for the academic year 2021- 2022, and understands that the school boards members will create a special plan before the end of June based on the government directives. Additionally, we know that understand that the ministry of education has provided directions to the school boards of learning for the age between 14 and 19.

The closure of schools without giving clear information about opening has been problematic to all learners. We have heard from stakeholders that learners of the age between 14 and 19 have experience problems which might end up destroying their mental health. It has been notice that their circumstances have not been consistently put into practice, and these as a result, they have reduced in terms of moral behind their social groups. It is important that the ministry of education

and school boards establish policies that systematically and within time address the requirements of the learners between the age of thirteen and nineteen years consecutively. Some special observation have been realized in the context of the OHRC's current rights to read public inquiries into the rights affecting wellbeing of peers. We have also find the information from the different groups such as the education advisors Board and the mental health organizations.

The premier released a policy statement to deal with problems during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as actions that should be taken by the government in governing of the children between the age of 14 and 19. This letter provides additional and specific policies from the OHRC on the obligation under the Ontario child protection service related to the needs of children between the age of 14 and 19.

Under the child protection in Ontario and Eligibility, school age right to meaning engage in activities that will help their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. The ministry of education have ability to accommodate the needs of all the learners who have been affected by the pandemic. This policies will be important in addressing the barrier in education that would otherwise prevent school age learners from having chances and contact during the pandemic.

From the desk of the ONRC's the policies and actions documents together with the investor reactions, this letter provide information and specific initiatives under the child protection and Eligibility for learners of the age between 14 and 19 who have high chances of getting mental health problems as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

1. The OHRC is much concerned about the following policies.
2. Ensuring continuity of learning and helping guardians support their children.
3. Ensuring the wellbeing of children in the digital environment.
4. Physical activities

## 5. Social participation and support

We strongly know that you are aware of this policies and the situation is repeatedly increasing. We hope that the ministry of education, boards and the concerned partners respond to the issues as fast as possible. It is important that the ministry and the board concerns prepare policies and initiatives that are concern individuals of the age between 14 and 21 in the coming academic year.

### **1. Facilitate safer socialization**

The OHRC fully support the ministry guidance in the school prevention plan to the Boards to extend the organization that provide tools to learners who will be able to access local connectivity. As schools have closed down, different school system have come up with digital and distance education. Other countries have used the online distance courses and also developed new materials and platforms. The ministry of education have made their resources available in the system, delivery of education has also taken place via television and radio. However, mitigations needs to be strengthen for children in humble families to reduce the widening of gap in education sector. This can be achieved by assisting parents to put in place quality teaching sessions especially for parents who are not usually involved for academic work of the children. Specific targeted materials and tutorial should be also made available for learners whose families do not have access to distance learning.

Assisting guardians to put in order quality teaching sessions is necessary, especially for the guardians who are usually not involved in the children school work. Because of this, the ministry

of education should organize with school Boards for teachers to share information and feedback on what parents can do to support the learners and maintain social contact as much as possible of schooling children who have chances of getting mental problem.

## **2. Ensuring the wellbeing of children in the digital environment**

We welcome the ministry of education direction board to support children in realizing and enjoying the benefit of digital environment, this will protect the learners from potential risks of mental health. A zero risk digital environment is unsuitable, however as children spend much of their time on the internet due to COVID-19 pandemic, it is very important to establish the necessary conditions for safer environment provide learners to address risks.

The ministry of education and the Board should play a particular role to evaluate and minimize risk of harm of children. To this direction, integrating digital literacy, skill and competency in learning surrounding. Strong digital knowledge are essential for learners to be able critically analyze the content that they are revising. As many students face conduct and conduct risks and in the digital environment and will have high chances of cyberbullying and sexting the government and will need to consider taking action to protect learners from abuse in digital environment.

## **3. Physical activities.**

Ministry of education should put in place regular physical activity which is widely recognized as a protective against the overall burden of mental health diseases. Lack of participation in sports by children between the age of 14 and 19 has been evident and this might lead to an increase in the number of mental health cases in future. We encourage the ministry of education to arrange organized sports and physical and physical recreation which will be helpful in reducing mental health problem. Walking is one the most popular recreational activity that should be encouraged between the peers in organized sport activity between the school age children.

#### **4. Social participation and support**

We strongly advise the ministry of education to allow children to get involved in social activities such as sporting participation and creating awareness to their parents to advise them to start participating. It has come into our realization that school age learners report no sporting participation in more than three months compared to individuals of 20 years and above. The ministry should support these children by supporting community organizations through its active participation grants. Participation by a large range of community organizations creates opportunities for young people who would not normally be involved in traditional sporting activities. These areas include group activities at day care centers and volunteering. Most of the volunteering work will help many young ones from getting involved in activities that may affect their mental health.

#### **5. Facilitate safe socialization.**

We should put into consideration that much of the time at school is all about having fun and socializing with their friends. To make it easier for their longing to play with their friends via technology tools that allow socialization from far distance such as zoom, google Hangouts and Face time on computers. The ministry of education should do this by hosting a virtual show or talent show, take field trips to museums and creating fun theme dress up days.

By creating life lessons out of these pandemic improves school age between 4 and 19 ability to adapt and change, these social and emotional wellbeing skills will help foster children's ability to adapt and also prevent mental health problems. It may be of great advantage for the ministry of education to add this requirement for the 2021 -2022 school requirements for the board to work on these ways to ensure that recommendations for technology can still be obtained.

Sincerely,

Name

Executive Director