

**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**

Student Pregnancies:

**Considerations
and
Directions**

For Catholic Educators



May 1999

**WATERLOO CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

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I give you a new
commandment, that you
love one another. Just as I
have loved you, you also
should love another.
(John 13:34)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This document is a response to the issues of teen pregnancy as they affect both male and female students. This is a system-wide initiative that consistently reflects Our Mission, Church teaching, and our Family Life & Human Sexuality Curricula.

- Statistics show that teenage pregnancies occur in families from **every** social, economic, ethnic and religious background.
- In 1994 of 13,100 females who were pregnant – ages 15 - 19 in our **region** there were 325 live births and 250 abortions. In 1994 nationally there were 106,255 abortions in our hospitals and clinics. Nationally per 100 live births there are 28 abortions.
- In 1994 there were 46,753 teen pregnancies in Canada.
- From 1993 - 1997 there were 51 infant adoptions in the Kitchener-Waterloo Region.
- In 1994 teenage abortions accounted for 1/5 of all such procedures in Canada.
- In 1995 45% of teen pregnancies ended in abortion.
- Teenagers have a high repeat rate for abortions.
- This resource is intended to prepare all educators with guidelines on how best to support teens throughout the pregnancy and after the birth of the baby, by providing resources to assist in decision-making.
- The continuing education of the student is seen as important to the well-being of all parties concerned, including the unborn child.
- Students will be encouraged **from the beginning** to include their families in any decision making.

PREFACE

The mission of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board as servant leaders in education, is to ensure that each student, in a Christ-centered and learner-focused environment, develops her/his capabilities and the desire to transform the world with the gift of the Catholic faith, into a just and loving society. In order to strive to live our mission it is vital to nurture a genuine Christian community. An authentic Christian community is one that welcomes, extends acceptance, demonstrates compassion and provides support to all, especially those who are in difficulty, pain, afraid or excluded.

Our students who become pregnant are vulnerable and are in need of our acceptance and proactive support.

To ensure that the issue of teen pregnancy is properly addressed, the W.C.D.S.B. has developed this resource for guidance counsellors, youth care workers, school administration, chaplains and teachers which specifically outlines important considerations and directions for Catholic Educators.

This document focuses on the reality of student pregnancies in our schools and provides direction for staff for a Christian response that is legal and professional. Student pregnancy is a multi-faceted issue. Catholic educators are called upon:

- to clearly share and discuss **our faith perspective** of the inviolability of the right to life of the unborn child (see Appendix V)
- to respond with respect and compassion to the student mother and father
- to support the dignity and rights of the student and the unborn child
- to assist students to obtain spiritual guidance they request
- to assist students to have all the information they require to make an informed moral decision
- to strive to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the students
- to respect and adhere to legal rights of students with respect to confidentiality
- to adhere to the legal parameters of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.
- to support and encourage the involvement of the parents/guardians of the student(s)
- to proactively and deliberately support the student(s) continued education
- to assist the student(s) in developing an individualized birth plan complete with the necessary support resources (human/physical) (when requested to do so)
- to provide the students with information outlining adoption procedure and facilitating student contact with community agencies (see Appendix II & IV) to develop a birth and parenting plan
- to support the right of a student who has had an abortion to compassion and support. It needs to be stressed that **respect, support** and **compassion** that are demonstrated for a person do not condone the person's action.

ISSUES of DISCLOSURE and CONFIDENTIALITY

DISCLOSURE

Disclosure is the beginning of a process of discussion, communication, decision-making and care-giving, primarily for the student mother and her unborn child, but also for the father and both student's parents.

It is crucial, especially during initial disclosure, to show compassion to be supportive, non-judgmental, and non-prescriptive.

LEGALITIES REGARDING DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The *Child and Family Services Act* imposes a statutory duty on all professionals and officials, including teacher and principals, to report to a Children's Aid Society where they have reasonable grounds to fear that a child is in need of protection. A child is in need of protection where they have suffered or are in danger of suffering some form of physical or emotional harm or have been sexually exploited by a parent, guardian or other person having charge of the child.
- Under the *Health Care Consent Act, 1996*, persons of all ages may consent to medical treatment provided they have capacity and provided they are capable of giving an informed, voluntary consent. Health practitioners, such as a physician, must determine whether a patient has capacity to understand the information that is relevant to a medical treatment and be able to appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of a medical treatment. Consent will be determined based on the individual circumstances, including the age of the patient and the nature of the treatment.
- It is an offence under the *Criminal Code* to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 14. Where a student mother is under the age of 14, the police should be informed so that they can conduct a full investigation.

In Ontario, the *MFIPPA* governs the use, collection and disclosure of personal information by school boards.

Personal information, in part, is defined in the *MFIPPA* as follows:

“Personal information means recorded information about an identifiable individual, including,

- (a) information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual,
- (b) information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved, . . .

- (h) the individual's name if it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other personal information about the individual."

If a student were to disclose to the Board that she was pregnant, that information would be personal information and the Board would be bound by the provisions of the *MFIPPA*. Under the *MFIPPA* the Board could not disclose that information to any individual or person requesting that information except as provided for in the *MFIPPA*.

Section 32 of the *MFIPPA* sets out a number of exceptions to the general prohibition on disclosure of personal information. Section 32, in part, provides:

"An institution shall not disclose personal information in its custody or under its control except, . . .

- (b) if the person to whom the information relates has identified that information in particular and consented to its disclosure; . . .
- (d) if the disclosure is made to an officer or employee of the institution who needs the record in the performance of his or her duties and if the disclosure is necessary and proper in the discharge of the institutions functions;
- (e) for the purpose of complying with an Act of the Legislature or an Act of Parliament, an agreement or arrangement under such an Act or a treaty; . . .
- (f) in compelling circumstances affecting the health or safety of an individual if upon disclosure notification is mailed to the last known address of the individual to whom the information relates."

Disclosure is permitted in order to comply with the reporting requirements under the *Child and Family Services Act* where a professional has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection. It would also apply to disclosure to a law enforcement agency to aid an investigation into allegations of child abuse or sexual assault. Disclosure to guidance counsellors, youth care workers, and social workers employed by the Board to facilitate counselling is also authorized.

Subsection 54 (C) of the *MFIPPA* provides:

any right or power conferred on an individual by this ACT may be exercised,

- (c) if the individual is less than 16 years of age, by a person who has lawful custody of the individual."

- Under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Education Act*, educators have certain obligations with respect to personal information of students. The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, among other things, protects the privacy of individuals such as students with regard to personal information about themselves that is in the custody of a school or school board. The *Education Act* establishes the contents of the OSR as legally privileged documents which can only be used or divulged for specific purposes and under certain circumstances.
- The standard of care at common law to be exercised by school authorities in providing for the supervision and protection of students for whom they are responsible is that of a careful or prudent parent. School authorities must act to protect the student from all reasonably foreseeable risks of harm.

Please note:

The standard of care is significant in the case of teen pregnancy in two circumstances. First, a teacher or other professional confronted with the information that a student is pregnant, may have a duty to ensure that the student is given appropriate guidance and support. Second, a professional who is informed by a student that she is pregnant must be sensitive and prudent in dealing with that information.

Unfortunately, there are no clear answers to the issues of privacy and confidentiality. These issues can be **extremely complex**. The school professional must delicately balance the interests and rights of the individual student while keeping the duties and obligations they may have under other legislations and the common law. **At all times the facts of the individual situation must be examined** because each case will be different and the following factors must be reviewed:

- (1) The best interests of the student taking into consideration the student's health and safety including emotional health.
- (2) All students are entitled to the protection of the *MFIPPA* regardless of age.
- (3) Where a student is under the age of 16, as per the Child and Family Services Act, and the school has reasonable grounds to believe that the student is from a violent family or the school has reason to be concerned that physical or emotional harm would come to the student should the family be informed, the social worker should be paged. If necessary, Family and Children's Services will be contacted and/or the consultation team will meet to discuss the situation and to determine the appropriate steps to be taken. In such a case, the consultation team (p. 10) shall determine a course of action that is in the best interest of the student.
- (4) It is appropriate for the Board to involve a parent, guardian or appropriate authority in most cases, but is **not a legal requirement**. There may be circumstances, for example such as suspected incest, where it may be in the best interests of the student not to tell a parent involved but rather inform only the Children's Aid Society and/or police of suspected child abuse.
- (5) Some pregnant students under 18 may continue to demand that a parent/guardian not be told of the pregnancy. It is important that staff realize that it is not so much the student not

permitting the parent to be informed but rather the **circumstances** dictating that the parent ought not to be informed.

- (6) The common law duty of the school to act as a careful and prudent parent and to avoid all reasonably foreseeable risks of harm to the student.
- (7) The issue of a student mother having the capability of giving consent to medical treatment must be determined by a qualified health practitioner under the *Health Care Consent Act, 1996* and consequently the staff should be cautious about making those decisions.

These are just a **few of the important factors** to take into consideration when balancing the competing interests and rights of the individual in the context of the interest of the parent, the relevant legislation and the common law duty of care. Due to the complex nature of this issue the consultation team approach has been adopted (see p. 10)

ISSUES of DISCLOSURE and CONFIDENTIALITY

When a student decides to tell a trusted adult about a pregnancy, it is important to know that the student needs our support and clear, accurate information. The role of the trusted adult is to facilitate the development of the student's skills for making clear and appropriate decisions. The relationship the adult has with the student needs to clearly demonstrate that the student takes the most vital role for all of the decision making for their well being.

Student Mother:

If a young woman discloses that she thinks she is pregnant she will:

- possibly need to know what her immediate alternatives are regarding:
 - a pregnancy test by a health professional
 - a place to live
 - a way to continue school
 - medical attention
 - community supports (see Appendix IV especially Birthright and St. Monica House)
- perhaps need encouragement or help to talk to her parents (see Legalities pp. 3 - 6).

Student Father:

If a young man discloses that his girlfriend may be pregnant he may:

- need someone to talk to about the support available to him and his rights and responsibilities (see Appendix IV)
- need to have access to the information and services available to help the young pregnant mother (see above)
- perhaps need encouragement or help to talk to his/her parents (see Legalities pp. 3-6).

Friend:

If a student discloses that a friend thinks she is pregnant, the student needs to:

- be given a list of people who the friend can approach for help or counselling (see Appendix IV)
- encourage the friend to seek help.

Parents:

If parents disclose that their daughter or son is involved in a pregnancy they need to know that:

- there is a support network available for their daughter or son
- her/his educational and career plans are still possible to achieve
- they are encouraged to come to the school with their daughter or son to participate in the development of the support required.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Within the context of this guideline:

Confidentiality means that information received or observed about a student will be held in confidence. It will be disclosed only with the student's authorization or if there is an obligation, legally or professionally, to do so.

The student's right to confidentiality is a priority regardless of age.

- The condition of pregnancy is a medical issue, and unless there are suspected *risk factors* (see Appendix I) regarding the mother and/or the unborn child, there is time to work towards involvement of the significant others in the student mother's life, namely, her parent/s or guardian/s.
- In all cases, there is a **professional responsibility** to work towards the **student mother** involving a family member (parent/guardian) in the decision-making process as soon as possible.
- It will be necessary for a staff member to consult with a Board Social Worker regarding the needs of a student and/or whether *risk factors* or *immediate danger* exist (see Appendix I).
- If it is deemed necessary after consultation with the Board Social Worker for a staff person to contact an appropriate outside authority/professional, this must be done **without in any way revealing the identity** of the student, unless required by law.
- After some initial decisions have been made, the staff member should advise the pregnant student that in order to have access to all of the support and resources available to her in the school and to receive the concessions she might require, the principal may need to be informed.
- It is always the intent of the Guidance Counsellor, Youth Care Worker or Social Worker to discuss with the student mother the earliest most appropriate opportunity to involve her parent/guardian. While acknowledging the desirability of the early involvement of the student's parent or guardian, if the student continues to exercise her right to confidentiality,
- (see pp. 3 - 5) the school personnel must honour the student's right **unless circumstances** indicate that the parent or guardian must be informed of the pregnancy (see pp. 6 & 18).

Please note: In most cases, it would be appropriate for the Board to involve a parent, guardian or appropriate authority but not necessarily in every case. The **best interests** of the student must always take priority. (Law Firm of Borden & Elliot - February 1999)

- **When the student's health and/or safety are in *immediate danger*, a parent, guardian or appropriate authority must be notified (see p. 5, #3, and p. 10).**

- **Issues of rape, incest or physical abuse may surface in connection with the pregnancy. Staff members are legally bound to follow the disclosure procedures outlined in the W.C.D.S.B. *Child Abuse Support Document* 1989, p. 10, and pp. 13 - 15. Appropriate authorities with respect to the *Child and Family Services Act*, and the *Criminal Code* must be informed under these circumstances.**

Procedures for Staff Response Regarding Pregnancy Disclosure

Student discloses that she suspects that she is pregnant.



Staff member consults directly with the Youth Care Worker who works in tandem with the Guidance Counsellor (as Case Manager). Staff member does not refer the student to the Public Health Nurse*



If the student is under the age of 18**, dialogue occurs around a plan to inform the parent/guardian that the student is pregnant and/or is contemplating an abortion. Student proceeds with plan to tell parent. Youth Care Worker or Guidance Counsellor will provide appropriate follow-up for this student.

After supportive counselling, if the student refuses to inform parent or guardian of the pregnancy and/or contemplated abortion, the following process will be followed:



Youth Care Worker/Guidance Counsellor will contact the Social Worker to determine if risk factors are present (i.e., physical, mental, social risks, see p. 18).



If risk factors are present, then the Four Person Consultation Team will meet within 48 hours to discuss whether to maintain student confidentiality or to pursue parental contact.



Consultation Team:

- Administrator
- Guidance Counsellor
- Youth Care Worker
- School Social Worker

Decision Made



Action Taken



Support will continue to be provided for the student

* Any staff member who is approached by a student who may be pregnant must acknowledge to the student that the teacher's obligation is to inform a Guidance Counsellor or Youth Care Worker (student's name will remain confidential at this time unless the Guidance or Youth Care worker requires it). It is essential that the staff person does not disclose this confidential information to anyone else nor refer the student to the Public Health Nurse. The student is not referred to the nurse until after the consultation team has followed the WCDSB Protocol for supporting a pregnant teen.

** Risk factors must also be considered for students over the age of 18.

DIRECTION for COUNSELLING

THE PRENATAL PERIOD

It is important to allow the students to explore their feelings and get as much accurate information as possible to assist them in making very important decisions (see Moral Decision-making Appendix V).

Support during the prenatal period could mean providing information and/or counselling regarding the following issues:

MEDICAL CONCERNS

Once the pregnancy has been confirmed:

- the student mother needs a doctor to monitor her pregnancy and should be encouraged to seek medical help (as in all cases parental consent needs to be obtained at all times when staff is accompanying a student outside of the school)
- guidance counsellor or youth care worker should support the student in contacting community resources e.g., doctors, birthright . . . role-playing steps required for the contact may be required
- consideration must be given to risks to the mother and the unborn baby from the possible presence of sexually transmitted diseases or substance abuse
- the student may need to be encouraged to keep regular appointments
- public health nurse(s) will be able to assist the pregnant student to register in on-going pre-natal classes, nutritional counselling and assistance with planning medical visits for the mother and the baby
- pregnancy should be presented as a state of health and not an illness that excuses the student from participating fully in school life, i.e., lates and absences (e.g., medical appointments). School will continue to make allowances for students in regards to morning sickness, health and emotional changes during pregnancy to try and accommodate the young woman prenatally as she has been accommodated postnatally with possible modification to the Education Plan, to ensure her full participation in school life
- refer to Appendix IV for community agencies and resources.

DECISION-MAKING REGARDING THE BABY

Decision-making is ongoing. Students may change their minds, regarding their **plans for the baby**, several times throughout the pregnancy. It is essential to ensure that the students make an informed decision, while assuring the students that the final decision is theirs. Staff of the W.C.D.S.B. are not responsible for the final decision of the student.

The students may need assistance to obtain essential information on:

Parenting

- parenting and its impact on the teen parent's social life and development must be viewed realistically
- community resources regarding parenting skills, housing, childcare, family allowance, community support, childhood illnesses, financial responsibilities (see Appendix IV).

Adoption

- there are many agencies available to arrange for legal adoptions; most of them also offer counselling for the young mother, father and their families
- some agencies will work with young people who decide to parent
- as the practices involved in an adoption have changed so drastically over the past few years, students may need to be informed about their options for adoption by an agency (see Appendix II).

Above all, students must be supported for their plan to give birth.

NOTE: Couples wishing to adopt sometimes approach school personnel requesting access to a pregnant teen. School personnel should not become involved in the process as they are not trained to do so.

RESIDENCE

If the student is not able to live at home or find alternate living arrangements:

- there are places in the community to seek temporary shelter
- there are maternity homes that provide residence for the duration of the pregnancy and for a short period afterwards, if necessary (see Appendix IV).

After the student finds alternate living arrangements, support could mean:

- making the necessary arrangements for the student's continued education
- facilitating a transfer to another school (only at student's request)
- intervening with teachers if the student needs a few days to get set up
- encouraging the student to stay connected with people and programs that can be of assistance.

THE ISSUE OF ABORTION

While an option that this Catholic School Board **does not** endorse, it is one that young women and men may consider.

Be aware that:

- abortion may be encouraged by family and friends who may only be reacting out of panic, or who may also be reacting out of conviction
- the student needs the opportunity to discuss her/his feelings and fears, but also needs to know that there is support for a baby in the community, including supportive adoption.
- referral for counselling to a pro-life community resource is appropriate (e.g., Birthright) to ensure the teen receives factual information – medical, emotional and moral issues regarding an abortion
- if a student, under age 16, as per the *Child and Family Services Act*, is feeling pressured by a parent/guardian towards an abortion, Family & Children's Services can be called in to assist the student
- if the student is 18 or over and feeling pressured, an alternate residence could be considered (see Appendix IV).

NOTE: After supporting the student and encouraging at every turn that the student speak with their parent or guardian and ensuring the student clearly understands the permanent implications for her baby and herself of an abortion, we will continue to support the student if she decides upon an abortion (e.g., empathy, counselling). This support does not include any staff member assisting the student in any way to procure the abortion.

As educators in the Catholic system we do not support the decision to abort. We are supporting the teen who has made this decision and is in need of our care and compassion.

ROLE OF THE STUDENT FATHER

If the student father comes forward, be aware that:

- it is important to refer him to an agency that can support him and advise him of his rights and responsibilities.
- if the student father is committed to supporting the mother and their baby he too may require a modification of his education plan.

As a Catholic educational community we clearly support student mothers and fathers to take responsibility for the life and the care of their child. This is deliberately addressed in our Family Life and Human Sexuality Curriculum and Parenting classes. In light of confidentiality issues, staff should not deliberately seek out the father to become involved in the decision making of the mother regarding the baby. If there are complications raised regarding the father they should be brought to the attention of the site level consultative team (please see p. 10). For support of young fathers in the community see Appendix IV.

FAMILY COUNSELLING

For family members in need of counselling:

- the schools do not have the mandate to handle their counselling
- a list of community supports should be made available to families (see Appendix IV)
- referral can be made to the school social worker

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Staff members may suggest that the legalities and the ramifications for both the young parents and their child regarding such issues as adoption, child support and one's rights and responsibilities should be explored with a lawyer, family doctor or other appropriate agency.

EDUCATION

There are a variety of routes to suggest for the continuation of the students=education:

- continuing in the present school (possibly reducing the work load)
- switching to adult continuing education, if the student is 18
- becoming a day student or resident in a maternity home
- applying to do correspondence courses through the Independent Learning Centre
- enrolling in evening and/or summer school courses

All efforts must be made to come up with an alternative that will allow the student to continue at a non-stressful rate to work towards future educational goals.

CLOTHING

As a pregnant teen has the right to continue her education at her regular school, each school should amend their dress code to include an acceptable "uniform" for the student mother.

- This could consist of a pair of maternity pants and a top in the school uniform colours. The student may need financial assistance to purchase this alternate uniform.
- The Guidance Counsellor/Youth Care Worker may be used as a resource regarding the appropriateness of the apparel.
- Pregnant teens should not be forced to wear maternity kilts, as they can be uncomfortable, restricting and embarrassing. The dignity and comfort of the pregnant teen is paramount.

THE POST - NATAL PERIOD

After the birth of the baby, there are challenges to be faced that can greatly affect the student's ability to concentrate on school work. The right to confidentiality must continue to be respected.

At this time, the following issues may be of concern to a student:

PARENTING

The new parent may:

- need to identify areas in their lives that may need to be adjusted in their social, educational and future plans
- need encouragement to take adequate maternity leave to foster critical parent/child bonding
- require childcare facilities in or close to the school; these are a priority if we want to encourage young parents to continue school; the inclusion of infant care is essential
- feel isolated from their peers as they have such different daily concerns; a peer counselling group with a quiet place to meet could help young parents feel welcome at school while encouraging them to continue their studies.
- require counselling services for economic, emotional, psychological, spiritual or social problems
- have to deal with financial assistance
- need help to deal with her/his feelings and to plan for the needs of a child born with medical complications and/or a developmental/physical challenges
- need to participate in a peer support group offered in the schools
- have to deal with emotional struggles that may be the result of negative messages sent out by the school community
- experience post-partum depression. The young parent may find difficulty in adjusting. Serious depression is a common occurrence due to circumstances or hormonal imbalance.
- need a mentoring couple if their biological parents are non-supportive (the parish may take responsibility for ensuring that an appropriate couple be matched with a young woman)
- need future moral guidance and education in sexual decision-making

GRIEF COUNSELLING

Confidentiality must be maintained, while encouraging the student to seek counselling. Grief counselling would be appropriate in the following situations:

- Abortion
in addition to experiencing grief, the student **may** need professional counselling for anger, helplessness, remorse and guilt
- Miscarriage/Stillbirth
a miscarriage/stillbirth can result in feelings of loss and anger
- Adoption
the young parent, whether male or female, who has placed a baby for adoption may feel loss, helplessness, loneliness, or regret as well as grief; special dates such as holidays and birthdays can be difficult; long-term counselling services may be required.

RESIDENCE

Community resources are available to help students find housing (see Appendix IV).

EDUCATION

If students are enrolled after the birth of the baby:

- the students should be encouraged after appropriate maternity leave to continue with their education and career plans; to this end, regular counselling sessions and peer support meetings could encourage the students to set realistic goals and to persevere regardless of how long their plans may take to materialize.
- absenteeism as a result of the baby's illnesses or medical appointments may make it difficult for the student to stay within the guidelines of the school attendance policy; a policy that may require notes from a doctor for baby-related absences recorded separately from the parent's attendance record could ease this problem
- peer tutoring support for a student who misses school to look after the baby, could help her/him to catch up
- **again, all efforts must be made to come up with an alternative that will allow the student to continue at a non-stressful rate to work towards future educational goals.**

Encourage the Student to seek assistance

Assistance/information/support from appropriate resources (see Appendix IV).
It is imperative that a staff member not exceed the limits of his/her own competence.

APPENDIX I

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Immediate Danger**
This describes a situation where a risk arises respecting the physical (e.g., refusing to seek medical care), mental (e.g., suicidal behaviour) or social (e.g., persistent truancy) safety of the student in relation to herself/himself or others unless immediate intervention is provided.
- **Risk Factors**
These may include factors related to the physical, mental or social well-being of the young person, or conditions which may exist in the young person's environment – family, peers, school and/or community – which this person must confront in order to succeed, and for which there may be inadequate internal/external supports in coping skills.
- **At Risk**
This is the existence of one or more risk factors which, in nature and intensity, result in the increased probability of illness, physical or mental harm, maladjustment, alienation and/or feeling of lack of control by the young person in his/her future.

APPENDIX II

OPTIONS FOR ADOPTION

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has pamphlets available that provide answers to basic questions about adoption that are helpful for both the birth parents and the adopting parents. Both pamphlets stress the fact that legislation regarding adoption changes and provides a number one can call to access the most current information.

Students should be advised to contact an adoption agency as soon as possible to get accurate information that will help them make an informed decision. Contacting an agency does not commit them to an adoption.

Adoption can take place with the assistance of the Family and Children's Services or through a licensed adoption agency (see Appendix IV).

The adoption worker will be able to counsel the student parents considering adoption on the options

- a) both for adoption and parenting
- b) for when the baby can be adopted (e.g., directly from the hospital, or after temporary foster care)
- c) for selecting the parents for their baby (e.g., whether or not it is possible to meet the adopting parents) and
- d) for signing an adoption registry which will enable possible contact with the child when he/she turns 18

These are all issues which change in legal practice depending on legislation. The best support that a staff member can give is to supply a list of phone numbers for the student and help arrange an initial meeting with a worker.

APPENDIX III
SCHOOL CONTACTS

- Guidance Counsellor
- Youth Care Worker
- Chaplain
- Any staff member with whom the student feels comfortable
- Social Worker
- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Parish Staff

APPENDIX IV
COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Note **DISCLAIMER**: Though a concerted effort was made to ensure that information listed here is correct and current, the list is by no means exhaustive.

Residence/Counselling			
Birthright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance and counselling • films/speakers • no birth control, or abortion information • free clothes for mother and baby. 	Kitchener	579-3990
		Cambridge	621-8370
Marillac Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing and support services for up to 1 year. • parenting and life skills. • pre and post natal women 15 - 22 and children under 3 years. 	Kitchener	571-0722
Monica – Ainslie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary, supportive housing for adolescent mothers and their pre-school children. • parenting skills and life skills available. 	Cambridge	624-0481
Prenatal Classes			621-6110
St. Monica House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young parent resource, care, support, help with decision-making, prenatal support, residential living moms and babies unit. Community supports, school programs, etc. 	Kitchener	743-0291

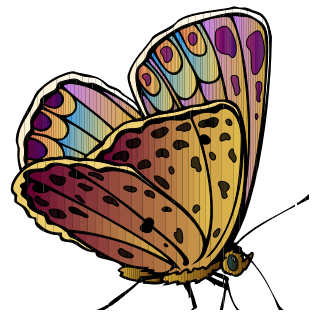
Young Father's Support Group - St. Monica		Kitchener	743-0294
Waterloo Region Community Health Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eight week prenatal course • early pregnancy information and prenatal activities to promote healthy pregnancies and births • clinical services on sexual health and STD HIV/Aids program. 	Cambridge	621-6110
		Kitchener	883-2267
Healthy Babies, Healthy Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new province wide program offered in Waterloo Region by the Community Health Department. Can arrange for family and home visitation to assist with parenting skills and to offer emotional support. 		883-2245
Financial Assistance			
Child Care Center Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial assistance to meet child care costs. Child care provided in Regional child care centres, community child care centres, or through Regional home child care program. 		883-2200
Home Child Care Subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordinates, supervises, and refers children to approved private home day care programs. 		883-2220
Regional Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial assistance. 		883-2100
Counselling Services			
Catholic Family Counselling Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provincially accredited, nondenominational, therapeutic counselling for individuals experiencing difficulties within marriage, family, social, grief counselling and personal relationships. 	Kitchener	743-6333
Child & Adolescent Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency admissions for acute, at risk individuals (suicide). 	K/W Hospital	743-3611 Ext. 2629
Community Mental Health		Cambridge	740-4900

		Hospital	
Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> counselling services. 	Cambridge	621-5090
Family & Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mandated to protect children, and investigate reports of child abuse and neglect supportive programs for families with children at risk. 	Cambridge Kitchener	623-1451 576-0540
Family & Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pregnancy counselling services supportive counselling and all information about options available to them. 	Kitchener	576-0540
Interfaith Pastoral Counselling Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confidential counselling to individuals, couples, families, support groups re: family violence, sexual abuse survivors. 	Cambridge	622-1670
		Kitchener	743-6781
KW Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides personal and family growth by providing information and skills, parenting program self esteem, communication etc. 		743-6391
Community Supports			
Betty Thompson Youth Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emergency shelter for youth 12 - 15. community supports available within the drop in centre for age 12 - 24. 		749-2450
Cambridge Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> registry of affordable housing employment assistance/counselling multitude of services for crime prevention. 		622-0815
Cradlelink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> caregiver relief for young parents with an infant trained volunteers spend three to four hours per week with one family. 		749-0977
Lutherwood Youth Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community outreach employment and job search skills 		743-2460

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing registry. 		
St. Mary's Counselling Service (Substance Abuse Clinic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individuals with drug, alcohol, or gambling concerns. 		745-2585
St. Vincent de Paul via community parish			
Emergency Housing, Shelter, Food			
Anselma House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short term emergency crisis shelter for women and their children who are victims of relationship violence, actual or threatened • counselling provided. 	Kitchener	742-5894
Argus House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short term residential housing for girls 16 years and older. 	Cambridge	623-7991
Family Crisis Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short term emergency crisis shelter for women and their children who are victims of relationship violence, actual or threatened • counselling provided. 	Cambridge	653-2422
Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Kitchener	743-5576
House of Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • men's hostel over 16 years. 	Kitchener	742-8327
Kiwanis Youth Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residential program for males 16 - 21 • prepares youth for independent living. 	Kitchener	578-0171
Mary's Place (Y.W.C.A.)		Kitchener	744-0120
Safe Haven		Kitchener	749-1450
St. John's Soup Kitchen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free hot, nutritious noon meal 11:15 - 1:00 provided Monday - Friday 	Kitchener	745-8928
Legal Services			
Birth Registry			571-6043
Immigration			571-6675
Landlord Tenant Act			579-5790

Lawyer Referral Service			1-800-268-8366
Legal Aid			743-4306
Parental Support Unit			740-5743
Family Support Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for families with the issue of pregnancy. 		575-4733
Passport			1-800-387-3000
Probation			571-6105
Probation (under 16)			886-4700
Sexual Assault			
Community Justice Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiatives to enhance justice and alternate means of resolving conflict • sexual abuse treatment programs • community mediation services 		744-6549
Sexual Assault Support Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support and assistance for those victims of sexual assault, throughout medical, legal procedures, and police investigations • 24 hour crisis line • individual/group counselling available 		741-8633
Sexual Assault Treatment Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crisis counselling, medical examinations • treatment team consists of doctors, nurses and social workers 		749-6994

Several of the persons who validated this resource inquired as to what is taught in our system in *Respect For Life* curriculum Gr. 8, 9 & 12 and Moral Decision-Making. The following overview is an attempt to briefly provide this important information.



APPENDIX V
Family Life & Human Sexuality Curriculum

<p>Overview of the Rationale of W.C.D.S.B. Respect for Life Curriculum</p>

"Catholic teaching is based on two truths about the human person: Human life is both sacred and social. Because we esteem human life as sacred, we have a duty to protect and foster it at all stages of development from conception to natural death and in all circumstances. Because we acknowledge that human life is also social, society must protect and foster it."¹

In some important areas, societal climate runs counter to our Catholic beliefs. These important areas include the abuse of drugs, excessive consumerism, the related degradation of the environment, euthanasia and abortion. In January of 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada declared the abortion law unconstitutional. An abortion can be procured anywhere in Canada by any woman regardless of her age or marital status. It may be performed by any medical practitioner in a clinic or doctor's office at any time during her pregnancy. We are bombarded daily by the issues of mercy-killing, using aborted fetal tissue for patients with particular diseases and a plethora of new reproductive technologies.

As a Catholic community we need to foster a "**consistent ethic**...that will sustain a consistent defense and promotion of life. When human life is considered 'cheap' or easily expendable in one area, eventually nothing is held as sacred and all lives are in jeopardy."² This consistent ethic whereby life in every way is respected must dwell, and be active, in our homes and in our schools.

The Catholic position on the inviolability of all life continues to be as strong as ever. The new Code of Canon (ecclesiastical) Law (1983) recognise this inviolability and calls all in our Catholic community to support all of life from conception to natural death.

Our school board has addressed the need for our students to be active in challenging the morals of the culture by striking a mission statement which calls for our students to: "develop his/her capabilities and the desire to transform the world, with the gift of the Catholic faith, into a just and loving society.@ Introductory comments stress the need for modelling a life-giving community, the program must be couched in an environment which uplifts and upholds the value and sanctity of life and dignity of the human person.

Our classrooms are places where faith is reflected as:

¹ Origins, March, 1987, Volume 16, No. 40

² Origins, March, 1987, Volume 16, No. 40

- Christ centered, i.e., to chose to be a follower of Christ is to be invited to transform the world into a place where all life is sacred;
- recognizing all of life is sacramental, i.e., our God is discernible to us in all of creation;
- incarnational, i.e., Jesus Christ in His incarnation transformed life and human dignity. The dignity and sacredness of every person is grounded in their relationship with God.³

This Family Life program entitled "*Respect for Life*", attempts to carry out the mandate of our school board and our Catholic community by providing our students with knowledge and the appreciation for the sanctity of all human life. It models and teaches the skills to practice moral decision-making in major areas of their lives.

One of the ways our Catholic students will be grappling with life's significant questions is in exploring the ramifications of applying a consistent life ethic. Students will be applying a comprehensive decision-making framework. This framework addresses the medical, moral, legal and socio-political realities surrounding major life issues. Applying the framework leads learners to ask difficult life questions such as: Who in our society is respected, protected, valued and empowered, and who is not and why not? Framing and exploring these larger questions will inform their moral decision making processes. (see pp. 22-28)

The Grade Eight overview deliberately supports a Christian appreciation for **all human life** while accentuating exactly when human life begins.

The Grade Nine overview is designed to expose students to information on euthanasia and abortion while beginning to develop the skills and values they will require to explore positive Christian alternatives.

The Grade Twelve overview encourages our students to discern the positive life options in the various bioethical issues of our technological age.

Throughout all the grades students are involved in co-operative, reflective, dialogic activities. These activities will foster the formation of conscience and effective Catholic moral decision-making skills. In a safe environment our students can begin to apply a consistent value/ethic of respect for all human life.

"2) Every human being is unique and priceless because they are made by God in the image and likeness of God. Every human life – let there be no mistake – is therefore fit to live for as long as the Lord of all life may choose. In the world as designed by God there can be no such thing as a human being unwanted, unloved, useless."

(A Matter of Life and Death - Declaration by the Catholic Bishops of Ontario on Abortion)

³ *Curriculum Matters, A Resource for Catholic Educators*, Institute for Catholic Education, Toronto, 1996.

The Basic Principles of a Consistent Ethic of Life

All life problems and challenges need to be related to the basic principle which prohibits the directly intended taking of innocent human life. The fundamental human right is the right to life. These simple fundamental oral principles are at the heart of a consistent ethic of life and apply to all life issues (genetics; capital punishment, war, abortion, etc.). We cannot apply these principles in one case, e.g., abortion, but not in another, e.g., capital punishment.

These basic principles flow out of the scriptural understanding that we are all made in God's image and likeness and that we are all called to follow Christ's new commandment of loving each other as He loves us. Other considerations of principle that apply here include the following:

- a) the Christian vision and belief rule out violence of any kind because violence solves no problems!;
- b) and state and society exist to serve the individual and not vice versa.

Some commentators on Bernardin's thought want tighter expressions of principle here or more scriptural ones and so they suggest principles that look like these:

- a) "no self-serving killing of innocent human life" (stated in this way because legitimate self-defense still holds as a morally viable option);
- b) and "do not ever do to the life of others what Jesus did not do, or what you do not now want done to your own life."

Because the consistent ethic of life is driven by these principles (above), it calls us not only to oppose abortion but also to push for quality of life. We cannot just defend the rights of the pre-born without also supporting the quality of life for groups and individuals like the homeless, the immigrant, the unemployed, etc. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways. We rightly push to eliminate abortion but then we cannot argue that public support programs like welfare undermine the fibre and structure of society. Hence the consistent ethic becomes the background for specific positions we take on a wide range of life issues. Finally, Bernardin also notes (accurately) that there is a lot of work that has to be done to build consensus among Catholics regarding this consistent ethic.

This *Consistent Ethic of Life*, by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin is found in Fr. Fred Scinto's, C.R., Overview of the Rationale of W.C.D.S.B. *Respect for Life Guideline*

OVERVIEW OF MORAL DECISION-MAKING IN W.C.D.S.B. FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

- "A judgment of the intellect, dictating what is to be done as morally right, or what is to be avoided as morally wrong, in the particular circumstances in which one is now placed" (Francis J. Connell, 1929).
- "The judgment of reason which tells whether an act should be avoided because it is evil or done because it is good" (Jessie Corrigan Pegis, 1957).
- "That element in man's/woman's experience of freedom which makes him/her aware of his/her responsibility. The biblical term for conscience is the heart, in which God's will is written (Rom 2:15) . . ." (Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, 1965).
- "The experience of ourselves as moral agents, as persons responsible for our actions. Decisions are made in light of who we think we are and are called to become" (Richard P. McBrien, 1980).
- "Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he/she is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed" (#1778, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994).
- "Conscience . . . is our ability and our obligation to seek the truth and decide for the truth now. Ultimately, conscience is a decision or a judgment made in the light of our knowledge . . . It is a decision about the here and now." (Leonard Foley, 1994).
- "The whole self trying to make judgments about who one ought to be and what one ought to do or not do. It is a person's 'most secret core and sanctuary' where one is 'alone with God' (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965, n.16)" (Richard M. Gula, 1995).

FRAMEWORK

MAKING (SERIOUS) CONSCIENCE DECISIONS

1) **PROBE**

- What are the principles, values, standards involved in this situation?
- What is the ideal as proposed by the Christian Community/Church (accepting the ideal as ideal)?
- What do the Scriptures say about this?
- How does the decision I make affect others?
- With whom do I need to discuss this (dialogue with someone is a sign of openness to the right decision)?

2) **PRAY**

- Pray the matter over a number of times and for sufficient length.
- In this prayer time allow enough silence for God the Father/Mother, the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit to "speak" to you.

3) **PICK**

- Make the best decision you can from among the alternatives.
- Leave the decision open for possible future change or emendation or qualifications or nuancing.

Fr. Fred Scinto, C.R.

GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE

- I) Human Balance
- II) Presence of Christ
- III) Scripture and Tradition
- IV) The Magisterium

Conscience Formation

A Guide to the Formation of Christian Conscience

It is a never-ending search we all must undertake to "know" what is morally right or worthy and that which is not morally right or worthy. The following guidelines are all necessary to the formation of Christian conscience.

- I) **HUMAN BALANCE**
Certain human conditions support balanced judgement from a Christian perspective. Sound emotional stability, self-knowledge, clear objective judgement, and education will help in the formation of sound conscience. Positive communal attitudes and cultural and social influences contribute to the acquisition of knowledge, and above all, of proper attitudes.
- II) **PRESENCE OF CHRIST:**
A person who wishes to have a true Christian conscience must be faithfully in communication with our Lord Jesus Christ – through personal and communal prayer.
- III) **SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION:**
Persons of faith draw their inspiration from the Scripture, the very Word of God. The Word of God reveals the designs of the Father in the historical context of the world and a refined series of ideals, precepts and examples given to us by the same Lord Jesus. This is communicated to us not only in the words of the scriptures but in the Spirit of Jesus which continues to live with us.
- IV) **THE MAGISTERIUM**
It is in this context that the teaching of the Church finds its full force. The Church has been given to us to make sure that the Word of God contained in the Scripture and illustrated to us in the Spirit can be authenticated in the community of believers. The teaching of the magisterium cannot be judged as just one element among others in the formation of conscience. It is the definitive cornerstone upon which the whole edifice of conscientious judgement must be built.

You are to build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets and Christ Jesus himself is the foundation stone (Eph. 2:20).

"Statement of the Formation of Conscience", Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Three Step Moral Decision Making model for Younger Students

How To Make A Good Moral Decision

STEP	MEANING	QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF
1. OBSERVE	Look carefully at what is involved in the situation. Investigate!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How could someone be helped in this situation?• How could someone be hurt in this situation?• What alternatives are available?• What effect will the decision have on the person who makes it?
2. JUDGE	Consider what is the right decision. Evaluate!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What commandment of God tells me what is the right thing to do?• What teaching of Jesus tells me what is the right thing to do?• What teaching of the Church tells me what is the right decision?• Be honest: is it really right or wrong?• What is the best decision I can make in this situation?
3. ACT	Do what is right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What help do I need so that I will do what is truly best? <p>Once we know what is the best that can be done, then we know what is the right thing to do, and therefore we know what our God is asking us to do.</p>

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Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Born of the Spirit Program, "We Believe God
Revealed in the Church"

Decision Making Model III - Senior Students

A GUIDE FOR MAKING MORAL DECISIONS

Those actions, decisions, and attitudes are:

LOVING, RIGHT, OR MORAL

SELFISH, WRONG OR IMMORAL

WHICH PRODUCE ALL OR SOME
OF THE FOLLOWING RESULTS IN YOU OR THOSE YOU AFFECT:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) an increase in your ability to trust others | 1) a decrease in your ability to trust others; suspicion |
| 2) greater honesty in relationships | 2) being two-faced; feeling phony in your relationship with others |
| 3) the breaking down of barriers between people; a lessening of the sense of separation | 3) a feeling of isolation; the sense of being separated from others |
| 4) an increase in the attitude of co-operation | 4) a decrease in the attitude of co-operation; not getting along with others. |
| 5) a greater sense of self-respect; you can look at yourself in the mirror and feel genuinely happy with yourself because of what you may have done | 5) a loss of self-respect; a feeling of guilt; you'd be embarrassed to have others know what happened |
| 6) a better attitude toward people in general; more confidence in the fact that people are really good | 6) a lack of acceptance of others; the feeling that people are just concerned about their own good |
| 7) a feeling of peace and joy in your life, a sense that you are doing what you are called to be doing and making the most of your life | 7) feeling that life is depressing; generally sad, turned off |

Two conditions are closely related to this guide and affect it in an important way:

FIRST: When we talk about the breaking down of barriers between people, this means a decrease in separation that extends beyond just the two-person relationship. For example, a boy and girl can get so much "together" that they have no room for anyone else.

SECOND: In everything we do or decide, we have to be concerned not just with right now but also with what the long-range effects are going to be on myself and others. We must ask: How will this affect me and others later on?

(Note: A duplicating master is available for this exercise.)

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from "Jesus of History, Christ of Faith" Teacher's manual

Please Note: In presenting and processing Christian value decision-making with our students it is critical that we stress that as baptized Christians we have been given the Holy Spirit to assist and inform our decision-making process. As we as Christians make our moral decisions, it is essential for us to pray to the Holy Spirit to guide us.