

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 161

### SCENT-SAFE WORKPLACES

#### Background

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools is committed to the safety of students, staff, volunteers and contractors. The Division is respectful of health concerns of students, staff, contractors, volunteers, and guests arising from exposure to scents when in Division buildings. The Division recognizes the responsibility it shares with staff and parents to provide a Christ-centered, safe and caring school learning environment for students. In order to maintain a safe learning environment for students and a safe work environment for staff, the Division intends to protect the indoor air quality of its buildings. Strong scents and fragrances can contribute to poor air quality that can be unhealthy and can cause environmental sensitivities to students, staff and guests.

In Alberta, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* protects Albertans from discrimination based on specific grounds. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all Albertans have an equal opportunity to be in a school or Division building to work or access services available to the public without discrimination. Administrators and Managers will be able to implement a scent-safe workplace when made aware that a student, staff member or parent is experiencing environmental sensitivities in the workplace.

Environmental Sensitivities can be caused by any product or chemical. Ingredients or chemicals used to produce scents are present in a very large range of products, including but not limited to:

- Shampoo and conditioner
- Deodorants
- Fragrances and perfumes
- Potpourri, air fresheners and deodorizers
- Essential oils
- Soaps, detergents, fabric softeners
- Food products including nuts
- Hairsprays
- Colognes and aftershaves
- Lotions and creams
- Industrial and household chemicals
- Cosmetics
- Candles
- Diapers
- Beverage products

Exposure to such fragrances/scents can cause a person with environmental sensitivities to experience symptoms that include but are not limited to:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Weakness
- Numbness
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Upper respiratory symptoms

- Skin irritation
- Confusion
- Difficulty with concentration
- Shortness of breath
- Malaise
- Severe allergic reaction

**Note:** The severity of these symptoms can vary from mild to life-threatening.

### Procedures

1. Students, staff, visitors and contractors will avoid strong perfumes, cologne, personal hygiene products, identified food and drink products, scented candles, scented laundry products, and other lingering odors on clothing such as tobacco smoke or chemical products which may affect the sensitivities or allergies of others.
2. Students, staff or visitors affected by persons using products that trigger environmental sensitivities shall take reasonable precautions to self-manage their conditions and will advise the principal or other manager if they are affected by environmental sensitivities.
3. The principal or manager will meet with the individual, and parent where applicable, to clarify the issue and to understand the impact that the environmental sensitivity is having and the actions that will be taken to address the problem.
4. In a timely manner, a scent-safe workplace plan will be developed. The school administration or department manager will communicate with students, staff and parents highlighting the key points of the plan and requesting everyone's cooperation and understanding to create a safe environment for all. **Signs or posters will be displayed in the building at entrance doors, in common areas and in classrooms/offices of the environmentally sensitive person(s).**
  - 4.1. All staff are responsible for reporting non-compliance to school administration or the department manager.
5. The implementation and support of the scent-free workplace plan will be monitored in terms of the health of affected persons and in the following of the plan.
6. Scent sensitivity is a safety issue therefore repeated or consistent violation of the procedure by students, staff, or a visitor may result in discipline.

#### References:

Canadian Human Rights Commission, Alberta Human Rights Commission, Alberta Health Services, Canadian Lung Association, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety