

# Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2024-2025 • Issue 1

## Informed Consent

### Informed Consent for Clinical Services via Inclusive Student Services Staff

With the adoption of DDSB's Human Rights Policy and Indigenous Education Policy, we are invited to examine policies, practices and approaches to ensure that they align with relevant legislation as well as these foundational policies. Core within these policies is voice and choice in education and related services.

Informed consent is a requirement for services provided by Psychological Services, Social Work Services, and Speech and Language Services as part of Inclusive Student Services. These services are provided to help support student mental health, learning and pathways of access to community-based services.

*"I always feel good when students mention feeling a lot safer and more comfortable to open up and express themselves authentically knowing things are confidential and they also have choice over what they feel they can share on their own terms and knowing they are in control."*

—Social Worker



Informed consent means you are involved in a conversation with your service provider to support understanding of services offered, the benefits, risks and any alternative courses of action. This connection also provides an opportunity for you to clarify questions and/or concerns. Informed consent leads to the decision to engage or not engage in the service(s) offered.

Before any services are provided, regulated health professionals need to seek and obtain informed consent about the services offered to support a student. This means a conversation with the student, at age of consent, or parent/guardian. It is important that the client understands the services being offered, the anticipated benefit and any risk of participating in the services, and the service provider's obligation to maintain privacy and confidentiality.



When students are seeking direct mental health supports (e.g., counselling) that Social Work and Psychological Services staff provide, students are able to consent to their own service(s), provided that they understand what they are consenting to. While practitioners will continue to seek to involve and clarify permission from parent(s)/guardian(s), in circumstances where a student wishes to independently initiate service from a member of Social Work and/or Psychological Services their informed consent (with some exceptions) will suffice. The involvement of parent(s)/guardian(s) continues to be foundational to the work we do, and an important component in the work with students. Other clinical services (e.g., assessment, consultation with school-based personnel) require the informed consent of parent(s)/guardian(s).

### **What is covered through informed consent?**

For all our services provided through regulated health professionals, we provide competent services and information, based on assessment and evidence-based interventions. We may collect information from multiple sources, including the Ontario Student Record, academic documents, caregivers and educators who know your child well, and the student themselves. With written permission, we may contact or consult with other professionals who provide services to your child.

Regardless of which services we offer and are agreed to, you and your child have rights to privacy and confidentiality.

**There are two key legislations related to informed consent:**

### **Health Care Consent Act**

This is the legislation that lays out the rules for how informed consent is obtained in any setting where there is a requirement to consent to treatment. Within the DDSB, that includes any services offered by members of Psychological Services, Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Services, and Social Work. ([ontario.ca/laws/statute/96h02](https://ontario.ca/laws/statute/96h02) )

“

“During planning for a significant transition, a parent/caregiver noted that she really appreciated understanding all of the ins and outs, and what information would be shared with the new school. She said that it made her feel better about this transition knowing that she can decide what information about her child is shared and only to those needing the information for planning.”

–Psychological Services team member

“Families may have previous experiences with receiving professional services for their child privately or through a community agency. The delivery of these services may differ within the school setting. The informed consent process helps families to better understand the nature of services that their child will receive from school-based professional services and provides them with the opportunity to ask questions.”

–Speech Language Pathologist

”

## Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)

This Act sets out rules for how personal health information is collected, used, and shared. Even though schools are not specifically healthcare settings, we do have many regulated health professionals within our Inclusive Student Services teams. When you provide consent to any services provided by a DDSB clinician, the rules they follow to keep your personal health information confidential are laid out in PHIPA. ([ipc.on.ca](http://ipc.on.ca))

Regulated Health Professionals in the DDSB support students aligned with the expectations of legislation, the district and governing professional organization:

- [College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario \(CASLPO\)](#)
- [Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers \(OCSWSSW\)](#)
- [The College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario \(CPBAO\)](#)



For more information about the  
 DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,  
 please visit [DDSB Inclusive Student Services](#).

