



Fragrance/Scent Safe Awareness AP 300.29

Procedure for: All Staff
Submitted by: Superintendent of Business
Category: Human Resources

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Revised: N/A

Purpose

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board is committed to a safe, healthy and respectful workplace and learning environment for all staff, students and visitors. In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and learning environment, this administrative procedure has been developed to assist principals and managers with implementing a fragrance/scent safe workplace when made aware that an employee is experiencing an adverse reaction to fragrances/scents in their work environment.

This administrative procedure applies to all work sites, buildings and schools, owned or leased by the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board. It is applicable to all employees, students, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

Responsibilities

As an employer, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board has a duty to accommodate employees who may be adversely affected or suffer a severe medical reaction when exposed to fragrance or scented products.

Principals and Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to make the working environment safe for those with chemical sensitivities, in the same manner that any other health issue or safety hazard is addressed.

Information

Exposure to fragrances and scents can create significant health problems in susceptible individuals. Fragrances and scents can be found in personal care products, cleaning products, perfume or cologne and construction and maintenance products. For susceptible individuals, exposure to fragrances and scents can create significant health problems including difficulty breathing, migraine headaches, severe allergic reactions, inability to concentrate, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness or seizures.

What is the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board doing about fragrance/scent related issues in the workplace?

Recognizing that fragrances and scents may negatively impact air quality within our schools/locations, the Board will endeavor to:

- Promote the use of environmentally friendly products in cleaning and building materials;
- Minimize the use of Board obtained products which contain fragrances and scents;
- Increase awareness within the Board community about the potential impact of fragrance and scented products on the health, well-being, productivity, and lifestyle of those affected, by providing staff with information via the document "Q&A and Information – Use of Fragrances and Scented Products" (Appendix A); and
- Prohibit the use of scented products such as air fresheners, scented products and essential oils brought from home into the workplace.



Procedures

1.0 Responding to Fragrance/Scent Concerns

The Principal or Supervisor is responsible for determining whether the informal or formal process outlined below should be implemented when notified by an employee, either verbally or in writing, of a concern related to fragrances/scents, and/or construction and maintenance products.

Scent-related concerns will typically fall into one of two separate categories:

- a) Medically supported evidence of ill health effects (either arising from or exacerbated by scents); or
- b) Comfort-related concerns.

In the case of comfort-related concerns, only the informal process can be initiated. While it may be required that an Employee provide supporting medical documentation in respect to the cause and symptoms of their issue, the absence of such does not remove the need for an immediate response.

The Principal/Supervisor should work towards a resolution using the informal process. In the event that scent-free cannot be achieved in the affected employee's environment, efforts should be made to explain to the employee the difference between comfort-related issues and hazards associated with medically supported ill-health effects.

2.0 Responding to Fragrance/Scent Concerns: Informal Process

When a concern related to fragrances/scents is brought forward, the Principal/Supervisor will:

- 2.1 Meet with the individual to listen to their concerns, to clarify the issue, to understand the impact that the fragrance/scent is having on their health and the actions that the individual is taking to deal with the issue.
- 2.2 Investigate the concern in a timely manner. Use good judgement and consideration to provide a fair, uniform and timely resolution.
- 2.3 Discuss the concern with staff/students (individually or as a group, as appropriate) in an open manner, informing them of the health concerns that have arisen as a result of the use of scented products in the workplace.
- 2.4 Develop a fragrance/scent-safe workplace plan. Note, the fragrance/scent-safe workplace plan does not have to be complicated, it could be as simple as asking staff to refrain from wearing colognes/perfumes while at work, or requesting employees to refrain from bringing air fresheners or cleaning products into the workplace.
- 2.5 Communicate with staff/students/visitors, highlighting the key points of the plan and requesting everyone's cooperation and understanding to create a safe workplace and learning environment for all.
- 2.6 Continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and the implementation of the plan.
- 2.7 If the Principal or Supervisor does not receive the necessary cooperation and/or the situation is not resolved through the informal process, it may be necessary to initiate the formal process.



3.0 Responding to Fragrance/Scent Concerns: Formal Process

If the informal process is ineffective and/or the situation cannot be resolved, the Principal/Supervisor will need to initiate the formal process. The Principal/Supervisor will meet with the employee to discuss next steps which include:

- a) Consultation with the Disability Management & Safety Coordinator and where applicable their Union representative.
- b) Advise the employee of the requirement for medical documentation, which includes specific and objective restrictions and limitations. Supporting medical documentation is necessary in order to develop a formal work accommodation plan to address the fragrance/scent concern.

The Disability Management & Safety Coordinator will work with the Principal/Supervisor to facilitate the development of a work accommodation plan that will identify the necessary actions and outline the responsibilities of the Principal/Supervisor, Employee and the Superintendent to establish a fragrance/scent-safe workplace. The actions taken may include but are not limited to:

- a) Installing signage indicating that the workplace is a fragrance/scent-safe environment.
- b) Memo to school staff
- c) Memo to parents – elementary
- d) Memo to students – secondary
- e) Memo to itinerant staff, volunteers and visitors including Childcare Programs and Community Use Programs
- f) Placing a statement in SmartFind indicating that the school/location is a fragrance/scent-safe environment and that no fragrances/scents are permitted due to potential severe allergic reaction.
- g) For meetings held in enclosed rooms (within or outside of the school premises), advise attendees in advance that it will be a fragrance/scent-safe environment and to refrain from wearing any perfume/cologne or scented products.
- h) Reminder messages for school websites, Board web page, school newsletters, communication for parent/teacher interview nights and community use of schools.

The Principal/Supervisor will share the mandatory requirements outlined in the work accommodation plan with staff, students and others who must comply with the expectations. The Principal/Supervisor will reinforce the need for cooperation to ensure that the goal of a healthy and safe workplace and learning environment is attained.

The Principal/Supervisor will continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and in the implementation of the work accommodation plan.

If compliance with a fragrance/scent-safe workplace does not occur following the formal process, the Principal/Supervisor will contact the appropriate school Superintendent for support in addressing the issue.



Definitions

Scent-Free Product

A product labeled unscented, scent-free or fragrance free by the manufacturer.

Scent-Reduced Product

A product having minimal scent, labelled hypo-allergenic or for sensitive skin.

Scent/Fragrance

A chemical or additive that creates an aroma or odour. These are found in a wide range of common products including perfume, aftershave, deodorant, soap, air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, facial tissues, candles and maintenance products.

References

- www.on.lung.ca
- www.scentedproducts.ca
- www.nf.lung.ca/noscents.html
- www.immuneweb.org/articles/perfume.html



Q&A's and Information on Use of Fragrances and Scented Products (Appendix A)

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board is committed to a safe, healthy and respectful workplace and learning environment for all staff, students and all other persons who are invited to or work on Board property. The following information has been created to:

- Increase awareness within the Board community about the potential impact of fragrances and scented chemicals on the health, well-being, productivity, and lifestyle of those affected;
- Ask for the voluntary cooperation towards a scent-safe environment; and
- Provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues.

What is the issue?

Exposure to fragrances and scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities.

Several hundred chemicals can be used to make one scented product. Fragrances and scents are found in a wide range of products. Common scented products include perfume, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, soap, shampoo, hairspray, body spray, air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, cleaners, facial tissues and candles.

Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms, including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing and shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion and an inability to concentrate. The impact on those affected can be quite severe, resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.

A person's reaction is not to you personally, but to one or more of the hundreds of chemicals that are present in the perfume, deodorant, hairspray, etc.

What can you do to help?

Staff, students and all other persons who are invited to or work on Board property are asked to be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrances and scented products by voluntarily refraining from wearing fragrances and scented products while on Board property. This will assist in reducing the use of fragrances and scented products in our environment.

If you use scented products, please consider the following:

- Use them sparingly and don't apply scented products while on Board property;
- A scented product should not be detectable more than an arm's length away from you;
- Do not bring scented products such as plug-ins, scented candles, scentsy products and essential oils onto Board property;
- Avoid using laundry products or cleaning agents that are scented; and
- Air out dry cleaned clothing before wearing.

What is the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board doing about fragrance/scent related issues in the workplace?

Recognizing that fragrances and scents may negatively impact air quality within our schools/locations, the Board will endeavor to:

- Promote the use of environmentally friendly products in cleaning and building materials;
- Minimize the use of Board obtained products which contain fragrances and scents;
- Optimize air quality by means of proper ventilation, as well as ensuring peak performance and proper maintenance of building ventilation systems;



- Increase awareness within the Board community about the potential impact of fragrance and scented products on the health, well-being, productivity, and lifestyle of those affected, by providing staff with information via the document "Q&A and Information – Use of Fragrances and Scented Products";
- Prohibit the use of scented products such as plug-ins, scented candles, scentsy products and essential oils brought from home into the workplace.

What can you do if you are sensitive to fragrances or scented products?

Scent-related concerns will typically fall into one of two separate categories:

1. Medically supported evidence of ill health effects (either arising from or exacerbated by scents); or
2. Comfort-related concerns.

If you have concerns regarding fragrances or scented products it is recommended that you follow the informal steps below:

1. If you can do so comfortably, approach the individual wearing the scented product and let them know how you react to fragrances or scented products. Be specific about how exposure to these products make you feel. Talk to the individual in a respectful manner and ask for their understanding and cooperation. Many people are unaware of the potential health effects of fragrances and scented products.
2. Inform your Supervisor of your sensitivities, symptoms and the types of exposures that improve or worsen these symptoms. Ask them to assist in finding a solution to your situation. You may ask your Supervisor to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees.
3. If your scent-related concern is medically supported with evidence of ill health effects, you may be asked to provide objective, supporting medical documentation which includes specific restrictions and limitations. If the issue cannot be resolved through the above informal steps, supporting medical documentation is necessary in order to develop a formal work accommodation plan to address the fragrance/scent concern.

What should you do if you are approached because you are using a fragrance or wearing a scented product?

- If you are informed that the fragrance that you are wearing is creating a health problem and you are requested to refrain from using the product while at work, you may feel puzzled, hurt, annoyed, defensive or even insulted by the request. Understand that it is not about you as a person or about your choice of fragrance or scent, it is about the product and the adverse effect it is having on another individual.
- Consider discussing the issue openly with the affected individual or with your Supervisor and the individual. Ask questions about the health impact on the person and the types of symptoms experienced. Work with cooperation and understanding towards a mutual satisfactory resolution.
- Remember that it is not about you as a person or your choice of fragrance, but about the chemicals in the fragrance or scented product that you wear. Do not discount the issue as ridiculous and unreasonable. Empathize with the individual and work with cooperation and understanding towards a satisfactory resolution.

Need more information?

If you would like more information on fragrances and scented products, visit these websites:

www.on.lung.ca www.scentedproducts.ca
www.nf.lung.ca/noscents.html
www.immuneweb.org/articles/perfume.html