

Guidelines for a Scent-Safe Workplace

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB), as an employer, has a duty to accommodate employees who may be adversely affected or suffer a severe medical reaction when exposed to a fragrance or scented product. Further, it is recognized by SMCDSB that in order to provide consistent Fragrance/Scent-Safe conditions at all facilities and amongst all workplace stakeholders, that this program be applied at all locations even in the absence of an identified accommodation. In all cases the minimum awareness considerations will be applied.

Principals, managers 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. All employees have a responsibility to maintain a safe working environment and to comply with the Scent-Safe Workplace Program.

Section 17 of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) creates an obligation to accommodate, specifically under the ground of disability. SMCDSB is legally obliged to accommodate employees with a disability to the point of undue hardship. (Human Rights Code, 1990).

In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for employees, these guidelines have been developed to assist principals, managers and supervisors with promoting a fragrance/scent-safe environment as well as maintaining a fragrance/scent-safe workplace when made aware that an employee is experiencing an adverse reaction to fragrances/scents in their work environment.

1. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all work sites, buildings and schools, owned or leased by SMCDSB. It is applicable to all employees, students, volunteers and contractors as well as to visitors. The minimum provisions of maintaining a fragrance/scent-safe workplace will be applied at all worksites.

2. BACKGROUND

Exposure to fragrances/scents found in personal care products, cleaning products, perfume/cologne, essential oils, and construction and maintenance products, can create significant health problems in susceptible individuals including asthma attacks, migraine headaches, severe allergic reactions, inability to concentrate, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness, or seizures.

3. DEFINITIONS

- i) **Scent-free product:** a product labeled unscented, scent-free or fragrance-free by the manufacturer.
- ii) **Scent-reduced product:** a product having minimal scent, labeled hypoallergenic or for sensitive skin.
- iii) **Scent/fragrance:** a chemical or additive that creates an aroma or odour. These are found in a wide range of common products including perfume, essential oils, aftershave, deodorant, soap,

air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, facial tissues, candles, and maintenance products.

Minimum awareness considerations: All Sites shall have at a minimum:

- Fragrance/Scent-Safe Posters at all entrance locations;
- ARCS Notification;
- Community Use of Facilities Notification; and,
- Web Site Board/School Notification

4. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO FRAGRANCE/SCENT CONCERNS

A principal, manager or supervisor is responsible for initiating the informal process when notified by an employee, either verbally or in writing, of a concern related to scents/ fragrances and/or construction and maintenance products.

While it may be required at some point that the employee provide supporting medical documentation in respect to the causes and symptoms of their issue, the absence of such does not remove the need for an immediate response.

5. PRINCIPAL/MANAGER/ SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES INFORMAL PROCESS

1. Meet with the individual to clarify the issue, to understand the impact that the fragrance/scent is having on their health and the actions they are taking to address the problem;
2. In a timely manner, develop a fragrance/scent-safe workplace plan.
Note – the workplace plan does not need to be complicated. It could be as simple as reinforcing with staff the need to refrain from wearing colognes/perfumes or scented products while at work, or requesting employees to refrain from bringing air fresheners or cleaning products into the workplace. (As a matter of established procedure SMCDSB does not permit the introduction of non-board approved/procured cleaning products);
3. Communicate with staff and students highlighting the key points of the plan and requesting everyone's cooperation and understanding to create a safe environment for all;
4. Offer staff the option of posting the No Scents poster in offices and classrooms;
5. Continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and the implementation of the plan; and,
6. If the principal, manager or supervisor does not receive the necessary cooperation and/or the situation is not resolved by the informal steps, it may be necessary to initiate the formal process.

6. FORMAL PROCESS

1. Meet with the employee to discuss next steps, including consultation with the Disability Management Coordinator and where applicable their union representative and the requirement for medical documentation. This is necessary in order to develop an official fragrance/scent-safe accommodation plan;

2. The Disability Management Coordinator will facilitate the development of a medical accommodation plan that will identify the necessary actions and outline the responsibilities of the principal/manager/supervisor/employee/superintendent to establish and maintain a fragrance/scent-safe workplace. These may include but are not limited to:

Issues applicable to communications:

- Ensure a fragrance/scent-safe statement is in all eBase work orders for the school
- Install signage indicating that this workplace is a fragrance/scent-safe environment (front door, side entrance, daycare if applicable)
- Update ARCS: 'The school is fragrance/scent-safe. No fragrances/scents permitted, due to potential severe allergic reaction.'
- Letter to school staff (Appendix 1)
- Question and Answer Resource (Appendix 2)
- Letter to Parents/Guardians - Elementary (Appendix 3)
- Memo for Secondary Students – secondary (Appendix 4)
- Memo to All Itinerant Staff, Volunteers, and Visitors including Childcare Programs (full day, B & A programs) and Community Outreach Programs (Appendix 5)
- Memo to Plant Services Staff & Contractors (Appendix 6)
- Sample school newsletter (Appendix 7).

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 scent producing products.

Reminder messages for curriculum night, interview night, school website, Board web page, school newsletter (minimum once per term), and community use of schools;

3. Share the mandatory requirements of the workplace plan with staff, students and others who must comply with the expectations. Reinforce the need for cooperation to ensure that the goal of a healthy and safe workplace is attained;
4. Continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and in the implementation of the plan; and
5. If compliance with a fragrance/scent-safe workplace does not occur at this level, contact the appropriate school superintendent for support in addressing the issue.



SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

7. APPENDICES

1. [Appendix 1 - Letter to Staff](#)
2. [Appendix 2 - Question and Answer Resource](#)
3. [Appendix 3 - Letter for Parents/Guardians-Elementary](#)
4. [Appendix 4 - Memo for Secondary Students](#)
5. [Appendix 5 - Memo for Itinerant Staff, Volunteers, Visitors](#)
6. [Appendix 6 - Memo for Facilities Services Staff & Contractors](#)
7. [Appendix 7 - Newsletter Message](#)
8. [Appendix 8 - Use of Facility Memo](#)

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Revised: Board Policy Review (Wednesday, May 11, 2022)

Revised: Board Meeting #08 (Wednesday, June 15, 2022)