

Update to the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Sexual Abuse Prevention Program (SAPP)

To: Presidents and All Members

From: Vaino Poysa, Associate General Secretary – Protective Services

For Information

At the meeting of the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers on June 8, 2023, College Staff provided an update on the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program (SAPP).

Background

In 2021, the provincial government amended the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* to require all Ontario Certified Teachers (and new applicants for certification) to complete a sexual abuse prevention program.

The OCT partnered with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to develop an online program (the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program), which was launched in January 2022.

Compliance

As of May 9, 2023, 94.4% of members in good standing had completed the program and an additional 1.5% of the membership obtained an extension to September 15, 2023. Boards provided professional development days prior to the September 2022 deadline for members to complete this training during their working day. At last reporting time, 4.1% of members (10,193) were recorded as “Incomplete”.

Bill 98, Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act makes consequential amendments to the SAPP. With the passing of *Bill 98* on June 8, 2023, the Registrar will be prohibited from removing any kind of suspension of a certificate or issuing a new certificate until the individual in question successfully completes the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program requirements. This includes members who are suspended for non-payment of fees or failure to provide information to the College.

The College has already started to communicate messaging to members to clarify that failure to complete the Program (i.e. any member with an “Incomplete” status on the public register) contravenes the Teachers’ Qualification Regulation. This has significant implications for members since, under section 1, paragraph 14 of the Professional Misconduct regulation (O. Reg. 437/97), “failing to comply with the Act or the regulations or the by-laws” is defined as professional misconduct. Consequently, members who fail to complete the Program could be subject to the complaints, investigation, and risk discipline processes of the College on the basis of not having completed the Program. Messaging from the College will also be targeted to members who are currently recorded as “incomplete” or whose extension will expire soon. OSSTF/FEESO recommends in order to avoid any unnecessary complaints or difficulty with the college and/or employer, that members complete the SAPP as soon as possible.

For further information, please contact Jessica Burnie by email at jessica.burnie@osstf.ca

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