

A RETURN TO SCHOOL

MANUAL FOR WELFARE WORKERS, GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AND OTHER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS & STAFF

A GENDER RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO RESPONDING TO THE
PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GUYANA SCHOOLS.



A MOE, UNICEF AND THE
INSTITUTE OF GENDER
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF
GUYANA COLLABORATION

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RETURN TO SCHOOL

A MANUAL FOR SCHOOL WELFARE OFFICERS GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AND OTHER SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

A MoE, UNICEF and the Institute of Gender Studies, University of Guyana Collaboration

A Gender Responsive Approach to Responding to the Psychosocial Needs of Children in Guyana

INTRODUCTION

The Issue:

Extended quarantine, school closures and physical distancing measures set up to manage the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the vulnerability to gender based violence.

Pre-existing gender inequalities and harmful norms; poor parenting strategies; increased exposure to abusers at home and in community spaces; limited coping strategies as a result of poverty and economic shocks are factors creating a potent mix for violence to thrive. In Guyana, the Director of Childcare and Protection Agency observed that the number of reports of abused children have decreased. This, she cautioned, resulted not from an actual decrease in incidents but, from the absence of the protective school environment (due to the COVID-19 precautions) where teachers and others in the school community, are the eyes, ears and voices of many abused and distracted children and youth. No child should suffer abuse, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization or violence of any kind and particularly gender-based violence, for any reason, **including on the basis of any actual or perceived gender orientation or gender identity.**

As the Ministry of Education prepares for the return to school, efforts are being made to enhance the competencies of school welfare officers, school counsellors, principals, teachers and all school personnel. The goals are to stem the onslaught of violence against children in school, assess learning loss as well as the psychosocial needs of all children and youth returning to school and to respond adequately to each person's needs. The MoE recognizes the urgent need for culturally appropriate support materials for use by the targeted population so as to provide for a safe, healthy and protective learning environment.

Action:

This intervention is the second in a series to address the psychosocial needs of school children in Guyana. The first being the use of the MoE's mobile psychosocial units to identify, engage and counsel the most vulnerable children. The focus of this work will be on children and youth from ages 5 to 16.

This second intervention document is for use by professionals in the school community. It will offer standard procedures, different intervention strategies for responding to the issues experienced by students ages 5 to 16 and case studies. This intervention is identified as a gender responsive approach to psychosocial support for children returning to school. It is a manual for teachers, school welfare officers and guidance counsellors on critical issues, signs, symptoms and processes to be considered for responding to boys and girls in the school system affected by various forms of violence.

The Use and Scope of the Manual: Impact and Goal

This manual highlights a gender-responsive “opening up schools” strategy with emphasis on violence prevention and teacher support to prevent stereotyping, discrimination, bias, harassment and violence (including bullying) and name calling. It offers ideas and strategies which can support the goal of making every child feel valued and respected and able to enjoy a clear sense of safety and belonging. It will be additional resource material to accompany the MoE’s document on **Maintenance of Discipline in Schools** and will be used during specialised training of school welfare and counselling officers. It will form the basis for the implementation of a pilot project in one of most vulnerable school communities in 2021 and will support the MoE’s goal of a gender responsive approach to critical issues in education. This manual sets out to foster a safe, caring and protective learning environment for all children by implementing a gender responsive approach to address psychosocial and learning needs. It will provide a structured and comprehensive approach to eradicating violence in schools.

Impact:

- This intervention paves the way for children attending public schools in Guyana to receive targeted gender focused support responses for coping with their specific psychosocial needs thus creating the space and opportunities for more active participation and improved performance in class.
- The school support systems will be enhanced with a more structured and comprehensive approach that fosters a safe, caring and protective learning environment.

Goal:

1. Enhanced support system
2. Provide Psycho-social support
3. Develop and Share a user-friendly manual

Anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, with special attention to Articles 32 to 40, this intervention is also aligned with the 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030 (See Appendix 2).

COVID-19 Everyday Health Tips for Students

It is recommended that children be taught from an early age to understand that in many crisis situations it is ok to feel sad or scared but it is important to share those feelings with someone they trust. For a scripted message during the COVID-19 pandemic students may be told the following:

1. Know that you are not alone:
 - a. In a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that you are not alone and talk to someone you trust, like your parent or teacher so that you can help keep yourself and your school safe and healthy.
 - b. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Ask questions and get information from reliable sources and people you trust.

2. Protect yourself and others:
 - a. Wash your hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - b. Remember to not touch your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
 - c. Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others.
 - d. Be a leader in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy.
 - e. Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family and friends, especially with those who are younger.
 - f. It is good to practice sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands. It is also necessary for staff, students and parents to be encouraged to demonstrate leadership by modeling this behavior.
3. Don't stigmatize your peers or tease anyone about being sick; remember that many viruses or illnesses do not follow geographical boundaries, ethnicities, age, ability or gender.
4. Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick, and ask to stay home.

World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 Recommendations:

1. Children aged 5 years and under should not be required to wear masks.
2. For children between 6 and 11 years of age, a risk-based approach should be applied to the decision to use a mask, considering:
 - a. Intensity of transmission in the area where the child is and evidence on the risk of infection and transmission in this age group.
 - b. Beliefs, customs and behaviours.
 - c. The child's capacity to comply with the correct use of masks and availability of adult supervision.
 - d. Potential impact of mask wearing on learning and development.
 - e. Additional considerations such as sport activities or for children with disabilities or underlying diseases.
3. Children and adolescents 12 years or older should follow the national mask guidelines for adults.
4. Teacher and support staff may be required to wear masks when they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others or there is widespread transmission in the area.

What to monitor for student safety and success during a disease outbreak:

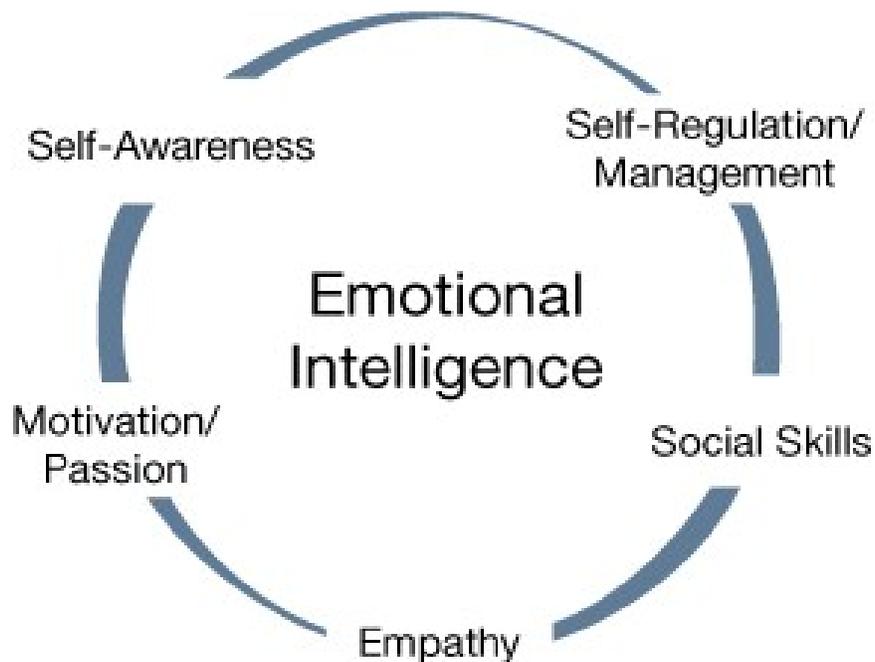
- a. Effectiveness of symptoms-reporting, monitoring, rapid testing and tracing of suspected cases.
- b. The effects of policies and measures on educational objectives and learning outcomes.
- c. The effects of policies and measures on health and well-being of children, siblings, staff, parents and other family members.
- d. The trend in school dropouts (in cases of restrictions and lifting of restrictions).
- e. The number of cases in children and staff in the school, and frequency of school-based outbreaks in the local administrative area and the country.
- f. Assessment of impact of remote teaching on learning.
- g. Support needed for children known to be living in poverty or poor circumstances and in areas with statistically high numbers of illnesses.

Based on what is learned from this monitoring, further modifications should be made to continue to provide children and staff with needed resources and the safest environment possible.

The importance of School Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors

As service providers, Social Workers are key in the area of providing support to school personnel and psychosocial support to all students in our schools. Social work graduates are well trained, sympathetic and capable of showing a great deal of empathy in dealing with clients.

Our School Welfare Officers Guidance Counsellors and Teachers are individuals who are faced with many challenges. Professional development opportunities and additional qualification courses allow them to employ critical thinking skills and high levels of the emotional intelligence that involves a sense of responsibility, self-management, perseverance and respect for others regardless of gender, class, race, age, ability, ethnicity or religious affiliations.



(<https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>)

The nurturance and development of Emotional Intelligence, by Social Workers and Counsellors motivate individuals in Guyana who are often expected to produce more with less, to more effectively work with the resources at hand in order to move social service agendas forward. It also allows individuals to advocate for much needed resources in order to effectively do their jobs.

THEORIES TO GUIDE THE PROVISION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The theories outlined below are shared to help to guide the provision of psychosocial support to children and families. Sections from these theories may be used to help guide the work of all individuals involved in the helping profession as well as those involved in parenting roles.

Theory 1. Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development.

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (1958, 1963) are based on (and expand upon) Freud's psychosexual theory. Erikson proposed that we are motivated by the need to achieve competence in certain areas of our lives. According to psychosocial theory, we experience eight stages of development over our lifespan, from infancy through late adulthood. At each stage there is a crisis or task that we need to resolve. Successful completion of each developmental task results in a sense of competence and a healthy personality. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy.

Erikson also added to Freud's stages by discussing the cultural implications of development; certain cultures may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs. It is important to note here that the first 5 stages as outlined by Erikson, appear crucial to the child development and the supports needed to prevent a child from entering adulthood with low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity and more. They are also crucial to the formation of adults who view themselves as capable and accomplished.

Stage 1. Trust vs. Mistrust

From birth to 12 months of age, infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child's basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are responsive and sensitive to their infant's needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive caregivers who do not meet their baby's needs can engender feelings of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world.

Goal: Be responsive and sensitive.

Stage 2: Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt

As toddlers (ages 1–3 years) begin to explore their world, they learn that they can control their actions and act on their environment to get results. They begin to show clear preferences for certain elements of the environment, such as food, toys, and clothing. A toddler's main task is to resolve the issue of *autonomy vs. shame and doubt* by working to establish independence. This is the "me do it" stage. For example, we might observe a budding sense of autonomy in a 2-year-old child who wants to choose clothing. Although the choices might not be appropriate for the situation, having a discussion with children and allowing them input in basic decision making has an effect on developing a sense of independence. If denied the opportunity to act on their own, they doubt their abilities, and may develop low self-esteem and feelings of shame.

Goal: Encourage independence (i.e. the children's desire to do it for themselves).

Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt

Once children reach the preschool stage (ages 3–6 years), they are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play. According to Erikson, preschool children must resolve the task of *initiative vs. guilt*. By learning to plan and achieve goals while interacting with others, preschool children can master this task. Initiative, a sense of ambition and responsibility, occurs when parents allow a child to explore within limits and then support the child's choice. These children will develop self-confidence and feel a sense of purpose. Those who are unsuccessful at this stage—with their initiative misfiring or stifled by over-controlling parents—may develop feelings of guilt.

Goal: Allow self-confidence to develop through social interactions and play

Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority

During the elementary school stage (ages 6–12), children face the task of *industry vs. inferiority*. Children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. They either develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don't measure up. If children do not learn to get along with others or have negative experiences at home or with peers, an inferiority complex might develop into adolescence and adulthood.

Goal: Help children develop their unique abilities.

Stage 5: Identity vs. Role Confusion

In adolescence (ages 12–18), children face the task of *identity vs. role confusion*. According to Erikson, an adolescent's main task is developing a sense of self. Adolescents struggle with questions such as "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?" Along the way, most adolescents try on many different selves to see which ones fit; they explore various roles and ideas, set goals, and attempt to discover their "adult" selves. Adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of problems and other people's perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents' ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future.

Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to "find" themselves as adults.

Goal: Allow children to explore various roles and discover their identities.

Stage 6: Intimacy vs. Isolation

People in early adulthood (20s through early 40s) are concerned with *intimacy vs. isolation*. After we have developed a sense of self in adolescence, we are ready to share our life with others. However, if other stages have not been successfully resolved, young adults may have trouble developing and maintaining successful relationships with others. Erikson said that we must have a strong sense of self before we can develop successful intimate relationships. Adults who do not develop a positive self-concept in adolescence may experience feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation.

Goal: Nurture healthy relationships based on personal and cultural needs.

Stage 7: Generativity vs. Stagnation

When people reach their 40s, they enter the time known as middle adulthood, which extends to the mid-60s. The social task of middle adulthood (40s to 60s) is *generativity vs. stagnation*. Generativity involves finding your life's work and contributing to the development of others. Those who do not master this task may experience stagnation and feel as though they are not leaving a mark on the world in a meaningful way; they may have little connection with others and little interest in productivity and self-improvement.

Goal: Connect, Collaborate, strive to achieve professional and personal goals.

Stage 8: Integrity vs. Despair

From the mid-60s to the end of life, we are in the period of development known as late adulthood. Erikson's task at this stage is called *integrity vs. despair*. He said that people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure. People who feel proud of their accomplishments feel a sense of integrity, and they can look back on their lives with few regrets. However, people who are not successful at this stage may feel as if their life has been wasted. They focus on what "would have," "should have," and "could have" been. They face the end of their lives with feelings of bitterness, depression, and despair.

Goal: Pride in accomplishments

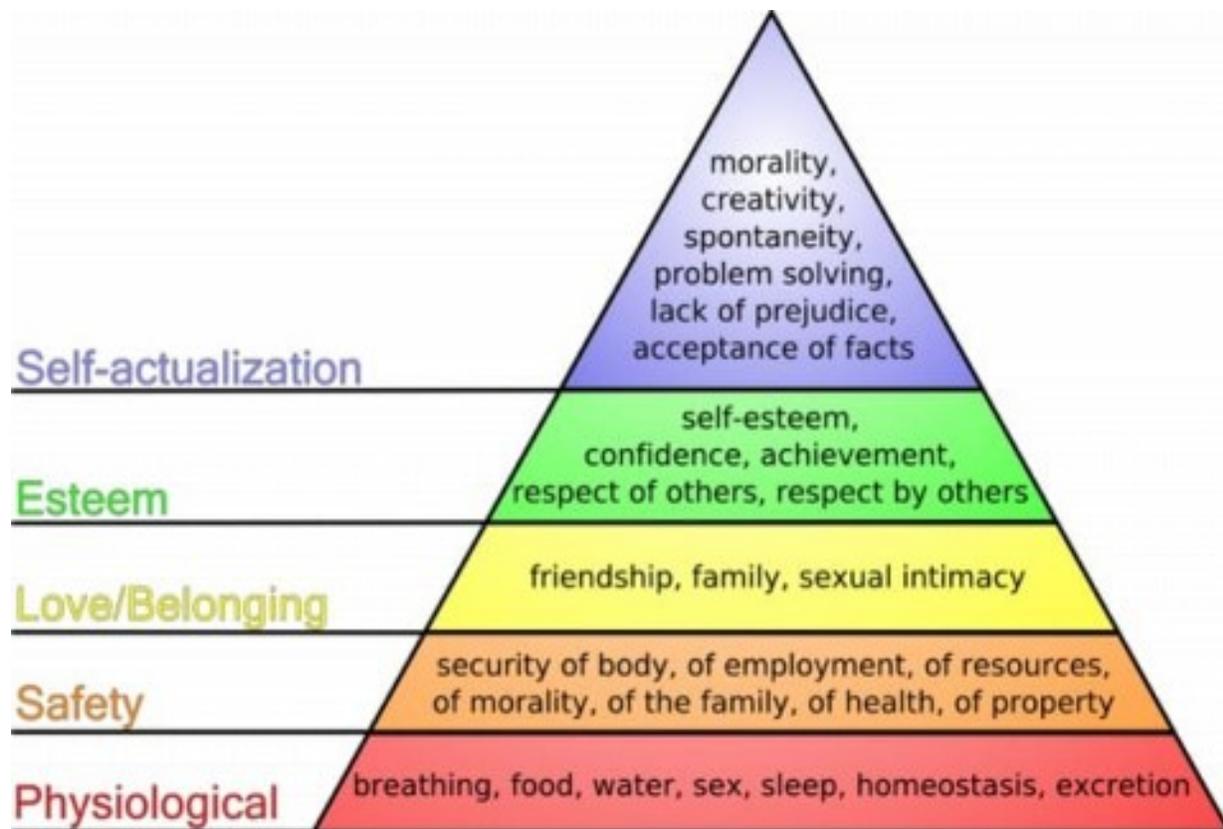
The goal in each section of Erickson's stages have been highlighted. In counselling, teaching and workshop sessions it may be stressed that a key goal is to help individuals reach a point in each stage of their development where they feel a sense of accomplishment ("ego strength"), develop a sense of integrity, as well as belonging, as members of local and global communities. This sense of belongingness is explored in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, listed below under Theory #2.

Theory #2 Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (1943, 1962, 1987)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem (confidence and achievement), and self-actualization (morality, creativity, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts). Maslow continued to refine his theory based on the concept of a hierarchy of needs over several decades (Maslow, 1943, 1962, 1987).

Regarding the structure of his hierarchy, Maslow (1987) proposed that the order in the hierarchy is not nearly as rigid as he may have implied in his earlier description.

The diagram beginning with our most basic but essential needs at various stages of development is outlined below.



<https://timeforchange.org/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs/>

Read from the bottom of the pyramid to the top. Maslow outlined:

1. **Physiological needs** - these are biological requirements for human survival, e.g. air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep. If these needs are not satisfied the human body cannot function optimally. Maslow considered physiological needs the most important as all the other needs become secondary until these needs are met.
2. **Safety needs** - Once an individual's physiological needs are satisfied, the needs for security and safety become salient. People want to experience order, predictability and control in their lives. These needs can be fulfilled by the family and society (e.g. police, schools, business and medical care). For example, emotional security, financial security (e.g. employment, social welfare), law and order, freedom from fear, social stability, property, health and wellbeing (e.g. safety against accidents and injury).

3. **Love and belongingness needs** - This third level of human needs is social and involves feelings of belongingness. The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior. Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work).

4. **Esteem needs** are the fourth level in Maslow’s hierarchy - which Maslow classified into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.

5. **Self-actualization needs** are the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy, and refer to the realization of a person's potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. Maslow (1943) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, to become the most that one can be.

ACTIONS THAT MEET SAFETY AND SECURITY NEEDS and ACTIONS THAT DO NOT

The list below is adapted and expanded on from, *Doorways 1: Student Manual on School-Related Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response*: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnado240.pdf where several are listed as, ‘Actions that comfort’ and ‘Actions that do not comfort’.

ACTIONS THAT MEET SAFETY AND SECURITY NEEDS

Be flexible in order to meet the student’s needs.
Be available immediately to provide assistance and support. Focus on the individual(s).
Meet in a space that is not threatening to the individuals and affords confidentiality or privacy.
Be non-judgmental. Provide support and information to the student regardless of personal feelings, beliefs or attitudes.
Do not overwhelm the student with information, questions or advice. Do not assume the student is ready for all the resources or help.
Listen to what the student is saying. Provide the student with understanding, support and assistance.
Do not attempt to tell the student how she, he, they feel. Assure the student that it is normal to feel upset.
Be prepared to call in a backup facilitator, call for an extra-long break or call on a co-facilitator should a student need immediate emotional support.

ACTIONS THAT DO NOT MEET SAFETY AND SECURITY NEEDS

Interrupting, ridiculing and/or shaming the student.
Criticizing or blaming.
Interrogating. Being judgmental.
Minimizing or ignoring the individual's feelings.
Placing the individual in a threatening setting (or what they feel is a threatening situation.
Distracting or diverting the student's attention from his or her feelings.
Telling the individual(s) how to feel.
Discussing the individual's situation with others.
Providing no follow-up to meeting(s)
Providing a diagnosis outside of professional training and expertise.

Psycho-social support within strong inclusive and equitable education systems is key to empowering and ensuring healthy lives, promoting well-being and gender equality. This is also key to achieving the 17 sustainable development goals (See Appendix 2) that impact the lives of children, families and communities.

*What can School Welfare Officers suggest that parents can do to meet the safety and security needs of their children? **PARENTS CAN:***

1. Understand Child Development

To effectively foster healthy social and emotional development in children, parents should have at least a basic knowledge of the ways in which children and adolescents grow and develop. Although parents do not need to be experts in child development, understanding a child's social and emotional needs during toddlerhood, elementary school, the preteen years and adolescence can help parents respond appropriately to their children's needs.

2. Provide a Nurturing Home Environment

Parents play a crucial role in a child's social and emotional development beginning in infancy. In the early years, ensuring that children have their basic needs for food, shelter, safety and comfort met can help them establish secure attachments, which are the cornerstones of healthy social and emotional development. As children get older, increasing their autonomy, along with providing age-appropriate support and guidance, can encourage appropriate emotional and social skills.

3. Encourage Healthy Peer Interactions

As children reach the pre-teen years, friends are an increasingly important part of their social and emotional development. As a parent you should get to know your children's friends to ensure that they interact with kids who provide positive influences. Further, you can encourage good social and emotional skills by encouraging your children to participate in meaningful peer-based activities such as sports, music or organized clubs.

4. Model Healthy Social and Emotional Skills

Parents play a crucial role in shaping how children respond socially and emotionally. While genetics play some role in a child's behaviors, environment also plays an important role. In other words, parents' behaviors affect the way that a child develops. To encourage healthy social and emotional growth, model behaviors you want to see in your children. For example, expressing your emotions calmly, without blaming others, and maintaining healthy relationship boundaries can set a good example for your children and shape their development in positive ways.

Adverse childhood experiences and questions that may be asked by social workers:

Negative childhood experiences before 18 years of age have been found to have a number of adverse effects on an individual's life. Some of these adverse childhood experiences are:

- 1) Living with someone who had mental health issues ("Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal?");
- 2) Living with someone who abused alcohol or drugs ("Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic?");
- 3) Living with someone who was incarcerated ("Did you live with anyone who served time or was sentenced to serve time in a prison, jail, or other correctional experiences?");
- 4) Parents separated or divorced ("Were your parents separated or divorced?");
- 5) Witnessing physical violence at home ("How often did your parents or adults in your home ever slap, hit, kick, punch, or beat each other up?");
- 6) Experiencing physical abuse "How often did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way? Do not include spanking.");
- 7) Experiencing verbal abuse ("How often did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you, or put you down?");
- 8) Sexual abuse (if participant answers "once" or "more than once" to one of the following three items: "How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult ever touch you sexually?", "How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult try to make you touch them sexually?", and "How often did anyone at least 5 years older than you or an adult force you to have sex?". All responses may be dichotomized into "yes" or "no").

AWARENESS AND MONITORING OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE IS NECESSARY FOR SCHOOL SAFETY and SECURITY:

It is important to be aware of the many different types or forms of abuse that negatively affect growth and learning. Some highlighted by School Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors in Guyana are listed below along with some useful suggestions and scenarios.

FORMS OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

BULLYING is reportedly a serious issue in schools across the 10 regions. **Students** bully for clothes, money, favours etc. Among many groups (including those in the Hinterland regions) individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds impose ideas of ethnic and economic superiority and heckle and harass. Bullying in any form is unacceptable. Hate incidents informed by racism and prejudice and misrepresented as bullying will not be condoned. Adults in positions of responsibility who may also be guilty of this behaviour are violating their leadership positions and should be encouraged to participate in professional development sessions regarding biases and prejudices they may bring into their workplaces.

Is bullying really a form of abuse?

Yes, bullying is a form of abuse and it is demonstrated through unwanted aggressive behavior towards another individual. It includes but is not limited to, hazing, harassment and stalking.

Bullying does not discriminate against race, religion or gender. Anyone can be a target of bullying.

What questions can School Welfare Officers, Guidance Counsellors, Parents e.g. ask the child suspected of being bullied?

If you suspect bullying is taking place, start by talking with the suspected child who you believe is being victimized. Ask direct questions such as:

- Are there any kids at school picking on you?
- Is there anyone at school leaving you out or excluding you on purpose?

Or you can get the conversation started with an indirect line of questioning such as:

- So who have you made friends with at school this year?

What advice can I give a student who sees another student (a peer) being bullied?

Talk with your peer, sit with them at lunch, listen to them and be kind

- Show friendship and encouragement.
- Tell an adult who you trust either in person or through a note, or help them tell an adult
- Send a text message or go up to them and let them know you're there for them
- Help them get away from the situation
- Ask them what you can do to help

CYBER BULLYING

Noted by Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors as a growing form of abuse among youth, cyber bullying according to GUYANA BILL No.17 of 2016 CYBERCRIME BILL 201 involves Using a computer system to coerce, harass, intimidate, humiliate, etc. a person.

(https://ndma.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GoG-CybercrimeBill2016_No.17-of-2016.pdf)

What are some signs and symptoms that a child may be a victim of Cyber-bullying?

- He/she unexpectedly stops using their computer or cell phone
- He/she appears nervous or jumpy when an instant message or email appears
- He/she appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general
- He/she appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after using the computer or cell phone
- He/she avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer or cell phone
- He/she is abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members

What may be done at school or home to prevent my child from being cyber-bullied?

- Establish rules for computer, phone (WhatsApp, FaceTime, Zoom etc.) use. Restrict access to certain sites and be specific about which sites are ok to be on and what's allowed.
- Discuss what is appropriate to share online. Remind them that things posted on the internet can be shared with anyone.
- Teach children and youth to ask themselves, *“Would I be comfortable saying this in person?”* and *“Would I be okay if tomorrow everyone at school or work knew about this?”*
- Let children know that it's always okay to talk about something that makes them uncomfortable online.

THE CYBERCRIME BILL 201 ALSO OUTLINES THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD LURING:

Child luring: 15. (1) A person commits an offence if the person uses a computer system to - (a) communicate with a child with the intent to induce the child to engage in sexual conversations or sexual activities; or (b) arrange a meeting with a child with the intent of abusing or engaging in sexual activity with the child or producing child pornography, whether or not he takes any steps to effect such a meeting. (2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable – (a) on summary conviction to a fine of three million dollars and to imprisonment for five years; or (b) on conviction on indictment to a fine of eight million dollars and to imprisonment for five years.

Childhood Sexual Abuse: Trauma caused by physical (e.g. sexual intercourse, rape) and non-physical acts (e.g. exposure to pornography and other inappropriate sexual material); encouraging children to behave in sexually explicit ways; a breach of trust in which an individual, who has the confidence of the child, uses that trust to secure sexual favours.

Emotional and Verbal Abuse: Attempts to undermine a person's sense of worth and may include constant criticism, belittling of abilities and competencies, name-calling, insults, put-downs, silent treatment, manipulation of feelings and emotions to induce guilt, subverting a partner's relationship with others (children, friends, siblings etc.), repeatedly making and breaking promises.

Incest: Sexual relations between people classed as being too closely related to marry each other.

Physical Abuse: Assaults and threats used to control another person that includes punching, hitting, choking, biting, throwing objects or liquids at a person, kicking, pushing and using a weapon such as a gun or a knife. Physical abuse usually escalates over time and may end in a person's death.

Psychological Abuse: Abuse designed to isolate and instill fear in individuals and often involves, for example, threats to harm, kidnapping, blackmailing, harassment, name calling (racial and otherwise), destruction of property, pets etc.; 'mind games', unfounded accusations, constant surveillance, withholding supports and access to phone and transportation; undermining personal relationships.

Reprisal or a **threat of reprisal** for the rejection of a sexual solicitation or advance, where the reprisal is made or threatened by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the person.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual contact without consent and includes incest; demands for sex; the performance of unwanted sexual acts; forcing a person to have sex with others; insisting on unsafe sexual practices.

Spiritual Abuse: Spiritual abuse is often linked to a church elder or faith leader inflicting abuse on congregation members (regardless of age or sex) but may also occur in a variety of other relationships. The abuse may occur in the form of using religious texts or beliefs to minimize or rationalize abusive behaviours (such as physical, financial, emotional, sexual abuse – including marital rape). It also involves manipulating, shaming, ridiculing, insulting or preventing another's practice.

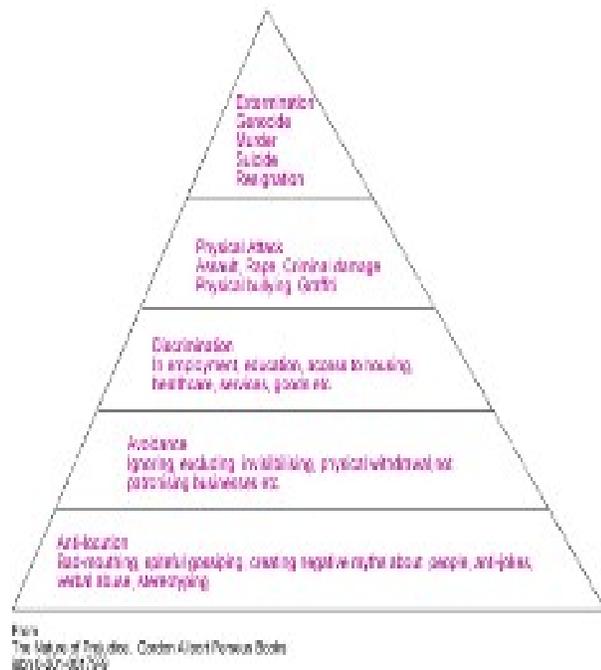
Sexual Harassment: (*Sexual Offences Act 2010 – ACT No. 7 of 2010*). According to this ACT, "Sexual" includes touching whereby the complainant does not consent to the touching or the act which would constitute indecent assault. Sexual Harassment includes but is not limited to: Vexatious comments or Verbal harassment.

- a) Conduct that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome.
- b) Workplace sexual harassment.
- c) Sexual solicitation or any advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the person where the person making the solicitation or advance knows or ought reasonably to know, that it is unwelcome.

Sexual Violence: Any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes **Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, and sexual exploitation.** *Incident of Sexual Violence:* Includes any instance of Sexual Violence, including Sexual Harassment and all associated definitions provided herein (Act No.7 of 2010 – The Sexual Offences Act 2010).

STEREOTYPING, LABELLING, RACISM and DISCRIMINATION:

School Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors may refer to G. Allport (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice* (below) that illustrates a ladder of discrimination that begins with jokes, rumors, insensitive remarks and leads to acts of discrimination, social exclusion, educational discrimination (such as refusing to teach children born to parents who are HIV positive), then acts of violence or threats, murder, rape, and finally genocide – the deliberate systematic extermination of an entire people.



Gordon Allport (1954) In the Ladder of Discrimination demonstrates the ways that labelling, name-calling, stereotyping and prejudice towards people who are different may lead to violence and genocide. There is widespread local and global concern about such attitudes, not only on the part of children and youth, but adults who are in parenting and teaching roles and who are expected to act as role models. Thus thoughtful and sensitive discussions about gender inequality (a root cause of violence against e.g. women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community), biases and prejudices are important from elementary to secondary and tertiary levels in order to stop the violent results of discrimination and hatred.

Discussions about Gender and Gender Inequality often begin with questions about the difference in meaning between, “gender” and “sex” and although the terms are frequently used interchangeably, **Sex and Gender do not mean the same things**. Below are some definitions relating to ‘Gender’ and ‘Sex’.

Gender

- A social construct
- Refers to the social roles, behaviors, and expectations considered appropriate for girls and boys
- Ideas about gender shape what it means to be ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’.

SEX

- Sex is a biological and physiological designation
- ‘Sex’ refers to both a person's chromosomes and the way that their genes are expressed. XY individuals can develop physiologically female bodies if they have certain genetic conditions that affect hormone processing).

FEMININE and **MASCULINE** are adjectives describing **gender characteristics**.

FEMALE and **MALE** describe **sexual characteristics**, although they are sometimes also used to describe gender.

GENDER ROLES: Describe what boys (men) and girls (women) are supposed to do in their various cultures. For example, boys may be expected to learn to climb trees or cut them down and girls may be expected to sweep, clean and wash dishes, clothes etc.

GENDER BINARY: A system of gender classification in which all people are categorized as being either male or female.

GENDER ESSENTIALISM: This is the idea that females and males **MUST** behave in certain, gender-specific ways.

Gender identity and **Sexual orientation** are also not the same things. A cisgender person can be heterosexual or homosexual, bisexual or asexual. So can a transgender person. This is, in fact, one of the problems with lumping transgender individuals into the LGBT (or LGBTQ or LGBTQI) acronym. It makes it more likely that people will conflate gender identity and sexual orientation. Really, they are two entirely different spectra.

GENDER IDENTITY: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION is a term used to describe your pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction. Sexual orientation may include attraction to the same gender (homosexuality), a gender different than your own (heterosexuality), both men and women (bisexuality), all genders (pansexual), or neither (asexuality).

BEING GENDER RESPONSIVE OR GENDER SENSITIVE: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

What does it mean to employ a “gender responsive” approach to dealing with psychosocial needs of children? It means 1) Be aware of and sensitive to the different ways that boys and girls are socialized in our society and culture(s). 2) Be aware of the impact on the health of individuals as a result of varied, stereotypical, biased views, posited as “norms” that negatively affect the ability of children to grow into healthy adults, capable of making decisions and acting on issues that affect their lives. 3) What are the risks that children and youth are exposed to as a result of particular norms such as “children must be seen and not heard”; “spare the rod and spoil the child”; “boys wear blue and play with trucks” and “girls wear pink and play with dolls”, “boys don’t cry”, “boys are acting like girls if they cry or express their emotions”, “girls want to be like men or take over men’s roles if they aspire to professions like engineering, mechanic etc.”.

Being gender responsive or gender sensitive means being conscious of the harmful effects of labelling and stereotyping individuals. It means being aware of the ways – from birth, that children are groomed to adhere to stereotypically binary ideas of what it means to be “female” and what it means to be “male”.

The following chart provides clinicians and other workshop facilitators (including teachers) with the type of information that may be shared after asking participants (students, parents etc.) to share their ideas of what it means to “act like a boy” or “act like a girl”. It is important for facilitators to be able to astutely point out the stereotypes and biases that may be reflected in various responses for their ability to help maintain hegemonic relationships and hierarchical structures.

Boy/Masculine	Girl/Feminine
Aggressive: Uses force to get what they want. Dominates.	Passive: Takes a passive role in relationships. Fears voicing needs and wants;
Adventurous: Has many sexual partners; Takes risks and does not consider the consequences	Fearful; Soft Spoken; Needs to be protected and ‘taken care of’. Not a risk-taker;
Assertive: exerts his will over others; in relationships makes unilateral decisions e.g. regarding the use of birth control	Dependent. Is financially and emotionally vulnerable.
Forceful: uses physical and emotional (verbal) violence to express feelings and thoughts	Weak. Unable to defend physical attacks; Finds it difficult to fight back except in some cases by engaging in verbal abuse.

To be gender responsive or gender sensitive means that Social Workers must be sensitive to the use of language and be cautious of exclusionary language or expressions that allow them to paint themselves as authorities in areas where it is in fact necessary to make a referral to another trained professional.

Language that is inclusive and not isolating or exclusionary may be to speak of “those of us who have been affected by HIV” as opposed to “people with HIV” (please note that there may be children affected by HIV in our schools and who need our care).

Language that is NOT gender sensitive or responsive and instead forceful, negative or opinion laden may be, “everyone who attempts or commits suicide is mentally ill” as opposed to sharing data and sources of information with the knowledge and understanding of biases and cultural perspectives that may influence the reporting of research findings.

Being gender sensitive and gender responsive involves giving children opportunities to reflect on their particular roles and aspects of those roles that can or cannot be changed. An activity e.g. may be one that can be labelled “I’m happy” and “I wish”.

ACTIVITY 1: Pair boys with boys and girls with girls and ask them to complete the following sentences:

I’m happy that I am a boy because _____.

I WISH I were a girl because _____.

I’m happy that I am a girl because _____.

I WISH I were a boy because _____.

Discuss the comments shared. Which roles can be changed and which cannot? Explain that some examples refer to gender stereotypes, attitudes and cultural practices and some refer to sex or biological differences between males and females (like having a baby).

At the end of this activity the song, “I’m Happy” by Pharrell Williams (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbZSe6N_BXs) may be played to give the children/students an opportunity to experience the freedom of expressing their happiness and wishes.

SCENARIO 1: Oh boy!

Imagine you are a 6-year old boy who loves to play ‘dress up’ and to play with dolls. Most of your friends at school are girls in your own age group who enjoy playing with you. However, your teachers (both female and male) tell you that it is wrong to be always playing with the girls and that you are going to be called a “sissy” and grow up to be an “anti-man”.

Questions:

1. Would you be able to defend yourself?
2. How do you imagine that you would respond?

SCENARIO 2: Jamila and Asha

Jamila and Asha have been friends since primary school. They share their possessions, like the same things, and always have fun together. When they get older and start dating, they realize they like each other more than any of the boys they go out with. They are able to talk openly with each other and help out each other whenever they have problems. Jamila always compliments and does kind things for Asha and Asha always gives Jamila nice presents and makes her laugh. Even when they disagree, they are still able to listen to each other's point of view. They enjoy kissing and cuddling with each other and can't wait until they are finished with school, get jobs, and can live together and get a puppy.

Questions:

1. What do you think of this relationship?
2. What makes a healthy relationship?
3. What gender essentialist or gender binary ideas may cause some people to see Jamila and Asha's relationship in a negative way and possibly inflict violence against them? Is such violence acceptable?
4. What makes Jamila and Asha's relationship special?

SCENARIO 3: Richard and Annie

Annie is 14 years old. She does well in school but her mother always quarrels with her about doing housework and never gives her money to buy the things she wants like makeup and jewellery. Annie's father does not live with them and only gives them money sometimes. Annie has two younger siblings who she often has to look after because her mother works long hours as a security guard. Annie met Richard online. Richard is 23 years old. They spend a lot of time chatting and sending pictures to each other. Richard tells Annie that she is different from the other girls he knows and very mature for her age. He tells Annie that he really wants to meet her in person. She agrees and meets him one day after school. They talked and drank some beer that Richard had brought. Richard started giving Annie money and soon they start having sex. Annie wants to tell her best friend but Richard tells her not to - that she must keep their relationship a secret because he could get in trouble since she's underage. He does not like to see her talking with boys from her school, even though Annie tells him they are only friends. Once they got into a quarrel about that and Richard slapped Annie. He said sorry afterwards.

Questions:

1. What do you think about this relationship between Richard and Annie?
2. What do you think Annie should do?
3. What do you think about Richard's behaviour?
4. What do you think about talking and meeting with people online?

Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence is a form of abuse exhibited by a dating partner, the abuse can consist of but is not limited to, destructive and aggressive behavior and physical and emotional harm.

The following are some signs and symptoms that teens may be aware of that are part of abusive dating relationships. The person you are dating:

- checks your phone or email without your permission
- keeps you away from your friends and family
- is furious with jealousy when friends of the opposite sex are talking with you
- puts you down and calls you names constantly
- lashes out at you by physically harming you
- controls your day-to-day activities so that they can decide what you do and who you do it with

SCENARIO 4: Sexual Luring

Maria

Maria recently turned 16. She is very sociable and has lots of friends but she does not like school very much. One of her teachers, Mr. Omar, is 28 years old. He is very attractive and all the students like him. Recently, Mr. Omar has been telling Maria that he likes her style but that she must focus more on her schoolwork. He offers to help her out after school and she agrees. She is flattered by the special attention she is getting and her grades do improve. Her parents are pleased by this and thank Mr. Omar for his help. One afternoon while Mr. Omar was tutoring Maria, he touched her hair and told her she was beautiful. Another time he said her uniform needed to be fixed and touched her body.

Maria likes Mr. Omar, but she's uncomfortable by the way he is touching her. She tells her parents that she does not want to go to Mr. Omar's lessons anymore but they yell at her and tell her that she needs to stop being lazy and that she has to keep going to the lessons to keep her grades up. One week, Mr. Omar tells Maria's parents that he will be starting weekend lessons at his home and that Maria should attend. They agree and drop Maria off. She is the only student there. Mr. Omar tells her that others are on their way and offers her a can of juice to drink while they wait. Maria drinks the juice and blacks out. When she wakes up, she feels nauseous and very sore between her legs, but she can't remember what happened. Mr. Omar tells Maria she fainted and that she should go home and rest, and that he will see her in school on Monday.

Questions:

1. What do you think about Mr. Omar's behaviour towards Maria?
2. What do you think Maria should do?
3. What do you believe happened to Maria? Why?
4. What programs or services do you feel should be available in the community to help someone who has had an experience like Maria's?

The Role of Social Service Organizations and Helpline Information

Social service organizations are designed to provide access to timely, clear accurate crisis information for anyone, including girls, boys, people of all gender orientations and ethnicities who have, or is, experiencing physical, sexual or other forms of violence, wherever they are and at whatever time day or night. This is vital for safety. A range of support services provided to improve the general well-being and empowerment to a specific population in society. They may be general in nature or provide more targeted responses to a specific issue, for example responding to women and girls who have experienced violence includes services provided by, or funded by government (also known as public services) or provided by other civil society and community actors, including non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations.

It is also expected that information about human rights, policies, laws and the range and nature of services available, is provided in a *non-blaming, non-judgmental and confidential manner*. This is so in order to enable individuals to consider the range and choices available to them, and to make their own choices. Crisis information must be available for those experiencing violence, and for family and friends, work colleagues, police and health services who may have a role in assisting women and girls to safely access services, where they choose to do so. Services for children should be age appropriate, child sensitive, child-friendly and in line with international standards.

The state has primary responsibility for action on violence against women and girls and national governments hold the ultimate responsibility for implementation and enforcement. It is important that individuals from early childhood are **taught to know their rights** and responsibilities. In Guyana, when individual rights are violated and result in Sexual Assault – rape and murder, the 2010 Police Officers Guide, Prosecutors Guide and Medical Officers Guide become useful tools for outlining the necessary procedures that must be followed. Legal instruments such as the Sexual Offences Act 2010, the Domestic Violence 1996 Act, Combatting Trafficking in Persons Act 2005, The Person with Disabilities Act 2010, and more, designed to protect the rights of individuals are documented in the Guyana review for Beijing that may be accessed at the following link:

[file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/guyana_review_beijing_20%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/guyana_review_beijing_20%20(2).pdf)

SOME USEFUL HELPLINE INFORMATION

The following HELPLINE numbers are important for children and youth seeking help (a more comprehensive list is attached):

In November 2020 the MINISTER of Human Services and Social Security, Dr. Vindhya Persaud acknowledged that over **55% of women in Guyana have experienced some form of abuse and as a consequence** revealed that a **914 helpline** will be introduced by the Ministry to facilitate the reporting of domestic and sexual violence.

CALL THE 914 HOT LINE REGARDING ALL FORMS OF ABUSE.



Crisis/Suicide/Helplines in Guyana

Inter-agency Suicide Prevention Help Line

Inter-agency Suicide Prevention Help Line offers 24-hour emotional support to those who are struggling with depression in Guyana.

Tel: 223-0001 (telephone)

Tel: 223-0009 (telephone)

Tel: 223-0818 (telephone) *Tel:* 600-7896 (cellphone)

Tel: 623-4444 (cellphone)

Guyana Standard

Guyana Standard a 24-hour, toll-free crisis hotline that is available to members of the public who may be feeling suicidal or may have mental health issues.

Tel: (592) 603-3666

Some regional helpline numbers are listed below. A more comprehensive list is available from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Human Resources and Social Protection:

REGION 1	Blossom Child Advocacy Centres (CAC) Caring Hands Help & Shelter	Tel: 233-6701, 680-6700/02 Email: region1cac@gmail.com Tel: 227-0996 225-4731, 227- 3454, 227-8353
REGION 2	Youth Challenge Guyana Interagency Services Blossom CAC: region2cac@gmail.com Migrant & Host Community Service	223-0001/223-0009 695-6700 679-6700
REGION 3	Youth Challenge Guyana Interagency Services Child Link – La Grange	223-0818/223-7885 644-8687
REGION 4	Youth Challenge Guyana Interagency Services Blossom CAC – blossomcacgy@gmail.com Caring Hands Child Link - Georgetown Help & Shelter Ministry of Amerindian Affairs Ministry of Human Resources & Soc. Services SASOD re. LGBTQI+ Support Services	infor@ycguyana.org 223-6701 or 680-6700 227-0996 616—7307 225-4731; 227-3454; 227-8353 227-5067 225-6545 https://sasod.org.gy/contact-us SASOD's Office #: 592-225-7283 Cell Phone: 592-623-5155
REGION 5	United Bricklayers Child Link – Fort Wellington	333-3322 687-3727
REGION 6	United Bricklayers (New Amsterdam) United Bricklayers (Courentye) (LGBT+ Support also) Comforting Hearts (LGBT+ Support also)	333-3322 335-3889 333-6351
REGION 7	Blossom Child Advocacy Centre (Also provides Migrant support services)	455-2001; 608-6708; 608-6797 Email: region7cac@gmail.com
REGION 8	Ministry of Indigenous Affairs	225-8416
REGION 9	Guyana Women Miners Association	223-6979
REGION 10	Blossom CAC (Linden): region10cac@gmail.com Blossom CAC: kwakwanicac@gmail.com Soc. Worker Linden Care Foundation	444-2014; 659-6700 608-6719 643-7922

Ministry of Health COVID-19 Hotline Numbers: 624-3067 and 624-6674



Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs: 225-8416

Amerindian Affairs: 227-5067; 225-6644

Police Divisions A to D Contact Information

Police 'A' Division Divisional Commander Tel: 592-226-1389, 592-227-2128 Second In-Command Tel: 592-226-7476 Officer-In-Charge Impact Base Tel: 592-227-2610 Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Tel: 592-226-7065 Divisional Operations Room Tel: 592-227-1611, 592-227-1149

Police 'B' Division Divisional Commander Tel: 592-333-3876 Second In-Command Tel: 592-333-2485 Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Tel: 295-333-2191 Divisional Operations Room Tel: 592-333-2151, 592-333-2152

Police 'C' Division Divisional Commander Tel: 592-229-2289 Second In-Command Tel: 592-229-2569 Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Tel: 295-333-5564 Divisional Operations Room Tel: 592-333-2151, 592-333-2152

Police 'D' Division Divisional Commander Tel: 592-229-2289 Second In-Command Tel: 592-229-2569
Divisional Detective Officer (Crime) Tel: 295-333-5564

Why involve the police?

1. To report any abuse and any impending life-threatening dangers to children (or adults) being victimized
2. To have the perpetrator charged and convicted.
3. To have restrictions (e.g. restraining orders) placed on perpetrators stalking or entering victim's home, workplace etc.
4. To assist in bringing the case to the attention of the courts.

Police Operating Principles

The 2010 Guyana Police Standard Operating Procedure document (p.5) states that the behaviors of those in policing must be guided by the following principles:

- a) Principle 1: Uphold the right of every person to make decisions about his or her sexual behaviour and engagement in sexual activity;
- b) Principle 2: Protect women, children (boys and girls) and persons with a disability from sexual exploitation;
- c) Principle 3: Assist those who have been victimized to be more aware of their options, to help them utilize the resources available to them, and to help reduce both the probability of reoccurrence and harmful effects of their assault and;
- d) Principle 4: Hold perpetrators of sexual coercion and violence responsible for their actions, regardless of their past victimization, alcohol or other drug use, or any other factors.

As leaders within the school system and the society, School Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors are in a position to empower children and their parents, to understand that a gender sensitive approach to human relations involves developing an understanding that when we exaggerate difference, show bias and stereotype, this affects the ways we see ourselves and the ways we see ourselves in relation to others.

Therefore, all citizens have the right to demand and expect that police officers must learn as part of their training, to respect confidentiality, to strive to be impartial in enforcing the laws and to understand that if the public is allied against the police force, then the police's work will be ineffective. It is important that School Welfare Officers help the police to understand (when necessary) that there are limits to their involvement with children who are held for such crimes as possession of drugs, guns, ammunition and more and limits to the support they may be able to offer to the families of such youth.

Twenty Strategies for Fighting Violence

1. Critically analyze and challenge traditional painful, oppressive and dangerous practices.
2. Teach and Preach against violence in homes, schools, organizations and government.
3. Give voice and strength to victims through education and economic empowerment programmes.
4. Develop restorative justice programmes for perpetrators that involve mental health counselling, schooling.
5. Establish community policing to curtail sexual harassment, rape and theft – all that impact negatively on the lives of girls and women.
6. Connect specialists to people and services in impoverished and isolated regions of the country.
7. Engage respected elders in the fight against violence against women and girls by having them speak out about valuing and NOT violating women's bodies and lives.
8. Place 24-hour 914 HOT LINES in all regions.
9. Conduct outreach to children and youth through schools and youth groups.
10. Adopt community based participatory empowerment approaches as part of Gender and Development.
11. Teach EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES, that is, INDIVIDUAL (power within) and COLLECTIVE (power with others).
12. Let the goal be one of *Social Transformation*.
13. Teach about healthy relationships and how to identify potentially abusive situations.
14. Institute country-wide protective policies and services.
15. Work toward changing discriminatory social structures and norms.
16. Develop more targeted and group specific RADIO DRAMA presentations. See:
<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2015/news/guyana/12/15/redesigned-merundoi-website-launched/>
17. Educate children about sex and sexuality.
18. Form and join support groups (Diverse & Specific: women, men, youth, gender, religious etc.).
19. Provide free after school and home work programs for Elementary and Secondary school children and youth.
20. Teach RESPECT for SELF and HUMANITY and address lack of respect for ethnic, cultural, religious, gender (LGBTQI+) difference demonstrated through jokes, mockery and violence.

Common activities to achieve objectives include:

- Conducting sensitization workshops and training sessions on gender.
- Organizing stakeholder consultations.
- The review of documents and draft policies.
- The establishment of working committees.

Typical resources required to achieve objectives are:

- Financial and human resources (technical assistance, trainers, budget allocation etc.)
- Background Literature and pamphlets.
- Relevant reports and statistical data.

Persons Responsible for carrying the process forward must include:

- Individuals responsible for the mental and physical welfare of the victimized
- Police (See GBV Units for trained personnel)
- Minister and/or Deputy Ministers of Social Protection, Child Protection
- The Gender Bureau
- International agencies and NGOs

SCHOOL WELFARE OFFICERS AND GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS KEY CONCERNS REGIONS 1 – 10

The following key concerns were shared by School Welfare Officers and Counsellors in a November 25, 2020 Zoom meeting hosted by UNICEF and IGS.

-
- Region 1 – Barima-Waini
 - Region 2 – Pomeroon-Supenaam
 - Region 3 – Essequibo Islands-West Demerara
 - Region 4 – Demerara-Mahaica
 - Region 5 – Mahaica-Berbice
 - Region 6 – East Berbice-Corentyne
 - Region 7 – Cuyuni-Mazaruni
 - Region 8 – Potaro-Siparuni
 - Region 9 – Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo
 - Region 10 – Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice

REGION: 1 – Barima-Waini

- a. A Diverse region with a majority of the schools along the river.
- b. An influx of Venezuelans in the region has caused a need for Spanish speaking professionals and training for officers and teachers particularly at the nursery and primary levels. The secondary schools may have youth who could be supported in taking a language course.
- c. Monies allocated from a department budget helps to fund work involving psycho-social support.
- d. Hygiene packages are needed for each dormitory student on an ongoing basis, not a one-time, basis.
- e. A plan to address teenage pregnancy is needed. This has been difficult to address because of the lack of Welfare officers and Guidance Counsellors to service the area.

REGION: 2- Pomeroon-Supenaam

- a. Geographically wide and spread out and therefore it is a challenge to reach all children and effectively serve the families.
- b. Poor internet access in the regional limits sharing of information and also limits social and cultural awareness.
- c. High poverty and Hunger.
- d. Poor attendance and a drop in attendance because of needing to work to help support families.

- e. A demand for children to attend school could potentially increase poverty and hunger amongst the families.
- f. Need for more welfare officers to effectively service the area and more effectively help residents to have access to support to address issues of poverty and hunger.

REGION: 3- Essequibo Islands-West Demerara

- a. Poor internet access limits learning opportunities especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. Poverty.
- c. Joblessness.
- d. Hunger.
- e. Violence.
- f. Peace Clubs and Support groups made up of Secondary school student leaders who are trained to work with their younger peers have been started to address issues of violence, drug abuse, needed tutoring support etc.
- g. Increased support needed for Spanish (Venezuelan) and Portuguese speaking refugees who are victims of poverty and violence. In the region.
- h. More language training needed for English as a second language for refugees in the area.
- i. More Spanish and Portuguese language training needed for Teachers, Welfare officers, Guidance Counsellors so that they can effectively advocate for the needs of asylum seekers etc. Few teachers know Spanish and are able to communicate.
- j. A few students with Special Needs who require more support e.g. Deaf

REGION: 4 – Demerara-Mahaica

- a. Limited access to internet and means of communication (laptops, cellphone, etc).
- b. Issues of poverty due to the need to enter the workforce and therefore leave school, needing to take care of younger siblings.
- c. Lack of access to transportation in order to get to school.
- d. Children at the 4 special needs schools are not being taught properly and are not gaining the skills to be independent when they leave schools.
- e. Re-integration of teenage mothers is a matter of grave concern since many girls drop out of school because they do not have child care support or financial support for child care.
- f. Drugs and alcohol abuse is of serious concern.
- g. Children who are not currently attending classes/skipping school.
- h. Access to electronic devices. Many homes do not have internet access or internet devices.
- i. Parents refuse to send children to school because of COVID fears so this means children are not being educated.
- j. Increase in teenage pregnancy during the pandemic
- k. Financial constraints at home and COVID-19 are forcing children into the workforce.
- l. Grief (Bereavement) counselling for children who are hurt/killed by violence.
- m. Information and training on counselling children who are dealing with violence or who commit violent acts.
- n. Suicide prevention is important for successfully servicing this region.
- o. Welfare Officers make home and hospital visits and need access to vehicles to be able to do so.
- p. Lack of human resources result in difficulties in overseeing all officers.

- q. Vaping, e-cigarettes and vaping products in schools. Vaping in schools has emerged as a major concern. A ban on the use of **e-cigarettes** and **vaping** products on and within 20 metres of all **school** grounds is recommended since the well-being of students is, and ought to be, a priority. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education provide funding for **schools** to install **vape** detectors as a deterrent for youth **vaping in schools**.
- r. Lack of communication and support as School Welfare Officers. They do not have the resources to do the work that is necessary. Incumbents need to become active in the struggle to transform Welfare into a specialized department.
- s. Bullying and sexual violence are major concerns.
- t. The early onset of child sexual behavior and teenage pregnancy.
- u. Physical disabilities and developmental/learning disabilities are being grouped together, and it is felt that this gives people without learning disabilities a disadvantage and vice versa.

REGION: 5 – Mahaica-Berbice

- a. Parents have trouble providing for their children and this became more critical during the pandemic despite community members' attempts to assist with food items.
- b. Sporadic and unreliable internet and phone access.
- c. Basic school supplies such as pens, pencils, paper, books, etc. is inaccessible and unaffordable for most.
- d. Students leaving school at the Grade 10 and 11 levels and are not returning.
- e. Parents do not have the requisite skills and education levels to give academic support to their children and this is of particular concern in the time of a pandemic. No access to learning channels for most families.
- f. Limited access to safe transportation – Some children do not want to use public transit because of the pandemic.
- g. Visits to families in the region by Welfare workers is often stymied as a result of the fact that the department only has one bus for its varied works and as a result, access and visitations are difficult.

REGION: 6 – East Berbice-Corentyne

- a. Providing and carrying out school and family visits are a challenge because the region geographically is widely spread out.
- b. Transportation is an issue despite approximately 5 buses in the area to-date.
- c. Lack of access to internet prevents virtual learning from taking place.
- d. Public transportation puts the children in the region at risk re. safety from the spread of disease and also at risk of being preyed on by sexual predators.
- e. There is an increase in teen pregnancy in the region.
- f. A lot of education needs to be done on issues of respect, acceptance and inclusion since children are victimized because of their family backgrounds, circumstances and more.
- g. Education about Gender diversity needs to be viewed by teachers as an important and normal part of the education of youth particularly between the ages of 13-17 since it is between these ages that questions about sexuality, sexual identity, gender identity and love (See A. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Appendix II) tend to arise and impact self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a family and community. Unbiased and non-judgmental teachings is crucial to personal growth.

REGION: 7: Cuyuni-Mazaruni

- a. Twenty-one schools (Bartica) 3 private schools and 1 special needs class which is currently not operating.
- b. High percentage of people living in poverty.
- c. Very limited or no internet access for most families.
- d. Limited transportation for all in the region.
- e. In order to get access to their schools, students must travel through Regions 3, 4, and 10.
- f. Some of the schools have NO method of communication between students and school.

REGION: 8 - Potaro-Siparuni

- a. A mountainous region with a sparse population.
- b. Families do not live close to each other.
- c. Access to school is a challenge because of poor transportation; poor roads.
- d. One School Welfare Officer, stationed in Lethem, for this region along with Region 9.
- e. A mining region, impacted by sex workers who enter the region.
- f. Child labour as children leave school to work in the mines to help support selves and families.

REGION: 9 - Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo

- a. Difficult to travel to each area of the regions due to the undeveloped condition of roads.
- b. Poor transportation affects the ability of workers to reach children and address their needs.
- c. Department only has 1 working vehicle or has to use an ATV.
- d. Prior to pandemic, a number of Venezuelans and Brazilians had entered the region and due to this there is a language barrier in trying to accommodate them.
- e. Officers who are fluent in Spanish and/or Portuguese are needed.
- f. Translation services needed! Teachers often reach out to School Welfare Officers (SWOs) for help with translation services. As a consequence, SWOs may reach out to NGOs in the area (if any) who may be bilingual and able to offer translation support. There are also a number of Translation services listed online. Some are on Facebook. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter may be a fast and efficient way to ask questions re. who and what is available for free or hire.
- g. Parents and other members of the community are often suspicious of School Welfare Officers and as a result do not cooperate with their efforts because the SWOs are viewed as “Enforcers” rather than “Caring Helpers” willing to work collaboratively with residents, some of whom are migrants who may need help navigating Guyana’s legal systems re. the necessary papers for birth registrations, school registrations and professional certifications for jobs etc.
- h. There is a rise of teenage pregnancies in the area with varied 2019 - 2020 reports of 15 pregnancies in one village, 5 in each of two other villages
- i. Children and youth are vulnerable to sexual predators.
- j. Teachers must respect teacher/student boundaries and this must be reflected in dress and behavior. Social media should NOT be used (as is too often the case) to ‘friend request’ students, share pictures etc. Such relationships are inappropriate, unprofessional and may be illegal.
- k. There is a need to establish trust in professionals hired to serve the community and feel assured that those professionals will not be physically or mentally abusive and thus violate trust. The prevalent belief appears to be that people who work with children do so because of concern and

kindness. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. It is therefore important and recommended that hiring practices for individuals working with vulnerable populations be part of institutional practice. It is important to do background checks, to check previous places of employment and association. It is also recommended that organizations have child protection policies*, which clearly state the standard of behaviour expected from any adult who comes into contact with children.

**Note: See the Child Protection Policy written by Help and Shelter, Guyana listed in the Resources section of this manual.*

REGION: 10 - Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice

- a. The region is large with approximately 60 schools in total - 24 Nursery, 29 Primary, 7m Secondary.
- b. There are also 2 special needs centers. Welfare workers are not directly responsible for the work at the 2 centers but may be called upon to intervene with “social issues”.
- c. Issues with internet connectivity and communication are of grave concern because of their geographic location.
- d. The region’s geographic location and the lack of resources invested in the development of roads and the provision of buses makes transportation an issue that negatively impacts the lives of residents and children’s ability to get to school safely.
- e. High unemployment and dire poverty is evident in the region. Donors have been trying to combat this by providing care packages, however these are temporary measures. Government and business interventions and investment are needed.
- f. Grade 10 and 11 students have a low attendance record (as reported by a number of schools).
- g. A 2020 rise in Teen pregnancy needs to be addressed.
- h. Many children drop out of school at an early age, enter the workforce, move to other regions, or are unable to access transportation in order to get to school.
- i. There is a growing population of Haitian asylum seekers in the region and as a consequence their issues of poverty, work, language must also be addressed.

WHAT VILLAGE COUNCILLORS IN REGIONS 3, 9 HAD TO SAY:

- In Surama, a town in Region 9, the Village Council holds quarterly meetings with villagers each year. In instances of emergencies, meetings are held as often as required. Councillors focus on educating the villagers and share everything that they receive from various workshops and meetings. There are separate meetings with the teenagers of the village to build positive relationships. At these meetings teenagers get to share what is affecting them, their goals and anything else they decide to share. This is viewed as an inclusive approach. It is also viewed as a reason for few reports on teenage pregnancy, rape and other forms of abuse.
- In cases of drug abuse, the Village Council will call in the parents, the police and the child and talk with them to encourage positive behaviours. While in cases of sexual abuse, rape, neglect and other serious crimes, if the matter is reported to the Village Council, the Village Council then reports the matter to the police.

- In the South Rupununi District Council, the women who are part of the Wapichan Women’s Movement collaborate with the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Red Thread and the Gender Affairs Bureau, to empower women and strengthen capacity building as it relates to women and children. Their 2020 collaboration saw 10 women in the Indigenous communities being trained to deal with social issues such as child abuse, that plague the communities. They also ensure that information is filtered to the villages in their native language via the local radio station.
- In Aishalton, the resources/information received from the Ministry of Human Services and Social Protection and the Gender Affairs Bureau are used to educate the indigenous population on how to respond to cases of child abuse. Information is filtered to the villages in the native language via the local radio station. They have documented 3 reports of teen pregnancies for 2020 and 7 reports of child sexual abuse between the ages of 12 to 14. Reports are may come through the Toshias to the Director of the Childcare and Protection agency and to the police.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Adult Education Programs** developed and offered through the Ministry of Education to help raise the education levels of parents who are un/undereducated and may not know to read or write.
2. **Parenting classes** offered through the Ministry of Education and by Church groups to address the violence that is prevalent in-home situations.
3. **Stronger community participation and involvement** with a focus on empowerment and conscientization along with improved data collection methods.
4. **Improved data collection methods** e.g. Action research from the ground up. Such methods will help to raise awareness and allow for connections to be made between the data collected and the number and prevalence of incidents across the country.
5. An ongoing national **stop the violence campaign** on radio, television, billboards, social media along with ongoing seminars for parents on how to deal with their stressors at home and avoid abuse situations.
6. **Increased educational offerings at all levels** that aim to (a) teach people about healthy relationships and to identify potentially abusive situations; (b) promote gender awareness and sensitivity to male and female participants; (c) inform about protective policies, services, and actions related to various forms of violence (including child sexual abuse) (d) educate about the relationship between Child Sexual Assault and HIV; and (e) motivate individuals to work toward changing the social structures and norms that support the violent incidents that occur throughout the society.
7. **Monetary support** in order to encourage parents to attend parent/teacher meetings and education upgrading programs. For example, funding support for transportation, on-site childcare and snacks for children and parents may be offered to schools by the Ministry of Education as incentives to attend meetings where SWOs, counsellors and teachers share strategies for dealing with issues that concern parents and students.
8. School Welfare Officers and Guidance counsellors would benefit from **specialized training in crisis intervention skills**, specifically as it relates to a) Child development and the impact of domestic abuse b) Child sexual abuse: assessment and intervention c) Building self-esteem in young people d) Suicide prevention e) Bereavement counselling f) Self-care and peer support

among facilitators g) HIV Education (including stigma and prejudice) and Services h) Training in facilitation skills to run support groups for the empowerment of girls and adult survivors of CSA. Empowerment training and Adult Education academic upgrading programs and needed to help alleviate poverty and the threat of abuse due to dependency.

9. To expand on the idea of **specialized training** as in #8 above, it is recommended that specific job descriptions with their related education and experience be written up and adhered to in order to ensure a pool of well-trained individuals who are respected for the services they provide and who are not treated as primarily “truancy officers”. It is noted that in some countries Guidance Counsellors are trained teachers who gained Guidance Additional Qualifications and who must gain specific in-school teaching and counselling experience before given a full-time counselling position.
10. **Support the work of the Guyana Sex Work Coalition** in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, along with 8, 9 and 10 where a growing number of asylum seekers have settled and are combatting issues of poverty and homelessness and women involved in survival sex work are facing abuse.
11. **Partner with Community Professionals:** School Welfare Officers and Guidance Counsellors would benefit from utilizing expertise of trained personnel at agencies such as Help and Shelter re. Anger Management training for perpetrators of GBV including DV; Facilitating ongoing support groups for boys and men; and the expertise of professionals at Blossom Inc. re. psychological effects on children living in abusive situations. Training is also offered to police, teachers and other professionals.
12. Advocate for a “**NO DROP POLICY**” to give police autonomy to lay charges against known perpetrators and those who collude with them. A program to garnishee the wages of men charged with domestic violence and separated from their families should be put in place and monitored in order to address the fear of reporting and losing monetary support that causes women to remain in abusive situations.
13. Engage with medical/health practitioners to **organize age-appropriate Sex Education and Drug and Alcohol awareness programs** for children and youth so they understand their bodies, and the different bodily effects of drugs and alcohol and to combat self-harm (cutting) and suicide.
14. Advocate for community centres in neighbourhoods across the country to provide extra-mural activities for youth.
15. Pressure government to address **isolation and poor service delivery** to Indigenous communities.
16. **Build literacy skills and appropriate behavior through growth intervention programmes** that involve caring for or raising animals, planting a garden or visiting agricultural holdings where students can plant various crops, a community clean up or beautification project; a chess club, art club, dance club; singing with seniors; CPR training; Self-Defense classes; Financial and Time Management skills and more.
17. **Nurture and teach emotional intelligence** so that children relate to each other in positive ways.
18. Instead of labelling children as rude **examine the reasons behind negative behavior** e.g. many children are seeing sex acts in homes, on phones, in movies and other areas.
19. **Examine the adult culture of imposing adult beliefs on to children** and disrespecting the rights of the child to question, critically analyze situations and formulate own ideas and new perspectives.
20. **Address language deficits** and lack of expressive skills through Art Therapy and Poetry.

21. **Advocate for teacher training** that involve: a) reflective practice b) developing leadership skills that are not toxic c) understanding about boundaries between teacher/student and teacher/parent d) teacher wellness and positive behavior management.
22. **Brainstorm creative ways to involve parents** in decision making processes and programs such as the 'change' clubs. Avoid top-down approaches to program planning. Involve the students.
23. **Show respect for privacy** and provide private spaces in schools and community to conduct counselling and hold workshops.
24. **Train the Trainer Programs** for the sharing of information and Best Practices between School Welfare Officers, Guidance Counsellors, Teachers, NGOS and other community professionals is needed for long-term program successes.
25. **Encourage the development of libraries and attention to the aesthetics of school buildings** so that all students and staff feel that they are part of an institution that is valued.
26. **Employ Restorative Justice principles or philosophies.** Restorative Justice is not a policy. It is a crime philosophy that may be useful in addressing an offence (crime) against the dynamics of human relationships and against the law. It does not replace the need for retribution but compliments and supports it. It is a VALUE BASED framework that 1) appeals to relationships between victims 2) Advocates no fixed rewards; no fixed punishment 3) Advocates that imprisonment is for only those who pose the greatest risk to society. 4) It is a philosophy that may be applied to ALL situations e.g. rape, murder etc.
27. **Think and Do.** Think about the specific skills and core competencies that SWOs need to create and make community-based interventions. Think about how these skills and competencies may be supported and funded.

RESOURCES and APPENDICES

Help and Shelter, Guyana. *Child Protection Policy*. Retrieved at: [https://www.hands.org.gy/files/Help%20&%20Shelter's%20Child%20Protection%20Policy%20\(January%202011\).pdf](https://www.hands.org.gy/files/Help%20&%20Shelter's%20Child%20Protection%20Policy%20(January%202011).pdf)

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McLeod, S. 2018. Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*. Retrieved at: <https://canadacollege.edu/dreamers/docs/Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf> (See Appendix II)

MoE (2002) Manual of guidelines for the maintenance of order and discipline in schools. <https://education.gov.gy/web/index.php/policies/maintenance-of-order-discipline-in-schoole/item/532-the-maintenance-of-order-and-discipline-roles-attached>

Peace Clubs: To motivate and promote empathy and non-violent principles. <https://www.nonviolence.com/hi-in/action/clubs-for-peace/>

UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

UNICEF Annual Report – Guyana & Suriname (2019) [https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Guyana-and-Suriname-2019-COAR\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Guyana-and-Suriname-2019-COAR(1).pdf)

UNICEF Study on Indigenous Women and Children (2017) <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/study-indigenous-women-and-children-guyana>

UNICEF (2016) Situational Analysis on Adolescent Pregnancy – Guyana. <https://www.unicef.org/guyanasuriname/reports/situation-analysis-adolescent-pregnancy-guyana>

Web Series, 2020. *Forward Promise: Disrupting historical dehumanization... of cultures, spirits, communities*. Experts from direct service organizations and youth-serving systems (like education and family services) discuss what dehumanization looks like in these arenas and how we can substantively disrupt dehumanization for boys and young men of colour (*retrieved at:* <https://forwardpromise.org/webcast/>)

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONS TO SCHOOL WELFARE OFFICERS/COUNSELLORS 11/24/2020

1. What would you like to see in the manual that would help to make it a useful resource?
 - a) For you as School Welfare Officers?
 - b) School Guidance Counsellors?
 - c) Principals,
 - d) Teachers and other staff employed full or part-time at the schools in your region?
2. What type of information should there be on: a) discrimination b) bias c) gender?
3. What would you like to see in the manual re. a) Strategies on violence prevention?
4. Would links to resources be useful? (If so, please share suggestions).
5. What information should there be on abuse? Types? If so, what types?
6. What other helpline information do you feel should be included in the manual?

APPENDIX 2:

17 Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015-2030

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere. 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty. 700 m less in 2010 than 1990.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Globally approx. 842m mal-nourished).
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages End TB, malaria, Aids, combat water-borne diseases, hepatitis; Achieve Universal Health care.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all and numeracy for all; early childhood and pre-primary ed.; vocational training for vulnerable populations: disabilities; Indigenous; children in vulnerable situations.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls: women hold less secure jobs than men; fewer social benefits despite increase in parliamentary positions.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all: End open
 - a. defecation; reduce water scarcity, improve water quality; sanitation; reduce dumping
 - b. hazardous materials into waters; promote recycling; protect and restore water related ecosystems.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all – 1.3 billion
 - a. people live without electricity; 2.6 billion people rely on pollution causing fuels that have cause 4.3m deaths in 2012; 291million students go to schools without electricity.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – 24.8% existing gender gap between men and women; 384m live below poverty line 2011 (reduced by 294m since 2001).
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation - Non-discriminatory trading and financial systems are needed.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries – 80% goods from developing countries enter developed countries duty free; address special needs of landlocked and small island developing countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – safe guard the world' cultural sites.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns – use local materials to build infrastructure.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) involve women and children in teaching re. early warnings and implementation of goals.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable Development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna. Prevent extinction.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by war, crime and civil unrest.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development – 90% of 4billion people without internet access reside in developing countries. 30% of world's youth are digital natives. Most developing countries carry a heavy debt burden.