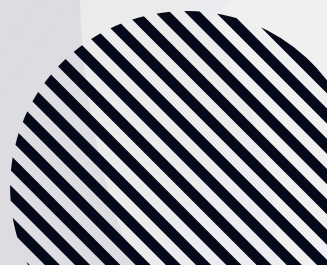




# BEST PRACTICES ISWIs

INDIVIDUAL SAFE WORK INSTRUCTIONS  
in K-12 Education



# Introduction

Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs) are individualized plans that provide specific and detailed guidance to workers on potential risks, and how to safely interact or work with students whose behaviour or care needs may pose an ongoing risk to workers. Each ISWI is specific to a particular student.

Depending on the district, ISWIs may also be called "Individual Safe Work Procedures," a "Safety Plan," "Employee Safety Plan," or "Student Safety Plan."



This document was developed by **the Joint Health & Safety Taskforce**, established through the *Support Staff Provincial Framework Agreement* and lays out ten best practices for the development and maintenance of ISWIs in the K-12 public education sector.

# Best Practice

## What is a Best Practice?

“A working method, or set of working methods, that is officially accepted as being the best to use in a particular business or industry”

- ***Cambridge Dictionary***

Best practices help ensure safety, consistency, and efficiency in workplace procedures.

# Requirements

## School Act

Under the School Act, every school aged person, who meets residency requirements, is entitled to enroll in an educational program. The right to education entitles students to fair treatment in a safe, inclusive and accessible learning environment.

School districts have a duty to ensure the health and safety of all workers present in the workplace. This includes compliance with all relevant health and safety legal requirements. Including requirements related to harassment, violence and ergonomics.

# **10 Best Practices**

## **in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)**

- 1 Collaborative development**
- 2 Dedicated internal collaboration time**
- 3 Identify & assess the risk**
- 4 Risk prevention & mitigation strategies**
- 5 Ensure ISWI is clear, comprehensive & consistent**
- 6 Education, training & professional development**
- 7 Document & communicate ISWIs**
- 8 Monitor & evaluate effectiveness**
- 9 Regularly review and update ISWIs**
- 10 Maintain Confidentiality**



# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 1 Collaborative development

To the extent possible, involve a multidisciplinary team in developing, reviewing and updating ISWIs.

This includes:

- School administrator(s),
- Employees that interact or work with the student, and other relevant professionals, including:
  - o Education assistants
  - o School counselors, and psychologists
  - o Indigenous support workers, child and youth care workers, inclusion support teachers, learning/resource teachers
  - o Office and district staff
  - o Bus drivers, noon-hour supervisors
  - o Teachers

It may also be beneficial to include other people, when appropriate, such as the student's parents/guardians, advocate, external subject matter experts, agencies, and service providers.

Consult with Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC) and Health and safety representatives on the prevention and response measures, procedures, templates, and processes.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 2 Dedicated internal collaboration time

To the extent possible, establish regular meetings/collaboration time dedicated to developing, reviewing, discussing and updating ISWIs.

Utilizing existing School Based Team (SBT) structures is an effective way to facilitate this work and ensure ISWIs are compatible and consistent with other plans, such as Individual Education Plans (IEP), Functional Behaviour Assessments (PTR-FBA), and Positive Behaviour Support Plans (PBSP). Some school districts may need to adjust their SBT meetings and agendas to include education assistants and student support workers for relevant portions of SBT meetings, where their current structure does not already include them.

If key employees are unable to attend meetings to provide updates and input, consider setting up an alternate development and consultation process to include them.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 3 Identify & assess the risk

Begin by identifying and assessing the specific risks associated with working or interacting with the student. The ISWI should include when and how employees are likely to be exposed to the risks and potential consequences if the risk is not adequately addressed.

Consider whether different environments and circumstances affect the level of risk (e.g. field trips, certain subjects or tasks, location, attachments, etc.). Consider and integrate other supports and plans (e.g. IEP, PTR-FBA, PBSP), as appropriate.



# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 4 Risk prevention & mitigation strategies

Develop specific, clear, detailed, and actionable strategies to eliminate, or reduce to the extent possible, the risks associated with interacting or working with the student. Ensure the ISWI uses simple, easy-to-understand language and provides detailed information and instructions to follow under normal/baseline conditions, during escalating behaviours, and for crisis/emergency response.

Consider whether different environments and circumstances affect the risk mitigation strategies needed (e.g. field trips, assemblies, time of the year, attachments etc.). Ensure there are clear instructions for summoning help. Employees must follow the strategies, instructions and other identified prevention measures.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 5 Ensure ISWI is clear, comprehensive & consistent

Include detailed information about the risks, including the student's triggers, precursors to dysregulation or antecedents, prevention and intervention strategies, communication and emergency procedures, and safe work instructions.

Use simple, easy-to-understand language that can be accessed and implemented quickly. Avoid jargon and technical terms that other employees may not understand. Use a standard framework and template to ensure that ISWIs are consistent and capture all relevant information and instructions.

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## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

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### Education, training & professional development

All employees who may be exposed to the risks associated with interacting or working with a particular student must be adequately orientated and trained on the hazards they are exposed to and how to protect themselves. This includes the specific workplace's prevention strategies (e.g. ISWIs, procedures, processes, PPE, etc.) as well as general or specialized measures (e.g. de-escalation training, attachment-focused frameworks).

Employers must provide appropriate refresher training and provide updated orientation/training/education, on a regular basis and whenever there are material changes. Employees must participate in required education, training, professional development and orientation. Employees must ensure they understand the risks they may be exposed to and how to protect themselves, and others, while working with and supporting students.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

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### Document & communicate ISWIs

ISWIs need to be adequately documented and retained. They must be communicated and readily available to all employees who may be exposed to the risks associated with interacting or working with a particular student.

Employees need to know what risks they may be exposed to and how to protect themselves, and others in the workplace. Whenever there are substantive changes to an ISWI they must be communicated to affected workers.

Employers must ensure that workers have adequate time to review and understand relevant ISWIs.

Employees must ensure they read and understand ISWIs, and ask for clarification, prior to starting work with students attached to one.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

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### Monitor & evaluate effectiveness

There should be a process in place for ongoing monitoring of the ISWI's effectiveness. Including through observations, incident reports, and employee input to identify any adjustments needed, to ensure employees are following the ISWI (and all prevention measures), and to evaluate their effectiveness.

Monitoring ensures that the ISWI adapts to the student's evolving needs and environmental changes, while continuing to be effective in protecting employees. Employees must notify their administrator/supervisor, as soon as possible, if the ISWI (or a particular mitigation strategy) is not working, or they become aware of changes that may affect the effectiveness the ISWI.

JHSCs and Health and Safety representatives play an important role in monitoring the effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies, including ISWIs and the prevention measures they include, and recommending improvements to workplace health and safety. JHSCs provide feedback to the school district, administration, or SBTs regarding ISWIs and related prevention measures.



# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

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### Regularly review & update ISWIs

ISWIs must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (at least once per year), at a frequency that ensures that they remain current and effective in mitigating the risks.

ISWIs must also be reviewed and updated, without delay, whenever there are:

- changes in student needs, medical status, and/or behaviours
- changes to the prevention measures available or their effectiveness
- new incidents, work refusals, or relevant environmental changes (e.g. moves schools/classes, staffing changes, different lighting, etc.).

Effective transition planning is key for successfully supporting students through transitions and periods of change and reducing the risks to workers. ISWIs must be reviewed, and updated as necessary, prior to students moving to a new classroom or school.

(cont.)

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

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### Regularly review & update ISWIs

(cont.)

School districts must establish a process to ensure that ISWIs, and other relevant information, are provided to the new school, classroom or school district to minimize student disruption, ensure that employees are aware of and understand the ISWI and that all relevant prevention measures are in place, prior to the student attending.

School districts must also have a process in place to regularly review whether an ISWI is still required. As students grow and develop, their needs and behaviours change, which can impact whether an ISWI is still necessary. Typically, if there have been no ongoing risks or incidents, ISWIs should be retired.

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 10 Maintain Confidentiality

School districts must inform their workers about all the hazards they may be exposed to and how to protect themselves, including the risks associated with interacting or working with students. However, they must also meet privacy obligations under FOIPPA, by not disclosing more personal information about the student than is reasonably necessary to protect employees and other individuals at the workplace.

This is known as the “need to know” principle, which ensures that the right information is shared with the right people, at the right time, for the right purposes. Processes must be in place to ensure that the information necessary to protect workers is communicated, including sharing ISWIs (or appropriate sections, “snapshots”, or summaries) with those who have a legitimate need to know and follow them, while still maintaining confidentiality.

School districts must also ensure there is a process in place for how disclosures are documented.

(cont.)

# 10 Best Practices

## in developing Individual Safe Work Instructions (ISWIs)

### 10 Maintain Confidentiality (cont.)

The level of detail required to be shared will depend on the workers' level of exposure to the risks. For example, educational assistant(s) require more in-depth information on the risks and prevention measures associated with a student they are directly working with, than a custodian who may cross paths with them in the hallway from time-to-time.

In general, identifying student information should be redacted/anonymized when providing access or copies of ISWIs to parties that may need to review the contents, but the student's identifying information is not relevant, such as the JHSC, DJHSC, or WorkSafeBC.

*Disclosure is required when sharing the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of employees and other individuals at the workplace*



[bcpsea.bc.ca](http://bcpsea.bc.ca) - OHS Resources & Tools



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