

risk matters

Liability for School Councils vs. Parent Groups

SCHOOL COUNCILS

As per the School Act, School councils are established in accordance with the regulations for each school operated by a board. The school council may advise the principal and the board on matters relating to the school, perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board or do anything it is authorized under the regulations to do. Members of school councils are protected by the boards' liability insurance for lawsuits while they are working within the scope of their mandated duties for the board.

For example, if a school principal organized a fund-raising activity and the school council members were asked to assist with the event, insurance protection would be provided to those members who volunteered.

If the school council members involve themselves in a fund-raising or other activities on their own and outside of the control of the school or board, the members are not protected by the board's liability insurance policy.

For example, if a school council decided to hold a Christmas social, a family social event, conduct a craft sale, orchestrate programs not provided by schools, etc. on its own, coverage is not extended by the board's insurer.

PARENT GROUPS

Parent groups play a significant role and contribute to the success of many school functions through their volunteer efforts. This contribution is recognized through the school board's liability policy which extends coverage to members of parent groups while they are acting within the scope of their duties on behalf of the school board. Duties are those assigned by any authorized employee or trustee. Coverage is extended to volunteer parents involved in activities which are approved and controlled by any authorized employee or member of the board. The person authorizing the activity must assume responsibility for it and the activity must be in accordance with board policies and procedures. Thus if a member of a parent group were sued because of alleged negligence arising out of their duties for the board, the ASBIE policy would provide protection.

Coverage through the school board does not extend to the parent organizations for activities of the group that is independent of the school or school board and are not directed by a school employee or trustee. Activities such as conventions, social outings of the parent group, independent fund-raising events, etc., would not fall under the board's liability insurance. The parent group would require their own liability policy as protection against being named in a law suit for these non-school directed activities.