

Privacy Breaches

What is a Breach?

A breach is when there is an unauthorized release of or access to personal information. In other words, personal information is seen by a person or people who do not have the legal authority to see it. It can happen to information that the

board and schools manage directly or through a third party such as a cloud service provider, school picture companies and myriad other third parties that provide services to schools and boards.

Breaches Take Many Forms

Including:

- hackers gaining access to data through malicious attack.
- lost, stolen or temporarily misplaced devices, e.g., mobile phones, usb keys
- mistakes, e.g., papers stored insecurely, leaving a computer station logged in, neglecting to password protect a device, a misdirected email



"I HAVE IDENTIFIED THE SOURCE OF OUR PRIVACY BREACH AND DEALT WITH IT, SIR!"

Breaches are learning opportunities!

When we report breaches and learn from our mistakes, we strengthen our ability to protect the personal information entrusted to us.

Challenge:

Think of an unauthorized disclosure of personal information that happened in your board. Now that you know it was a breach, can you think of ways in which it could have been handled differently?

[Click here for 10 Tips for Reducing the Likelihood of a Privacy Breach](#) from the Privacy Commissioner of Canada

Breach Response

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Here is a typical breach response protocol:

- 1. Respond.** Report the breach to your supervisor immediately. Time is crucial.
- 2. Contain.** Stop it from getting worse, e.g., secure access; find copies; shut down systems.
- 3. Investigate.** What caused it? What information is involved? Who is affected? How sensitive is the data?
- 4. Notify.** Notify those affected when there is a risk of harm to them, e.g., identity theft, embarrassment. Tell them what steps were taken to minimize risk and prevent a recurrence. Apologize.
- 5. Change.** Review the circumstances of the breach and change practice to reduce the risk of it recurring. Train staff.

