

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: POLICE INTERACTIONS AT SCHOOL

The following information describes what you should know regarding your rights when interacting with School Liaison Officers or police at school.



## YOU CAN CHOOSE NOT TO INTERACT WITH POLICE

There is no situation where it is acceptable to compel anyone, let alone a student, to engage in conversation or develop a relationship with the police, regardless of how friendly they may seem. Whether you're in the hallway, classroom, or during extra-curricular activities, you have the right not to interact with the police or School Liaison Officer (SLO).

## REMEMBER: RIGHT TO SILENCE

**If you are approached and questioned by a police officer or SLO, you do not necessarily have to answer their questions, but it is a good idea to be respectful and stay calm.**

You have the right to go about your business without police interference unless they have reason to believe you are breaking the law. Police can ask you questions, but you have the right to remain silent. Even if it seems like you are having a casual conversation with a police officer, everything you say to the police can be used as evidence against you.



The police may also collect, retain and share any of this information with school staff, other police, your parents or guardians, or even record it in law enforcement databases. Everyone in BC has a right to access their personal information that public bodies like the police and school board have collected. If you are concerned about your personal information being collected and used by the police, or are worried about whether it has been shared, you can make a written request for access to any records about you held by the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and/or the [Vancouver School Board \(VSB\)](#). [Make a request to the VPD using these resources](#).

The VSB School Liaison Officer Program [Memorandum of Understanding](#) contemplates broad information sharing between the police department and the school board as well as the potential for a “formal information sharing agreement.”

## REMEMBER: RIGHT TO SILENCE

Continued

To find out if you are under arrest or detention, calmly ask the officer, “Am I free to go?” If they say Yes, you can leave. If they say No, you have the right to speak to a lawyer immediately. The police are not supposed to question you while you are waiting to talk to your parent, trusted adult, or lawyer. If they continue to question you, you can remain silent.

**Youth can access a lawyer for free through [Legal Aid BC](#).**

In some situations, you do need to provide your name and address to the police. This is only if you are under arrest, or driving a car, or if the police give you a ticket or a document to appear in court.

Other than your name and address in the situations described above, you have the right to keep your identity private. This includes your gender identity, your immigration status, or any other parts of your identity.

## REMEMBER: SEARCHES AND PRIVACY

You are protected from unreasonable search and seizure. This means the police cannot search your body, possessions, home, or cell phone, except in certain circumstances. Specifically, the police officer needs to have your consent, a good reason to believe you committed a crime, a warrant, or an emergency

Even in these circumstances, not all searches are legal. If you have any concerns about a search that the police have performed, talk to a lawyer about it.



Teachers and principals can also search you or your belongings to uphold school rules. While the police must not use teachers as their agents, teachers can give evidence they find to the police. To be safe, you may want to leave anything you consider very private at home.

Everyone has the right to take photos and videos of police while they perform their duties, provided that you are not “obstructing” the police in any way. They may direct you to stay at a distance depending on the context, but police cannot demand that you stop filming. Keep in mind that the police can seize your phone as evidence in certain circumstances.



## REMEMBER: SAFETY TIPS

Clothing worn by School Liaison Officers in Vancouver is different than standard VPD uniforms but includes branding with VPD crests. If you're approached by someone who might be a police School Liaison Officer:

- You can ask them if they are a police officer and ask for their name and badge number.
- You can ask to have a parent or trusted adult present when speaking to them and/or you can contact a lawyer.
- If you are under 18, you have the right to have a parent or trusted adult and a lawyer present with you while the police question you.
- If possible, note the name and badge number of the police officer and keep notes about things that happen to you. You may need this information later.
- Do not physically resist the police if you are arrested or being searched, as this can be dangerous and lead to charges against you. If you are under 18, the police must notify a parent, or a trusted adult if your parents are not available, of your arrest or detention as soon as possible.



You may feel frustrated, embarrassed, or frightened when confronted by the police, especially if you are a member of a visible minority, 2SLGBTQIA+, or struggling with your mental health. Remember that you have legal rights and protections available to you that the police are supposed to respect. You can enforce these rights later, when you are in a safe place.

If you have a complaint about the treatment you receive from any police officer, you can contact:

- The Office of the Police Complaint Commission of BC at [opcc.bc.ca](https://opcc.bc.ca)
- BC Human Rights Commission at [bchumanrights.ca](https://bchumanrights.ca)

