



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

PURPOSE:

There are times when a school may become involved in a traumatic or critical incident and staff members need to be prepared to make appropriate responses.

BROAD GUIDELINES

- Schools may become directly or indirectly involved in a tragic or traumatic event.
- The incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance.
- The incident may occur in the school environment or outside.
- It may involve staff, students or those close to them.
- The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the school.
- Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time.
- Counselling should be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved.
- The school may be in a position to help grieving families at difficult times. e.g. through the school's participation in the funeral service.
- While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist.
- It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following Critical Incident Management action plan is to be implemented as a result of a tragic / traumatic event, particularly if it relates to bereavement that involves the school community.

Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases. However the following 4 principles must be followed: -

- * Provision of clear accurate information.
- * Description of action to be followed.
- * Provision of help for all affected.
- * Maintenance of normal school program.

1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.

2. As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved, and School Council president. Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.
3. Appoint a skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, external DE&T personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of Support Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
4. As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
5. The principal and/or School Council president will deal with all media requirements. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media.
6. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
7. Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating the Principal's telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
8. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
9. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends.
10. Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. All emergency or criminal activity in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, or where there is a threat to property, must be reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on ph: **(03) 9589 6266**
11. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
12. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
13. Provide counselling for all. Ensure that there are suitable places in which this can take place. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help.
14. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
16. In the event of a death, children wishing to attend funerals should be encouraged to do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
17. Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the school community. Be flexible with those in need of help. Be aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time.

18. Maintain links with the family. The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the school.
19. Monitor, be sensitive to, and respond to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed after any significant critical incident or on a triennial basis as part of the policy evaluation process.

REVIEW PERIOD

This was ratified by School Council August 2019