



St. Louis Secondary School
Carrickmacross

Critical Incident Management Plan

2016



St. Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan

Critical Incident Management Plan

Introduction

This Critical Incident Management Plan is designed to enable the school to cope with critical incidents or traumatic situations that may occasionally arise. For the purposes of this plan, a Critical incident may be defined as *any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school*. Some examples of such critical incidents include the following:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Serious damage to the school buildings through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

Saint Louis Secondary School wishes to maintain an atmosphere and spirit in the school that is caring and supportive of the entire school community. In line with our Mission Statement and Ethos we wish to support the vision of the founding father of the Sisters of Saint Louis, Abbé Bautain when he stated:

“Give the young all your care and affection, and try and touch their hearts by the interest you show in them.”

The creation of an effective Critical Incident Management Plan is therefore part of the overall plan to create a school environment that is physically and psychologically safe for all the members of its community.

The Critical Incident Management Plan

The Critical Incident Management Team is a planning team made up of key personnel in the school. The purpose of the team is as follows:

- To meet in the immediate aftermath of a Critical Incident and assist the School Management and Principal in planning a response.
- To Assist the Principal in managing the key tasks that may arise in the aftermath of a Critical Incident
- To meet annually to update and review the Critical Incident Management Plan.

The Critical Incident Management Team is at present made up of the following members of staff:

Karen Patton (Principal)
Lynette Woods (Deputy Principal)

Louise Mulligan (School Chaplain)
Sheila Murray (Guidance Counsellor and Year Head)
Monica O’Kane (R.E. Department)
Siobhán Finnegan (Year Head)
Martina Farren (Year Head)
Dermot Brady (Year Head)
Sonya Sexton (Year Head)
Barbara Martin (Year Head)
Mary Mc Ardle (Learning Support)

Planning for a Critical Incident

In order to prepare for a range of possible critical incidents the following steps are necessary:

- (1) Maintaining a list of relevant up-to-date contact numbers. These should include numbers for the following:
 - Pupils, parents and guardians
 - Staff
 - Emergency Support Services (These numbers to be displayed in the staffroom, Secretary’s Office, Principal’s Office and Deputy Principal’s Office)

- (2) Compiling emergency information for school trips

This should include:

- List of all pupils and staff involved and teacher in charge
- List of contact numbers including mobile numbers for accompanying teacher(s)
- Up to date medical information on pupils with allergies, epilepsy, etc.

- (3) Identifying roles to be fulfilled at the time of a critical incident

External Liaison with: (see Appendix 1)

- Outside support agencies (emergency service, DES, NEPS, H.S.E., etc)
- Parents
- Distressed visitors
- The media

Internal care and communication with:

- Staff
- Students in general
- Students more immediately involved or affected

Maintaining administration and services such as:

- Keeping telephone lines clear
- Rooms for debriefing, meeting, or counselling
- Log of events, letters to parents, telephone calls made and received
- Dealing with normal school business

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident

As a general principle it is school policy to maintain the normal routine of the school as far as possible for classes/students not immediately affected by a critical incident. Where this is not immediately possible, it is important to return the school to a normal routine at the earliest opportunity.

Short-Term Actions (Day One of Critical Incident

(1) Gather accurate information

This is important to prevent rumour causing further distress. This information might include:

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of injuries?
- How many involved and their names?
- Are there further risks?
- What agencies have been contacted?

(2) Contact appropriate agencies

These might include:

- Emergency Services
- Medical Services
- Health Board
- NEPS
- BOM
- DES

(3) Convene the Critical Incident Management Team

- Agree a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media
- Delegate responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team
- Organise the timetable for the day (adhere to the normal school routine as far as possible)
- Organise a staff meeting – if appropriate
- Organise the supervision of students during staff briefings
- Decide if outside professional help is needed

(4) Arrange Supervision of Students

(5) Hold a Staff Meeting

All staff should be asked to attend including ancillary staff. The possible topics for discussion might include some of the following

- An outline of the known facts
- An opportunity for staff to express their views and feelings
- Agree on the facts to be shared with the students
- An outline of the routine for the day
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students

- Distributions of relevant handout material

(6) Organise the timetable for the day

As far as possible maintain normal routines

(7) Inform Parents/Guardians

The Parents/Guardians of pupils directly involved should be informed as soon as possible and this first contact should be handled with great sensitivity. Siblings who are students in the school should also be informed with parental permission. The steps are as follows:

- Appoint teachers to share information with parents and decide how this should be done
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents
- Provide support to parents upon arrival in school
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries
- Parents of other children in the school should be informed of the incident in writing and told that their daughter may be upset

(8) Inform Students

Careful preparation is necessary when meeting students to inform them of a critical incident. Consideration should be given to the age of the students and the optimum group size. This is best done in class groups or class sub-groups. As a general principle, support is best given by an adult with whom the students are familiar. The nature of the incident will clearly influence how students are informed.

- Give the facts and avoid speculation
- Allow students to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings
- Help students to realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident.

(9) Make Contact With Bereaved Families

(10) Deal with the media

Prepare a written statement to include:

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done

Positive information or comments about the deceased (if appropriate)

(11) Organise the Reunion of Students and Parents (if necessary)

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Medium Term Actions (Days 2 and 3)

- (1) Review the events of the first 24 hours
 - Reconvene Critical Incident Management team
 - Decide arrangements for support meetings for students/parents/staff
 - Receive feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
 - Keep staff up to date on any developments: hold staff meeting if necessary
 - Be sensitive to how staff are coping both personally and professionally
 - Establish contact with absent staff/students
 - Update media if necessary

- (2) Arrange support for individual students/groups of students/parents if necessary
 - Clarify what has happened
 - Provide information about available support services and provide relevant handouts
 - Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
 - Arrange in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission

- (3) Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
 - These might include absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives

- (4) Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

- (5) School Closure
 - If appropriate request a decision on this from school management/DES

Longer Term Actions

- (1) Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. These signs might include:
 - Uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Deterioration in academic performance
 - Physical symptoms such as weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 - Inappropriate emotional reactions
 - Increased absenteeism

- (2) If necessary put programmes in place to address ongoing issues such as the *Rainbows Programme*

- (3) Evaluate response to incident and amend Plan accordingly

(4) Inform new staff

- Ensure that they are aware of which pupils were affected by any critical incident
- Ensure that they become aware of policy and procedures in this area
- When individual students affected by a critical incident are transferring to another school brief the Principal of the school as appropriate

(5) Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries.

- Be aware that anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and that they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge anniversaries
- Be sensitive to significant days such as birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day.

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Deputy Principal.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of St. Louis Secondary School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is confirmed information that death was due to

suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Appendix 1

Key Roles

Team leader: K Patton, L Woods

Agency contact: L Mulligan, M Mc Ardle, S Murray

Staff Liaison: D Brady, S Finnegan, B Martin

Student Contact: Relevant Year Head, L Mulligan, S Murray

Clergy: L Mulligan

Media Contact: K Patton, L Woods

Parent Contact: M Farren, S Sexton

Administrator: C Kellett, M O Rourke

Appendix 2

Rooms for meeting and debriefing

Cistín Essex: Members of public

Guidance office: 1 to 1 student support (staff and students)

Chaplains Office: 1 to 1 student support (staff and students)

Guidance room, Religion Room & Library: Group support

Parent's room and Board room: Parents (staff and students)

Hall & Chapel: Meeting students with news

Appendix 3

Roles

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role.

TEAM LEADER/ MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Makes decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)
- Liaises with the Board of Management
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Will draw up a press statement; give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC, relevant teacher unions etc.

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)

STAFF LIAISON

- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder).
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.
- Indicate where supports are located in school during the day.

STUDENT LIAISON

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Maintains student contact records
- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)

COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources (DES; NEPS; SEC;)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- Coordinates the involvement of agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges

PARENT/GUARDIAN

- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

ADMINISTRATOR

- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation

Critical Incident Management Plan

- Photocopies materials as needed Maintains records.
- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.