

ST EUPHEMIA COLLEGE

K-12



CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURES

2014

Critical Incident Policy - Procedures

Introduction

These Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Critical Incident Policy.

There are a number of vital phases in dealing with critical incidents:

- *prevention*
- *preparation & planning*
- *initial response*
- *recovery and debriefing.*

Some critical incidents that may influence a school community include:

- a death in the school community following illness, accident, suicide or criminal behaviour
- serious injury to a member of the school community
- violent assault
- violent events in the community
- witnessing a serious accident or act of violence
- significant loss of property due to acts of nature, accident or vandalism
- disappearance of school community members
- unusual and unfavourable media attention.

Prevention

This involves the identification of risks that are specific to the school community environment including security, school regulations and occupational health & safety. Additionally there are preventative strategies to minimise risk which have been and are continuing to be implemented. Some of these include:

- staff first aid training
- staff training in suicide intervention
- consistently implementing and evaluating the Student Welfare Policy to help prevent extremes in resentment, alienation and rage
- staff are kept up to date in regards to changes to the Child Protection Policy
- staff are punctual and active during supervision duties
- drug harm minimisation education and practices are implemented
- videos, books and curriculum materials that foster inappropriate and potentially harmful ideas on suicide, violence and risk taking behaviour should be avoided
- promotion of resilience of students through the formal Studies of Religion and PDHPE programs as well as other initiatives such as year meetings and camps
- families are also supported through access to the School Counsellor.

Prevention and Planning

This relates to the processes undertaken when an emergency occurs including planning, education, training, role definition and action plan. In order to have an environment that is ready to respond quickly and effectively to a critical incident, several key structural elements will be maintained within the College.

The College's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will be the focus for coordination, planning and direction in the event of a critical incident. They will ensure that appropriate procedures are implemented at the time and in the period following the incident.

The CIMT team comprises of:

- the Principal
- the Director
- the High School Administration Coordinator
- the School Counsellor
- School Executives
- High School Year Coordinators.

Initial Response Procedures

This involves planned procedures to ensure the ongoing safety of the school community including liaison with emergency services, mobilising action plans, assigning roles and responsibilities and informing those groups who need to be notified. These procedures comprise the initial responses in a critical incident.

The alert may come from a staff member, a student, the police, parents, caregivers, the media or other sources.

Whoever receives the alert should be prepared to ask for as much information as possible:

- what has happened?
- have the emergency services been informed/are they attending?
- exact location (and any access problems if not on site)
- casualties
- actions taken so far
- name/contact at the scene (if not on site)
- what assistance is needed?

The most senior staff member available will:

- assess whether students and staff are safe and take all necessary steps to ensure their safety
- consider any apparent risks to his/her own safety
- determine if in his/her opinion a critical incident will be apparent or likely. If so, he/she must alert a member of the CIMT
- take steps to minimise further damage or injury provided there is no threat to personal safety in doing so. This may involve organising willing bystanders to provide support.

The CIMT will then assume responsibility for re-assessing the incident. Its role is to deal with matters of immediate urgency e.g. establishing clear lines of communication with emergency services, media liaison, briefing switchboard, briefing staff, informing the school community.

The Critical Incident Management Team will:

- decide on the range of supportive actions that can be offered to those affected by the incident
- develop a profile of the incident. What has happened? Who has been most affected by the incident? How might it have affected them?
- liaise with relevant outside support agencies after evaluating what individuals/organisations need to be involved and their potential roles in the process (*Refer to Appendix A*)
- establish a pathway for phone use and for dealing with enquiries. Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- contact families of those students or staff involved in the critical incident
- convene a staff meeting
- discuss the facts as known and the staff will be given the opportunity to express their views and their feelings.
- provide an outline of the proposed crisis management plan. Suggest sources of personal support for other staff, give guidelines to staff about what information to give students

- ensure any absent staff members are kept informed on their return to School
- inform all students. Outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity. A school assembly would seem the most appropriate way of doing this
- inform parents and caregivers. A letter should be sent to parents and caregivers from the Principal or Delegated Authority, as soon as possible explaining the facts of the incident, the College's response, possible reactions of students and sources of help for families
- set up a counselling/debriefing room(s) in the School. Provide where possible, tea/coffee, comfortable chairs and an appropriate support person. Allow distressed student and staff access to these room(s) for several days after the incident. Counselling of staff and students will be a priority for incidents where trauma may be experienced
- remind staff that the Principal is the designated Media Liaison Person and all media enquiries about students and the College relating to the critical incident MUST be referred to the Principal
- minimise media contact with staff and students and provide the media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students
- prepare a Critical Incident Report (*refer to Appendix B*) outlining details re: the type of incident, the exact location and details of any person or persons who might be injured, in distress, or at risk
- organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible). Provide structure to help students and staff return to normal functioning
- delegate a staff member to deal with telephone/counter inquiries. Direct all public calls to the Principal's Secretary, who will have a prepared statement. All office staff are to be given a prepared statement for any public enquiries and personal visits
- provide access to the Priests. The Priests may also assist with prayer services and spiritual support and be available as personal and spiritual support to the staff and students.

The School has the responsibility to contact emergency services. This responsibility is not replaced by these guidelines.

Recovery and Debriefing

This is the recovery process to facilitate the return to routine. With assistance from others as required, the CIMT will provide ongoing support to persons affected and seek to restore college routines. This process may include the following:

- providing accurate and up to date information to the College community
- providing ongoing support for students and staff members as required and continuing to monitor their needs
- attending the funeral or memorial service if a death has occurred, in accordance with the family's wishes. Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by the bereaved family
- ensuring that all staff are kept up to date on any developments – this may require having a review staff meeting
- attending to any administrative, legal or associated issues arising from the incident
- arrangements for visits to/from families concerned
- liaison with police, doctors, hospital staff
- attending to any insurance matters, ambulance cover
- formal stress management interventions required for students and/or staff (release from classes, leave, rescheduled assessments or exams)
- arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required
- follow up condolence letters to families
- provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- monitor the students affected

- review and evaluate Plan
- facilitation of students'/'staff' responses, eg. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc
- review the events of the first 24 hours
- plan for the re-integration of students and staff eg. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc
- hold a support or information meeting for parents and caregivers or for students in order to clarify what has happened.

Longer term actions

This involves the review of existing plans and may include memorials and counselling.

- convene a meeting of the parents and caregivers of students involved in the incident after 3 or 4 weeks (where a number of students were directly involved). Involve counselling professionals to encourage parents and caregivers to express and share their feelings and concerns about their children's welfare and to help them understand their reactions
- monitor staff and students for signs of undue stress or continuing distress. Encourage stressed staff and students to seek professional help
- be alert for and sensitive to the disturbing influence of anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- special support for those affected may be needed again at these times. Make extra staff and services available if necessary
- encourage teachers to allow students (especially those more directly involved) opportunities to talk about the incident and about their reactions. This is an important part of the recovery process but should not be forced on students
- encourage two-way communication between parents, caregivers and the College
- the CIMT will organise a debriefing session(s) to evaluate response procedures:
 - what went well?
 - where were the gaps?
 - what was most/least helpful?
 - have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 - are there any unfinished matters?
- make recommendations for handling future critical incidents
- identify professional development and training which need to be addressed as a result of the incident
- when individual students or a class of students affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school
- details of the Incident and the action taken are to be retained by the Principal and placed in relevant student files, where applicable.

Contacting staff if critical incident occurs over weekend

In the event of the death of a colleague, the Principal or Director will contact staff by phone. In the event of the death of a student, the Critical Incident Management Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed on Monday.

Appendix A

EMERGENCY NUMBERS	
Fire Police Ambulance	000
Bankstown Police	02 9783 2199
Department of Community Services	02 9716 2222
Bankstown Hospital	02 9722 8000
SES	02 4251 6111
South Western Community Health	02 9515 9420



CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT

GROUPS INVOLVED

GROUPS

- K-12
- Primary
- High School
- Teaching Staff
- Administration Staff
- Canteen Staff
- Volunteer Staff
- Priests/Congregation

Date of incident: Time:

Location of incident:

Describe the injuries sustained:

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State exactly what happened:

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Was first aid given by school? **Y/N** Was further medical attention given? **Y/N**

What emergency services were contacted?.....

Who made the contact?

Name of doctor/hospital:

Name of person completing this report:

Signature: Date: