



Critical Incident Management Policy

Rationale:

A critical incident may be described as an event or circumstance that causes normally stable and healthy people to experience strong emotional psychological distress which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the time of the event or later.

When a school community is confronted with a critical incident it is important for all involved that the school takes positive steps to address the presenting issues in a way that is informing, empowering and healing.

Aims of Policy:

In the event of a critical incident the recovery process will rely heavily on:

- A timely and appropriate response from the school
- Clear and accurate sharing of information
- Assistance and support in immediate terms and as required on an ongoing basis
- If possible, prompt resumption of normal school program

Implementation:

- Obtain accurate information, dealing only with substantiated facts.
- Inform staff, especially those most directly involved, and the Parish Priest. Inform the CEM Critical Incidents Management Officer, emergency services, police etc. as the need requires. Follow the Phone Tree Critical Incident advice *refer Appendix 1*.
- Inform family and close friends individually.
- Appoint a skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, external CEM personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Announce the names of Support Team members, and clearly articulate their role.
- Provide information to the students and school community as to what has happened, and what steps are being taken to address the issue. Keep everyone informed about developments as they happen. Give clear and accurate information so as to discourage rumours.



- The principal and/or Parish Priest will deal with all media requirements in tandem with advice from CEM. A written press release may be used, if directed by CEM.
- Where necessary, an open line of contact will be maintained with the family or families directly involved.
- Out of school hours contact should be provided if necessary. Depending on the need, out of hours telephone contact may be maintained at the school.
- Try to identify the needs of people who are affected by the event, so as to ascertain the level of support required.
- Provide access to counselling for all who require same. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help.
- 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.
- 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.
- Monitor, be sensitive to, and respond to staff and student needs over a period of time.
- Determine the need for periodic debriefing, counselling or other follow up action.
- Review this process after any significant incident.
- Ensure relevant support and care for those in major supporting or leadership roles related to the incident.

Emergency management procedures are available on the CEVN site including critical incident report forms and notification requirements.

Evaluation:

The Critical Incident Management Policy will be evaluated and reviewed as part of the 4 year School Review cycle.

Date of last review: June 2015 Date for Review: 2019