

Critical Incident Plan Policy

1. Responding to a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved

The School 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. It is essential that a Critical Incident Recovery Team be formed to manage the short and long term effects.

2. Action to be taken as a result of a tragic/traumatic event which involves the school

2.1 Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases.

2.2 However, the following 4 principles must be followed:

2.2.1 Provide clear, accurate information

2.2.2 Describe the actions to be followed

2.2.3 Provide help for all affected

2.2.4 Maintain a normal school program as closely as possible

2.3 Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.

2.4 As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved. Inform very close friends of the student and their family. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.

2.5 Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the

nature of the incident. Distribute names of the Critical Incident Recovery Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.

- 2.6 As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it. A follow up letter home may be important.
- 2.7 Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team member to respond to media enquiries. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. Advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre and the DET Media Unit.
- 2.8 Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
- 2.9 Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating a school telephone number or mobile number for an After Hours contact. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
- 2.10 Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
- 2.11 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 **(03) 9589 6266**. Provide counselling services 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.
- 2.12 Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- 2.13 The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
- 2.14 Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
- 2.15 Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of the 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.
- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

References and Appendices (including processes related to this policy)

- Emergency Management Act 1986
- Emergency Management Act 2013

Links which are connected with this policy are:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/support.aspx>
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/reporting.aspx>

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix A: Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)
- Appendix B: Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks
- Appendix C: Emergency Message Record Form – Template

Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy will be carried out after any critical incident occurs

Date Implemented	2019
Author	Education Committee:
Approved By	School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	 #DDMAR
Date Reviewed	2019
Responsible for Review	School Council
Review Date	2022

Appendix A

Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)

Responsibilities and Procedures

Plan Statement

This Plan is an integral part of the Emergency Management processes of the school.

Implementation

The Recovery Team will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the Plan

It will need to consider:

- Contacting parents /guardians
- establishing the facts as soon as possible
- developing an action plan of short, medium and long term tasks
- contact with the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- liaising with external bodies including the media
- communicating with the whole staff as soon as possible
- meeting with staff both as a whole and with individuals or groups for debriefing
- communicating with the student body
- meeting with students in groups or individually for debriefing
- short term and long term counselling requirements for groups or individuals

The relevance of each of the above will depend on factors such as the nature and magnitude of the incident, the intensity of the impact on the School community and the number of people affected.

Debriefing

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing has three components:

- initial discussion about feelings and an assessment of the intensity of the stress responses
 - detailed discussion of signs and symptoms of stress responses
 - closing stage - provides overview and information with referral to an outside agency if required
1. The Recovery Team will assist the Principal to facilitate the recovery of staff and students and those of the School community affected by the critical incident.
 2. The debriefing meeting of the Recovery Team should include a mental health professional and one peer who was not involved in the incident.
 3. The Recovery Team will decide the structure and composition of debriefing meetings; such meetings should be held within **eight hours** of the critical incident. These meetings will review the impressions and reactions of the persons involved during or following the incident.

4. Counselling support and referrals for students and their families will be provided initially by the Principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer.

Review

The Recovery Team will meet to review the implementation of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan within **seventy two (72) hours** of the critical incident.

As part of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan, the Principal will decide upon a Recovery Team as required

Following a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Recovery Team as soon as possible.

The composition of the Recovery Team will be:

- the Principal
- a member of the teaching staff
- a member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- other support staff as appropriate (eg: Chaplain)
- as necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

The Principal will convene the Recovery Team once each semester to review planning and strategies for the Critical Incident Recovery Plan.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the Plans will follow any critical incident at the school.

Appendix B

Critical or Traumatic Plan – Frist 24 Hour Short Term Tasks

Responsibilities and Procedures

Emergency Record

Record Information

- nature of the incident
- location of the incident, number and names of persons involved
- name of the person reporting the incident
- time incident reported
- contact telephone number if away from school

Verify all Details

- confirm that the information given about the event is accurate

Record the Incident

- notify principal workplace coordinator
- ensure emergency services have been called notify the Department's 24 hour Emergency Communications Centre on **(03) 9589 6266**

Ensure students and staff are safe from harm or injury

- The Principal and staff will cordon off any 'crisis' area and keep students away
- Manage the grounds while staff are briefed and ensure media do not intrude
- Check corridors, toilets etc for stray students - try to prevent students leaving on their own particularly if distressed
- Send all very stressed students to the designated Recovery area
- Ensure the school continues as normally as possible

Establish Critical Incident Recovery Team

The composition of the Recovery Team will be:

- The Principal
- A member of the teaching staff
- A member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- Other support staff as appropriate (eg: Chaplain)
- As necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

Allocate responsibilities

- emergency contact list
- evacuation and assembly of staff and students
- cordon off area of 'crisis'
- establish a Support Team and Communications Centre to:
 - manage information and phone calls
 - coordinate media requests for information
 - provide information to parents arriving at school
 - coordinate routine school activities – maintain where practical
 - notify students, staff and ancillary about the emergency
 - notify parents first, and then siblings in the school
 - establish a recovery room and supervisor for affected students

- establish a waiting room for parents
- inform students
- inform School Council
- inform School Community by newsletter
- monitor School Community's reactions
- liaise with outside agencies and emergency services
- brief key personnel and review responses

Recovery Room(s)

Set Up Recovery Room

- set up designated area, and if necessary the Staffroom
- empty adjoining rooms if possible and relocate to other rooms
- screen windows
- have available pens, textas, paper, scissors, envelopes, tissues

Appoint Recovery Room Supervisors

- First Aid staff

Recovery Room Supervisors' Responsibilities

- keep calm
- monitor students for shock reactions, provide first aid if necessary
- encourage students to gather in small friendship groups rather than bigger ones
- keep a list of students attending the recovery room
- give the students a task to undertake such as making a card or writing a letter
- contact parents of students who remain in the recovery room and alert them to possible concerns

Informing Staff

- provide teachers and ancillary staff with a brief outline of the incident
- restate to ensure that staff fully understand the situation
- outline recovery management arrangements
- discuss procedures to be followed by staff during the day
- discuss the general procedures that Critical Incident Team will be following
- discuss guidelines for informing students and ways of answering questions from them
- give staff time to discuss this among themselves
- provide a brief factual outline to others in the community on a need to know basis
- inform staff as soon as possible about a serious emergency involving death or injury which occurs after hours, on the weekend or during the school holidays
- inform staff as soon as possible about arrangements for holding a brief meeting before informing students at the start of the next school day
- review with staff afterwards any issues and needs
- provide staff with contact numbers for counselling or support services for themselves

Informing Students

Principal

- contact the bereaved family or police to ascertain what information may be released within the school
- prepare a written factual statement, without graphic detail, for use as a reference by teachers when discussing the incident with students

- determine whether to tell students about the incident at a whole school assembly, by year levels or individual classes, depending on the nature of the incident
- discuss with teachers who feel uncomfortable raising the event with students and arrange for support from another teacher or a member of the recovery team
- identify staff who may be too distraught to take classes and arrange replacements
- inform students soon after briefing staff
- ask teachers to mark a roll to identify who has been informed and who has not

Teachers

- provide a factual account of the incident at the beginning of the first class in a way that ensures all students hear the same information
- limit speculation and rumours
- inform students about arrangements of counselling and recovery rooms
- inform students about arrangements for services, and appropriate ways to express condolences
- outline the arrangements for the day

Notifying close friends

- notify close friends of the student if applicable, especially prior to making an announcement to other students
- take these students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
- consider contacting their parents
- prior to the start of the day
- ensure individual attention is given to intimate friends who are likely to have special needs beyond those of other students

Communication Centre

Organise the following to be on hand:

- telephone - dedicated line in case of jamming by incoming calls
- telephone message if necessary
- message records
- phone lists
- rolls
- excursion list
- timetable
- maps
- computer and printer
- photocopier
- Emergency Management Plan instructions

Media Coverage

- nominate a media coordinator, prepare the School Council President and Principal to provide on camera interviews
- contact DET Media Unit on 9637 2871 or 9264 5821
- prepare a three paragraph report:
 - briefly outline the facts
 - outline what the school has done to assist those affected
 - outline support and recovery arrangements
 - include a name and contact number for the school media coordinator
- liaise with the family about any statements made to media
- exclude discussion of policy matters, limit comment to the emergency and the school response
- set rules for persistent media

- keep a record of media enquiries
- offer scheduled interviews in return for media commitment not to seek uninvited access to staff, students, parents
- negotiate accepted areas for filming e.g. school boundary and not within
- check that information provided does not conflict with court requirements or police proceedings
- anticipate renewed interest arising from anniversaries, court proceedings

Long Term Actions

- monitor and support members of the school community, particularly on significant dates such as anniversaries
- consider longer term intervention activities such as counselling or specialist support
- consider establishing an area within the school as a place of remembrance
- reconvene key people at regular intervals to review the school response and effectiveness of planning arrangements
- review the school emergency management plan in light of experience gained
- consider a ritual of marking significant dates
- prepare for legal proceedings if necessary
- remove students name from the roll if deceased
- consider article in school magazine

Reference

A Guide To Managing Incidents In Your School

https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/SEMD_A5%20booklet_25%20Oct.pdf

Managing Trauma

https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame2.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/Managing%20Trauma.pdf&action=default&AuthResend1908BC2350124b5095AB75012FA405BA

Appendix C

Emergency Record Form - Template

Date: / ___/

Time of notification: __ ___ : ___ am/pm

Name of person taking the call _____

Position: _____

Name of person reporting the incident _____

Contact telephone number _____

Details

Describe:

Where everyone is now

What action is being taken to help?

Who: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

How: _____

Nature and extent of injury: _____

Immediate Actions Required

Principal notified 0407 858 337 Yes Time: _____ : _____ am/pm

Other school staff? Yes Time: _____ : _____ am/pm

Emergency Services notified 132 500 Yes Time: _____ : _____ am/pm

Emergency & Security Management notified (03) 9589 6266 Yes Time: _____ : _____ am/pm

Emergency Contact Telephone Numbers

Police 000

Ambulance 000

Fire Brigade 000

State Emergency Services (SES) 132 500

Local Hospitals:

William Angliss 9764 6111

Knox Private Hospital 9210 7000

Assistant Regional Director 9265 2400

Emergency Security Management (03) 9589 6266

Emergency Message Record Form

Time: ____ ____ : am/pm

Message from _____

Action required? Yes No

If 'YES', please detail:

Completed

Message taken by _____

Emergency Message Record

Time: ____ ____ : am/pm

Message from _____

Action required? Yes No

If 'YES', please detail:

Completed

Message taken by _____