

Critical Incident Management Policy

St. Mary's Secondary School

Ballina

Co. Mayo

Critical Incident Management Policy

The critical Incident Management Team:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Critical Incident Co-ordinator
- Chaplain
- Guidance Counsellors
- Home/School Liaison Officer
- Appropriate Year Head

What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is defined as a significant incident which is likely to be difficult or traumatic for the school community, examples of which could be:

- Suicide
- Child killed in front of others crossing a road
- Bus crash on school trip: multiple injuries/deaths
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Hostage situation/physical attack
- Sudden death of a Staff Member

Include list or not?

Limit list?

Critical Incident Management Team

1. Leadership/Family Liaison/Communication

- (a) Principal
- (b) Deputy Principal
- (c) Home/School Liaison Officer
- (d) Critical Incident Co-Ordinator

2. Counselling/Chaplaincy:

- (a) Guidance Counsellor
- (b) Chaplain
- (c) Appropriate Year Head

Intervention Responsibilities:

Step by Step: Day 1

*** P = Principal, DP = Deputy Principal,
HSL = Home School Liaison, YH = Year Head
CIC = Critical Incident Co-Ordinator
GC = Guidance Counsellor**

Leadership/Family Liaison/Communication

Principal, Deputy Principal, Home School Liaison, Critical Incident Co-Ordinator

- | | |
|----------|--|
| P. | Confirm death has occurred. Get accurate information |
| P. | Notify Board of Management |
| P. | Express sympathy to family, assure of school's support |
| P. | Ensure family know who the contact people in the school are e.g. Home/School Liaison, Chaplain, GC |
| HSL | Consult with family on school involvement with Funeral. (Family wishes to be respected) |
| CIC | Organise the Crisis Response Team to meet |
| P & CIC | Prepare a statement for staff/students |
| P/DP/CIC | Call a General Assembly of all staff and school Community. At Assembly the news may be confirmed, the victim named and information disseminated about the provision of appropriate Sacred Space within the school together with arrangements for counselling where needed. A Prayer Service would be conducted. Following General Assembly students will accompany Tutors to classrooms for further support and opportunity to defuse |
| DP | Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents |
| P/DP/CIC | Have prepared written and/or oral response to enquiries |
| P/YH | Discourage any student or staff from dealing with the media |

- * School may close for the Funeral following consultation with the family

Intervention Responsibilities: Chaplain/Counselling

Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head.

Chaplain:

- Set up Crisis Team Room in the school – such as the Chaplaincy Office
- Where appropriate/wanted liaise with the local clergy
- With Guidance Counsellors, have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. information on grief responses identifying those in need

Guidance Counsellor:

- Set up Crisis Team Room in the school
- Outline services available to affected students during first hours (access to counselling and chaplaincy). Additional counselling resources may be requested from St Muredach's College and the Newman Institute
- Meet and support any distressed parents and staff

Year Head:

- Assist Class Tutor affected in dealing with students
- Contact parents where some students request to go home
- With Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor encourage those that feel able to return to class

Sample Media Statement (letter to parents)

It is with profound sadness that the Management, Staff and Students of St Mary's Secondary School have learned of the tragic death ofOur sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of

On hearing the tragic news the School Critical Incident Management Plan was put into immediate operation. The CIM Team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately.

Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given help to cope at this time.

The school is offering counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in co-operation with the school chaplain. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family.

At this sad time our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

**Critical Incident Response Team:
Step by Step: Step 2**

- The Principal having confirmed the death makes contact with the family
- Crisis Team meet to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above
- Key tasks are distributed
- Have all guidelines for teachers ready and official appointment cards for students requiring counselling
- Have all written and oral statements ready for communication within the school
- Meet staff (Note any absence or late arrivals to ensure that all staff hear the news)
- Crisis Response Team outline to staff the plan for the day and the support available at General Assembly
- Location of Crisis Response Room
- Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using Crisis Response Room
- Deputy Principal to make sure that all appropriate personnel are freed from class
- Plan another update staff meeting later
- Clarify funeral arrangements for staff
- Crisis Team meet to plan procedure for school involvement in removal and funeral

General Guidelines for School Community

- Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family, can it be relayed as such
- Not every class is going to be traumatised
- Let them know the facts as you know them
- Encourage questions
- Let the class know of common reactions to tragic news
- The most common reaction is shock
- Expect tears and outbursts
- Don't allow a student to leave alone
- Students must be supervised within the building while in a distressed state
- Let them know that you will support them
- Let them know who else is available to support them
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news
- Allow them time to mingle and talk
- Explain how they can support one another
- Be attentive to identifying those that are not coping well with the news
- You may have to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock
- Let them know where the Crisis Response Team will be
- Refreshments, also boxes of tissues
- A short prayer for the deceased
- If the student appears ready, a Year Group Assembly may be held later in the day
- Some students may be able to continue to go to class
- Some will need to stay with the Crisis Response Team for the morning
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends
- Some may need to go home (only if parents come and collect them)
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class
- Subject teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups as the need arises (defusing)

Common Reactions on Hearing Traumatic News

| Emotional and Physical | Mental and Behavioural |
|--|--|
| Shock Fear Guilt Grief Tears Panic Denial Anxiety Depression Anger Emotional Outbursts Overwhelmed Nausea Fainting Pain Dizziness Weakness Palpitations Breathing Difficulties | Confusion Blame Poor Concentration Disorientation Withdrawn Restlessness Let Down Uncertainty |

How to help someone who has suffered loss

- Show genuine care and concern
- Be available
- Listen
- Allow them time to express their feelings
- Encourage talking as much as they want to
- Talk about the person they have lost
- Reassure them that they did everything

Step by Step

Day 2: Students who are not coping to be referred to the Counsellor or Chaplain on an individual basis. It is important for the school to run as normally as possible.

Day 3: CIM Team meet to plan CISD (stress debriefing) and aftercare following the funeral. (Involve Year Head)

- **Update school records**

Contacting Staff if Tragedy Occurs over a Weekend/Holidays

1. If it is the death of a colleague, a system of informing staff needs to be in place
2. If it is the death of a student, the Crisis Team need to be informed immediately. Other staff can be informed later
3. Whoever first hears the news to contact the Principal or Deputy Principal
4. Secretaries to be provided with the numbers of relevant services or agencies if enquiries regarding incident are made during school closures

List of Mobile Numbers and e-mail addresses are available in the office

Critical Incident Co-ordinator to include a list of phone numbers and e-mail addresses of all staff.

Critical Incident Management Aftercare

- Debriefing
- On-going counselling and support
- Normality and Routine
- Observation of those deeply affected

Why Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

(NEPS) (Choose Life)

- The First Aid of Mental Health
- Emotional, Psychological and Spiritual First Aid
- Acknowledge a traumatic incident has happened
- Those involved will be affected in different ways
- Safe space to tell their story
- Red Flagging
- Aim to prevent onset of PTSD
- Enable majority to get back to the normality of life ASAP

Difficult CISD Situations

1. Multiple Event
2. Significantly delayed intervention
3. Suicide of a Colleague
4. Line of duty death
5. Disaster/Multi Casualty

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Debriefing can prevent onset of PTSD
- Flashbacks/Dreams
- Intense Distress
- Emotional Numbing
- Lack of sleep/irritability/anger
- Poor Concentration
- On Edge

Memorials and Remembrances

- Book of Condolence
- Scrap Book/Pictorial Record
- Photo/Candle
- Memorial Award
- Memorial Service
- Anniversary