



# Critical Incident Management Plan

Implemented: April 2013

Review: January 2014



At any time of the day a critical incident may occur at the school creating a situation where staff, students and parents feel unsafe, vulnerable and under stress. The following are examples of incidents that may necessitate the implementation of a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP). The plan moves through five phases.

## **PHASE 1: Identification**

Examples of critical incidents include:

- The sudden death of a student or a teacher
- The suicide of a student or a teacher
- The murder of a student or a teacher
- The sexual assault of a student
- Students who witness murder, serious accident, war
- Students being injured, lost or killed whilst on a school excursion
- Death of a Parish Priest
- Significant vandalism of school property - fire, break-in
- The death of an ex-student, teacher, friend of the school
- The terminal illness of a member of the school community
- High winds, environmental disasters, flood

Sudden death or a crisis such as an accident (bus), drowning, murder or suicide, or a hostage situation, has a major effect upon family, friends and school staff who know the person/people involved. Any school could be faced with a natural disaster. The school, by its very nature, is a major part of the student's social, cultural and emotional system.

The early identification of a potential/actual critical incident will help in creating a situation where the grieving process can begin, where students, staff and parents can talk about the situation in terms of readjustment, acceptance and faith.

If a critical incident is not addressed adequately, a significant amount of unresolved grief can develop within the individual regardless of his/her age. Unresolved grief can lead to severe emotional difficulties, physical illness and contribute to a crisis later in life.

## **PHASE 2: Critical Incident Management**

### ***Within 24 hours after the incident***

The following checklist needs to be followed once a Critical Incident has been identified.

This phase deals with the initial impact through to the area of post incident.

It is essential that these steps are discussed and amended so as to provide the maximum amount of management.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of relevant contact persons.

1. Obtain factual information e.g. police/family/those involved
2. Leadership Team Meeting
  - Contact Director of System Performance and School Counsellor
  - Appoint Crisis Coordinator
3. Activate Intervention Team
  - Team will consist of the Leadership Team and Parish Priest

4. Meeting with All School Staff
  - Office staff will be given a written statement
  - If the frequency of incoming calls to the school prevents outgoing calls from being made, a mobile phone will be used
5. Students will be informed in class groups, at the same time. All bells will cease. Class teachers will receive a written statement. Information will include:
  - The facts
  - School's response - Mass date/time, changes to regular timetable/classes, meeting venue
  - Counselling facilities to be made available
  - Any other arrangements
  - Attendance records will be checked for absentees to ensure all children are notified
  - Absent students will be informed by Principal or Assistant Principal on arrival at school
6. Relief teachers will be given a copy of Critical Incident Management Policy in their daily information folder
7. Letter to parents to inform them of:
  - Facts
  - The School's response
  - Facilities available to parents

School will be open with counsellor, coffee and tea until 8:00 pm (or later if necessary, as determined by the Critical Incident Management Team). Parents are encouraged to come up and talk with counsellors
8. Contact Communications Unit, Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta to liaise with media enquiries, etc
9. Identify those "at risk" (Monitor children's behaviour) - students, staff and parents  
Refer to Counselling Team, Assistant Principal, Principal
10. Contact will be made with the families of those at risk
  - a) Information given about counselling facilities
  - b) School support and prayer
11. Allow discussion of the incident within classrooms
12. Provision will be made for small group counselling and individual counselling
13. Staff to meet and be debriefed daily
14. Representation at funeral (if applicable) will be discussed

### **PHASE 3: Counselling Team (Crisis Support Team)**

#### ***Within 48 to 72 hours after the incident***

Throughout the phases, students, staff and parents will engage with varying forms of multiple cumulative grief and consequently will require ongoing support both at school and at home.

Phase 3 deals with the establishment of a counselling/intervention team. It is essential this team be appropriate to the critical incident. The team would likely include the following personnel:

- Parish clergy
- Team Leader Student Services
- School Counsellor
- Other school counsellors and/or Student Services staff as required

The counselling team may be required for an intensive week, followed up with subsequent interventions over time.

Long-term intervention requires that the individual be referred to an appropriate outside agency.

Suitable areas in the school will be designated for the use of the counselling team. Such spaces may include:

- Conference room
- Multipurpose room
- Classroom breakout rooms
- Principal's office
- Assistant Principal's office
- Coordinators' offices
- Reading Recovery and EMU room
- Music Room.

The counselling team will meet daily with the school leadership team to provide continuous evaluation and advice on the status of students and staff.

A final report from the team must be submitted to the school leadership team.

Procedures will be established for:

- Masses
- Prayer
- Memorial services

## **PHASE 4: Re-establishment of Staff and Students**

There will come a time when there is a need to re-establish a sense of normality within the school. This will be determined by the leadership team, in consultation with the counselling team. Although there has been a significant critical incident, students, staff and parents will feel "safe" once the regular patterns of management have been restored.

The following are examples of re-established boundaries:

- Rules that were relaxed are now enforced
- School bells return to normal
- Regular classes and activities take place
- Homework as usual
- Logical consequences are given for inappropriate actions
- Staff meetings, social functions etc re-established
- Newsletters carry positive aspects of the school
- Parents are encouraged to visit the school.

## **PHASE 5: Debriefing of Parents and Staff**

Once boundaries for students and staff have been re-established, it is essential that the parents and staff be formally debriefed, bringing closure to the critical Incident.

Debriefing will take the following format:

- Formal meeting with professional input given by an appropriately qualified presenter, eg Student Services staff
- Question time to address any unanswered questions that parents or staff may have

- Two sessions to be held - one for staff, one for parents
- Each session will provide opportunities for those in attendance to seek additional information, join a support group or express their concerns.

These debriefing procedures will be done within three weeks of the establishment of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

## ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

### School Documentation

- [Mission and Vision Statement](#)
- [Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Emergency Management Plan](#)

### System Documentation

- [Critical Incident Management Policy](#)
- Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines
- Safety Policy
- [Complaint Handling Policy](#)
- Communications Policy
- [Privacy - Procedures](#)
- [Privacy - Guidelines](#)
- [Return to Work - Guidelines](#)
- [Working With the Media: A Guide for Parramatta Diocesan Catholic Systemic Schools](#)

**Relevant Contact Persons**

*Please note: this list has been excluded from the public copy of this policy for privacy reasons. Staff requiring these contact details should refer to the original copy stored securely on the school server.*