

ROBINSTOWN N.S.

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

What is Critical Incident Policy

“A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”.

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (Foot/Mouth)
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, shooting at first communion in Ballymun)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. ‘Navan bus crash’)
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Midleton incident in Cork)

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role: Shane Foley (in his absence Gerard Bradley)

Communication Role: Shane Foley (in his absence Gerard Bradley)

Student Liaison/Counselling Role: Teaching staff, N.E.P.S., staff of the N.E.H.B.

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Noel Horneck

Family Liaison Role: Shane Foley/Gerard Bradley

Parents Association Rep. Una O Connor

BOM Rep: Margaret Hickey

N.E.P.S: Contact Navan Office, Sean Flanagan

The first named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first named.

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role: Team

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the C.I. response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies

- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

Communication Role: Team

Intervention

- With team prepare a public statement
- Organise designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaison with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/Counselling Role: Mr. Bradley/Mr. Foley

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Information
- Counselling

Postvention

- Ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan

Chaplaincy Role:Fr. Horneck/Margaret Hickey

Intervention

- Visit home, if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to family in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with religious education team
- Review and evaluate plan

Family Liaison Role: Mr. Foley/Gerard Bradley

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident.

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Action Plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families, Mr. Foley.
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school e.g. funeral service. Mr. Foley
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff, Mr. Bradley.
- Prayer service for school, Fr. Horneck.
- Rooms will be made available, Mr. Bradley.
- Individual Meetings: Principal's Office, Mr. Foley.
- Parent's: Secretary's Office, Mr. Bradley

Media Briefing

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader) Mr. Foley
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather *accurate* information

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.

1. What happened, where and when?
2. What is the extent of the injuries?
3. How many are involved and what are their names?
4. Is there a risk of further injury?
5. What agencies have been contacted already?

Contact appropriate agencies

1. Emergency services
2. Medical services
3. H.S.E. Psychology/Departments/Community Care Services
4. N.E.P.S.

5. B.O.M.

6. DES/Schools Inspector

Convene a meeting with key staff/critical management team (8.30 a.m.)

1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate (9.00a.m.)
2. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
3. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the student liaison person.
4. Arrange supervision of students

Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

1. The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate (student liaison person + class teacher)
3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
 - Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family.
 - Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
 - Ritual within the school
 - Review the events of the first 24 hours
1. Reconvene key staff/critical incident management team (8.30 a.m.)
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
 3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
 4. Have review critical incident management team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
 5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- ***Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary. Mr. Foley/Mr. Bradley***
1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students and parents, if necessary in order to clarify what happened.
 2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
 3. Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. Permission slips to be included in enrolment forms.

Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.

1. Student liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
2. Plan visits to injured.
3. Family liaison person plus class teacher, plus Principal to visit home/hospital.
4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service
5. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
6. School closure
7. Request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- ***Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.*** Mr. Foley/Mr. Bradley
- ***If, over a prolonged period of time a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board.***
 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness.
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism.
- ***Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.*** Team
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the gaps?
 3. What was most/least helpful?
 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 5. Is there any unfinished business?
- ***Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future,*** Team.
 1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- ***Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate***
 1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
 2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
 3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events). Mr. Bradley/Una O'Connor

1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day.
 - Plan a school memorial service.
 - Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
 - Update and amend school records.

This policy was reviewed in September 2019.