



Oakleigh Grammar

Policy Document Name	Critical Incident Response Protocol
Date Ratified by Board of Management	November 2022
Date for Review	November 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Critical Incident Response Protocol is to provide a framework for a coordinated response to critical incidents involving Oakleigh Grammar so as to:

- Maximise the safety of staff and students
- Support a timely response to incidents
- Provide effective processes
- Reduce the impact of the event

It is recognised that the safety and wellbeing of students is paramount.

Critical incident management arrangements must be flexible enough to adapt to any incident and provide sufficient support to allow for sound and rapid decision making.

2. School Background and Layout

Oakleigh Grammar is a co - educational school that operates as a normal day school providing educational services to students ranging from the Early Learning Years through to Year 12.

The School operates on a five - day week (Monday - Friday) program with some of its facilities being used on Saturday by the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and Districts for Greek language classes. The normal operating hours through the week are 8.30 am - 5.00 pm. The buildings are opened at approximately 8.00 am and locked anytime from 7.00 pm to 8.00 pm by cleaning staff. On Saturdays facilities are used between the hours of 8.30 am and 2.00 pm.

Site Layout:

The site on which the School is situated contains six distinct and separate two level buildings that are predominantly of brick and concrete construction. These are:

- (a) Administration and Library Building
- (b) Conference and Assembly Centre
- (c) Secondary Building
- (d) Primary Building
- (e) Sports Complex and Gymnasium
- (f) Early Learning Centre

All buildings regardless of age are automatically monitored by the MFB for fire and smoke through a Wormald Automatic Fire Detection System.

The School has primary, secondary and ELC areas, it has flexibility and economy in the use of its facilities.

The site is situated in a residential area in Oakleigh, approximately midway between Oakleigh and Hughesdale stations. The site occupies approximately 85 % of the block bounded by Willesden, Clapham, Euston and Bletchley Roads.

The site boundary is approximately 120m from the railway line and 700m from the Princess Highway. The nearest Industrial Zone is situated in Huntingdale approximately 3 km South East of the School.

The School's outer yard is used as the first assembly point, with the Church car park as the second (or alternate) assembly point. A number of large buildings, large enough to house the school population away from the site, are in close proximity to the School such as the Church of Sts Anargiri (50 metres), the Oakleigh Primary School (600 metres) and Sacred Heart Girls School (700 metres).

Emergency Management Review

Emergency Management and Planning are primarily the responsibility of the Principal and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Business Manager is the All Hours Contact (AHC) Person. The Deputy Principals round out the School's SLT. In an emergency situation the School also has access to its Bursar and to the Principal of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and Districts to further assist in the coordination of an emergency situation.

The plan is reviewed on an annual basis and modified to accommodate any changes that may have taken place to the site, to personnel, to accepted safety and emergency techniques / procedures and to the school's locality and surrounds. This review occurs towards the end of Term I and is undertaken by the Principal and the Senior Leadership Team.

3. Threat Identification and Prioritising as a Risk

The threats listed below in the table, have been identified as those most pertinent to the School’s situation. The level of risk associated with each is determined based upon prior experience and advice received from relevant regulatory bodies.

Factor 2: Impact on school operations or seriousness of conduct involved, with consideration of scale	Severe • normal school operations cease and/or • conduct that requires police notification and immediate intervention Scale • incident may involve numerous students or staff	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	
	Major • whole-of-school operations disrupted and/or • conduct that requires police notification and intervention Scale • incident may involve many students or staff	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Moderate • key school operations temporarily disrupted and/or • conduct that requires police notification Scale • incident may involve multiple students or staff	High	High	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	Minor • minor workarounds could return school to normal operations and/or • conduct that may require police notification Scale • incident may involve a few students or staff	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Insignificant • school operations continue with slight interruptions and/or • conduct that may require staff intervention and notification to the principal Scale • incident may involve a single student or staff	Low	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	None Incident has no impact on school operations nor involves conduct that may require police notification and intervention		Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Severity rating Decision-making matrix	None No impact on a student or staff health, safety or wellbeing	Insignificant Minor injury/ill health requiring no first aid or peer support for stress/trauma incident	Minor Injury/ill health requiring first aid or peer support for stress/trauma incident	Moderate Injury/ill health requiring medical attention or stress/trauma incident requiring professional support	Major Injury/ill health requiring hospital admission or stress/trauma incident requiring ongoing clinical support	Severe Fatality, permanent disability or stress/trauma incident requiring extensive clinical support		
Factor 1: Impact on student and/or staff health, safety and wellbeing								

Emergency Services are all located in close proximity to the School, with the Ambulance being located the furthest distance away at approximately 7 km on Waverley Road.

The approximate response time of the Fire Brigade is 3 - 4 minutes similar to the Police who are also able to arrive in the same time frame.

Ambulance arrival time is expected to be somewhat longer, given the longer distance and the reported delays experienced by the service. (With this in mind the School should be ready to respond and provide adequate first - aid to its community, ranging from the minor to the more serious).

4. Critical Incident Response Plan

Defining a Critical Incident:

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident affecting a School is any event that causes a significant number of people to experience reactions that are beyond their normal emotional range. Each of us has a personal emotional range within which we manage stressful situations. Such a critical incident is often referred to as a crisis.

A critical incident exists when an individual or individuals is / are faced with any problem that they perceive as serious. A critical incident can be defined as a hazardous, threatening event which cannot be dealt with through usual problem-solving resources.”

A critical incident may occur:

- At the School (on School property, during School hours) directly affecting the community at large;
- Off site and / or outside School hours;
- To members of the School Community,
- To friends / acquaintances of particular members of the community.

Some examples of scenarios that may be defined as a ‘critical incident’ include:

- Death of a student or staff member on school grounds
- Death of a student or staff member on school camp or excursion
- Drugs found in possession of a student or staff member on or off school grounds
- Serious injury or illness with threat to life or limb;
- Missing person / group (after 1 hour);
- Other situation, as judged by staff.
- Romantic / sexual relationship uncovered between a staff member and a student

These scenarios are the most common, and the most general examples that may occur in a school. Of course, the hope is that none of these scenarios ever occur and this document is never required; however, it is vital to be prepared in the unfortunate event one does occur.

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

Ultimate Goals of Critical Incident Management

- To best support students, staff and the School
- Provide clear, accurate information
- Describe the actions to be followed
- Provide help for all affected
- Maintain the School program as close as possible, and ensure it continues to do so.

5. Activating Critical Response

ACTION TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF A CRITICAL EVENT WHICH INVOLVES THE SCHOOL

5.1 Create a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Membership: Principal
Business Manager (All Hours Contact-[AHC])
Deputy Principals x 3
Bursar
Principal's Executive Assistant
School Counsellor
School Chaplain

5.2 Ensure the Chair of the School Board is notified

5.3 Agenda for Initial Critical Incident Management Team Meeting - checklist

1. Verify and update the factual details of the critical incident event
 - Depending on the nature of the event, the CIMT may need to be in close liaison with emergency services personnel
2. Conduct an initial assessment on the impact of the critical incident and identify possible affected students and staff
 - Prepare to make contact with immediate next of kin or family members before general communication is made
3. Evaluate if additional support from external or community agencies is needed
4. Determine the scale, scope and targets of crisis intervention, and arrange the implementation procedures and division of labour
 - Determine if camp/tour/excursion needs to return to school/Melbourne
5. Prepare for media enquiries – refer to Communication Guidelines (appendix)
 - Crisis Statements - The following statements should be prepared by the CIMT for speedy replies and effective communications.
 - a. Holding Statements - press release and community
 - Distributed within the first 30-45 minutes
 - Express concern / compassion
 - Confirm basic authorised details of the incident
 - Confirm actions taken / planned actions by the school
 - Portray school's key messages – policies, safety, emergency, investigation
 - Commit to providing updated details as they come to hand
 - b. Media posts / statements / interviews
 - c. Stakeholder engagement
 - d. Updates – posts and website pages
 - e. Media conference
 - f. Extended current affairs and/or news angles

6. Prepare communications to the school and wider community(phone, website, SMS, emails)
 - Answer enquiries from parents and the general public
 - Prepare scripts for information dissemination
 - For the school Principal or Deputy Principal(s) to make announcements to students
 - For staff members to respond to enquiries
7. Discuss support formats to students
 - Who are the students most in need?
 - Consider siblings
 - Decide targets and format of announcements
 - Arrange assembly or class meetings
 - Arrange for special class or year level meeting for students in need
 - Arrange meetings with identified students in need for individual and/or group counselling
 - Arrange venues for above
8. Discuss support formats to staff members and/or parents
9. School Operations
 - Determine if the school needs to close for a period of time
10. Prepare for and hold the initial staff meeting – see agenda in Appendix
11. Seek additional counsellor support
12. Establish designated critical incident management rooms e.g. boardroom, and support areas for families/students e.g. library, Arrowsmith room
13. Designate specific roles for the CIMT (see organisation chart below)
14. Evaluate the need for additional resources
 - May include the need for food and drink
15. If the incident occurred off site (e.g. camp), determine if a member of SLT should attend

5.4 Communication

It is vital to have a strong communication plan in place, complete with templates and sample scripts.

It is important that the school community is made aware of the situation and all the facts first and foremost.

a) Immediate families

It is important that parents (especially those directly affected) hear about the crisis directly from the school before hearing it 'on the grapevine' or in the media.

There should be an option for them to gather at the School, in cases where students may be off site. Continue contact with the family/families to identify their expectations of the school.

Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.

b) Communication with the Board

It is important that The Board are aware of the details pertaining to the crisis, and advised not to speak to the media and refer all questions to the spokesperson (Principal). The Board may be notified via telephone, with a more detailed email to follow.

c) Communication with staff

Notifying faculty and staff of an event or crisis and keeping them informed as additional information becomes available and as plans for management of the situation evolve is critical.

If time and resources permit, a staff briefing may be necessary to provide staff with as much information as possible / necessary and let them know where they may seek counselling if they feel the need. See agenda attached.

Communications can begin with an email from the Principal to all staff, making the aware of the incident that has occurred and all the facts we have so far. The email should mandate that no staff are to speak to media, and be given a generic, sincere statement they can use if they are asked any questions, followed by 'all questions should be directed to the Principal.'

Consider informing staff on leave or former staff.

d) Students

Communications to students are extremely important, and where possible a whole school assembly should be arranged, followed by class meetings and special periods for support.

People are not always psychologically affected in proportion to their exposure to an incident. Sometimes the negative effects are not always apparent. Care should be taken not to restrict access to support / counselling. All those affected should be provided with the support available).

e) Families

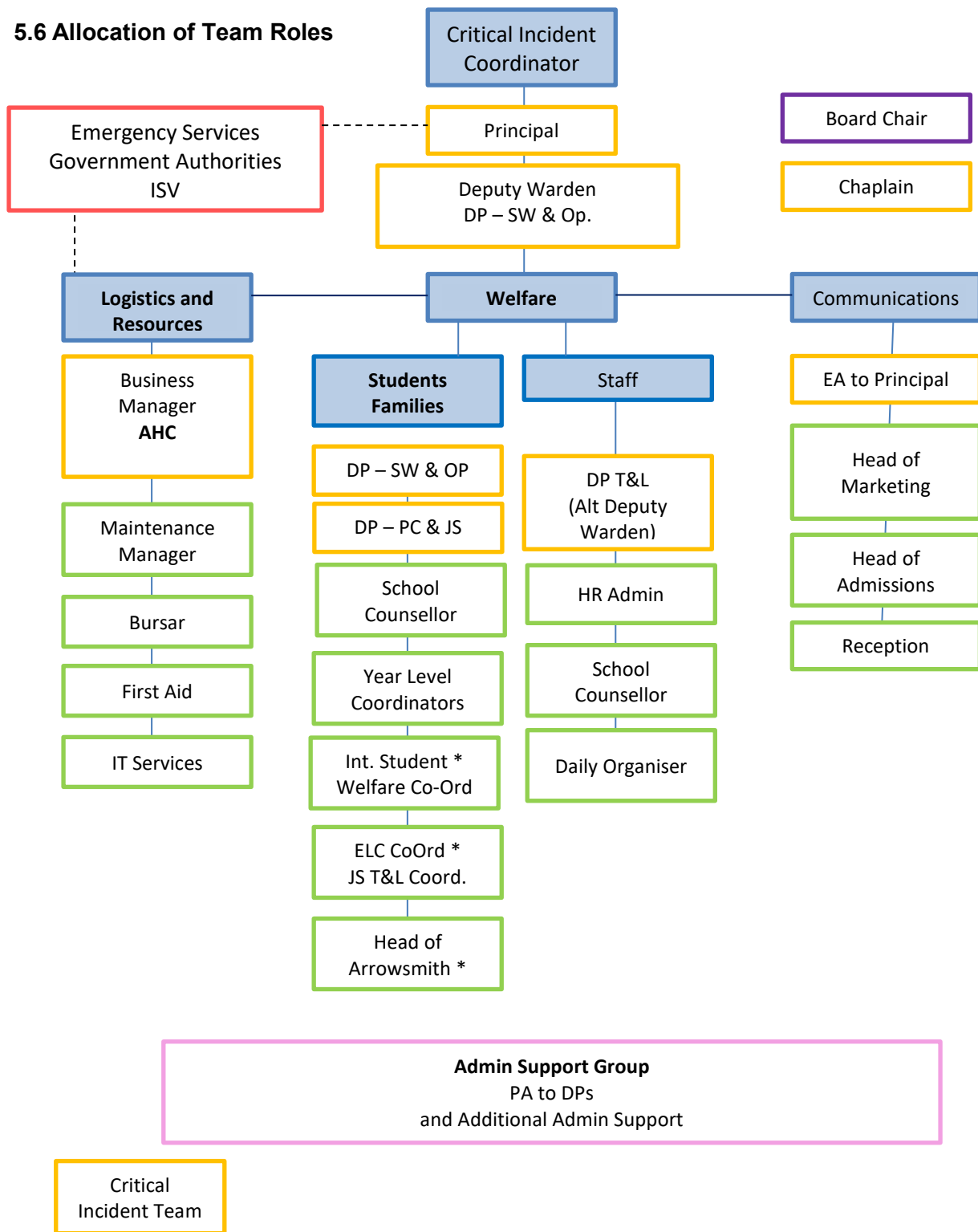
It is important that parents (especially those directly affected) hear about the crisis directly from the school before hearing it ‘on the grapevine’ or in the media. This communication can be via email and should come directly from the Principal. An email template should be developed for the Principal to edit accordingly – in a crisis there will not be time to properly draft an extensive and appropriate email to parents

f) Other community members

5.5 Additional CIMT Meeting Agenda

1. Update on Actions from previous meetings
2. Updates and New Actions
 - a. Logistics and Operations
 - b. Welfare – students, staff, families
 - c. Communications
3. School Business and Operations
4. Resources
5. Issues

5.6 Allocation of Team Roles



* As appropriate depending on incident
 # Depending on the location of the incident there may need to be designated 'on-site' incident coordinator liaising directly with the CIMT

5.7 Roll Descriptions and Considerations (have been amalgamated)

Any critical incident must be reported to the AHC Person.

The AHC Person (Business Manager) Logistics

The Key objective of the AHC is to maximise efficiency of response.

The AHC

- Collects and verifies information and documents
- Maintains contact with individuals who reported the incident and those individuals involved.
- Gains a clear understanding of the details of the incident and verify the information. Finds out who is, and who may be, involved.
- Establishes initial contact with the outside authorities, including emergency personnel, and determines if they are already involved and attending at the School.
- Finds out who was at the scene and who was not there, and begin to develop appropriate intervention for those who could be affected.
- **Contacts the Principal** who contacts key staff and activates the CIMT
- Gathers all available information and transfers information to the School
- Ensures that accurate documentation (photographs, notes of conversations, individuals involved, and witnesses etc.) of critical incident.
- Determines additional resources required
- Determines if food and drink is required
- Manages the recovery of buildings, resources as required

If the School group is in the field, the Field Team will activate their plan. The AHC Person becomes the contact person to the field.

Principal (Critical Incident Management Team Leader)

As leader of the Critical Incident Management Team, the Principal

- Oversees incident response
- Schedules a meeting of the CIMT and plans and oversees steps to meet needs
- Distributes most current information to members of the team
- Assigns roles to members of the team
- Arranges for information about the Critical Incident to be communicated to the President and Board of Management and other significant agencies.
- Becomes the single point of contact for all communications.
- Allocates room for CIMT, and considers spaces for families to gather (eg CC, Arrowsmith)
- Determines additional CIMT meetings
- Organises debriefs – during and the post the critical incident
- Oversees the evaluation

Welfare

Students

- Identifies which students are most affected, or at risk
- Determine who will communicate with students, how and when
- Will whole-School assembly/ meetings and group meetings be needed?
- Sets up meeting with students
- Determine students absent, on camp or on excursion
- De-briefing support for students involved.
- Pastoral responses through worship
- Information should be distributed as it becomes available. Answer questions and provide information about what happens next and where to go for assistance.
- Who will contact any schools attended by sibling survivors?
- Formulate a protocol for dealing with students who want to go home after being involved in a critical incident.
- Manage ongoing support in the following days and weeks.

Immediate Families

- Liaising with family
- Consideration for who notifies next of kin, liaise with police etc.
- Provide regular information updates to parents, remembering that always the number 1 need with be information
- Provide families information re counselling available
- Provide a venue at school to gather, depending on incident and how this will be managed in the short and longer term
- Single point of contact must remain the leader of the CIMT, or their designate

Other Families

- Keep regularly informed
- Consider the need to contact families of international students – how, when

Staff

- Determine who will communicate with staff, how and when
- Sets up meeting with staff
- Determine staff on PD, excursion, camp etc
- Liaison with families of affected staff member(s), including the gathering of personal items if necessary
- De-briefing support for students involved
- Pastoral responses through worship.
- Areas designated for staff to meet and discuss or debrief
- Determines communication with staff on leave or former staff

Staff organisational needs

- Daily Organiser must be freed to keep the School operating.
- Which staff are unable to take their classes, and how long will they be out of action?
- How many replacement teachers will be needed to replace absent staff?
- Changes required to class or year level lists?

Communications

Coordinates

- All aspects of media communications
- Provides regular updated information, including own social media platforms
- Overseeing a designated media area
- Internal communications
- The gathering and evaluation of incoming information,
- Monitoring external media (radio, TV, print and social media)
- Additional admin support

Ensures accuracy and professional approach and maintenance of accurate documentation

- A decision about who addresses the media, strategies for dealing with the media, and responses from the public to media releases are part of the planning process.
- Staff members and students to be advised that if approached by media or outsiders wanting information, the response should be: "If you want information about the incident please contact the Principal."
- Teachers and other staff need to be advised of strategies for disseminating outgoing information.
- Receptionists must be briefed not to provide any information but should refer callers to the leader of the CIMT. The leader of the team will decide on what information to give, how much should be made known to staff and students.
- Devise strategies for keeping staff and students informed of unfolding events.
- Ensure accuracy and a professional approach to the provision of information and dealing with media.
- Carefully document events as they unfold
- A record should also be kept of phone calls that are made and/or received (see appendix)
- Develop strategies for enabling office staff to cope with reception and telephone enquiries. Arrange for a regular relief from the reception desk.
- Filing of information,

(Field) Operations when the School Group is in the field

- Develop and enact field response plan,
- Organise necessary resources; food, communications, transport, equipment,
- Liaise with outside authorities,
- Brief field response team,
- Accurate documentation of information as it becomes available.

5.8 Proposed Breakdown of Tasks

WITHIN 24 HOURS AFTER THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

TASKS FOR THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Find Out the Facts.

Collect information about the incident from reliable sources as soon as possible. Verify Information where possible.

Establish a Management Plan.

Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and support personnel.

Inform All Staff.

Deputy Principal(s) should also inform those staff who have been absent due to illness, on excursion or Professional Development activity, etc. Provide the facts of the incident. Outline the proposed response plan. Suggest sources of personal support for teachers.

Inform All Students.

Assemble students and outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity. Advise students who have been absent due to illness or an excursion. Organise additional assistance – counselling etc. if it's required.

Inform Parents.

Provide by letter/email the facts of the incident. (See sample letter.)

Liaise With the Media.

The Principal/ Deputy Principal(s) will be appointed as the School's Media Liaison Person. Minimise media contact with staff and students and provide the media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students.

Set up 'telephone group' of trained operators with regular information updates.

Set Up a Support / Counselling Group for the School.

If the magnitude of the incident is too great for personnel to manage, co-opt Counselling personnel. It is essential that the Principal or a member of the SLT be involved in all decision-making by this group.

Liaise with the Local Community Co-ordinating Agency.

Where an incident of significant proportion occurs in a community setting, the School DISPLAN Co-Ordinator (Business Manager) is attached to the City of Monash and to the Department of Human Services. The Independent Schools of Victoria Office should also be involved. The Department of Human Services usually co-ordinates any recovery program.

Offer Counselling Support to Bereaved Parents within 24 hours of the Incident.

This is applicable especially where the incident occurred during a School activity.

Identify Students and Staff Directly and Significantly Involved in the Incident.

Initiate a de-briefing procedure conducted by an appropriate qualified counsellor within three to five days.

Restore the School to a regular routine as soon as possible.
Provide structure to help students and staff return to normal functioning.

WITHIN 48 to 72 HOURS AFTER THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

TASKS FOR THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Restore the School to regular routine as soon as possible.

Provide structure to help students and staff return to normal functioning.

Encourage teachers to allow students (especially those more directly involved) opportunities to talk about the incident and about their reactions. The basic needs are :

- To be informed
- To be heard
- To have one's feelings validated

No one is obliged to attend. A trained adult should be present in the recovery rooms, especially in the case of a death or suicide. Debriefing sessions for Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) team members should be organized.

Keep Parents Informed

Inform parents about:

- The School Critical Incident Response Plan
- Possible reactions of students
- Sources of help for families.

Encourage two-way communication between parents and the School.

Support School Staff

- Allow time for staff members to deal with their own emotional responses.
- Provide support for staff, including de-briefing, by appropriately qualified counsellors, where needed.
- Inform staff of the possible effects on students.
- Provide advice on how to manage student reactions.
- Warn of the need for care-givers to monitor their own mental and physical health.
- Pastoral care through liturgies in Church, special liturgies as required.

DURING THE FIRST MONTH AFTER THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

TASKS FOR THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

If a Critical Incident results in a fatality, then the School should organize a Memorial Service at the School. Encourage close friends and others directly involved in the incident to participate and be involved in the planning. Involve hospitalized students where possible encourage older students to attend funerals.

Convene a Meeting of Parents of students involved in the incident after three or four weeks where a number of students were directly involved.
Enlist the aid of counselling professionals to encourage parents to express and share their feelings and concerns about their children's welfare and to help them understand their children's reactions.

Monitor Progress of Hospitalized Students.
Ensure hospitalized students have access to counselling support.
Liaise closely with hospital support staff about hospital support programs.
Ensure continued access to counselling support for students on discharge.

Monitor the Mental and Physical Health of those in care-giver roles.
Burnout Syndrome may occur, especially when the emergency is perceived to have eased.
Arrange meetings with care-givers (include administrators) to monitor how well they are managing their increased workloads and emotional and physical stress levels.
Remember that students may have care-giver roles.

IN THE LONGER TERM

TASKS FOR THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Monitor Staff for Signs of Undue Stress.
Encourage stressed staff to seek professional help.
Try to provide a supportive environment
Provide for increased demand on teacher relief time.
Scholarship, plaque, memorial prize.
Anniversaries and legal proceedings – need to alert staff and provide special support for affected staff.
Continue to Monitor Mental Health of Care Givers
Students in caring roles may develop delayed stress.

PHASE 3 MOVING ON

The effect of the critical incidents is not over until the first anniversary passes. Many staff and students will recall the incident and may experience similar emotions to those they felt at the time of the critical incidents. Providing feedback is important to signify that the incident is over and the future can begin. De-briefing and caring for the leaders and counsellors is essential in the 'moving on' phase

6. GUIDE TO SPECIFIC CRITICAL INCIDENTS

N.B. In addition to the particular requirements outlined above, the following is to be noted.

DEATH OF A STUDENT OR STAFF ON CAMP/TOUR

- **Principal** - To contact student or staff member's family, to give the facts and sympathy.
- **Principal and/or School Chaplain** - to go to the camp/excursion site to support and assist in de-briefing with staff and students. Consider the need to take a professional support person.
- **Principal / Deputy Principal** - to call parents of all other participating students for a meeting, the purpose of which is to give accurate facts and to provide and explain information on how they might support their own children. Perhaps Grief Counsellor to assist.
- **Funeral**
 - Determine the family's wishes.
 - Provide transport for students who wish to attend.
 - Parental permission. See prepared letter 'Sample Permission Note to Attend Funeral'.
 - Principal liaise with family about School involvement
 - Place an Obituary Notice in the daily Newspapers.
- **Staff on Camp/Excursion/Tour**
 - Determine needs.
 - Provide counselling and leave, or reduced contract time, if required. If staff wish to go home – make sure they are escorted. Where required, provide transport for family members if possible.

TERMINAL ILLNESS

- Determine the wishes of the individual / family regarding the communication of information to staff and students.
- Determine the nature of the illness.
- The effects of the illness
- What to do as the illness progresses
- The expected life span
- Special care required at school
- How the person should be treated by staff and students.
- Inform students and staff who will work with the person. Allow questions to be asked.
- When hospitalized or not able to attend school, plan how and who will communicate / visit.
- Seek guidance from Hospice staff on how the person and his / her family would like to be remembered.
- Appropriate liturgies and prayers in Church Services and assemblies.

TELLING A STUDENT A RELATIVE HAS DIED

- Student to go to the Principal's Office to avoid the news being overheard accidentally. Deputy Principal, Counsellor and/or School Chaplain, to be present.
- Tell the child simply and without euphemisms that the relative is dead. Do not elaborate all of the details, some of which may be initially incorrect. To allow the 'psychological protection' give a chronology of the event such as:
- "Your father was involved in a car accident. The ambulance took him to the _____ Hospital. The doctors did all that they could, but he died. Your Aunt is on her way here now to pick you up. We are so sorry that this happened".
- There is a warning that bad news is coming.
- Once the student hears the news, continue to respond to that child's needs. Speak quietly and soothingly but expect no response while the child processes the information. Respect the student's privacy but remain close so that he / she is not left alone. If the child remains completely silent or non-interactive, permission to cry or express other emotions should be given. Listen to the student's ventilated feelings and provide assurance that such feelings are normal.
- Express whatever feelings you honestly have. Cry with the student if you wish.
- To free the Principal for other commitments, when it is appropriate, Counsellor, School Chaplain should take the student to his / her office or to the Sick Bay. Ask if the child would like a friend with him / her.
- Inform the front office where the student is in order to facilitate collection.
- Inform the appropriate Deputy Principal – SW & Op who will communicate with the Home Room / Class Teachers.
- Deputy Principal t-T&L o inform other teachers.
- Condolences to the family from the School, via the Principal.
- Place an Obituary Notice in the Daily Newspapers on behalf of the School Community.

STUDENT SUICIDE

- Find out the facts from the Police and when the School can release these facts to others.
- The Principal visits parents to express condolence and to determine their wishes in respect of the funeral and contact from some students.
- Involve outside counselling professionals.
- Principal informs students quickly and allowing them to grieve prevents clustering.
- Stresses that student was unwell, not rational.
- In-service staff on danger signs of suicide to enable careful observation of students. (Prevention of clustering.)
- Give students basic, accurate facts in a way that is a de-glorification of the suicide.
- Take particular care of switchboard operators. They will need support and de-briefing.
- Do all parents need to be informed? If so, how? Discuss this matter with family first. (e.g. letter, information evening.) Arrange, if necessary, facilities for staff who may want to stay back after hours to de-brief.
- What has been arranged for staff who may want to stay back after hours and discuss the events?
- Do personnel directly involved have support for themselves? Has contact been made with this support.
- Will the School hold a memorial service or create a memorial to the victim?
- On the anniversary date, watch for troubled students. Again, the Principal needs to provide this warning.

ACCIDENT – MOTOR VEHICLE OR OTHER

- Determine accurate details.
- Communicate with family. Express sympathy. Determine the family's wishes.
- Principal informs staff and students verbally and in writing. Keep updating the information.
- Brief switchboard staff.

FIRE (Outside school hours)

School premises burnt by fire outside school hours can cause serious disruption to school routine and services. Below are some immediate steps which need to be taken to prepare staff and premises for resumed activity.

- Telephone teachers of affected classrooms and ask them to come to the School. To be met by someone from the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Alternative classrooms, furniture and consumables to be easily available. The Business Manager and Bursar to meet to decide the requirements. Reasonable requests should be available with minimal red tape. It should not be left to the Principal to chase up promised resources – someone in the Finance Office could take this role so the Principal is free to attend to other urgent matters.
- The most urgent requirement is often lighting. A set of battery-operated fluorescent lights could make a major difference. Mobile telephone may be necessary.
- Security – new provisions need to be made urgently to ensure that the new facilities are protected.
- The sudden extra demands on staff and the stressful affects of a school fire need to be recognized.
- Extra administration time – filling in forms, organizing new equipment, etc.
- Extra teacher resources thus allowing teachers to re-build lost resources. Extra sick leave may be available and regular use of it to be strongly encouraged – teachers in this position do not wish to appear weak and suffer greatly later.

TOXIC EMISSION

- Seek source of emission.
- Contact, and follow the directions of Emergency Services.
- Keep children and staff calm.
- Ensure that any necessary treatment is administered.
- Inform staff and students, orally and in writing. Keep updating the information.
- Brief switchboard staff.
- If appropriate, prepare information for parents.

EXPLOSION – OIL AND GAS

- Prepare for evacuation; keep students and staff calm. Supervise students until the emergency is over.
- Contact emergency services. Arrange for any necessary medical treatment.
- Await directions from emergency services, and be ready for any alternative arrangements.
- Brief switchboard staff.

ABDUCTION / DISAPPEARANCE

- Find out the facts from the Police. In the event that Police wish to speak with some students at the School and establish with staff protocols for police interviews with students.
- Prepare a media statement.
- Communicate with the family.
- Form groups which will need to address:
 - Denial – many students will not accept that a student has been abducted for the first week.
 - Fear and safety – students will display behaviors that indicate that they do not feel safe.
- The best way to manage these responses is to give clear and accurate information about the abduction. Be aware of rumors and ensure that each student has the opportunity to discuss any rumors that they have heard and have them dealt with appropriately.
- Assessing exactly what is worrying students. Ask questions like :
 - How can you be safe?
 - What do you think about abduction?
 - What do you feel?
 - Who do you talk to about your missing friend?
 - What do your parents think?
 - What do you think can make the situation better?
- Tell the School community that they will be informed when the mystery is solved, but it may never be solved.
- Write to parents about their reactions. Many discussions will occur within the family home about abduction and safety. This fear is transferred quite quickly from parents to children, and there may be a negative impact on children. The important role that parents have at this time is to reassure their children that they are safe.
- The Principal and Deputy Principals may need to assist each other with normal duties to avoid overload in the affected area of the School.

SIEGE / HOSTAGE / GUN ATTACK

- Confirm available facts and situation details.
- Record information and report to Police. Follow directions of the Police.
- Carry out evacuation or confinement to the school buildings.
- Assemble personnel with direct knowledge of :
 - events
 - interior layout / topography
 - hostage(s)
 - assailant(s)
- Assist Police as necessary.
- Inform staff and students orally and in writing. Keep updating information.
- Brief switchboard staff.
- Prepare information for the staff and the media.
- Conduct discussions with staff / students regarding fear and safety.

BOMB AND OTHER GENERAL THREATS

- Without alarming or aggravating the caller, attempt to identify him / her.
- Keep calm—treat the threat as genuine; record exact information.
- Contact Police and await directions.
- Carry out evacuation and supervise students until the emergency is over.
- If object is found—do not touch; report where found and keep area clear.
- Brief switchboard staff.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTACTS

ORGANISATION	CONTACT NAME	TELEPHONE
EMERGENCY Police, Fire, Ambulance		000
LOCAL SERVICES		
Police	Oakleigh Police Station	9567 8900
Fire Brigade	Oakleigh Fire Brigade	9665 4525
Ambulance	Metropolitan Ambulance Service	000
Hospital	Monash Medical Centre	9594 6666
	Royal Children's Hospital (RCH)	9345 5522
Asthma Foundation		1800 278 462
Beyond Blue		1300 224 636
CISMFA (Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation of Australia)		9663 7999
Department of Human Services (DHS)		1300 650 172
DHS - Communicable Disease Control Unit		1300 651 160
Direct line – (24hr drug/alcohol info)		1800 888 236
Lifeline (Support & Counselling)		13 11 14
Nurse on Call		1300 606 024
Poisons Information Centre		13 11 26
Centre for Adolescent Health		9345 5890
State Emergency Services		13 25 00
Church of Sts Anargiri		9569 6874
City of Monash		9518 3555
Electricity Emergency (United Energy)		132 099
Gas Emergency (Multinet)		132 691
South East Water Emergency		9552 3000

SCHOOL CONTACTS

ROLE	NAME	PHONE
Principal	Mr Mark Robertson	0452 646 128
Deputy Principal – Teaching & Learning	Mr Lance Ryan	0449 923 500
Deputy Principal – Student Welfare & Operations	Mr Peter Dickinson	0438 500 192
Deputy Principal – Professional Culture and Junior School	Mrs Shelley Parkes	0411 625 099
Business Manager (All Hours Contact Person)	Mr Tim Grandy	0410 090 732
Executive Assistant to the Principal	Mrs Tania Watson	0410 419 662
Bursar	Mr Arthur Kakavas	0437 825 506
School Chaplain	Father Stavros	
President, Board of Management	Mr Chris Damatopoulos	0481 394 557
School Counsellor	Mrs Susan Bassett	
International Student Welfare Officer	Ms Hui Harvey	0438 637 632

Appendix

1. Critical Incident Log
2. Phone Call Register
3. Media Communications Guidelines
4. Agenda for Staff Meeting
5. Sample of Possible Emails/Letters
6. Support Resources

Appendix 3

Media Communications

It is important to refer to the communications guidelines before communicating with the media.

The Media Stages of a Crisis

1. The incident (when the crisis hits)
2. The story unfolds (crisis escalates)
3. Climax (who's to blame?)
4. Aftermath (in-depth analysis / new angles)
5. Legacy

When dealing with the media, the following suggestions will promote clear communications:

- Deal with up-front reporters. Be honest, forthright and establish good communication with the media before problems or crisis occurs
- Do not try to stonewall the media or keep them from doing their job
- The school should decide what to say, define the ground rules, issue a statement and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality
- Identify a single information source/spokesperson (Principal)
- Advise school staff of media procedures / policies
- Advise students of the media policy and let them know that they do not have to talk and can say 'no comment' to journalists
- If the crisis directly involves a student or staff member, consult with them and/or their family before making any statements – explain the school policies and assure that confidential information is being protected
- The primary goal should be to keep the public informed about the crisis while trying to maintain the privacy of students and ensure as little interruption of the educational process as possible
- Prepare a written statement that gives the basic facts clearly and concisely – try to anticipate what some of the questions will be and prepare the answers (what, what, when, where, why and how)
- Use the **same facts** in dealing with **all** media so that the story is consistent across all channels
- If news media personnel arrive on campus while students are in class, guide their activities so that they will not disrupt the educational process – they should not be permitted to enter classrooms
- Don't presume to tell a reporter what is or is not newsworthy, and never lie to a reporter.
- Tell the bad news first and set the record straight
- Establish the school's division as the best source for information on the crisis
- If the media thinks the school is hiding something they are likely to dig for information from other sources and play the story more sensationally (and perhaps less accurately)
- Remember that conflict is news and reporters often frame their questions to bring out the conflict or emotion in a story
- Don't let a reporter's friendly, sympathetic manner disarm you into giving them additional information
- Don't assume that any chatty comments are 'off the record'
- Keep a log of media communications – whether it is a basic statement or a subsequent update (appendix iv)

- Do not ask the reporter for editing rights or to see the story for approval before it runs – if major story details are inaccurate in a print story, the school has a right to ask for a correction

During a crisis:

- Attempt to define the type and extent of the crisis as soon as possible
- Inform employees what is happening as soon as possible
- Designate that a central source, such as the crisis communication centre, coordinate information gathering and dissemination
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to communication centres
- Remind employees that only designated spokesperson (Principal) is authorised to talk to the media
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is or is not known about the situation
- When communication, remember to maintain a unified position and uniform message – keep messages concise, clear and consistent and keep spokesperson briefed
- Contact the top administrator or designee to inform him of the current situation, emerging developments, and to clear statements
- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school’s position about the crisis is clear
- Read all releases from previously prepared and approved statements to avoid danger of ad-libbing
- Assign sufficient staff to handle phones and seek additional information
- Keep a log of all incoming and outgoing calls and personal contacts
- Relieve key people from their normal duties so they may focus on the crisis
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the crisis
- Prepare a general announcement to be given by the principal or designee, finished off with a statement that more information will be forthcoming when verified

Dos and don’ts when working with the media

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize your good record • Be accurate and cooperate as best you can • Be prepared for and prepare in advance a response to questions which might violate confidentiality or hinder a police investigation • Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of students and staff • Speak to reporters in plain English (no jargon) • When asked a question to which you do not know the answer, say that you do not know but will find out and let the reporter know • Advise school personnel of the media procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to keep the media ‘kill’ a story • Say ‘no comment’ • Adlib • Speak ‘off the record’ • Speculate • Try to cover up or place blame • Repeat negative or misleading statements • Play favourites among the media • Give out personal information • Supply photographs of the victims • Create heroes or glorify the victim/s

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure a consistency of information and stick to the facts• Secure entrance / exits to the school | |
|--|--|

Sample press release

The school was informed by (press / police / parent / etc.) on (date) about the (incident).

Teachers and students are extremely saddened by the news.

We cannot offer comments at this stage as the incident is still under police investigation.

In response to this incident, the school has mobilized necessary resources to provide support to students. The School Crisis Management Team and counsellors have offered counselling to students and staff in distress.

The school has also issued a letter to all parents about the incident and they are encourage to pay special attention to their children and to maintain communication with the school.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact Mark Robertson, Principal on (03) 9569 6128.

Key media contacts

Monash Leader

Blair Corless

Editor

03 9875 8333

monash@leadernewspapers.com.au

Neos Kosmos

Eugenia Pavlopoulou

Journalist

03 9482 4433

eugenia@neoskopos.com.au

Herald Sun

Karina Grift

Education Journalist

03 9292 1876

news@heraldsun.com.au

The Age

03 8667 2250

newsdesk@theage.com.au

Social Media

The following checklist should be referred to in the event of a crisis to ensure that all Social Media channels are effectively monitored and handled.

- Determine the key social media profiles to be monitored
- Allocated a social media profile to each member of the Marketing and Communications team to monitor
- Pause all scheduled social posts
- Issue a general statement on the school website similar to the press release
- Acknowledge on the main social media page what is going on and post a link to the longer statement on the website
- Monitor each channel for comments and messages, and individually reply to concerned audience members
- Only post / comment with the facts (the above dos and don'ts apply to social media too)

If the crisis occurs on the weekend

Key staff members will have access to the contact details of Executive Team Members and other staff members who may need to be involved in the communications process.

The Critical Incident Management Team should do their best to meet up and go through all key points of the Critical Management Meeting – whether by phone or in person.

No other staff member shall make a comment on the crisis until told otherwise after the weekend.

Appendix 4

Agenda for Staff Meeting

1. Inform all teachers of the crisis event and the school's stance
2. Clarify details and queries
3. Explain and discuss the intervention plan formulated by the Critical Incident Management Team. Arrange its implementation time, procedures and division of labour
4. Prepare student support work (e.g. class meetings, special class periods)
 - Explain the content and key points
 - Distribute relevant documents (e.g. briefing documents, fact sheets, phone tree records)
 - Provide support to teachers in need
5. Convey acceptance of teachers'/staff's emotions
 - Explain common crisis feelings
 - Show understanding towards staff's reactions
 - Identify staff who are severely affected
 - Arrange follow up support to those in need
6. Reminders for staff:
 - Stabilise your emotions, obtain facts and relevant information before rendering support to students
 - Prepare to listen and render support to students
 - Encourage students to seek help when necessary, and introduce channels to seek help, which include information on school counselling services
 - Control spread of rumours
 - Stick to the facts when talking to students and parents – do not speculate
 - Do not make comments to the media – refer them to the key spokesperson (Principal) for all comments and/or interviews
 - Identify emotions and behaviours of students and provide support accordingly
 - List our and pass onto the Critical Incident Management Team a student referral / follow up list
 - Initiate to seek help from the Critical Incident Management Team in handling your class when necessary (e.g. when many students in the class are severely affected)
 - Attend staff meetings and evaluation meetings to report and receive update information
 - Follow the normal routine and procedure in handling absence or early leave for students until further notice
 - Allow for flexibility such as to postpone tests or examinations if necessary

Appendix 5

Sample Letters

SAMPLE LETTER (Abduction)

Dear Parent,

Paragraph 1 Give facts of current situation.

Paragraph 2 Explain the School's response.

Paragraph 3 Urge parents to :

1. Review their protective behaviors practices with their children without over-reacting.
2. Reassure their children that they will be safe if they practice these behaviors.
3. Respond to the grief reactions that their children may display.

Yours faithfully

Principal

EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO PARENTS IN THE EVENT OF A SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT

Special Note to Parents

Many of you would be aware that

It is hard to believe that this could happen in our School. The whole School community is shocked by this happening. (Optional comments depending on the type of incident.)

Your children may be affected by the news. Many children may find it frightening. Often children find it hard to let people know how they feel. Children may have a variety of different reactions, including crying, laughing, not sleeping well or having dreams, becoming irritable or angry. Some children may not be affected.

It is important to accept any of the different reactions and reassure your child that you care for them. For some children crying or talking a lot can really help.

You may find yourself being affected in different ways as well. Sometimes deaths or unusual incidents may trigger other thoughts or memories in our lives. Talking to someone you trust may help.

If you do find your children or yourself having some difficulty in dealing with feelings or reactions, you can contact the after-hours CRITICAL INCIDENT CARE UNIT and they will be able to talk to you or refer you to another available service.

CRITICAL INCIDENT CARE UNIT

The unit is located at :

and can be reached on telephone :

The person in charge of the Unit is :

As yet we are unsure of all the details of the situation. Every effort is being made to look after the children throughout these days and we know you will continue to support us in our efforts and your children.

Yours faithfully

Principal

**EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO PARENTS IN THE
EVENT OF A DEATH IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Dear Parents

As you may be aware, the School Community has been saddened by the death of _____ name(s) last (day of week).

A funeral service is being held at _____ (place) on _____ (date). Your son / daughter has indicated a desire to attend the service.

Should you be agreeable to your son / daughter attending the funeral service, the School is happy to provide transport to and from the service. Should you wish to attend the funeral service yourself and prefer your son / daughter to accompany you, please advise us. We also request you advise us should you prefer to keep your son / daughter at home for the funeral service.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Principal

**SAMPLE PERMISSION NOTE
TO ATTEND A FUNERAL**

Dear Parents,

As you know died this week. Your son / daughter has requested that he / she attend the funeral on The funeral will be held at

You may wish to keep your child at home and take him / her to the funeral yourself, or we will provide transport and support students who attend the funeral.

Please let us know your wishes in regard to the attendance at the funeral of

Yours faithfully,

Principal

Appendix 7

Resources on the Effects of Critical Incidents and Support

PEOPLE WHO MAY BE AFFECTED BY CRITICAL INCIDENTS

When a critical incident affects the School community, those in that community will play various roles and encounter different experiences. The following model classifies the various groups of people who may be affected by the incident. This is a useful guide for the School support personnel in identifying those who are most likely to need assistance.

People directly exposed to incidents

Those who suffer the full intensity of trauma including injuries, e.g. children, teachers.

Relatives and friends

Those who are grieving for the injured and affected, e.g. families, children, teachers.

Helpers / recovery personnel

Those who need to help maintain functional efficiency during the incident and cope with the psychological effects, e.g. teachers, guidance officers, administrators, Emergency Services personnel.

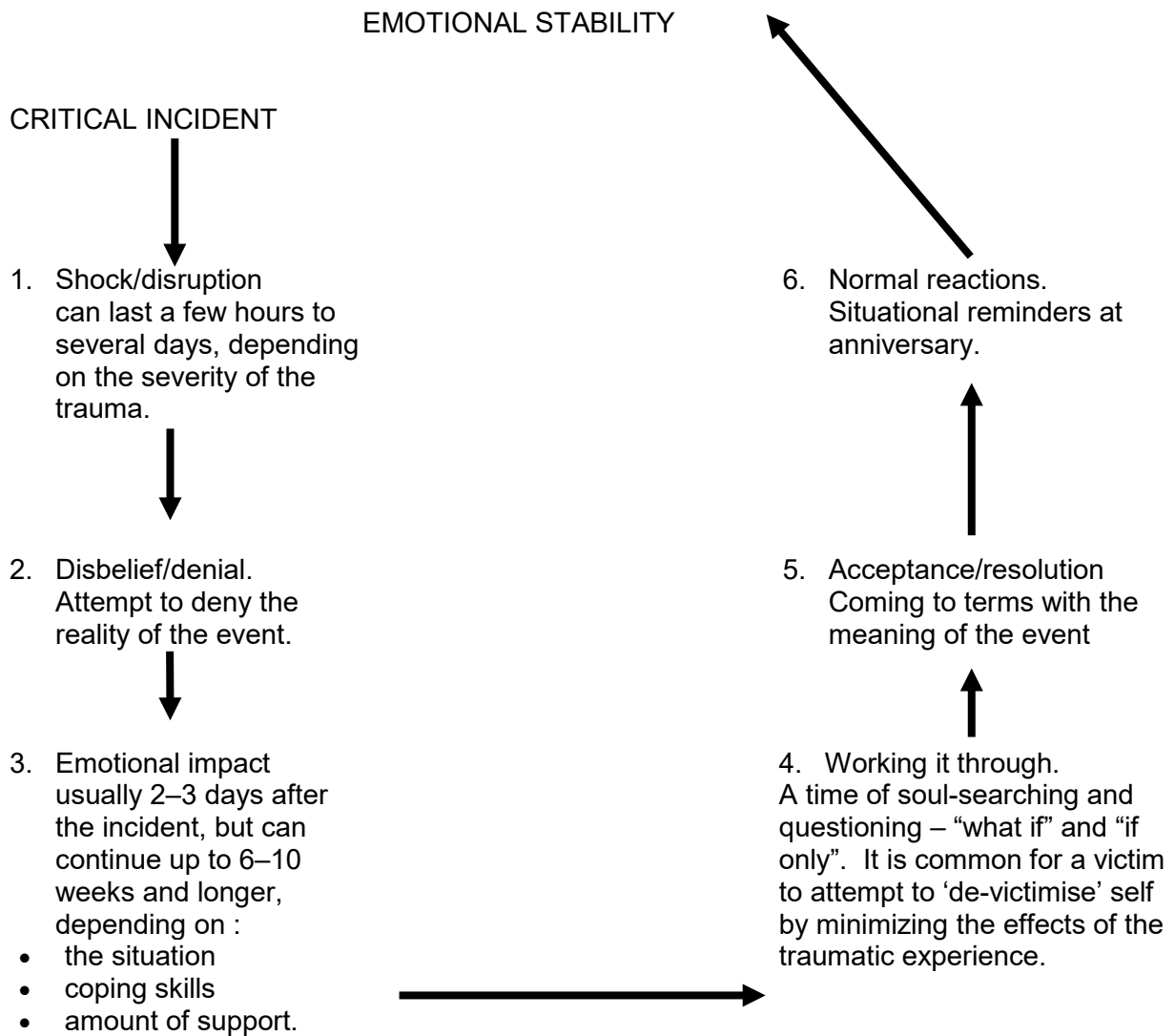
School community

Those in the School Community affected but not directly involved, e.g. other parents, teachers, and students.

People indirectly involved

Others in the general community affected but not directly involved, e.g. those who could have been direct victims but were not because of chance or circumstances; those for whom stress is triggered as a result of a traumatic incident.

**NORMAL STAGES OF THE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY
FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT**



It is common to experience depression and/or anger, fear and anxiety. Such mood swings reflect concern/worry about being ‘normal’ again.

ADOLESCENT REACTIONS THAT MAY OCCUR AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Regressive	Psychological	Emotional/Behavioral
<p>Decline in previous levels of responsible behaviors.</p> <p>Changes in activities.</p> <p>Decrease in social interests and activities.</p> <p>Decline in interest in the opposite sex.</p>	<p>Headaches.</p> <p>Bowel/bladder problems.</p> <p>Skin disorders.</p> <p>Sleep disorders.</p> <p>Digestion problems.</p> <p>Painful menstruation.</p>	<p>Inadequacy/helplessness.</p> <p>Delinquent acts (stealing, vandalism).</p> <p>Concentration difficulties.</p> <p>Hypochondriasis.</p> <p>Sadness.</p> <p>Isolation.</p> <p>Depression.</p> <p>Mood swings.</p> <p>Lapses in memory.</p> <p>Recurrent distressing recollections of events.</p> <p>Atypical behavior.</p>

Adolescents have a need to have their feelings accepted by their peers. They tend to seek comfort and support from peers and those directly involved in a traumatic incident. Many spend hours going over the events of the incident together. Parents, teachers and other adults who want to help may feel excluded, rejected and hurt.

Sometimes adolescents may seek comfort from the opposite sex and from intimate sexual relationships.

There may be a tendency from some adolescents to make important decisions impulsively. These decisions often involve leaving school, changing subjects or limiting career aspirations.

For some adolescents the trauma of the experience may have challenged their sense of security and they may become over-cautious and reluctant to engage in any risk-taking activity. For others there may be a heightening of the adolescent sense of invulnerability which can lead to an increase in risk-taking activities. Occasionally survivors of a fatal incident experience guilt at having survived and engage in reckless behavior.

Adolescents may increase their use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs after a traumatic incident.

Sudden and marked mood swings sometimes occur in the weeks after an incident and these can prove very trying for parents and teachers and need to be addressed with understanding.

ADOLESCENT REACTIONS TO GRIEF AND LOSS

Students in this age group are capable of thinking abstractly about death and, with support, they normally are able to progress through the four main tasks of mourning.

1. Accepting the reality of the loss.
2. Dealing with the pain and grief.
3. Adjusting to the environment without the lost person or possession.
4. Withdrawing emotional energy and re-investing that energy in another relationship.

Thought patterns which mark the early stages of grieving are disbelief, helplessness, confusion, pre-occupation and sometimes a sense of presence of the deceased and hallucinations. These may be accompanied by frequent crying and treasuring of objects which belonged to the deceased.

Behaviors following a bereavement are similar to those which may occur after a traumatic event. However, where grief is acute some physical sensations may be apparent.

- Hollowness in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest and/or throat
- Dry mouth
- Over-sensitivity to noise
- Sense of depersonalisation where nothing seems real
- Breathlessness, sighing
- Lack of energy.

When grieving is associated with a traumatic experience, reactions to the shock of the trauma tend to dominate and the grief process may not properly begin for several weeks.

Students in the early teens may wish to explore philosophical or religious questions about death. While peers are the most probable target for these discussions, teachers and parents may be approached about this issue.

HELPING ADOLESCENTS AT SCHOOL AFTER A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

- Reassure that the emotional and physiological disturbances being experienced are normal in the circumstances and will pass with time.
- Ensure every affected student has a personal support group of peers. Be alert for those who seem to want to be loners. Gently but firmly involve them in peer group activities.
- Allow short periods in class for students to discuss the incident if there appears to be a genuine need by students for this.
- Use group work if a number of students appear to be significantly disturbed. A guidance officer or teacher with skill as a facilitator can use group processes to help students deal with feelings of anger, guilt, fear and helplessness. For this age group work can also be used for discussion about abstract issues such as anxiety, the grief process, life and death, irrational and rational decision-making.
- Make available to students relevant books or journal articles on recovering from trauma and grief. Reading about how others have been affected in similar circumstances can help adolescents better manage their own reactions.

- Monitor students for signs of abnormal reaction, i.e. students whose reactions appear more acute than those of most others and who do not appear to be responding to support activities. As a general guide, students who continue to display persisting significant disturbance and atypical behaviors for more than a month after the incident may need specialist counselling or medical help. Advise parents of any such concerns.
- After adolescent suicide, be alert for the 'copycat' phenomenon where others disturbed by the death may show suicidal tendencies. Monitor close friends of the deceased and ensure counselling and peer support is available. Notify parents if concerned about student behavior.
- Maintain close communication with parents and students seriously affected by the incident.
- Be alert for rash decision-making. Encourage students to delay decisions about leaving school, changing aspirations or giving up social or sporting activities. If necessary, talk with the student about the likely consequences of any major decisions being considered.
- Involve students in re-establishing the routine of the school after an incident. Where disruption or damage in the community has occurred as a result of the incident, encourage students to participate in appropriate community restoration activities.
- Involve students in developing a Disaster Plan for their home, school or community.
- Where whole classes of students have been affected by an incident, structure lesson activities to allow positive discussion of the incident. Some examples :

Science

Investigate the effects of a natural disaster on the environment and explore how insects and animals adapt to a changed environment.

Health Education

Stress management, relaxation, taking care of one's emotional and physical well-being under stress.

Art

Painting murals, clay modeling.

Any appropriate activities that help students express their emotions and concern such as a memorial garden, a book, a scholarship, fundraising for bereaved family, letters of goodbye, etc.

- Temporarily relax expectations of performance in school work and homework.

SUPPORTING NEEDS OF CARE GIVERS

SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN MONITORING AND ALLEVIATING CARE-GIVER STRESS

After a traumatic incident some people in the School may undertake or have thrust on them the responsibility of supporting those seriously affected by the incident and of returning the School to its normal functioning. These people may be at risk of stress-induced changes to their mental and physical health and may need support in the short term and / or long term.

Counsellors and others who co-ordinate recovery procedures need to be alert to the way their responsibilities as care-givers may affect themselves and other helpers. It is important that all care-givers are made aware of the risks of this role and be provided with guidelines for minimizing risks.

The helper also may be a 'victim' of the incident. For example, the helper may be a survivor of an accident which killed or injured others, or has suffered damage to personal property in a cyclone or flood which has also had an impact on the School.

Witnessing a death, experiencing threatening or horrifying circumstances during an incident, the death or injury of a student or friend, can all cause intense personal stress which adds to the stress of caring for others.

This can be compounded if the care-giver after an incident is a further source of stress. Teachers have to continue their regular teaching program and administrators are responsible for running the School, often under adverse conditions, while at the same time comforting and supporting others.

Sometimes the helper at the School may be torn between responsibilities to his or her own family affected by an incident such as a flood or cyclone and to those at School who are also affected.

Unlike Emergency Service personnel, who have clearly defined roles and tasks in traumatic incidents, teachers, administrators and guidance officers may not know exactly what is expected of them during or in the aftermath of an incident. Moreover, the normal chain of command may be dislocated in the confusion of an emergency.

When other agencies become involved in rescue and recovery efforts, conflicts may arise between groups over who 'owns' or has the right to treat those affected in the short term and long term.

Care-givers often feel an irrational obligation to be all-powerful and re-live totally the emotional pain of others. Frustration at their perceived lack of training for this and their failure to do so can lead to a sense of inadequacy and helplessness.

Intense bonds may develop between the School helper and those being supported, especially if very direct and sustained assistance is provided. This relationship may be effective for only as long as the helper feels needed and in control. As those being helped become less dependent, the care-giver may feel threatened, rejected or inadequate.

Some helpers may want to continue relationships well beyond the period of necessity. They may be reluctant to hand cases over or refer to other appropriate professional care-givers such as psychologists. Feelings of conflict, resentment and rejection may arise at this stage.

On the other hand, as a person being helped becomes able to function independently, the feelings of the care-giver may be of relief that the added responsibilities are receding. This can be a danger period, however, for the care-giver who may have made a show of 'being strong' for the sake of those being helped. Repressed feelings and reactions may surface which can result in severe emotional upset.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

School staff actually involved in a major critical incident and during the period directly after its occurrence may require immediate counselling support, preferably before they leave the scene of the incident or the School.

De-briefing is best done by a counsellor trained in the highly specialized techniques of Traumatic Incident Stress De-briefing. A regularly updated list of Agencies that can provide expert assistance in a major traumatic incident is attached to this Plan. Those Agencies include:

- Department of Human Services
- Department of Education

- Private Psychologists and Counsellors
- CISMFA - Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation of Australia

Debrief by external sources are especially important for the SLT/Executive and for any group expressing concern about how the situation was managed and for staff disciplined or involved in legal proceedings.

People likely to need this support include those involved:

- in the actual incident
- in rescuing and / or evacuating others from the incident
- in calming, comforting or counselling others affected by the incident
- in managing the immediate administrative consequences of the incident.

CARE-GIVER NEEDS FOR SUPPORT IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Counsellors and teachers in frequent, regular contact with those seriously affected by an incident cannot avoid sharing their suffering and may become acutely aware of grief, pain and distress. Sometimes the only way helpers can cope with this awareness is by withdrawing, retreating into important practical tasks or denying the emotional suffering of victims.

Other defensive responses likely to arise are feelings of helplessness, frustration, fatigue, denial, disbelief, anger and rage.

Stress responses can lead to more serious physical and psychological reactions. Research into the effects of stress on Emergency Services workers and mental health professionals has revealed a high incidence of the following:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depression • intrusive unpleasant thoughts • drinking problems • bad dreams • mental difficulties • sleep disturbances • accident proneness • change in eating habits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illness • wanting to be alone • fatigue • tension • dependency • helplessness • confusion • shock • panic attacks |
|--|---|

Active support for care-givers can be provided by:

- Reassuring that emotional and physical disturbances quite commonly are associated with the helping role and that these are normal reactions which, with appropriate management and over time, will pass.
- Informing how to manage and minimize the effects of the care-giver role on mental and physical health.
- Ensuring each care-giver has a personal support system which encourages the open expression of feelings.
- Using structured groups to allow helpers to work through concerns.

An outside agency is likely to be required e.g. Cairnmiller; RCH Centre for Adolescent Health etc.

CONDUCTING LESSONS AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

1. A regular routine is essential in helping grieving people to cope and in avoiding mass hysteria. Therefore it is important that teachers are at lessons on time and have planned lessons that will not be too demanding but will occupy students fully. Homework should be set but it may be shorter and the due date may be a little later.
2. Do not get side-tracked into talking about the incident as this will not suit the needs of all students. Politely say that it has been a very sad day but this is not the time to discuss it further.
3. If students are obviously not coping, ask them to go to a specified room. (Room __.) If they stay in the classroom they will not gain anything from the lesson and will distract others.
4. Do not allow groups of students to go out of the classroom and form clusters in the locker areas or toilets. This can encourage hysteria to spread.
5. If a teacher is too upset to conduct the lesson let the Daily Organizer know as soon as possible and relief will be arranged.
6. Be consistent with rules and behavior expectations. Some children will test these out to see if things have changed.
7. As time passes watch out for students who do not seem to be concentrating, who are falling behind with their work or those whose performance has slipped. Communicate this information to the Deputy Principal SW & Op, or Year Level coordinator.