



St. Colman's N.S.

Stradbally,

Co. Laois

Ph. 057 - 8625348

Critical Incident Policy

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Introduction:

In St. Colman's we aim to protect the wellbeing of all our pupils, staff and wider school community by ensuring we provide a safe, tolerant and caring environment.

What is a Critical Incident?

"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.
- Criminal incidents (e.g Dunblane shooting, Shooting at First Holy Communion in Ballymun)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g Navan bus crash)
- Suicide
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g Midleton incident in Cork)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home

Critical Management Team:

Leadership Roles: Mr Cathal Ruane, (Principal) Ms Róisín Brennan (Deputy Principal)

Communication Role: Mr Cathal Ruane

Student Liaison Support: Ms Sharon Carroll

Chaplaincy Role: Fr Jim O Connell (P.P)

Family Liaison Role: Ms Róisín Brennan

Parents Association: Kathleen Sheridan

B.O.M Rep: Fr. Jim O Connell (Chairperson)

N.E.P.S: Dermot Bergin (Psychologist)

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident management 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 on-going support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events

Communication Role

Intervention

- With team, prepare a public statement if necessary
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/ Support Role

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide information
- Provide counselling

Postvention

- Provide on-going support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate

Chaplaincy Role

Intervention

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayers
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff when necessary

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident Team

Family Liaison Role

Intervention

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

Post intervention

- Provide on-going support to families affected by the incident where necessary
- Involve as appropriate family in-school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups

ACTION PLAN

Day 1

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school e.g. funeral services
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students/staff
- Rooms will be made available as follows: Individual Meetings, Parents
- Room

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 - What happened, where and when?
 - What are the extent of the injuries?
 - How many are involved and what are their names?
 - Is there a risk of further injury?
 - What agencies have been contacted already?

Contact appropriate agencies

- Emergency services – **Local Garda Station 057 86 25222** – Ambulance

999- 112

- Medical Services **Stradbally Medical Practice 057 86 25106**

Dr Deirdre Honan 057 86 62929

- NEPS – National Educational Psychological Service - Dermott Bergin

- BOM – Fr Jim O Connell P.P.

Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team

- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- 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.
- Arrange supervision of students

Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements /memorial service

- The Chaplin /Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and
- clarify the family's wishes regarding the schools involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24hours, if
- appropriate
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

Medium Term Actions

- 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
- Ritual within the school
- Review events of the first 24hours

- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- where necessary
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils

Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parents if necessary

- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured siblings, close relatives etc
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school

Plan visits to injured

- Home School Person, class teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital if appropriate in case of bereavement.
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided)
- Decide this in accordance with parents wishes and school management
- decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

Longer Term Actions

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following he/she may need assistance from the HSE. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist

Inform new staff/ new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate.

- Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an accident are transferring to a new school, the principal should brief the principal of the new school.

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events.)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- 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
- Review and Evaluate Plan

Drawn by the Board of Management of St Colman's N.S

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____