



CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SCOILE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL

Definition:

“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” (NEPS 2003)

The importance of having a critical incident management plan

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Most schools at some time will experience a traumatic event

Planning is the key to managing a critical incident

Quick and effective reaction

Provides a sense of control

Ensures normality returns as soon as possible

Effects on students and staff are limited

Step 1: Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos

Physically safe environment

Evacuation plan, fire drills, sports equipment

(Sean Foley – Health and Safety Officer)

Equip students to deal with mental health problems and seek help for same (Via all teachers, via all subjects especially S.P.H.E, R.E., C.S.P.E.)

S.P.H.E. programmes

Grief and loss, stress/conflict management, decision making communication skills, alcohol and drug prevention

Anti-bullying policy

Peer support programmes (none formally set up to date)

Books/resources

Staff training (signs and symptoms of depression, suicide awareness, interventions of suicide, mental health issues Liaison with external agencies

Step 2: What is a critical incident Types of incidents

Death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide

An accident on or off the school premises

A physical attack or intrusion

Serious damage to the school building

An accident/tragedy in the wider community

Disappearance of someone from the community

Step 3: Who is in a critical incident management team

“It is a group of individuals from the staff of a school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs” (School crisis response team: Lessening the aftermath – Mary Schoenfeldt)

The success of the crisis management team can depend on the selection of members

(decisions need to be made)

The roles provide rewards but also considerable stress so participants should be interested and motivated

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Appropriate personal and practical skills (some of the team come from the pastoral care/R.E. departments)

Assign roles and tasks

Size of team will vary according to size of school (5 in the team, 420 students)

Decide the term of membership (2 years in rotation, with at least 2 people continuing until the next term, to pass on experience – next rotation Sept 2007)

Meet at least annually

Possible Roles:

Team leader: authoritative and decision maker. Alerts team members of a crisis/ convenes meeting/coordinates tasks for the team/keeps in touch with all members/communicates with BOM/DES/liases with bereaved family – Marian
Staff Liaison: trusted and liked. Information meeting for teachers – facts, vulnerable students, expression of feelings, routine for day/is alert to vulnerable teachers and circulates building/'ready to go' info packs – Theresa

Student Liaison/counsellor: familiar and trusted figure. Liaise with parents/ teachers/identify vulnerable student/counselling and monitoring. Alerts staff to vulnerable students/'ready to go packs' – Elizabeth

Parent Liaison: known to parents, public speaking skills and skills in managing emotional responses. Questions and answers meeting/meet individual parents/ parent6s with skills/liase with parent of the deceased/'ready to go' packs – Padraig

Community Liaison: someone with good contacts – agencies and individuals. Network with community agencies/coordinate community involvement in school/keep records of involvement/update team members – Joan

Media Liaison: comfortable being interviewed, good interpersonal skills, assertive. Room for media/press release/DES communications office (this person is to be based in the office for the period – Noreen

Ready to go packs

Collated by each member of the team

Contains relevant materials

-Sample letter P.35&36, FAQ's P.27-31 & 24, emotions P.21. reactions P.23

Step 4 Critical Incident Plan

Key administrative tasks in the critical incident management process Page 6

Contact numbers (necessary for school trips)

List of all pupils, staff involved, teacher in charge, list of mobiles of accompanying teachers

Up to date medical information on pupils with allergies etc.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a C.I. Short-term actions (1st day)

Gather accurate information

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Contact appropriate agencies
Convene a meeting with key staff/C.I. management team
Arrange supervision of students
Hold staff meeting (team leader)
Organise timetable for the day
Inform students (student liaison)
Make contact with the bereaved family
Dealing with the media
Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary

Medium term action (24-72 hours)

Review the events of the first 24 hours
Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parent if necessary
Plan for the reintegration of students and staff (e.g. Absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.,)
Plan visits to injured
Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service
School closure

Longer-term actions

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
Evaluate response to incident and amend the C.I. management plan for the future
Inform new staff, new school pupils affected by critical incidents where appropriate
Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries

Child Protection Issues

Child protection guidelines and procedures – DES April 2001 Responsibilities of school personnel (chapter 2) Reporting of concerns (chapter 3)

The range of normal reactions to a C.I.

Resource document P.23

These may occur hours, days or even weeks after the event, this is quite usual.

Do share them, let others know about them.

Physical tiredness, sleeplessness, headaches, bowel/bladder problems. Loss or increase of appetite

Behavioural: intrusive thought or ideas, bad dreams, Loss of concentration and forgetfulness, easy upset/irritable, insecure feelings

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Dealing with the aftermath of a suicide or suspected suicide

The term suicide should not be used until it has been firmly established that the death was as a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden loss' may be used instead.

When a person dies through suicide, those who know the person experience a deep sense of shock. The unexpectedness of the death and the taboo associated with suicide can leave a school community feeling unsure of how to proceed. Again the key to this is planning.

Dealing with the aftermath of a suicide or suspected suicide

Family, staff, students, indicators of high-risk students (P.14&15 responding to critical incidents advice and information pack for schools)

Indicators of high-risk students

Close friends and relatives of the deceased

Pupils with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm

Pupils, who experience a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break up with a boyfriend

Pupils who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past

Pupils with a psychiatric history

Pupils with a history of sexual abuse

Non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings

Pupils experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness

Less able students

How teachers can support students in school following a C.I.

General considerations meeting with individual students

A classroom session following a C.I.

Tailor to meet the needs of age group

Provide facts and dispel rumours

Sharing stories

Sharing thoughts and feelings

Normalisation of thoughts and feelings

Empowerment

Closure

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Next step

On-going review of C.I. management plan

Regular meetings (hopefully 2/3 times in the year)

Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible.