



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Critical Incident – Definition

A critical incident can be defined as any situation faced by members of the College community that causes them to experience unusually strong emotions which have the potential to overwhelm their ability to cope, either then or later. They are traumatic, causing emotional turmoil and behavioural changes. The response to a critical incident is determined by the school's reaction to it rather than by the severity of the incident.

Rationale

Preparing for critical incidents affecting schools is a little like maintaining a Fire Brigade unit at an airport. It may not be needed for months, or even years, but on the occasion when there is a critical incident; it may be the difference between a minor crisis becoming a major crisis, or even the difference between life and death.

Concern regarding litigation is not a very noble reason for being better prepared for and responsive to a critical incident, but it should be a consideration. It is an integral part of a School's Duty of Care.

Over reaction to a situation can be as bad, if not worse, than an under reaction. Following a Critical Incident affecting a school not everyone is traumatised and in need of counselling. This document provides guidelines for responding appropriately.

Some of the most crucial elements of a sound, Critical Incident Management Plan are:

- The dissemination of factual and appropriate information – who disseminates it, how is it disseminated and to whom is it disseminated?
- Ensure all staff members are briefed on how to spot students at risk and what to do with these more 'at risk' students.
- Ensure the Executive and Counsellors have a system whereby they identify at risk staff members also.
- Ensure all members of the community affected by the critical incident (parents, staff, and students) are attended to.
- Practice Post-Event evaluation, whereby all aspects of the community are asked to provide feedback on how well informed and supported they felt.
- A Critical Incident Management Plan is a living document. It needs to be constantly updated and reflected upon.
- The entire staff are aware of the Critical Incident Management Plan, and the Executive and all members of the Critical Incident Management Team are familiar with the plan, and their role in it, and that they keep a copy of the document both at home and at work.



- It includes strategies for re-establishing safety, caring for personnel and minimising further risk.
- It includes strategies for assisting students, staff and parents in the recovery process.

Examples of Critical Incidents

- Sudden death of a student, staff member or parent
- Suicide of a student, staff member or parent
- Terminal illness of a student, staff member or parent
- Murder of a student, parent or staff member
- Students and staff members lost or injured during a school excursion
- Student, parent, staff member being taken hostage
- Groups of students and staff who witness sudden death, severe injury or disaster on school premises, whilst travelling to and from school or on school excursions
- Major vandalism of school property
- Natural and community disaster
- Incidents which put in danger the safety of the school community – fire, bomb threats, explosions, gas leaks, chemical spills
- Unusual and/or unfavourable media attention
- Violent community events

Who decides when an incident is critical?

- Normally the Principal is the one to decide. In her absence, the Assistant Principal would decide.

Key principles of any Critical Incident Plan:

- Safety
- Containment of crisis, information and people involved – “trauma is contagious” – control vicarious traumatisation
- Validation and normalisation
- Reassurance that the adults are in control
- Information and strategies for self care and supporting others
- The first principle of recovery is empowerment – “the more helpless, dependent and incompetent the patient feels, generally the worse her symptoms become”.

The Critical Incident Management Team for OLSH College 2016:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| ● Principal | Jenny Fowler |
| ● Assistant Principal | Angela D’Angelo |
| ● REC | Andrew Martin |



- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Leader of Learning Curriculum | Helen Zannettides |
| ● Business Manager | Michele O'Shea |
| ● Leader of Teaching, Admin | Brennan Sharpley |
| ● Counsellor | Cathy Braun |
| ● LOPC Year 7 | Lynette Blundell |
| ● LOPC Year 8 | Elizabeth Solomonides |
| ● Act LOPC Year 9 | Rachel Morton |
| ● Act LOPC Year 10 | Caroline McCaffrie |
| ● LOPC Year 11 | Sylvia Eldahaby |
| ● LOPC Year 12 | Joanne Caletti |

Tasks of the Critical Incident Management Team:

- To assess the needs of OLSH College in relation to possible critical incidents
- To put in place procedures to respond to critical incidents
- To educate the rest of the school community about these procedures

Goals of the Critical Incident Management Team Policy

- To reduce psychological suffering and help the school community survive the trauma situation
 - To provide support systems and a safe place for individuals at this period of time
 - To provide accurate information and to maintain communication links within the school and to outside sources
 - To assist in making appropriate referrals and follow up resources available to students and staff
 - To help restore and maintain a supportive, positive learning environment as soon as possible
- NOTE: It is suggested that this Critical Incident Management document should be used in conjunction with Sydney Catholic School's Critical Incident Management Guidelines for Catholic Schools, which provides more detailed information for procedures and communication.



OVERVIEW OF THE PROCEDURES FOR THE RESPONSE TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Immediate action by the first person made aware of the crisis:

- Inform emergency services if life or property is threatened.
- Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors if they are at risk. Initiate evacuation and provide first aid if appropriate.
- Inform the Principal.

ONCE THE CRISIS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A CRITICAL INCIDENT THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE FACILITATED BY THE PRINCIPAL OR MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

ORGANISATION	CONTACT NAME	PHONE
EMERGENCY police/fire/ambulance		000
POLICE	Maroubra	9349 9299
FIRE BRIGADE	Alexandria	9318 4320
FIRE BRIGADE	Maroubra	9349 7408
Bush Fire Brigade	Sutherland	9520 3936
Ambulance	Bookings	13 1233
	Head Quarters	9320 7777
Local Hospital	Prince of Wales	9382 2222
State Emergency Services		13 2500
Poisons Information Centre		13 1126



SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND SYDNEY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONTACT NUMBERS

POSITION/ ORGANISATION		
Regional Director	Elizabeth O’Carrigan	83443000
Regional Consultant	Phillip Gane	83443000
Director of Human Resources	Jane Comensoli	95696111
Child Protection Team	Child Protection Team	95688251
SCS Media Contact	Mark Rix	95688224
Principal	Jenny Fowler	96624088
Assistant Principal	Angela D’Angelo	96624088
Religious Education Coordinator	Andrew Martin	96624088
College Counsellor	Cathy Braun	96624088
Parish Priest	Fr Alo Lamere	96631070

POST PREVENTION PLAN OF ACTION

Stage 1 The Event

- A report of any critical incident must be reported to the Principal.
- Issues of safety must be immediately addressed (using school evacuation procedures where necessary, eg. Fire)
- Principal needs to ascertain the facts, particularly when incidents occur away from the school property. The principal must be able to verify what was ‘reported to have occurred’. (This will involve members who reported the incident and those involved).

Stage 2 Informing the Community of a Critical Incident

- The Principal and Executive are informed. Appropriate steps to be taken are planned. (Functioning as the critical incident team)
- Principal informs the Regional Office.
- Staff are informed by the Principal (as appropriate)
- Principal informs school (office staff with information necessary to contain the situation, for example directing media calls to the Principal.
- Consultants (eg. Community counsellors) are contacted by the Principal.



- Contact clergy, where appropriate.
- The Principal prepares for the Student, Parents and School Community being mindful of legal and privacy constraints.
- Siblings and close friends of the victims are told individually.
- The principal informs the rest of the school if appropriate.
- ALL students are informed of counselling and assistance available.

(It is most important to inform ALL students of this assistance, as we can be certain of the social links that exist. For example, a tragic incident occurring to a Year 10 student may have a large impact on a Year 7 student who used to live next door to the victim several years ago).

- The Principal contacts organisations and individuals for additional assistance if required.
- Ensure that staff members have support and counselling if required.
- Maintain a supportive, calm atmosphere, by maintaining normal procedures as far as possible.
- The Principal plans the school's response to media, as required.
- The Religious Education Coordinator prepares memorials (prayer services) as required.

NB: Teachers need to be conscious of not taking on roles which are not appropriate. We are not trained counsellors, we have organised referral systems and structures in place to protect the integrity of individual staff members and the students.

Stage 3 Follow up.

- Ensure that 'outside professionals' are able to meet the needs of the school community.
- Informing parents of the event AND support available.
- Provision of reading/support material to staff, students, families.
- Aiming to get back to the 'normal routine', without a set time frame.