

St. Ailbe's School Policy

On

Responding to Critical Incidents

Introduction

Hopefully we here in St. Ailbe's School will never experience a major crisis. However, we must be realistic and accept that at some time or other we, like most schools will have experience of traumatic situations such as the sudden death of a student or teacher due to an accident or illness. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Research indicates that schools that have developed a Critical Incident Management Plan report being able to cope more effectively in the aftermath of an incident. Having a plan will enable us to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on the school community are limited.

School Ethos

Through our mission statement we endeavour to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in our school. This is currently addressed via a number of different avenues:

- Inclusion of SPHE programme in the curriculum
- A physically safe school – Health and Safety Policy
- A psychologically safe school – Anti-Bullying Policy
- Pastoral Care Structures
- Established links with external agencies and referral procedures.

Defining a Critical Incident

In general a critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. Examples of critical incidents could include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.

Creation of a Critical Incident Management Team

Central to a successful school policy on the management of critical incidents is the creation of a *Critical Incident Management Team* (CIMT). The personnel will be drawn from the school staff. The team will identify the key tasks that may arise in the aftermath of a critical

incident and who will be responsible for the different tasks. This team will meet annually to update and review the plan. Should the school experience a critical incident the CIMT will meet in its aftermath to evaluate and revise the plan as necessary.

The following members of staff are presently (2007) on this CIMT.

Mr.P. O'Callaghan, Mr. J. Blackburn, Mr. J Kelly, Mr M Quirke, Mr D. Cullen, Mr N Clancy, Mrs M. Ryan, Mrs B. Collins, Ms A Hayes, Mrs B. Ryan, Mrs M. Quinlan and Mrs V. Hogan.

Critical Incident Management Plan

The Critical Incident Management Team will be responsible for devising the Critical Incident Management Plan. It will also take primary responsibility for its implementation in the event of a critical incident.

Key administrative tasks could include:

1. Maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers
2. Compiling emergency information for school trips
3. Identification of roles to be fulfilled at the time of a critical incident
4. External liaison with outside support agencies, parents, distressed visitors and the media.
5. Internal care and communication with staff, students in general and students more immediately involved or affected.
6. Maintaining administration and services.

(Best practice indicates that it is advisable to maintain the normal routine as far as possible for classes not immediately affected by the incident.)

The Critical Incident Management Team will devise procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident. These will cover short term (first day), medium term (24 to 72 hours) and longer term actions.

Development and Communication of St. Ailbe's Critical Incident Management Plan.

- Submissions and suggestions in regard to the Critical Incident Management Plan are invited from all members of staff.
- On completion of the Critical Incident Management Plan it will be instantly accessible to the personnel who will have the key roles in its implementation.
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of and made familiar with its content.
- A list of the members of the CIMT will displayed in the office and Staff Room and updated as necessary.

Point of information: The term 'suicide' should not be used until it has been established categorically that the death in question was as a result of suicide. The terms 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

Contact List

Contact	Name	Phone No.
Local Gardaí		062 - 51212
Local Hospital	St. Joseph's Clonmel	052 - 77000
G.P.'s	Dr. Browne Dr. Knightly	062 - 51567 062 - 51687
Health Board Services		
Manager of Community Care	Alan Price	052 - 77000
Psychological Services	Maeve Martin	052 - 77911
Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services	Anne-Marie Naughton	052 - 29774
Adult Psychiatric Services	Dr. Crowe, St. Michaels	052 - 77000
Addiction Services	John Casey	052 - 77900
Regional Suicide Resource Officer	Sean McCarthy	051 - 874013
Education Services and School Contacts		
Principal	Mr. Paul O'Callaghan	062 - 51905
National Educational Psychological Services	Evelyn Buckley	052 - 25833
SPHE Support Services	Beatrice Barry- Murphy Ollie Grace	056 - 7761400 054 - 39111
Home School Liaison Officer	Ms. Noreen Ryan	062 - 51905
Guidance Counsellor	Mr. Liam Carroll	062 - 51905
Other Useful Numbers		
Clergy	Fr. Coffey	086 - 2427728
Local Suicide Bereavement Support Group	Ms. Ailish Hayes	062 - 51905
Media Representation	Mr. Paul O'Callaghan	062 - 5190

