

Critical Incident Policy

Purpose: To ensure the School is able to quickly and effectively plan for and manage emergencies and critical incidents.

Scope: All school staff

Implemented by: Principal

Approved by: KVS Board

Published: KVS Policy Folders

Reviewed: Every two years or as legislative changes arise, or improvements are identified following any critical incidents

Overview

A critical incident plan is the overarching plan that can cover both the immediate management of a critical incident but also a coordinated plan to ensure appropriate support and communication for any ongoing impacts associated with an incident or emergency.

Examples of critical incidents include but are not limited to: serious illness, injury or death of a member of the school community; students or staff lost or injured on an excursion; distressing event in the local community, including staff or students witnessing a serious accident or incident of violence; significant vandalism or damage to part of the school property.

Information Gathering

Find out the facts:

The Principal should be notified immediately after the Critical Incident has occurred. The Principal (or their designated representative) will then confirm the incident and collect information about the incident from reliable sources as soon as possible.

If the incident occurs during the school holidays, then the Principal (or his/her designated representative) will be the initial contact and will confirm the details.

Confirmation may be obtained by contacting:

- the people involved
- the Police
- Hospital

Details required may include

WHO?	WHERE?	WHEN?
Student	On Campus	During School
Family Member(s)	Off Campus	After Hours
Staff		On Holidays
Visitor		

Plan

The Principal will convene an urgent meeting of the Leadership Team and relevant support Staff and contact the Chairperson of the Board.

If the incident occurs during the school holidays, the Principal (or his/her designated representative) will contact the relevant personnel to convene a meeting in order to plan the immediate response, and what should be done on the first day of return to school.

Appoint

From this meeting, a person will be appointed to co-ordinate the Action/Management Plan devised. In addition, co-ordinators of Counselling/Support, Media Liaison and Parent Contact will need to be appointed (as required).

When appointing co-ordinators, care should be taken to ensure that these persons are not traumatised by the event to the extent that their capacity to facilitate response/recovery will be impaired.

Inform / Consult

Staff Briefing

The Principal will call a Full Staff Briefing and provide the correct, up-to-date facts of the incident, and outline the proposed Management Plan.

If the incident is during the School Holidays, the Principal will co-ordinate a response which provides the opportunity for a Full Staff Briefing, especially in relation to the Action Management Plan.

These meetings will also suggest sources for personal support for teachers, especially if the incident is on campus.

Inform Students

To ensure clarity and consistency of information, assemble students and outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity. Whether the assembly is for the whole school or a year level will depend on the situation and the scope of the incident.

Inform Parents

Immediate contact will be made with parents/relatives of those directly involved. In addition, the Principal shall provide by letter the facts of the incident.

Consultation / Informing Personnel and Organisations

May include:

- Providing the facts of the incident
- Outlining any proposals about the Management Plan
- Checking any other suggestions or possible assistance

Allocate Resources

Ensure that personnel responsible for taking incoming telephone calls are thoroughly briefed as to information to be given and to whom enquiries should be directed. Note especially, calls from parents and media.

Security

There may be the need to arrange a Security Guard to restrict access to the school grounds. In the interim, school staff (key holders) may be required to supervise the yards and ensure adequate security.

This role, in the case of police or fire service involvement, may be undertaken by the relevant authority.

- Ensure that adequate information, including facts and relevant responses are supplied to the Media
- Set up a Recovery Room in the School – to isolate upset students to allow them to receive appropriate assistance.

A designated staff member of the Management Group (e.g. Office Staff, Designated First Aid Officer) shall set up a room with hot and cold drinks and comfortable chairs.

It may be an advantage to have an outside counsellor in attendance as well as a school staff member.

Allow distressed students and staff access to this room for several days after the incident.

Intervene

Set Up a Support Group for the School

If the magnitude of the incident is too great for school personnel alone to manage, outside agencies will be contacted in order to negotiate access to services of counsellors, psychologists and social workers to provide additional support. (It is essential that the Principal (or their representative) be involved in decision making with outside personnel.)

Liaise with Outside Agencies

Schools experiencing Critical Incidents commonly report an influx of professionals and well-intentioned people offering counselling and other support. Care should be taken to ensure that only those people whose suitability has been affirmed will take any role in the response and recovery plan. Prior knowledge is a distinct advantage here.

Defusing of affected staff and students should be done within 8 hours of the incident. Defusing provides a meeting where, as a group, those affected can retell their experience, clarify the facts, discuss their feelings, learn about normal reactions to trauma and discover some important strategies for coping

Every attempt should be made to ensure that all affected persons attend defusing meetings. Those people who facilitate the defusing process should be alert to those who may require further support.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (commonly referred to as CISD) provides a more structured meeting of those involved in the incident, including those who are part of the response team.

In addition, a school may gain considerable advantage from offering a CISD to the Management Team.

CISD is best completed 5-7 days after the event (Provided defusing has already been completed). In very serious cases CISD may need to be completed within 24 hours of the event.

Provide

Press / Media Liaison

The Media is to be informed by the **Principal ONLY**. The Principal may choose to appoint a staff member or P.R. expert as Media Liaison Person.

Media contact with staff and students is to be minimized, and the Principal will provide the Media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students.

The Principal will write the Media Release, and information will be disseminated in a standard form.

A suitable room will be designated to hold Press Conferences if necessary. If the incident is controversial, then the media may be dealt with by Public Relations experts.

All office staff need to be briefed as how to handle questions from the media and how to deal with phone calls.

Staff may require a special meeting to review information handouts, ask questions of concern, and collaborate on any proposed alterations to class work / curriculum

On-Going Recovery

On-going recovery strategies are crucial to the overall wellbeing of staff and students and therefore to the optimum functioning of School. Close attention should be given to the development of an on-going recovery plan.

Related Policies

- Emergency Management Plan

Related Documentation

- Attachment A – Critical Incident Checklist
- Attachment B – On-going Recovery Checklist
- Appendix A – Counselling Contacts