

Critical Incident Management Guidelines

Acknowledgement to Swanleigh Residential College WA

Forward

Sudden, unexpected incidents, such as the death of a student, have a significant emotional and psychological impact on the members of a community. Such Critical incidents tend to be way outside normal experiences and the individual has few guidelines, based on previous experience, about how to deal with the event or the reaction to it. They violate the un-stated expectation of parents/guardians and community that schools and boarding colleges are safe places where children are in care.

Such critical incidents can trigger a large range of 'normal' but strong reactions and responses that will vary in duration and intensity. A degree of preparedness can help to reduce the immediate trauma. On-going support and debriefing can minimise the duration and intensity of the distress being experienced by students and staff.

A vital aspect of the management of a critical incident is the need to effectively manage the reactions and responses of the school community.

Rationale

When a student's spiritual, emotional or psychological development is placed under severe stress as a result of a critical incident, it is incumbent on the college to have in place strategies and processes to minimise the negative impact.

For this to occur the response needs to be centrally coordinated, quick and cohesive with everyone working towards a common goal – to help distressed students and staff. Resources outside the college need to be acknowledged and utilised as appropriate. The needs of all people concerned (students, staff, parents/guardians, families and friends) need to be considered.

The policy needs to be formulated to:

- A** Reduce the impact of a critical incident through effective management which seeks to :
 - Allay panic through the provision of a calm, coordinated, speedy response that demonstrates a sense of being 'in control'
 - Alleviate immediate distress and suffering
 - Liaise with, and facilitate access to community resources as appropriate
- B** Provide ongoing support for the people concerned which attempts to :
 - Facilitate a return to normal
 - Support staff and students in achieving a healthy resolution of issues
 - Help them find meaning in what has happened
 - Reduce the risk of imitative behaviour in the event of a suicide.

Introduction

Critical Incident 'Definition'

Critical Incidents can be defined as any incident or situation faced by staff and or students that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which may have the potential to interfere with their ability to perform at that time or later. EG. Death or serious injury to student/s staff or significant other person/s.

Standing Procedures to be in Place

- As many as possible of the decisions that would be required in the event of a critical incident should be made in advance, preparatory to being required. Consider rooms

most suitable for the counselling process. Prepare draft documents such as such as an information letter to parents/guardians in the event of a sudden death and possible a statement to students.

- An emergency telephone numbers sheet should be in existence and regularly updated. These numbers and the flow chart for procedures should be appropriately displayed and distributed to all key staff.
- The procedures for dealing with a critical incident as outlined in this document should be familiar to all staff and regularly reviewed at staff training sessions and /or staff meetings. This review, in the case of non-implementation, would best incorporate a whole staff workshop review to support induction of new staff and team commitment. It could incorporate differing scenarios to assist in testing the plans effectiveness using hypothetical settings. Non maintenance of the plan may cause severe difficulties with an assumption that there is an effective plan in place.
- Students must be aware of and alert to the recordings requirements when taking students out of school on activities.
- Students need to be educated about assistance available when distressed and have activities designed to strengthen their coping strategies.

Immediate Response to a Critical Incident

Any staff member/s who becomes aware of or is early at the scene of a life threatening situation should:

A Endeavour to Save Life

- First Aid: immediately apply as appropriate, by the person on the scene most qualified
- Seek Help: 000 Emergency services –Ambulance and or Police
- Do not disturb anything at the scene once safety is ensured. Isolate area if necessary.
- Support: Attend to physical needs , ie.food and drink. Comfort and support injured and /or distressed students and staff.

B Inform Appropriate People

- Advise Executive Director and /or designated nominee
- Liases with Police – ensure accuracy of information