



Critical Incident Management Guide

LONGBURN ADVENTIST COLLEGE

Education Departments, Trans-Tasman Union, Trans-Australian Union, Seventh-day Adventist Church
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Compiled by
Ewan Brown, Colin Clark and Owen Robinson.

Adapted by Terry Rogers for Longburn Adventist College 1999-04-27
Revised by T Rogers 2000-04-18

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development of this resource.

It must be kept in mind that this is only a general guide. Significant elements of each critical incident may differ from others. Your response should be modified to cater for the particular circumstances of each situation. Adaptation of this guide should be accompanied by appropriate preparation, practice and training.

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INTRODUCTION

Occasionally, schools will be involved in a crisis situation that has a significant effect upon the school and the community. These are called “critical incidents”. A critical incident (CI) can be defined as any situation faced by members of the school 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 effects of a critical incident can be long lasting and depend in part on appropriate responses and the extent of support given.

Although it is not possible to prepare for specific critical incidents it is the responsibility of each institution to have a plan for the management of these events. An effective response to a tragedy should be an essential part of the mission of Adventist schools. Critical incidents also tend to focus attention on the school. Professional management of a crisis can have a lasting impact on the community's perception of the school.

Examples of Critical Incidents that might affect schools include:

- Sudden death of a student or staff member
- Suicide of a student or staff member
- Murder of a student or staff member
- Groups of students and staff who witness sudden death or severe injury, whilst travelling to or from school, or on school excursions.
- A disaster on school premises
- Major vandalism of school property
- Natural or community disaster
- Unusual and unfavourable media attention

In this guide critical incidents are not considered to be those events which affect only a small number of people. Those situations involving a small group or an individual can be dealt with using strategies and personnel which are part of the school's pastoral care or student services programme.

This guide is intended to be a resource for the Principal and the Critical Incident Management (CIM) Team of each school to assist in the development of a CIM plan at the school level for the management of major incidents. The material contained inside is designed for use by school staff and professionals who are brought in to assist during the crisis.

The material which follows often assumes that a critical incident has involved the death of a member of the school community. This may not necessarily be the case.

Critical Incident Management

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

FIRST ACTIONS DURING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Principals should delegate as many tasks as possible so that they can make decisions, be available for consultation, and be present and available to staff and students as well as maintain their overall management of the situation.

If the Principal is absent, a casualty or is significantly affected by the crisis consultations should take place between the school administration and the Education Director to determine who will manage the crisis.

Frequently administration and staff do not realise how debilitating the situation has become. It is crucial that even the most effective administrator or staff member acknowledge that they may be affected to the point where they need to take a "time out", seek counselling, or temporarily hand over their responsibilities.

If the critical incident occurred outside school hours, contact appropriate staff at home and arrange a meeting before classes begin. Include a secretarial staff member to arrange for typing, photocopying etc.

After considering the possible effects of the critical incident on the school personnel, decide in consultation with the Education Director if a CIM Team should be called in.

Confirm all information before the staff meeting.

Statements prepared for staff and students should outline the facts surrounding the critical incident. Information should be delivered very clearly to prevent inadvertent distortion of facts by students, and to dispel unfounded rumours that may have already begun to develop.

Classroom teachers inform students of the critical incident. Teachers may recognise from the students' reactions potential "at risk" individuals. If possible, inform close friends of those most directly affected in private before classes start. Public Address systems tend to be impersonal and may catch students unawares as they prepare for classes. In most situations it is helpful to avoid its use at the onset of a Critical Incident.

It is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that they are aware of the implications of negligence and the legal ramifications of unauthorised or inappropriate disclosure of information.

Discourage the media from entering school property to interview staff or students or to take photographs or view the property of a victim. Parent volunteers or professional security officers might be utilised for this task.

Allow informal groups to gather in supervised areas. Expressions of anger and use of normally inappropriate language may need to be tolerated or ignored.

Students who are unable to be involved in the regular routine will still need supervision and permission (slips) to be elsewhere. Those being referred for counselling should always be accompanied to and from the counsellor by a teacher or a responsible student.

Students may not readily seek counselling on Day 1 of a Critical Incident. Counsellors may need to do a fair bit of mingling with groups to help students/staff talk.

It is important to maintain regular school activities. Students will need the support of an established routine. Also, maintaining some form of regular routine enables the school to readjust more quickly after the crisis has passed. This routine might simply mean being in a room until recess or lunch, even if normal teaching is not occurring in all rooms. It is unwise, however, to have the school program collapsed for longer than 3 days. Students usually need boundaries to be restored after this time.

It is essential that only one person be delegated as the school spokesperson. Under most circumstances the school Principal will perform this task. It is usually sufficient for the school to acknowledge the death, confirm that the deceased was a member of the school and offer condolences to the family.

Secretarial staff will be carrying a very heavy load. They should not be expected to respond to inquiries about the death. Incident related inquiries from the public should be referred to an appointed staff member. A decision will need to be made as to whether the circumstances warrant a media ban. If a media ban is not seen as necessary the Principal is generally the best person to communicate with the media.

Avoid using the school Public Address system. Firstly, it may be very invasive in rooms where people are grieving or receiving therapy. Secondly, every "call to the office" may provoke a wave of speculation and unfounded rumour. Where possible use a runner or internal phone system.

In most states it is the normal practice for the Police to inform the next of kin when a death has occurred. The Police may request that the school Principal undertake this duty, and it may in many circumstances be more appropriate. **The next of kin should never be informed of a death by telephone.** At that time you do not know of the situation, surroundings or state of mind.

The family of the deceased often feels abandoned and alone. Arrangements should be made for a staff member to contact the family and assure the family members of the school's support. A letter of condolence and a floral tribute will

indicate that the deceased was a valued member of the school. If the family wishes, a donation to an organisation specified by the family could be made by the school in lieu of flowers.

It is not essential that the deceased's property be immediately removed from the school. Allow the family members to do this when they are ready. They may prefer that it is done by some other person.

In the case of a suspected suicide, however, it is imperative that the deceased's desk and locker be examined for a possible suicide note or other pertinent information.

The decision whether or not to hold a school memorial service rests with the school administration. If a school memorial service is to be held, discuss the arrangements with the family and invite the family to attend.

WHEN SUICIDE HAS OCCURRED

Suicide has a devastating effect on survivors. As well as the effect on the school population and the sense of loss, there is also a very real danger of “copy cat” suicides; that is, others emulating the deceased.

Why this occurs is not fully understood but it is recognised that cluster suicides can, and do, happen. It is important that a school responds immediately to the situation and in the case of suicide, it is strongly recommended that the CIM Team be called in to provide support and guidance at the onset of the crisis.

Alert the staff as quickly as possible and initiate the school’s CIM plan.

Avoid glorification or condemnation of the deceased’s action. Focus on the tragedy, the loss of life, the sadness that the deceased could see no other options. Also focus on the fact that many other options are available for people in distress. Talk about other ways of coping. eg. talk to a trusted person.

Discuss the feelings of guilt survivors often feel after a suicide. Talk about hindsight and ‘survivor guilt’, emphasising that no one is to blame for the death nor more or less worthy of death.

Listen to what the students say. Watch their reactions carefully for possible “at risk” individuals.

Refer “at risk” individuals to the CIM Team. Group counselling may also be necessary. Pay close attention to the immediate class of a victim but do not ignore other classes. Often unrelated grief from another event is triggered by a crisis.

It is important in the succeeding days to maintain a regular school routine but allow time for discussion if necessary.

Recognise that there will be reduced activity and lack of concentration. Reschedule tests and assignments for a later date if possible.

Encourage those who wish to attend the funeral to do so.

Families often feel isolated or ostracised after a suicide. A visit from the school Principal, counsellor or other staff members will reassure the family of the school’s support. The initial visit could be followed by other short visits or by a letter reconfirming the school’s support and assistance.

A suicide is a painful experience for the survivors. Its effects may be felt for years, not only by the school staff and students but by the whole community.

Parents of other students who are concerned about their own children may need reassurance. It may be necessary for the school administrators, counsellors and the CIM Team to meet with these parents, either individually or in small groups. It may also be necessary to arrange ongoing counselling for them.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Give serious consideration to implementing a media ban. This can be done by contacting the police. Another option is to only issue a written media release.

Any statements and contact with the media must be directed to the school Principal.

Media are not allowed onto school premises unless permission has been granted. Staff and student privacy must be respected.

Don't cover up in a critical incident because the truth will eventually come out. When dealing with the media it is a natural tendency to underestimate the scale of a crisis (casualties/deaths/missing) - but never do it.

During a critical incident the media will generally be sympathetic towards the school. They will only turn against you if you lie or are too slow to answer their questions, which can be interpreted as having something to hide.

Do not release the names of the deceased to the media. This is up to the parents.

The key to a successful interview with a journalist is thorough preparation. Before taking the interview, you should prepare answers for the questions below.

THE "ON SITE" CRISIS

Questions from the media which the Principal will need to answer in a crisis may include:

- What has happened? Tell the media. Open and honest communication is best.
- What is the school doing about it? Tell them what you are doing in general terms.
- How does the school feel about the disaster? Tell them. In a crisis people are looking for reassurance that the school deeply cares.

THE "OFF SITE" CRISIS

When a crisis has occurred away from the school, information about what actually happened often takes several hours to filter in. When this is the case:

- Never speculate about the cause of an accident to the media. Tell them what you have at the time and that as more information comes to hand you will keep them informed. If you do this the media will be very sympathetic to your cause.
- Don't ignore the media or make no comment. You can be assured that the journalist will publish a story on a crisis. It is important that you have some control. Journalists who travel to a scene are not going to go away empty handed. If you are seen not to cooperate or be interviewed then that is exactly what could be reported. "A tragic accident has occurred yet the school is refusing to comment". This will then lead the journalist to speculate, which is the last thing you would need in this situation.
- If the crisis continues over an extended period of time and the media are involved, it may be appropriate for the Principal or the Education Director to be at the crisis scene.

THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

It is recommended that the following personnel be considered for a School's CIM Team.

- Principal*
- Deputy Principal*
- School Chaplain/ Counsellor*
- Education Director*
- Nominated person from the office staff*.
- School Chaplain or local Minister*
- Head counsellor (CIM)
- Involved Year Coordinator or Class Teacher.

* These permanent members of the CIM team will be responsible for the maintenance of the school's capacity to effectively respond to critical incidents.

Give consideration to gender in the selection of team members

NB. It may be impractical or impossible to have all of the personnel on the CIM Team at every meeting. It is advisable however, that they be kept informed and included when able.

ROLES OF A CIM TEAM BEFORE A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- utilise this guide to formulate your own CIM plan.
- develop preventative strategies and specific plans to cater for different foreseeable incidents (eg procedures in the event of a bomb threat, fire, hostage situation, death/suicide on campus etc.) including allocation of specific responsibilities to staff members.
- have specific plans checked by relevant authorities. eg police recommendations for bomb threats and hostage procedures.
- define roles of individual members of the team and other key personnel.
- the identification of specific professional development needs related to potential critical incidents and the organisation of staff attendance at appropriate courses. (office staff should be trained before, not during a critical incident. eg. what to record at the time of bomb threat.)
- recognising that assigned tasks may vary "on the day", prepare a list of suggested names to assign to various management tasks from the "CIM Checklist" (see following pages).
- establish your list of emergency contacts and resources.
- establish a network of contacts within the community.
- establish reciprocal arrangements with other institutions for the sharing of resources and personnel during a crisis.
- make up a list of counselling personnel from other Adventist institutions and the community who may be called at short notice to assist during and after a crisis.
- familiarise staff with the potential incidents identified and the arrangements made by the school to address these situations, including the "CIM Checklist".
- establish a protocol with the Education Director for the calling of counsellors. ie. from where & who pays?
- where practical liaise with other CIM teams for the purpose of gaining experience in CIM or debrief with other CIM teams during their evaluation of an incident.
- present the school's CIM plan to staff for their training and input.

- a CIM team should have prepared a chain of command in the event of the Principal or Education Director being unavailable.
- make an annual review of the CIM plans in the school.

ROLES OF A CIM TEAM DURING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- the decision to call a CIM team together to manage a crisis should be made by the Principal in conjunction with the Education Director.
- evaluate the extent of the impact on the school and community and determine the number of counsellors that need to be called in.
- appoint the head counsellor for the crisis. This person will move among staff, student, office, administration and counselling areas monitoring the situation and providing support where needed. The head counsellor will also coordinate counselling activities and advising staff and administration.
- act on the predetermined protocol to call counsellors and other support personnel.
- in the event of a crisis the team may function with reduced numbers until all members are able to be present.
- assist the Principal to assign responsibilities from the "CIM Checklist".
- appoint a person to receive and allocate student referrals for counselling.
- monitor how staff effectiveness is being impacted by the crisis.
- meet as frequently as practical to ensure the effectiveness of the response to the crisis.
- assess the response and keep Principal advised on aspects and development of the situation.

ROLES OF A CIM TEAM AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- meet with staff and others involved to debrief on the management of the crisis.
- the CIM team should make a final evaluation.
- modify the school's CIM procedures.

CIM EVALUATION

After a crisis, evaluate your plan with the participants.

- Was the plan effective? If some parts were not, why not?
- Were the survivors' needs met effectively? Partially? Not at all? What were the problems? How can they be rectified?
- Were there any areas where further planning would have been helpful? If so, what were they? How could these areas be improved and changes implemented?
- Did the key participants know their roles and carry out their responsibilities effectively?
- Was responsibility evenly distributed or were some participants too weighed down to be fully effective? How can responsibilities be redistributed?
- Based on your experience, what other factors should be considered in modifying your plan?
- In this evaluation have you identified the special characteristics of this crisis and taken those aspects into account for future planning.
- Request feedback from the families of the student's most affected by the incident.

**Critical
Incident
Management**

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Assigned To

Is the critical incident confirmed? ?

PHASE 1 INITIAL RESPONSE

Contact emergency services if needed.

111

Ensure the safety of students and staff.

Is additional security required?

Inform Education Director.

09 2625620,
021 988 791

Inform relevant Ministers.

355 4535,3545447
021217 9044

Church No. 3590977.

Contact the immediate family.

(in person in the case of a death)

All Police calls are directed to the Principal.

Receptionist

All Media phone calls are directed to the Principal.

Receptionist

Principal and Education Director to decide if it is necessary to gather a Critical Incident Management Team.

Do additional fact finding and/or clarification.

PHASE 2 EXTERNAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Fax available information on incident to Conference Office. (Ensure that the fax states if the family concerned has been informed. Update as appropriate.)

Education Director will contact the Police to implement media ban, if necessary.

Contact School Board Chairperson.

If students are likely to find out about incident before school at the station or bus stop, send staff member to monitor and normalise responses. (ie. assure students that their reaction are OK)

Appoint appropriate staff member to take all incident phone enquires. (keep updated with new info)

PHASE 3 INTERNAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Appoint reliable less involved "message runners"

Prepare 1st Fact Sheets for teachers and students.

Call all teaching and ancillary staff to briefing meeting.

Home room teachers given Student Fact Sheet, Teacher Referral/Counselling Intake form, CI Response Guide for Teachers and Grief Awareness Sheet. Assign roles and responsibilities. Outline how the school routine will be interrupted. Suggest classroom strategies.

Promise/provide further updated Fact Sheets to follow as new information is obtained.

Ensure home room teacher supplies absentee list to administration.

Ensure all student phone calls go through the office. (ie. disconnect public phones and modems)

Account for the attendance of all students.

PHASE 4 SUPPORT RESPONSE (DAY 1)

Ascertain the need for relief staff to release staff most affected by the incident, or staff who are delegated to special roles.

Place a good supply of light refreshments and drinks in the staff room. (Personnel often forget to eat or drink during a Critical Incident)

Arrange for meeting and counselling rooms.

Appoint a person to receive and allocate student referrals for counselling.

Identify students 'at risk' and distressed, withdraw and provide debriefing.

If routines and rules are to be collapsed for a few days turn off the regular school bells.

Ring parents if a student is likely to arrive home in a distressed state.

Facilitate comings and goings of students and ensure leave slips are available. (make sure students are aware of the correct procedures)

Inform subject teachers, part-time teachers, librarians and other relevant staff of students withdrawn from their class.

Provide tissues and drinking water for counselling rooms or where any formal groups are gathered.

Write a letter to inform parents of the incident.

Cater to the needs of the visitors to the school.

Call absent staff and absent students' families to inform.

Identify close friends and peers to be advised.

Visitation of affected family by members of the school community and counsellor.

Staff gathering for debriefing at the close of the day. _____

Critical Incident Management Team and
Counselling Team meet for evaluation of the day
and planning for the following days. _____

Contact supportive community agencies if needed. _____

PHASE 5 SUPPORT RESPONSE (FOLLOWING DAYS)

Updated Fact Sheets for staff, students and parents. _____

In the event of a death plan appropriate school
involvement in the funeral. _____

If the school is to be involved appoint a liaison person
to work with the family and the undertaker. _____

Provide "Parent Permission" slips for funeral
attendance. _____

Arrange for school transportation to and from funeral. _____

Provide information for students on how to deal with
a funeral. _____

PHASE 6 NORMALISATION (GENERALLY POST FUNERAL)

Organise time and format of closure and return to
normal routine. (Closure may be as simple as a get-
together for the staff, and for the students a gathering
after the funeral) _____

Organise follow-up Grief & Loss Guest Speaker for
school community. _____

Contact the families at appropriate intervals. _____

Ensure that ongoing professional support is received
by those significantly affected. _____

Monitor affected students for delayed or prolonged
grieving. _____

Consider appropriate ways to remember the loss. _____

PHASE 7 EVALUATION

Seek group feedback from students about the incident and it's management.

Set the date, time and place for a comprehensive evaluation of your school's management of the crisis. Determine who will be involved.

Ensure that appropriate amendments are made to your school's plan.

Report your conclusions to your Education Director and School Board.

Pass on your conclusions to the Union Education Director so that this "Guide" can be improved.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

<i>ORGANISATION</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>PHONE</i>	<i>FAX</i>
Emergency police/fire/ambulance	Russell	111	
Local Police Station		357 9999	
Local Fire Brigade		357 8025	
Electric Power Lines		351 0510	
Gas		351 7800	
Local Ambulance Station		351 1605	
Local Hospital Casualty Section		356 9169	
State Emergency Services/Civil Defence		356 8199	
Poisons Information Centre		03474 7000	
Children Young Persons and their Family Services		952 0200	
Victim support		351 3873	
Salvation Army - Crisis Centre		351 2442	
Salvation Army - Care Line	24hr line	357 7540	
Youth Life Line		357 3077	
Drug-Arm		356 3337	
School Maintance	Steve Higgins	025 579 169	

CIM TEAM MEMBERS

Name	Work	Fax	Home	Mobile
Brian Mercer P	354 1059	355 1350	354 2072	021 466 069
Terry Rogers DP			354 6734	
Lynsay Wells Pas	354 68		354 0522	021 299 6122
Owen ED D	09 262 5620			021 988 791
Taupo Tani Y W	354 6804		358 8072	025 200 7653
Sue Mercer Sch Counselor				
Van Wyk Pas	359 0977		355 4535	021 217 9044
Alison Tooley AP			355 1682	
Stan Walsh AP			355 1745	
Andrew Chem BUS 4482			356 7232	021 125
Maria Henry	354 6304 <i>Dorm</i>		356 1477 (<i>Flat</i>) 355 2584 (<i>Home</i>)	025 621 5526
Roy Henry	354 6306 <i>Dorm</i>		356 1475	021 377 879
Pamerston North SDA Primary			3576256(<i>Fax/Phone</i>)	354 9181
School Mobile				025 276 4605

MEDIA CONTACTS

Name	Work	Fax	Mobile
.....			
.....			
.....			

.....

STAFF FACT SHEET

Example

Date:

On (day) evening, (date), (number) students from Year “Z” were involved in a car accident at (location) at approximately (time). The car rolled once, and (name) died as a result of injuries s/he sustained. The (number) other students in the car were (names). We understand that the car was being driven at the time by (name). (Name) was held in hospital overnight for observation and apart from some bruising there were no other injuries. On Saturday afternoon a meeting was held with (principal, assistant principal, counsellors, year coordinator) to formulate a procedure for dealing with this tragic situation. Due to the holidays communication of this information to staff and students has been hampered.

(Counsellor’s name) has been in frequent contact with each of the students involved and they will receive the most professional care we can provide.

On (day) evening we opened the school with an informal invitation for students to have a central meeting place, if they so needed. To our surprise approximately 50-60 students turned up, some parents and staff as well. (Counsellors) then conducted a debriefing with the students and commenced some initial grief expression and normalisation of grief processes. This then led into a prayer where we gave thanks for the life of (name). Mr and Mrs (name) joined us later in the evening which was a very healing experience for the (number) surviving students who were in the accident.

The funeral was held at (church) on (day) last. Staff, students, parents and friends gathered at the school after the service.

At this time we can only offer our prayers and support for Mr & Mrs (name) and (siblings names). Our focus now turns to the (number) surviving students, the other students of Year “Z” and all those in the school community who have been affected by this tragedy. The counsellor (Counsellors name) will now explain the structures that we have put in place.

STUDENT FACT SHEET

Example

On (date), (number) of our Year “X” students were involved in a very serious car accident at (location), at approximately (time).

One of the students, (name) was killed as a result of the accident. His/her funeral was held last (day) at the (name of Church) at (suburb), and later we had a large gathering of friends and family plus some members of the school community back here at school.

It is not helpful at this time for any students to be passing around rumours, nor making judgements, especially when they do not know the full story.

At this very sad time we can only offer our prayers and support to (name)’s family and to the people who knew (name), especially the Year “X” students.

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

Example A

Dear Parents,

With this letter your son/daughter will have told you that one of our Year “X” students, (name), has tragically died. (Name) took his/her own life yesterday morning.

Our heartfelt prayers and thoughts go out to his/her parents, his/her (brothers/sisters), and to his/her friends, especially over these days as they struggle with hurt that his/her death has brought. May they find comfort in our support and in our God who loves them.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of this very sad news and to alert you to some reactions that may be triggered within our School community and even your own family. Such a loss can heighten people’s emotions, especially those of young people. You may find that your son/daughter/s behaviour is different from normal. S/he may be unusually quiet, or find it difficult to concentrate on her/his school work. S/he may exhibit a range of emotions, such as shock, sadness, anger, or guilt. If s/he did not know (name) well, the death may have little immediate impact on him/her at all.

Your son/daughter may wish to share some of their feelings or thoughts with you. I would encourage you to be open to this, even if it may be uncomfortable for you. S/he may also wish to talk about the situation among his/her friends. Additional support and counselling is available at the school, for students, their parents and teachers. Many have already been helped by the expertise of these professionals and I recommend them to you.

Yours sincerely

Principal

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

Example B

Dear Parents

This week our community was shocked and saddened by the very tragic death of (name). The suddenness and very nature of his/her death are very difficult for us to comprehend and accept. I believe it is important that you are informed of the response of the school and of what support is being given to our students in enabling them to work through their many and very different feelings and reactions of this news.

The school and Conference Department of Education has offered support through the counsellors who are leading a team of support staff at the school for as long as they are needed. These trained counsellors are here to work with both staff and students and their experience and expertise ensure that the appropriate care is given to all who need it.

Since (day) this team has worked with me and other staff at the school, especially in the planning for the return of our students today. All the students were informed of the circumstances of (name)'s death at roll class this morning and were given the opportunity for follow-up discussion with teachers and counsellors individually and in groups.

Your son or daughter may want to talk with you about their reactions to this overwhelming tragedy. It is important that they are encouraged to do so freely and honestly. Later we will have a meeting with parents to discuss these events.

At such a difficult time of grief and sadness we turn to our faith for solace and for strength. We share a belief in a loving God who knows and cares for each one of us and who gives us the promise of Eternal Life. I ask you to keep in your prayers (name)'s family, in particular his/her sister/brother who is at this school. May they find comfort in our support and in our God who loves them.

We will grow through this experience by supporting each other and by responding as a community of faith.

Yours sincerely

Critical Incident Management

A RESPONSE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

INFORMING STUDENTS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Ideally the students will be given information about the critical incident in groups by teachers. This is a crucial step and is very demanding. If you feel that you cannot do this at the time, then do not feel any pressure to do so. Simply let someone know so that alternatives can be arranged. Do not be embarrassed or afraid to seek counselling for yourself.

INFORMATION GIVING

Start the session by talking to the students. It would be best to get through all of the Student Fact Sheet before taking questions or allowing comment. This is negotiable, but if you feel the need for structure, this is a good one. The initial talk should go on for about 5 minutes.

- a. Tell the facts.
Here you tell the students the official information as per the fact sheet. Careful attention to the wording is important. If you are asked for clarification, simply repeat the part of the information that is relevant to the question. It would not be appropriate to be placing interpretations or attributing motives at this point.
- b. If you are comfortable doing so, talk about your memories and feelings. Mention some possible responses.
Feelings: Sadness, fears, confusion, guilt, anger etc.
Thoughts: "Why", "If only. . .?" "What if?"
Possible reactions are: crying, loss of focus, irritable, unreasonable, withdrawn, disbelief, shock, denial, covering up feelings, rationalising, self preoccupation, rage, shaking, questioning, loss of appetite, fatigue, holding, talking, aloneness and guilt.
- c. Tell them the plan. eg.
 - i. "After this announcement classes will resume. If people need to opt out, they should feel free to do so with permission."
 - ii. "Counselling support is available at the school for as long as it will be required. Simply ask to be referred or directed."
Explain the procedure for seeking and receiving counselling. eg. teacher has to fill out Referral/Counselling Intake form.

Inform students that they are doing the right thing if it is with permission and is supervised.

NB. Additional supervision and extra vigilance are very important.

ALLOW DISCUSSION, COMMENT AND QUESTIONS

It is entirely unpredictable what the students will do at this point.

If the response is subdued, thoughtful or very weak, let it go and get on with a planned task and monitor reactions.

Some students may not wish to participate in a discussion about death. Try to accommodate this.

If students have things to say, the following may guide your responses:

- Acknowledge feelings clearly. No feelings are unacceptable of themselves and tend to be a more positive influence when acknowledged.
- Try to make a response (verbal or non-verbal) to every student statement which has a significant feeling content.
- Take all issues calmly and assertively. Being truthful engenders recovery better than cover-ups.
- Discourage exaggerated glorification of the deceased.
- Challenge and firmly debunk all rumours that are contrary to the fact sheet or that have the effect of apportioning blame or motives on anyone. Encourage students to do the same.
- Suffering and pain should not be linked with guilt, punishment or sin. Keep them separate.
- Write down the names of students who appear to be experiencing distress and pass the list on to the Counselling Team immediately after the session.
- If hysteria arises, move quickly to calm upset students or have them accompanied to support personnel for further debriefing. Call for additional support rather than lose the battle with hysteria.
- Be patient. Grieving takes its own time.
- Give students the choice to leave the room in groups of two or more to go to a supervised area where they can support each other in their grief.

CONCLUDING/MOVING ON

As feeling settles, begin to wind up. If it looks like going on without settling, warn that you will be concluding in a few minutes and that those who still need to talk should seek further support as outlined in the plan.

Recap the plan. Restate what will be expected of students next and remind them of the individuality of the grieving now in progress.

Try to have a concrete activity ready should it be the most appropriate thing to do.

THE AFTERMATH

After the initial meeting with students, the process of grieving will continue and may escalate. At this time the teacher's role is to provide the ordinary curriculum structure for the vast majority of students who are not significantly affected. Distressed students need to be referred to more specialist counselling for debriefing. They need to be allowed to seek help within the constraints of teacher-granted permission (ie. Teacher Referral/Counselling Intake form from the teacher who would normally have them). Students should be (as always) supervised in their activities at school.

Any student whom you feel needs follow-up should be referred. Fill out a Teacher Referral/Counselling Intake form and give it to the person appointed by the CIM Team. Directly invite distressed students to seek help. If they do not want to, affirm their decision, but still refer them.

GRIEF AWARENESS - DO'S AND DONT'S

1. Do spend time with grieving people. Refer them to counsellors.
Don't try to do everything for them - be with them.

LISTEN AND REFER RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO "RESCUE".

2. Do accept their behaviour, eg. screaming, normally inappropriate language, crying, being quiet, laughing.
Don't inhibit them, eg. through lecturing, reasoning, giving advice.

STOPPING THE BEHAVIOUR DOESN'T STOP THE FEELINGS.

3. Do accept their feelings, even negative feelings. eg. anger, guilt, self-accusation.
Don't try to stop them through reasoning, pep-talks, lectures.

FEELINGS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE EXPRESSED.

4. Do let the grieving person choose their own way of experiencing grief.
Don't allow any student to be alone. Make sure that at least one other student is with them.

GRIEF IS INDIVIDUAL.

5. Do let grieving people choose how long they grieve.
Don't expect grieving to occur in sequential stages.

GRIEF DOESN'T ALWAYS FOLLOW THE SAME PATTERN.

6. Do share your concern with a trusted colleague when anxious about a person's management of grief.
Don't try to provide all the answers.

SHARE THE CARING

7. Do remain on the lookout for delayed grief.
Don't assume that student's who show little or no emotion are OK

GRIEF DOES NOT FOLLOW A TIMETABLE.

Afterwards:

Be aware that certain situations such as sporting events, birthdays, or the anniversary of the incident itself may awaken distress. The school may need to be prepared to reintroduce additional assistance as required and provide opportunities for inservice and training as required.

SUICIDE AWARENESS - AFTER A DEATH

A critical incident can result in circumstances that trigger suicidal tendencies in students, teachers or parents. It is important for school personnel to recognise the possible signs of suicide. Teachers who have reason to believe that a student may be considering suicide should immediately contact their School Counsellor or Principal to gain specialist help.

Danger signs that someone may be considering suicide include:

- a previous suicide attempt
- verbal threats
- changes in behaviour (eg. withdrawal)
- talking about or being in possession of suicide facilitating materials
- unusual purchase (eg. weapons, rope)
- giving away personal possessions
- signs of depression (anxiety, restlessness)
- problems in school (drop in grades, emotional outbursts)
- preoccupation with themes of death (artwork, essays)

A person who is considering suicide needs to know that others care.

DO:

- be direct (talk openly, ask direct questions)
- be a good listener (don't make judgments)
- make time available
- get help (act quickly) - always take any threat of suicide seriously.

DON'T:

- sidestep the issue
- keep what you know a secret (do not allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy, do not keep such a promise)
- leave the person alone
- feel responsible for saving the person (you cannot control another's decisions)

Critical Incident Management

PHOTO COPY MASTERS

TEACHER REFERRAL /COUNSELLING INTAKE FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

This section to be filled in by referring teacher

Date & Time referred: _____ Name of student: _____

Year and Home Room: _____ Referring Teacher : _____

Reason for referral: _____

This section to be filled in and kept by the school counsellor

Seen by (counsellor): _____ Time _____

Assessment summary: _____

Recommendation: _____

Assessment of risk:

Low Risk

Medium Risk

High Risk

Student needs to be seen again: today within 24 hours in __ days

Next Appointment : _____ day _____ time.

Issues to be dealt with: _____

student's name

Your next appointment with

counsellor's name

is on _____ the ___ / ___ / 199
day

at _____ am. pm.
time

signature of your supervising teacher

student's name

Your next appointment with

counsellor's name

is on _____ the ___ / ___ / 199
day

at _____ am. pm.
time

signature of your supervising teacher

student's name

Your next appointment with

counsellor's name

is on _____ the ___ / ___ / 199
day

at _____ am. pm.
time

signature of your supervising teacher

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