



# CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

DATE: 4 DECEMBER 2007

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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Paul's College is a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition and as such is concerned about the welfare of all members of the community, including staff, students and parents. In times of adversity and emotional distress, it is vital that the school administration and members of the community work to console the grief stricken, enable healing and offer support for those who suffer as a result of critical incidents.

## **WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?**

A critical incident is any event or situation faced by staff or students that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the scene or later at work or home.

## **A CRITICAL INCIDENT MIGHT INCLUDE**

- Unexpected death of a student or parent.
- A student or parent who experiences serious injury or mutilation.
- The death or serious injury of a colleague.
- A situation that threatens the safety of staff.
- A situation where large numbers of casualties are dealt with, as in a major trauma.
- Any situation that evokes a strong emotional reaction.

## **PRINCIPLES**

St Paul's College is committed to:

- Responding with precision and sensitivity to critical incidents as they affect members of the community.
- Keeping members of the community informed of events and aware of follow-up procedures.
- Being inclusive of all who are affected by the critical incident.
- Preparing necessary professional support from agencies who are trained to deal with critical incidents.

**PROCEDURE FOR INTERVENTION FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

CRITICAL INCIDENT



ASSESSMENT OF INCIDENT BY  
PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL EXECUTIVE



CONTACT CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
OFFICE FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT



FORMAL DE-BRIEFING BY  
QUALIFIED COUNSELLORS



IF APPROPRIATE, INDIVIDUALS  
REFERRED OR OFFERED COUNSELLING



REVIEW NEEDS AND ARRANGE  
ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE IF NECESSARY

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DE-BRIEFING**

Critical Incident Stress De-briefing (CISD) is an organised approach to assist staff and students in dealing with a critical incident to minimise short-term and long-term stress that may arise.

“An early, brief and focussed counselling intervention designed to assist workers cope with their psychological responses (including emotional and physical responses) in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic or critical incident ...”

Workcover Bulletin

- Normalise reactions to a critical incident;
- Create a climate with regard to critical incident stress that encourages those involved to recognise and deal with it in a positive manner and in a supportive environment;
- Lessen the impact of a critical incident on the people involved and to facilitate recover in those who are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal events;
- Prevent the development or persistence of unresolved problems as a result of a critical incident.

## **PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DE-BRIEFING**

- Critical Incident Stress De-briefing is not counselling or supervision but a procedure that allows those involved in an incident to deal with it immediately.
- A Critical Incident Stress De-briefing only addresses the participant’s psychological reactions to an incident and is not a critique of the performance of those at the scene.
- Critical Incident De-briefing will be confidential and undertaken through specialised support systems including the School Counsellor and CEO.

## **ACTION PLAN CHECK LIST**

### **A. Information Gathering**

- Inform Principal
- Confirm incident / collect reliable information
- Contact Emergency Services (see attached list).

**B. Plan**

Principal convenes a meeting of the Critical Incident Team / Leadership Team and relevant staff to:

- Appoint the management plan co-ordinator
- Outline proposed Action Plan – as below
- Assign tasks (as below) to appropriate personnel
- Appoint press / media liaison person. (Must be done through Principal's office)
- Appoint co-ordinator of counselling / support
- Appoint contact person for parents (where necessary).

**C. Inform / Consult**

- Staff – Briefing and Management Plan
- Students who need to know – assembly or specified group meetings
- Parents who need to know – phone – letter
- Catholic Education Office
- Provincial and Trustees of the Christian Brothers Holy Spirit Province)
- Chairman of School Board
- Legal Representatives
- Relevant outside agencies.

**D. Allocate Resources**

- Control use of phones – allocate specific lines for incoming and outgoing calls
- Arrange for school security as required
- Designate:
  - a) Assembly point for parents
  - b) Media Room
  - c) Recovery room for staff and / or students.

**E. Intervene**

- Liaise with outside agencies (re defusing, de-briefing, counselling)
- Defuse affected staff / students (within 8 hours)
- Identify student / staff needing further support
- Provide initial support / defusing for parents (within 8 hours)
- Arrange de-briefing where necessary (after 5-7 days)
- Communication of sympathy / concern, etc. to affected parents.

**F. Provide**

- Information / letter to affected parents
- Information to Press / Media
- Supportive information handouts for parents
- Supportive information handouts for staff re:
  - a) Personal response
  - b) Understanding student responses
- Review of class work / curriculum for affected year levels.

## **G. Faith Response**

- Liaise with REC
- Liaise re funeral arrangements:
  - a) Assistance, e.g. music, liturgy
  - b) Students and staff attending
- Memorial Service / Ritual.

## **H. On-going Recovery**

- Support for Principal
- Support for affected staff, including office staff
- Support for Critical Incident Team (daily de-briefing)
- Long-term initiatives (community and curriculum)
- Long-term monitoring / counselling of those affected.

## **I. Review**

Meeting to evaluate the College's response (after approximately 1 week) and recovery (after 3 months) in case of serious Critical Incidents.

## **IMPORTANT EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

Human Resources Co-ordinator CEO	8301 6600
Crisis Management CEO	8301 6600
Fire, Police, Ambulance	000
Centacare Catholic Family Services	8210 8200
Crisis Care	131 611
Lifeline	131 114
Legal Aid	8205 0111
Legal Aid – Telephone Advice	8205 0155
Poisons Information Centre	131 126
Rape & Sexual Assault Services	1800 817 421 8226 8777
Victims of Crime	1800 182 368
Youth Call	8277 4400