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CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Each year schools may be confronted by a crisis situation that affects the school and its community.

The aims of developing a management plan are

- to outline the help and care provided to each member of the whole school community affected
- to ensure that any such incident causes as little distress and suffering as possible
- to ensure that there is a co-ordinated response with clear roles and responsibilities
- to assist a return to normality within the school as soon as possible.

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

A critical incident is an incident that puts members of the whole school community at risk.

A critical incident often arises suddenly.

Critical incidents may occur in school, or out of school, but both types can have a major impact on staff and students.

An incident might be designated as critical where

- the health and wellbeing of students and staff are at risk
- the result is likely to lead to serious disruption to the running (teaching & learning) of the school
- there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on the school.

DEFINING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The life of any school is affected by many and various traumas such as

- Bereavement
- Suicide of a student, teacher, parent
- Death of a staff member or student
- Serious illness of a close relative of a student or staff member
- Abuse/Assault – physical, mental, emotional, sexual
- School fire, explosion or other emergency
- Serious violence or threat of same in the school or school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Intrusion into the school
- An illness such as meningitis within the school or the local community
- An accident on a school trip
- Death or injury to students or staff members while on a school outing for example a school bus crash
- An accident to a student or staff member while out of school on a tour, match etc.
- Tragedies involving children from many schools
- Civil disturbances.

Clonkeen College is committed to addressing the issues of death, loss and tragedy in a comprehensive manner and this policy document will attempt to outline structures and strategies which the school has in place in anticipation of such events within the school community.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The purpose of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is to deal with any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the school.

The CIMT will exercise a leadership role providing direction, guidance, containment and support when a critical incident occurs.

The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process.

CRITICAL INCIDENT PREVENTION

In an effort to being as prepared as possible for any such incident, the Principal of the school or a person designated by them for example the Health and Safety Officer, will be responsible for the following on-going procedures

- Organisation of practice drills to test the plan in place in the event of a Critical Incident
- Regular review of the plan
- Arranging relevant Staff Development Programmes, where necessary
- Monitor staff and student adherence to the school Health & Safety Policy

STEPS IN CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Short Term Actions

Once a critical incident comes to the attention of a member of the school community, s/he should, where possible and practical, inform the senior management of the school.

However, where it is apparent that an emergency situation exists, it may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.

The below procedures to be followed, and their order, will depend on the particular incident that has occurred and the particular arrangements in place in a school.

1. Gather the facts
2. Contact appropriate agencies
3. Convene a meeting with the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Arrange supervision of students
5. Inform staff
6. Organise timetable for the day
7. Inform Parents/Guardians
8. Inform students
9. Make contact with the bereaved family
10. Organise Support
11. Prepare a written statement
12. Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary
13. Funeral Services

Medium Term Actions

This may include

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours
2. Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents
3. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
4. Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service if not already done in the short term.

Longer Term Actions

This may include

1. Monitor students for signs of continuing distress - a referral for professional help may be necessary
2. Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
3. Formation of a forum / group which would meet on a regular basis (monthly) for students to talk and share. This would be facilitated by staff and/or outside professionals
4. Inform new staff of school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
5. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with memorials / anniversaries