



ALEXANDRA COLLEGE DUBLIN

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

1. Introduction

The policy has been formulated in consultation with staff, students, parents and the Board of Management of Alexandra College. Alexandra College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment. The school has formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day including:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- SPHE policy
- Guidance and Counselling Plan
- Social Media Policy

2. Definition of a Critical Incident

In a school context NEPS suggests the following definition:

“A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school”.

Types of incidents might include but are not limited to the following:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- An accident involving members of the school community
- Serious damage to the school building by fire, flood, vandalism
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

3. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

At the time of a crisis there are a large number of tasks to be carried out. By identifying key roles in advance of an incident, there is a clear statement of **who will do what, when and how**. It is important that no one individual is over-burdened and that important elements in the response are not forgotten. Generally the Principal/ Head of Junior School will play a key role. Staff members such as the guidance counsellor, chaplain and a member of the SEN or student support teams will have an important contribution to make when an incident occurs because of their particular training and expertise.

The Critical Incident Management Team includes the following:

- The Principal/Head of Junior School
- Deputy Principal
- Administration Staff
- Chaplain
- Guidance Counsellor
- Year Heads
- Head of Residence and Residence House Representative

In the absence of the Principal/Head of the Junior School, the Deputy Principal will assume the role of team leader.

4. Role of the Team Leader

- Gathers accurate information about the incident
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM, DES, NEPS, SEC as appropriate
- In cases of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family
- Maintains an up-to-date list of contact numbers
- Manages response to events on the basis of an agreed plan

5. Critical Incident Management Team Duties

The following are key personnel relating to the CMIT. The team leader may delegate the responsibilities to other members as she deems appropriate.

6. Areas of Responsibility

The following are areas of responsibility to be dealt with by members of the CMIT during a critical incident:

a. Staff Liaison

- Care of and communication with staff including ancillary staff
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the proposed routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Ensures that she is aware of staff members who may be vulnerable and makes contact with them individually
- Informs them of the services of the EAS

b. Student Liaison

- Care of and communication with students
- Liaises with Student Council
- Organises the supervision of students in school
- Provides support for students

- Identifies and monitor students at risk and informs relevant staff
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a “quiet” room where agreed
- Co-ordinates information from Tutors and Year Heads about students of concern

c. Community/Agency Liaison

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of ACA parent reps
- Is a resource for emergency support services and external contacts/resources
- Liaises with outside agencies for support and onward referral
- Checks credentials of all individuals offering support
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

d. Parent Liaison

- Arranges parent meetings
- Facilitates and manages the above meetings
- Maintains a record of parents in attendance
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the school system

e. Media Liaison

The Principal of the College is responsible for all and any communication with the Media.

- Hypothetical situations will be discussed by the Principal with the team/BOM/ACA as appropriate and issues that may arise and how they will be responded to (e.g. Media interviewing students, photographers on site etc) will be coordinagted by the Principal
- In the event of an incident will liaise where necessary with the relevant outside agencies
- Will draw up a press statement in conjunction with the Board of Management and give media briefings and interviews as agreed with the Board of Management

f. Secretarial/Admin Staff

- Ensure the office is manned at all times
- Ensure that all relevant contact numbers are kept up to date at all times:
 - Parents and guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency Services
- Take telephone calls and keep record of them, and note those that require a response
- Ensures that template letters are on the school system in advance and ready for adapting if and when required
- Prepares and sends out letters and emails
- Keeps records of all activities

g. Emergency Service Liaison

- Liaise with Gardaí and emergency services
- Ensure that **information is accurate and verified** before being shared

h. SEN

- Liaises with Year Heads in relation to students who might be particularly affected
- Liaises with relevant agencies such as NEPS where appropriate
- Keeps records of all meetings with students and or parents

i. Pastoral Care Team

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff an opportunity to ask questions and articulate concerns, outlines the routine/plan for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identifying vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually
- Advises staff on the availability of EAS
- Liaises with outside agencies for onward referral and support
- Updates team on involvement of external agencies
- In case of bereavement contacts bereaved family with team leader

j. Chaplain

- Liaises with Deputy Principal/Head of Junior School and Guidance Counsellor regarding support for students
- Organises a service for staff and or students if appropriate

7. General Regulations Associated with a Critical Incident

a. Record Keeping

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will document all phone calls made and received, all meetings held and interventions used.

The school admin staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls and queries, sending letters and photocopying necessary materials.

b. Confidentiality

The management and staff of Alexandra College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the parties involved in any incident and must be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

All staff members must bear this in mind, and try in as far as possible to ensure that students also do this. For instance, the term “suicide” will NOT be used unless there is solid information that a death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consent to its use. The phrase ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be more appropriate. Similarly, the phrase ‘murder’ should not be used, as

this could have serious legal implications. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Emotive language is best avoided.

c. Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident occurring, there should be a room available for use exclusively as the 'control centre'. Should the need arise, further rooms may need to be allocated.

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The concourse/ lecture theatre will be used for meetings with students
- The Career Guidance/Year Heads rooms will be used for individual meetings with students
- The Principal's Office will be used for possible media briefings

8. Consultation and Communication Regarding the Critical Incident Policy

The plan will be reviewed and updated annually. When this document has been agreed and approved, copies will be disseminated to the CIMT, the BOM, Council, the ACA, and the Students Council. Copies will be available on the College website.

APPENDICES

- A. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**
- B. SHORT TERM ACTION - DAY 1**
- C. MEDIUM TERM ACTION - DAY 2**
- D. FOLLOW UP – BEYOND 72 HOURS**
- E. EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**
- F. INFORM STUDENTS OF INCIDENT**
- G. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA/SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT**

APPENDIX A

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

TEAM LEADER: The Principal/Head of the Junior School

STAFF LIAISON: The Guidance Counsellor/Head of the Junior School

STUDENT LIAISON: Deputy Principal of Senior School/ Deputy Head of Junior School

COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON: The Principal

PARENT LIAISON: The Deputy Principal/ Head of the Junior School

ADMINISTRATOR: Rachel O'Farrell/Catherine Peters/ Hilary O'Donnell

EMERGENCY SERVICES LIAISON: The SEN Co-ordinator

BOM CHAIRPERSON: Peter O'Grady Walshe

BOM MEMBERS: Peter O'Grady Walshe, Tony Sheil, Judith Woodworth, John Coman, Margaret Farrar, Valerie Beatty, Catherine O'Donovan, Elaine Whitty, Christopher Burge, Aileen Hickey, Aideen Corr, Barbara Ennis

COUNCIL MEMBERS: His Grace, the Most Reverend Michael Jackson, Peter O'Grady Walshe, Tony Sheil, Judith Woodworth, John Coman, Margaret Farrar, Valerie Beatty, Carol Reynolds, Asa Bjork, David Grindle, Andrew Nugent, Nicholas Ashmore, Elizabeth Oldham

Appendix B: SHORT TERM ACTIONS - DAY 1

TASK	NAME
Gather accurate information:	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Convene a CMIT meeting - specify time and place clearly:	Principal/JS Head
Contact external agencies:	Guidance Counsellor
Arrange supervision for students: Year Heads in SS	Deputy Principal of SS and JS and
Hold staff meeting:	Principal/JS Head
Agree a schedule for the day:	The Team
Inform students: Guidance Counsellor (close friends may need to be told separately)	Principal/JS Head and
Compile a list of vulnerable students SEN Coordinator	Guidance Counsellor, Year Heads,
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media:	The College Principal and BOM
Inform parents guardians: the Admin Team	Principal/JS Head through
Hold end of day staff briefing:	Principal/JS Head and

Appendix C MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS DAY 2

TASK	NAME
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1: Principal/JS Head and Guidance Counsellor	
Meet external agencies:	Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Head of JS
Meet whole staff: Head and Guidance Counsellor	Principal/Deputy Principal/JS
Arrange support for students, staff parents/guardians:Principal/JS Head and Guidance Counsellor	
Visit the injured if appropriate: Counsellor/Year Heads	Principal/JS Head and Guidance
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements if appropriate: Principal	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service:	Principal
Make decisions about school closure:	BOM

Appendix D FOLLOW -UP BEYOND 72 HOURS

TASK	NAME
Monitor students:	All staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals: Head	Guidance Counsellor/ JS
Plan for return of bereaved student(s):	Year Head
Decide on memorials and anniversaries, if appropriate:	Principal/Head of JS and Chaplain

Appendix E Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staff-room, school office and Principal's office etc.)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	
HOSPITAL	
FIRE BRIGADE	
LOCAL GPs	
HSE/Primary Care Team/Primary Care Centre/CAMHS/Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention	
SCHOOL INSPECTOR	
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	
DES/ETB	
INTO/ASTI/TUI	
CLERGY	
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057

Appendix G

Dealing with the Media: Sample Announcement

This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school.

In some instances it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals.

This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.

My name is **(Name)** and I am the principal of **(Name)** School. We learned this morning of the death of **(one of our students or Name of student)**. This is a terrible tragedy for family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with **(Name)** family and friends.

Name of student/students was a **(5th year boy)** and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.