



# Critical Incident Recovery

## POLICY

### 1. Purpose:

- 1.1 Responding to a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved:
- The school may become directly or indirectly involved in a tragic or traumatic event. The incident may occur in the school environment or outside.
  - A critical incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance.  
It may involve staff, students or those close to them. The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the school. Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time.
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  - While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility exists.

### 2. Implementation:

- 2.1 It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times. The following 4 principles will be followed:
- Provide clear, accurate information
  - Describe the actions to be followed
  - Provide help for all affected
  - Maintain a normal school program as close as possible.
- 2.2 Accurate information is obtained and the school deals with substantiated facts only.
- 2.3 As soon as possible staff are informed, especially those most directly involved. Close friends and family are informed individually.
- 2.4 A Critical Incident Recovery Team is appointed to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. The names of the Critical Incident Recovery Team members and their roles are distributed.
- 2.5 As soon as possible information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done is provided. The Department of Education SMS will be used as a part of the process.
- 2.6 The principal or delegate will respond to any media enquiries in consultation with the department. A written press release may be issued and if necessary, in order to protect others from contact with the media, advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre and the Media Unit.
- 2.7 Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.

- 2.8 The out of school hours contact number will be provided if necessary. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
- 2.9 Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
- 2.10 Those identified as being distressed or most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends, others will be offered counselling help. The principal or delegate will consult with the Regional Office.
- 2.11 All emergency or criminal activity, in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, Or where there is a threat to property, is reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on (03) 9589 6266. Staff, students and parents are informed, especially about what has happened and the school's action plan.
- 2.12 As soon as possible students will be called together and provided with information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- 2.13 A follow up letter will be sent home.
- 2.14 The school will be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help e.g. counselling services. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
- 2.15 Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents.  
Meaningful participation at school is provided for those not actually attending the service.
- 2.16 Normal routines will be continued at school but the effect of tragedy on the school community is acknowledged. The school will be flexible with those in need of help.
- 2.17 The school will remain aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time. The school will maintain links with the family.
- 2.18 The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the school and be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
- 2.18 Debriefing:
- The Recovery Team will assist the principal to facilitate the recovery of staff and students and those of the school community affected by the critical incident.
  - The debriefing meeting of the Recovery Team will include a mental health professional and one peer who were not involved in the incident.
  - The Recovery Team will decide the structure and composition of debriefing meetings; such meetings should be held within eight hours of the critical incident. These meetings will review the impressions and reactions of the persons involved during or following the incident.

- Counselling support and referrals for students and their families will be provided initially by the principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer

### **3. Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated following any critical incident at the school.