



CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

Emergencies and critical incidents can affect people physically, psychologically, and emotionally and can have an impact on program continuity.

The purpose of this Critical Incident Plan is to ensure Wild Cherry School and Kindergarten are prepared for effective responds to emergency and critical incidents through appropriate resources. The prevention and effective management of emergency situations and critical incidents can assist to minimise the negative impact on an unexpected event.

This Critical Incident Plan applies to all staff, volunteers, Board members, students and parents.

DEFINITIONS

An emergency is an unplanned or imminent event that affects or threatens the health, safety or welfare of people, property and infrastructure, and which requires a significant and coordinated response. The defining characteristic of an emergency event or situation is that usual resources are overwhelmed or have the potential to be overwhelmed. Emergencies may be a specific event with a clear beginning, end and recovery process or a situation that develops over time and where implications are graduated rather than immediate.

A critical incident is an unexpected traumatic event involving personal or professional threat, which evokes extreme stress, fear or injury. Providing appropriate support following a critical incident is part of emergency management.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Inform School Leader or delegate

- Confirm incident / collect reliable information
- Contact Emergency Services (see separate list)

PLAN

- School Leader convenes a meeting with the College of Teachers and relevant staff to:

Appoint

- Appoint the Management Plan Coordinator (if the School Leader is unable to take this role)
- Outline proposed Action Plan – as below
- Assign tasks (as below) to appropriate personnel
- Appoint Press/Media Liaison Person
- Appoint Coordinator of Counselling/Support
- Appoint contact person for parents (where necessary)

Inform / Consult

- Staff: Briefing and Management Plan
- Students who need to know – assembly or specified group meetings
- Parents who need to know: Phone, Email or Letter
- Legal Representation
- Relevant outside agencies e.g. ISV, SEA

Allocate resources

- Control use of phones – allocate specific phones for incoming and outgoing calls
- Arrange security
- Designate assembly point of parents
- Media Room
- Recovery room for staff and / or students

INTERVENE

- Liaise with outside agencies (re defusing, debriefing, counselling)
- Defuse affected staff/students (within 8 hours)
- Identify students / staff needing further support
- Provide initial support/defusing for parents (within 3 hours)
- Arrange debriefing where necessary (after 5-7 days)
- Communication of sympathy/concern etc to affected parents

PROVIDE

- Information / letter to affected parents
- Information to Press / Media
- Supportive Information Handouts for staff
- Re: personal response
- Re: understanding student responses
- Review of class work / curriculum for affected year levels

ON-GOING RECOVERY

- Support for School Leader and College of Teachers
- Support for affected staff, including office staff
- Support for Intervention Team (Daily debriefing)
- Long Term Initiatives
- Community & Curriculum
- Long Term Monitoring / counselling of those affected.

REVIEW

- Meeting to evaluate Wild Cherry School's response (after approximately 1 week) and recovery (after 3 months in case of serious critical incidents)

NOTES TO ACCOMPANY ACTION CHECK-LIST

INFORMATION GATHERING

Find out the facts:

- The School Leader should be notified immediately after the Critical Incident has occurred. The School Leader will then confirm the incident and collect information about the incident from reliable sources as soon as possible.
- If the incident occurs during the school holidays, then the School Leader (or designated representative) will be the initial contact, and will confirm the details.)
- Confirmation may be obtained by contacting:
 - the people involved
 - the Police
 - Hospital
- Details required may include:

WHO?

Student

Family Member(s)

Staff

Visitor

WHERE?

On Campus

Off Campus

WHEN?

During School

After Hours

On Holidays

PLAN

- The School Leader will convene an urgent meeting with the College of Teachers and relevant support Staff.
- If the incident occurs during the school holidays, the School Leader (or designated representative) will contact the relevant personnel to convene said meeting in order to plan the immediate response, and what should be done on the first day of return to school.

APPOINT

- From this meeting, a person will be appointed to co-ordinate the Action/Management Plan devised. In addition, co-ordinators of Counselling/Support, Media Liaison and Parent Contact will need to be appointed (as required).
- When appointing co-ordinators, care should be taken to ensure that these persons are not traumatised by the event to the extent that their capacity to facilitate response/recovery will be impaired.

INFORM/CONSULT

Staff briefing

- The School Leader will call a Full Staff Briefing and provide the correct, up-to-date facts of the incident, and outline the proposed Management Plan.
- (If the incident is during the School Holidays, the School Leader will co-ordinate a response which provides the opportunity for a Full Staff Briefing, especially in relation to the Action Management Plan.)
- These meetings will also suggest sources for personal support for staff, especially if the incident is on campus.

Inform students

- To ensure clarity and consistency of information, assemble students and outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity. Whether the assembly is for the whole school or a year level will depend on the situation and the scope of the incident.

Inform parents

- Immediate contact will be made with parents/relatives of those directly involved. In addition, the School Leader shall provide by letter the facts of the incident.

CONSULTATION/INFORMING PERSONNEL AND ORGANISATIONS

- May include:
 - Providing the facts of the incident
 - Outlining any proposals about the management plan
 - Checking any other suggestions or possible assistance
 - Ensuring that adequate information, including facts and relevant responses are supplied to the Media

ALLOCATE RESOURCES

- Ensure that personnel responsible for taking incoming telephone calls are thoroughly briefed as to information to be given and to whom enquiries should be directed. Note especially, calls from parents, media.

SECURITY

- There may be the need to arrange a Security Guard to restrict access to the school grounds. In the interim, school staff (key holders) may be required to supervise the yards and ensure adequate security.
- This role, in the case of police or fire service involvement, may be undertaken by the relevant authority.
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RECOVERY ROOM

Set up a Recovery Room in the School – to isolate upset students to allow them to receive appropriate assistance.

- A designated staff member of the Committee of Management shall set up a room with hot and cold drinks and comfortable chairs.
- It may be an advantage to have an outside counsellor in attendance as well as a school staff member.
- Allow distressed students and staff access to this room for several days after the incident.

INTERVENE

Set up a support group for the school

- If the magnitude of the incident is too great for school personnel alone to manage, outside agencies will be contacted to negotiate access to services of counsellors, psychologists and social workers to provide additional support. (It is essential that the School Leader (or their representative) be involved in decision making with outside personnel.)

Liaise with outside agencies

- Schools experiencing Critical Incidents commonly report an influx of professionals and well-intentioned people offering counselling and other support. Care should be taken to ensure that only those people whose suitability has been affirmed will take any role in the response and recovery plan. Prior knowledge is a distinct advantage here.

- Defusing** of affected staff and students should be done within 8 hours of the incident. Defusing provides a meeting where, as a group, those affected can retell their experience, clarify the facts, discuss their feelings, learn about normal reactions to trauma and discover some important strategies for coping
- Every attempt should be made to ensure that all affected persons attend defusing meetings. Those people who facilitate the defusing process should be alert to those who may require further support.
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing** (commonly referred to as C.I.S.D.) provides a more structured meeting of those involved in the incident, including those who are part of the response team.
- In addition, a school may gain considerable advantage from offering a CISD to the Management Team.
- CISD is best-completed 5-7 days after the event (Provided defusing has already been completed). In very serious cases CISD may need to be completed within 24 hours of the event.

PROVIDE

- Information to affected parents

Press / Media Liaison

- The Media is to be informed by the **School Leader ONLY**. The School Leader may choose to appoint a staff member or P.R. expert as Media Liaison Person.
- Media contact with staff and students is to be minimized, and the School Leader will provide the Media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students.
- The School Leader will write the Media Release, in consultation with relevant staff or board members if possible, and information will be disseminated in a standard form.
- A suitable room will be designated to hold Media Conferences if necessary. If the incident is controversial, then the media may be dealt with by Public Relations experts.
- All office staff need to be briefed as how to handle questions from the media and how to deal with phone calls.
- Staff may require a special meeting to review information handouts, ask questions of concern, and collaborate on any proposed alterations to class work / curriculum.

ONGOING RECOVERY

Ongoing recovery strategies are crucial to the overall wellbeing of staff and students and therefore to the optimum functioning of School. Close attention should be given to the development of an on-going recovery plan.

ON-GOING RECOVERY CHECK-LIST

WITHIN 48 TO 72 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT:

Restore the school to regular routine as soon as possible

- Provide structure to help students and staff return to normal functioning
- Encourage teachers to allow students (especially those more directly involved) in opportunities to talk about the incident and about their reactions. This is an important part of the recovery process but should be not forced on students

Keep parents informed

- Inform parents about:
 - School Management Plan
 - Possible reactions of students
 - Source of help for families

Support school staff

- Encourage two-way communication between parents and school
- Allow time for staff members to deal with their own emotional responses
- Provide support for staff including debriefing by appropriately qualified counsellors when needed
- Inform staff of the possible effects on students
- Provide advice on how to manage student reactions

Monitor the situation

- Warn of the need for caregivers to monitor their own mental and physical health
- Provide or organize additional personnel if required

DURING THE FIRST MONTH

- Arrange a memorial service at school within a week of the incident if students or teachers have been killed in the incident, or remain seriously injured
- Encourage close friends and others directly involved in the incident to participate and be involved in the planning
- Encourage students to attend funerals
- Convene a meeting of parents of students involved, after three or four weeks, where a number of students were directly involved.
- Enlist the aid of counselling professionals to encourage parents to express and share their feelings about their children's welfare and to help them understand their children's reactions
- Encourage staff to be alert for signs of significant persistent changes in behaviour of those affected by the incident
- Some students may not experience or exhibit reactions until days or weeks after the event
- Students with behaviour changes persisting for more than a month may need specialist professional help

Monitor progress of hospitalised students

- Ensure hospitalised students have access to counselling support
- Liaise closely with hospital support staff about hospital support programs
- Ensure continued access to counselling support for students on discharge
- Ensure there is a support program for hospitalised students on return to school

Monitor the mental and physical health of those in caregiver roles and other helpers

- Burnout Syndrome may occur, especially when the emergency is perceived to have eased. Adjust workloads where necessary.
- Arrange meetings with caregivers (include administrators) to monitor how well they are managing their increased workloads and emotional and physical stress levels
- Remember that students may have caregiver roles. Ensure personal support is readily available

IN THE LONGER TERM

Monitor the staff for signs of undue stress

- Encourage stressed staff to seek professional help
- Try to provide a supportive environment
- Provide for increased demand on teacher relief time

Continue to monitor mental health of caregivers

Students in caring roles may develop delayed stress

- Establish procedures for ensuring continuity of monitoring long term effects despite staff changes in the school
- Be alert for and sensitive to the disturbing influences of anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings
- Special support for those affected may be needed again at these times
- Make extra staff and services available if necessary

AUTHORISATION

Signature Board Secretary
East Gippsland Steiner Education Group Inc.
Date authorised: 27 November 2018