

## Critical Incident Protocol

### IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS:

Teachers will be contacted by text and asked to be at school at 9.00am. The presence of as many teachers as possible would be crucial to responding to a critical incident.

Meanwhile the School Response Team (SRT) will be convened. It consists of: Principal, Deputy Principal, HCSSL, Chaplain, Class Tutor, Career Guidance Counsellors and Year Head as appropriate.

### The SRT will:

1. Establish the facts, as far as possible.
  2. Decide school routine for the first day. As far as possible a normal routine will be maintained. This may not be possible for those students and teachers who were close to the deceased.
  3. Contact the appropriate agencies: Emergency, Medical, NEPS, Health Board, Restore, Board of Management, Department of Education and Science, for additional advice and assistance.
  4. Prepare a written statement to be communicated to the students. Decide when the information will be communicated. Prepare a written statement to be communicated to all parents.
  5. Ensure that all staff members and the Board of Management are fully informed on what has happened.
  6. Furnish all teachers with guidelines for dealing with the classroom situation.
  7. Assign two teachers, preferably people known to the family, to contact the family of the student involved and offer support on the school's behalf.
  8. Designate teachers to Room 23 which will be the designated room for students who need to be out of class. Ensure that student sign in to use this room. The list of students using Room 23 will be available in the staff room. Special attention will be paid to the year group/class group/group of friends of student/s involved in the incident.
  9. Review events of the first 24 hours.
  10. Make school policy and reference material on dealing with a critical incident available to all staff.
- Home-School Liaison will link in with the parents/guardians, those directly involved and the general parent group where necessary. The Parents' Room will be available to parents, who, on hearing that an incident has occurred, may want to be with their own child.
  - The Principal will deal with media queries.
  - Identify and call on those teachers willing to counsel and assist students, those willing to supervise and those willing to provide an additional presence amongst the students at break times.

# *Coláiste Cholmcille*

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## A CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

### AIM

To enable the students of Coláiste Cholmcille, their parents/guardians where appropriate and their teachers, to respond sensitively to a critical incident.

### DEFINITION

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. It is important for the school to identify potential critical incidents and which procedures to follow in each instance. Some crises affecting schools are listed below:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.

### PROCEDURE

- Establish a School Response Team consisting of: Deputy Principal acting as coordinator and liaising with the Principal, Home-School Liaison teacher, Chaplain, RE teacher and Class

tutor and Year Head as appropriate. The composition of this team may be amended.

- The role of this group is to co-ordinate the various aspects of the response required if an incident occurs. (The majority of staff would inevitably take on individual roles. These cannot be clearly identified at the outset - they will depend on the circumstances.)
- In-service training should be availed of by as many of the team as possible. The provision of school based in-service will be investigated.
- Relevant subject areas should create learning opportunities for students around issues related to family life, separation, death and loss, etc.
- The team should meet annually to update and review the plan.

#### **IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS**

- If teachers are aware that an incident has occurred they are asked to be at school at 9.00am, the presence of as many teachers as possible would be crucial to responding to a critical incident.
- Convene the School Response Team.
- Establish the facts, as far as possible.
- Discuss school routine for the first day. The advice is to try to maintain, as far as possible, a normal routine. This may not be possible for those students and teachers who were close to the deceased.
- Delegate responsibilities to the School Response team.
- Contact the appropriate agencies; Emergency, Medical, NEPS, Health Board, Restore, Board of Management, Department of Education and Science for additional advice and assistance.

- Prepare a written statement to be communicated to the students. Decide who communicates the information and how.
- Prepare a written statement to be communicated to all parents. (Appendix 5)
- Furnish all teachers with guidelines for dealing with the classroom situation. (Appendix 1)
- Assign two teachers, preferably people known to the family, to contact the family of the deceased and offer sympathy on the school's behalf.
- Pay special attention to students closely involved in the incident - they may be considered at-risk and will need close individual attention. Be aware of the year group/class group/group of friends who will need special attention and designate two teachers to this group. Rooms 52 and 54 will be made available to students who need to be out of class.
- Home-School Liaison will link in with the parents/guardians, those directly involved and the general parent group where necessary. The Parents' Room will be available to parents, who, on hearing that an incident has occurred, may want to be with their own child.
- The Principal will deal with media queries in a manner in keeping with the guidelines for dealing with the media. (Appendix 2)
- Identify and call on those teachers willing to counsel and assist students, those willing to supervise and those willing to provide an additional presence amongst the students at break times.
- Ensure that all staff members and the Board of Management are fully informed on what has happened.
- [Despite the disruption to the normal routine a staff meeting to include ancillary staff may be necessary in exceptional](#)

[circumstances](#). It may require two [sessions](#) so that students can be adequately supervised.

- Have an up-to-date list of all local support services readily available, (Appendix 3).
  - Where appropriate, provide the family with the list of local services.
  - Make resource literature available to the staff.
  - Response team should review events of first 24 hours.
- The [response team](#) will meet and monitor the school's response to the incident and ultimately review that response. In the light of the review any necessary changes should be made to this plan.

## **LITURGICAL RESPONSE**

This will be co-ordinated by the school chaplain.

### **Funeral**

- Establish the family's wishes for the school's involvement in the funeral.
- Where appropriate plan guard of honour, music, prayers, reflections and so on, with the chaplain, the family, the students the local clergy, and where appropriate, other local organisations.

- In the event of an incident occurring during the holidays the Student Council will develop a procedure for contacting students in order to organise a student presence at funerals.
- Identify and confer with students who might participate in the liturgy.
- Provide students with a place to gather after the funeral. The school assembly area may be the appropriate. If the canteen is to be made available to the students, request the help of the Parents' Association and staff in providing refreshments.

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jkeogh 4/10/04 10:49

**Comment [1]:** must get Marianne working on this  
WILL TALK TO MARIANNE TODAY

### School liturgy/prayer service

- Plan this in conjunction with a relevant group of students, allowing them the freedom to decide the form and the content.

### Anniversary

- Liaise with the family to act in accordance with their wishes.
- Allow the students to prepare their own service of remembrance in co-operation with the chaplain and RE teacher.

### APPENDIX 1

#### GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING THE CLASSROOM SITUATION

- Decide on a specific class period for informing students of what has happened. In that class period read statement from the School Response Team, using the deceased person's name.
- Acknowledge the deceased in that class and in each subsequent class. Say a prayer or have a moment's silence.
- Do not speculate with students about the death. Give honest answers. All students' questions should be acknowledged.

Questions of 'Why?' or 'How?' in the case of suicide should be diverted.

- The topic of suicide may arise and should be addressed, but teachers must keep the focus on suicide in general and not on the specific person's death. Do not get drawn into arguments with anyone who believes suicide is a brave or noble act. Focus on the loss and pain of survivors. Discuss normal grief reactions and what students might expect over the following days. Reassure students that anger, guilt and tears are all part of a normal response.
- Don't use 'I know how you feel' statements.
- Encourage students to be supportive of each other.
- The teacher should feel free to express her/his own feelings appropriately.
- Advise students of teachers who are available to them to help them deal with their fears and worries.
- A designated area may be provided for students to be together; students should be given the freedom to use this area where appropriate. Teachers would supervise the area but not intrude on students.
- Identify and notify School Response Team of vulnerable students or students who are very distressed. These students may need individual support.
- Parents/guardians of distressed students should be contacted and advised of the situation before the school day ends.
- On returning to school after the funeral teachers should be aware of how sensitive students will be to the empty chair recently occupied by their classmate and friend, to the student's belongings which may still be in the room and so on. A decision should be taken as to how best to return the deceased student's

belongings to the deceased's family. All members of staff should be informed of the decision taken.

- Students and teachers should be sensitive to any student on their return to school after bereavement. A timely reminder to classmates to treat their fellow student with consideration may help ease the student back into the school routine.
- Continue to observe students in the subsequent days and weeks and be sensitive to those who may need professional help. Consult with the team to discuss your concerns.

## **APPENDIX 2      RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA**

The following are some general guidelines for dealing with the media.

- Designate one person, preferably the Principal, to deal with the media.
- Remind staff in general not to make statements about the incident.
- Prepare a written statement expressing sorrow at the student's death and stating that it is a difficult time for the school community and for the deceased's family. Ask that the



deceased's family's privacy be respected. State what the school is doing to support students and staff.

- Be co-operative and respectful but always talk as if everything you say is on record.

### Appendix 3

#### CONTACT NUMBERS

<b>Restore</b>  <b>North Western Health Board Community Services Ballybofey Co Donegal</b>  <b>074-9131391    087-7987883</b>	<b>Child and Family Mental Health Services</b>  <b>Letterkenny General Hospital Co Donegal</b> <i>Referrals via GP</i>  <b>074-9123563 074-9125888 ext2588</b>
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<p><b>NWHB Bereavement Counsellor</b></p> <p>Millennium Court Pearse Road Letterkenny Co Donegal</p> <p>074-9123670</p>	<p><b>Suicide Resource Officer</b></p> <p><b>Suicide Reduction Strategy</b></p> <p>Ardaghowen The Mall Sligo</p> <p>071-9149623</p>
<p><b>National Educational Psychological Services(N.E.P.S.)</b></p> <p>Westward Centre Bridge Street Sligo</p> <p>071-9143218</p>	<p><b>Child and Family Mental Health Service</b></p> <p>Molloway House The Mall Sligo</p> <p><i>Referrals via GP</i></p> <p>071-9155108</p>
<p><b>Department of Psychology</b></p> <p>Markievicz House Barracks Street Sligo</p> <p>071-9155132</p>	<p><b>NWHB Bereavement Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Health Care Centre</b></p> <p>Barrack Street Sligo</p> <p>071-9155108</p>
<p><b>NWHB Regional Information Help Line</b></p> <p>1850-636 313</p> <p>e-mail: <a href="mailto:infoline@nwhb.ie">infoline@nwhb.ie</a></p>	<p>Dr McCurtin                    071) 9851600</p> <p>Gardaí                            071) 9851102</p> <p>Fire Brigade</p> <p>Ambulance                    071) 9851888</p> <p>Sheil Hospital                071) 9851300</p> <p>Fr C. Ó Fearraí                071) 9851295</p> <p>Rev S. Richmond            074) 9721113</p>

	Rev B. Russell 074) 9734025
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APPENDIX 4

The following resource material is included:

- Responding To Critical Incidents  
Advice and Information Pack NEPS
- Bereavement and Adolescents
- Teenagers and Bereavement Reactions
- Taking Action - Dealing with 'at-risk' teenagers
- Suicide - Fact and Fiction
- Thoughts on Suicide
- Suggestions for Survivors
- School Response to the Grieving Child
- When a young person in your school has been bereaved
- 'Restore' an NWHB Publication