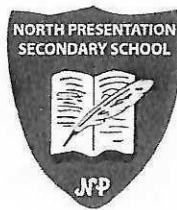


# North Presentation Secondary School

## Critical Incident Plan



Ratified by the Board of Management on 20/05/19

Signed Richard V Brett Chairperson

Review 2022

# Critical Incident Plan

Key pre-emptive administrative tasks in CI management include:

- Maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers
  - *Parents/guardians*
  - *Contact persons if parents/guardians are unavailable*
  - *School staff members*
  - *Next-of-kin for school staff*
  - *Emergency support services*
- Compiling emergency information for school trips
  - *List of all pupils/staff involved*
  - *List of mobile phone numbers of accompanying teachers*
  - *Current medical information for at-risk pupils (allergies or conditions)*

## Elements of a Critical Incident Plan

### ● Administrative roles and duties:

- Maintaining telephone contact with the outside environment, e.g., keeping a log of calls in and out, using pre-written statement for inquiries (Secretary)
- Maintaining a brief record of events as incident develops (Team Leader)
- Designating rooms for debriefing, meeting parents, press conference, etc. (Parent/Media Liaison)
- Preparation of explanatory letters for parents (Team Leader/Secretary)

## Communication during crisis

**Internal** care and communication with: staff, directly-affected students, general student body

**External** liaison with outside parties:

- Parents/guardians (secretary may use a standard script)
- Emergency services
- Outside support agencies
- HSE
- NEPS
- Media
- Use written statements
- Consider use of Dept of Ed press officer

## Procedures to be followed in the event of a CI

**Critical Incident: Day One**

**Short-Term Actions for Team Leader**

- Gather **accurate** information

- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene a meeting with key staff/CIMT
- Arrange supervision of students
- Hold whole-staff meeting
- Organise timetable for the day
- Make contact with the bereaved family
- Inform students currently attending school
- NB. Give only **verified/accurate** information
- Inform parents/guardians of other students by written statement
- Deal with the media if necessary (BOM-agreed statement may be sent to press office DES)
- Organise the reunion of significantly distressed students with their parents if necessary

## Supporting students during a CI (Day 1)

Research/best practice suggests optimal resolution of CIs occurs when

- As much normality as possible is maintained during the school day, e.g., maintain schedules and routines, ensure pupils remain in their classrooms
- Students are informed about CIs by teachers/adults they already know
- Try to maintain normal composure when interacting with students
- Showing some emotion is acceptable as it may facilitate students in expressing emotion themselves
- Explain to students it is normal to have a range of responses, particularly grief and sadness.
- Only provide students with information which is **accurate and verifiable** at that time
- Allow students to ask questions about the critical incident in its initial aftermath
- Organise a “quiet” room for students who may be overwhelmed (under supervision)

## Social Media

- School may provide guidance to parents on appropriate social media usage (by students and parents) in the CI letter to parents
- Schools may be pro-active in their own use of social media, e.g., notifications and helpful information may be made available on school website, e.g., how to guide their children’s use of social media
- DES may provide advice on schools’ use of social media at a CI, e.g., AUP limitations
- Direct control by the school over students’ social media usage is limited to what can be requested of students at the time of a CI
- Should a distressing post/message come to the attention of the school, the easiest way to remove it is to request this of the student who posted it

## Procedures to be followed in the event of a CI (Day 2 & 3)

Medium – Term Actions (24 – 72 hours)

- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents if necessary
- Plan visits to injured
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- Consider student attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (setting precedents)
- Necessary to be sensitive to, and respect, parental wishes and cultural differences

#### **Longer – Term Actions**

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
  - Siblings/friends of those involved in C I
  - Witnesses/survivors of traumatic event
  - Children with special needs
  - See checklist of vulnerable students (R 14, R 15)
- Inform new staff/pupils of previous critical incidents if it is pertinent to their day-to-day actions in school
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the CI Plan appropriately
- Prepare to meet needs of those indirectly affected by the C I
  1. Bereaved parents/siblings (P 11)
  2. Bereaved classmates of the pupil
    - Preparation of memory box
    - “The empty chair”/personal effects – consult classmates on appropriate responses
- Decide on appropriate ways to be aware of and cope with anniversaries

## **Range of ‘normal’ reactions to a CI**

- Reactions to critical incidents may normally occur (and recur) hours, days and even weeks after the event
- Individuals experience a wide range of reactions to a CI and each is natural/normal for the individual experiencing them
- Informing students and staff of one’s own possible responses to a CI may help them share and resolve their experience of these responses

## **Dealing with the aftermath of a suicide or suspected suicide**

- Follow-up monitoring with vulnerable students is necessary
- Important to assess each case of a student expressing suicidal ideation as a feasible threat
- Inform parents of supportive agents
  - CAMHS (A & E services for out-of-hours emergencies)
  - Family GP
  - NEPS

## **Indicators of high-risk students**

- Pupils with a history of suicide attempts/self harm
- Students with family history of suicide/self harm
- Pupils with a psychiatric history
- Close friends and relatives of the deceased
- Pupils with difficulty talking about their feelings
- Pupils who experience a recent loss, e.g., death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
- Pupils with a history of sexual abuse
- Pupils experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness
- Less able students / Student with Learning Difficulties