

Critical Incident Management Plan for Presentation Secondary School Mitchelstown

Background/Definition

A critical incident is one where an incident or sequence of events overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of part of or all of the school community and/or disrupts the normal functioning of the school.

For example:

- ❖ The death of a member of the school community, pupil or staff member, through sudden death, suicide, terminal illness or accident.
- ❖ An accident involving pupils or staff either on or off of the school premises.
- ❖ A physical attack on a member of the school community or intrusion into the school.
- ❖ The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- ❖ An accident or tragedy in the wider school community.

Critical incidents are usually unexpected. The key components to a successful response to a critical incident are (1) Preparation (2) Prevention (3) Intervention (4) Follow up. Having a plan in place allows staff to cope more effectively and to maintain a sense of control. A critical incident plan works best when there is already a caring ethos in the school. This is achieved through the creation of a physically and psychologically safe environment for students in the school.

To implement a Management Plan, it is essential to have a trained team in place in the school. This team should meet regularly to update and review this plan.

Critical Incident Management Team

This will consist of:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Guidance Counsellor
- Three further staff members

Key roles will be assigned to each member of the team as follows:

- **Team Leader** – Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting, co-ordinates the task with the team, liaises with the BOM, DES, NEPS, SEC. liaises with the bereaved family.

- **Garda Liaison** – Liaises with the Gardai and ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- **Staff Liaison** – Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known; gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions; outlines the routine for the day; advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students; provides materials for staff from their critical incident folder; keeps staff updated as the day progresses; is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually; advises them of the availability of EAS and gives them the contact number.
- **Student Liaison** – Co-ordinates information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about; alerts other staff to vulnerable students; provides materials for students from the critical incident folder; maintains student contact records; looks after setting up and supervision of a ‘quiet’ room.
- **Parent/Guardian Liaison** – Visits the bereaved family with the team leader; arranges meetings, if held; May facilitate such meetings and manage ‘questions and answers’ sessions; manages the consent issues in accordance with agreed school policy; ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school’s IT system ready for adaptation; sets up room for meetings with parents; maintains a record of parents seen; meets with individual parents; provides appropriate materials for parents from the critical incident folder.
- **Community Liaison** – Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Council; emergency Support services and other external contacts and resources; liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral; is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support; co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies; reminds agency staff to wear name badges; updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- **Media Liaison**
In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises). In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC, relevant teacher unions). Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by the school management).
- **Administrator**
Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, teachers, emergency services. Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response. Ensures that templates are available on the school IT system and ready for

adaption

- **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letter sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used

The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one year.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Presentation Secondary School – Mitchelstown have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements.

Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term ‘suicide’ will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use.

The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be used instead. Similarly, the word ‘murder’ should not be used until it is legally established that murder was committed. The term ‘violent death’ may be used.

Critical Incident Management Rooms

Room Name

Designated purpose

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Naoimh Caomhin, | Critical Incident Management Team |
| 2. Staff Room | Staff Meetings |
| 3. Base Classrooms | Students |
| 4. Library | Quiet Room for students |
| 5. Career Guidance Office | NEPS |
| 6. Music Room | Meetings for parents of for staff |
| 7. MP1 and MP2 | Meeting rooms for media |

Prevention

1. Physically Safe Environment:

Evacuation plan; Fire drills; Fire exits; Fire extinguishers; Gates/doors secure during school time.

2. Psychologically Safe Environment:

- Child protection procedures
- Anti-bullying policies
- Peer support programmes
- Develop school policies for LGBTQI+ students

- Effective student support systems
- Well-Being in Post Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)
- Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014)

3. Equip students to deal with mental health problems and seek help when necessary.

Mental health promotion for all:

- SPHE & RSE programmes
- Problem solving
- Communication skills and know where to seek help
- Decision making
- Grief and loss/stress/anger/conflict management – workshops for students
- Alcohol and drug prevention.
- Anti-bullying policy reviewed and updated annually
- Promotion of mental health

4. Staff training

- Signs and symptoms of stress/anxiety/depression/loss
- Suicide awareness (ASIST and Safetalk training)
- Mental health issues
- Referral procedures and interagency liaison
- SPHE
- Child Protection Procedures and the Designated Liaison Person
- Books/resources/websites

5. Employment services for teachers and SNAs:

Freephone Helpline – 1800 411 057

Importance of preparation:

- It leads to quick and effective systems and a sense of control should the need arise
- Normality returns to the school as soon as possible
- The effects on the students and staff are limited.

Immediate Procedure to be Followed

The exact procedures to be followed in the case of a critical incident will depend on the particular incident that has occurred.

1. Factual information will be obtained from the relevant sources by the Principal.
2. Principal makes initial contact with the family and follows their wishes in relation to a response from the school.

3. Contact outside agencies such as NEPS.
4. A meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team agrees a statement of facts, delegate responsibilities, organize a timetable for the day, and where necessary, prepare an information letter for parents or information for the media.
5. The Principal will call a meeting to brief all Staff.
6. Any necessary supervision of the students will be arranged by the Deputy Principal.
7. The Principal will contact any family member/students who may need to be told individually of the death.
8. Students will be given factual information about the event/situation by their class teachers (if the teacher so wishes) on the basis of the prepared factual statement and informs the students of the routine etc. for the day(s) ahead.
9. The Guidance Counsellor, in consultation with other members of staff, will identify any students who may be particularly vulnerable.
10. There will be flexibility in the timetable to allow teachers and students to come to terms with the tragic news while also being aware that it is important to maintain as much as possible the normal timetable of the day.
11. A member of the team will designate a room for use by distressed students.
12. A prayer service will be organized, if appropriate to the situation. The ideal situation in this instance would be if permission for same could be obtained from the family.
13. Principal only meets with the media. Others are asked not to speak to the media.
14. Counselling for anybody in need will be facilitated and support organized as appropriate with the assistance of the NEPS team.
15. A time for a follow-up meeting of the critical incident management team will be agreed.

As a general principle a normal school routine will be maintained where possible. The Principal will request a decision from the BOM and the school inspector if closing the school is deemed appropriate by the critical incident management team.

Procedures for the Following Days:

1. A memory to the deceased is displayed in an appropriate room in the school with the family's permission. This can be in the form of a picture and a condolence book is made available to both students and staff. This can be maintained for one week at the end of which there is a prayer service and the memory is removed.
2. At risk students will be monitored by Guidance Counsellor and class teachers.
3. Students are kept informed by the Principal or class teacher about the facts of the situation.
4. Students will be given opportunities to express their feelings/talk about the incident/situation in class/in group, as appropriate.
5. The Principal will liaise with family/families directly affected to ascertain how they would like the situation to be managed/to find out about arrangements (funeral/visiting) with a view to conveying this information to staff and students.
6. Management team re-convenes to review the situation.
7. Arrangements will be made for participation by staff/students in a Liturgy if this is appropriate to the situation.

8. The involvement of students in any funeral or other services needs to be discussed. This requires invitation, planning and review. The families involved need to be consulted, the students invited to take part, time given to prepare for this participation and, finally, a debriefing of those concerned. While it would be appropriate for the deceased student's classmates to attend the church services and the burial, it may be inappropriate for large numbers to be present. The presence of large numbers of young people at such highly charged events could prove to be inappropriate as well as being upsetting for individual students and for the parents of the deceased student.

At all times the rights of the deceased family to privacy must be respected.

9. Support for individuals or groups (including staff) will be arranged if necessary.
10. Students from the year/student council to which the student belonged attend the funeral bearing a wreath and representing the school.
11. The school organizes a month's mind, with the family's permission, to which the family is invited.
12. The class teacher together with friends of the student gathers belongings and give them to the Principal.
13. The Principal returns these belongings to the family on a follow-up visit.

Should a critical incident arise outside of school time such as the holidays:

- a. Principal notifies staff to the best of her ability.
- b. Implement 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 immediately.
- c. Follow up with 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 (12, 13 if appropriate)

Breaking the News to Students

Guidelines for Class Teachers

- ❖ Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family, can it be relayed as such to students.
- ❖ It is imperative to communicate that the act of suicide does not solve anything, rather it is a devastating event in the lives of all connected to the person.
- ❖ The class of the student who has died should be the first to be told, with Principal, Counsellor and class teacher present.
- ❖ Other classes to be told by their class teachers.
- ❖ Not every class is going to be traumatized, some students may not even know the deceased, but it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.
- ❖ Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this.
- ❖ Let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- ❖ Let them know the facts, as you know them. (It is important to prevent rumors through misinformation).
- ❖ Encourage questions.
- ❖ Let the class know of common reactions to tragic news.
- ❖ The most common reaction is shock.
- ❖ Expect tears and outbursts.
- ❖ Don't allow a student to leave the classroom alone in a distressed state.
- ❖ Students must be supervised within the building while in a distressed state.
- ❖ Let them know that you will support them.
- ❖ Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.
- ❖ Allow them time to mingle and talk to one another in groups.
- ❖ Explain how they can support one another.
- ❖ Be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news.
- ❖ You may need to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.
- ❖ Let them know where the Crisis Response Team will be (possibly base classroom).
- ❖ Arrange to have refreshments ready, also boxes of Kleenex.
- ❖ A short prayer for the deceased would be appropriate.
- ❖ If the students appear ready, a year group assembly may be held later in the day.
- ❖ Some students may be able to continue and go to class

After the Event

- ❖ Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- ❖ Refer, if necessary.
- ❖ Arrange to display a memory of the student in the school for “1 week” - a prayer service and memory is removed.
- ❖ Class teacher and friends gather belongings of student.
- ❖ Principal or representative returns same to family on a follow up visit.
- ❖ Return of other members of family to school.
- ❖ School organize Months Mind Service and invites family.
- ❖ Evaluate response to incident and amend plan appropriately.
 - ↳ What went well?
 - ↳ Where were the gaps?
 - ↳ What was most/least helpful?
 - ↳ Have all necessary onward referrals been made?
 - ↳ Is there any unfinished business?
- ❖ Review plan with NEP’s psychologist.
- ❖ Inform new staff of incident and of any students who may still be affected.
- ❖ Ensure that new staff are aware of policy and procedures.
- ❖ If affected students move to a new school, inform the principal.
- ❖ Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries etc. and be sensitive to significant days (e.g.) birthdays, graduation, etc.
- ❖ In service for all staff.
- ❖ Training for team.
- ❖ Should a critical incident happen during holidays or at the weekend, Principal should contact the team to meet and plan.

Contacting Staff if Tragedy occurs over a Weekend/Holidays

1. If it is the death of a colleague, a system of informing staff needs to be in place.
2. If it is the death of a student, the Crisis Team need to be informed immediately. Other staff can be informed later.
3. Whoever first hears the news to contact the Principal or Deputy.

In Summary

Telling the Students

- ❖ Give facts as known.
- ❖ Create a safe and supportive space for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings.
- ❖ Advise them over their possible reactions over the next few days.
- ❖ In the case of suicide, avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalizing the suicide.
- ❖ Advise the students on the support that is available to them.
- ❖ Give them the routine for the remainder of the day.
- ❖ Use “Resource Material” as appropriate.

During the Day

- ❖ Prepare a letter to go home to each parent.
- ❖ Manage social media (a member of the Critical Incident Management Team is designated). Prepare content to post on platforms in conjunction with the preparation of the letter home. Request members of the school community not to post on social media individually.
- ❖ Contact family to discuss funeral arrangements and discuss participation by the school.

After School

- ❖ Review the day - how students and staff are coping.
- ❖ Information on follow up support.
- ❖ Discuss closure of school for funeral and seek permission.
- ❖ Arrange for participation in funeral in accordance with family’s wishes - involve classmates and close friends.

Programme for following day (if not the day of the funeral).

Staff Meeting

- ❖ All staff
- ❖ The facts as known.
- ❖ An opportunity for staff to express their views and feelings.
- ❖ Give feedback from team meeting.
- ❖ How the facts should be shared with students (an agreed approach if possible).
- ❖ Information about outside agencies that have been contacted, or are involved and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
- ❖ Identify vulnerable students that may need to be told individually (e.g.) close friends, relatives, those that have been recently bereaved.
- ❖ Be conscious of vulnerable members of staff and accommodate them. They may need to opt out of classroom work.
- ❖ Encourage staff to give feedback during the day.
- ❖ Ask staff and students not to speak to the media. A person will be appointed for this.
- ❖ Distribute resource handouts.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parents/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Deputy Principal.

The plan will be reviewed annually in April each year.

Signed



Chair of Board of Management

Date

4/12/6/23

Signed

Secretary of the Board of
Management

Date

Lo name O'Keefe

APPENDIX 1 Useful Contact Numbers

Barnardos	01-4530335
The Samaritans	1850-609090
Childline	1800-666666
Parentline	1890-927277
Aware	01-6766166
	1890-303302
National Suicide Bereavement	
Support Network	024-95561
Irish Hospice Foundation	1800 80 70 77
Bereavement Support Line	

Crisis Management Team

- Lorraine O’Keeffe
- Martha Kent
- Mary Lynch
- Eddrina White
- Kate Molloy
- Geraldine Redoutey

APPENDIX 2

Letter to the Parents

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by this tragic situation.

(Brief details of the incident and, in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrance of the person who had died.)

Support structures are in place to help you daughter cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your daughter may have some feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help her by taking time to listen and encourage her to express her feelings. It is important to give her truthful information that is appropriate to her age.

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the Guidance Counsellor of the school.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 3

Prayers

Prayer Service in the event of Death

(Death of either student or staff member)

Blessed are they who mourn. This beatitude offers us comfort at this difficult time. We know that Jesus shares our suffering because he too, suffered when he became one of us. In fact it is in and through his life, death and resurrection that we can find hope at this difficult time. We know that he loves us tenderly and walks with us every step of the way, ready to help and to heal us.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, the death of (name) is very difficult for us. We know that your love is far greater and more powerful than ours. We pray that you give our friend (name) your peace and your joy. Let his/her memory be a light what shines within each of us as we continue on this earthly journey. We put our pain and sorrow before you, Lord, as we know that you are the source of comfort. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Psalm

O God, you are my God, for you I long, for you my soul is thirsting
My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory
For your love is better than life, my lips will speak your praise
So I will bless you all my life. In your name I will lift up my hands,
My soul shall be fitted as with banquet, my mouth shall praise you with joy.
On my bed I remember you, on you I muse through the night.
For you have been my help, in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you
Your right hand holds me fast
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Prayer Service in the Event of a Tragedy

Life holds so many disappointments for us. We accept that accident and tragedies are apart of life. We believe Jesus that you endured the cross which was a great tragedy. We know that in turning to you we will receive strength and courage from you to live with every situation, as you have said “come to me all you who labour and are over

burdened and I will give you rest”. we gather to pray for our friends who have been involved in a serious accident. We ask for your healing love to touch them and help them, and also for their families who are upset and worried for their loved ones who have been hurt.

Word of God

And Jesus said: “I am with you always, yes to the end of time. Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God still and trust in me. Do not worry about your life. Consider the ravens; they neither sow nor reap, and yet God feeds them. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Do not be afraid.”

Prayers of Intercession

We are a people who depend on you Lord; we gather to pray for ourselves but most especially for those who need our prayers at this time.

1. Lord, help us to embrace the future with confidence even in the midst of suffering and disappointment.
Lord hear us
2. For our friends who have been injured and will have to face the future depending on the assistance and help of others.
Lord hear us.
3. For their parents, brothers and sisters and all of us who know them. Guide us in making a genuine effort to remember that they need us as friends.
Lord hear us.
4. Lord God, we ask your daily protection on all of us as we come and go along the road of life. May we always respect the gift of life we have received from you and give you thanks.
Lord hear us.

Reflection

The Lord is my shepherd, he always leads me. No matter what path I take I know that the Lord is there to redirect me. He does not cast judgement against me, he does not keep records. There is simply love and a willingness so lead me and direct me. This provides me with great comfort and confidence in who I am. The Lord is full of forgiveness and love, how could I ever turn away.

Bless the Lord, for he shall comfort those who turn to him. When I am lost, the Lord shall lead me, when I am in despair, the Lord shall comfort me, when I am in hatred, the Lord will extend his love, when I am in darkness, the Lord will shed his light. Who other than the Lord can offers this, love without limit that holds no grudges. His love always welcomes us. How blessed is the Lord my God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

APPENDIX 4

Principal's Check List/Items for Consideration

The following is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. They are not written in order of what must come first etc. It is important for a Principal to take time to plan what he/she must do and what is appropriate to say to all concerned.

- ❖ Take time to let the news sink in.
- ❖ Call a meeting of the Pastoral Team, include Year Head and Tutor of deceased student (see notes on same).
- ❖ Put together as much factual information as possible.
- ❖ Inform staff what has happened.
- ❖ Discuss school routine for the first day with the staff.
- ❖ Identify particular students who may need to be told individually, (e.g.) close friends, relatives, etc.
- ❖ Inform the pupils that a student has tragically died and explain that this is something everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain school routine for the day and support and back-up for the students.
- ❖ Contact Local Health Board Crisis Service.
- ❖ Make contact with the family of the deceased.
- ❖ Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format for this.
- ❖ Decide on any other arrangements which need to be made on the first day, (e.g.) prayers for the student and his/her family.
- ❖ Check in with staff room during the day and keep abreast of what is happening in the school.
- ❖ Be aware of any particular teachers who may be particularly distressed, (e.g.) teachers who are recently bereaved themselves or who have had prior experience of suicide in their family.
- ❖ Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going.
- ❖ Find out details of the funeral etc. and communicate this to staff and students.
- ❖ Make contact with the bereaved family.
- ❖ At the end of the first day, review events with staff and make plans for the following day.
- ❖ Make staff aware of students who are particularly vulnerable and what supports will be available to them.
- ❖ If there is a likelihood of interest from the media discuss a strategy to deal with any such requests.

Long Term:

- ❖ In-service for Form Teachers and staff to help them explore death, dying and grief with students.

APPENDIX 5

Suicide - Indicators and Intervention Measures

Ottawa Pointers

1. Loss of interest in usual activities.
2. Withdrawal from social contact.
3. Difficulty in concentrating, problems with judgement and memory.
4. Dramatic fall-off in school performance.
5. Feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness may be expressed in essays.
6. Sleep disturbance - decreased, or sometimes increased.
7. Increased overt displays of anger and rage, verbal or physical.
8. Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol.
9. Promiscuous behaviour.
10. Uncharacteristic delinquent behaviour/thrill seeking.
11. Lack of supportive relationship with friends or family.
12. Previous suicidal threats, gestures, attempts.
13. Statements, verbal or written, revealing wish to die or preoccupation with death.
14. Nihilistic comments - life is meaningless, filled with misery.
15. Gestures to be noticed - self mutilation, scratches.
16. Planning for death, making final arrangements, giving away treasured possessions.
17. Suddenly becoming cheerful after long depression (relief when decision taken).

What to do: Take It Seriously - have a talk with the young person keeping some principles in mind:

1. Remain in control - don't panic, act slowly.
2. Encourage expression of feelings and accept them (give time).
3. Avoid judgemental comments or empty reassurance.
4. Avoid promises you can't keep (e.g. secrecy; call me any time; confidentially).
5. Empathise and let them know you care (biggest single preventative is knowing someone cares).
6. Encourage them to see a counsellor or therapist (carefully).
7. Inform Parents and Management of school.
8. If seriously worried, don't leave them alone.
9. Seek advice and support yourself (nobody should carry the worry about a suicidal youngster alone).

Suicide

What Not to Do

1. Don't assume a youngster is not the "type" to commit suicide.
2. Don't leave a child/teenager alone if you believe the risk of suicide is imminent.

3. Don't act shocked at whatever is told to you.
4. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong. This may make him/her feel more guilty and intensify the depression.
5. Don't take responsibility for "saving the youth", get additional help.
6. Don't feel that you have to have an answer to all the child's questions. If you do not know the meaning of life, say so. Make it clear that you are there to help. Not to solve problems.
7. Don't be afraid to be the first to mention suicide. Generally it comes as a relief to the youth that you are willing to discuss the subject.
8. Don't deny or cover up the youngster's feelings or intents. Don't be judgemental. Acknowledge his/her feelings without reinforcing the negative. "I believe you are feeling miserable right now. Let's talk about it".
9. Don't abandon the youth because the problems are too overwhelming. Follow through in getting him/her help. Don't be another loss or rejection to him/her.
10. Don't wait too long because you hope he/she will get over it. It can't hurt to talk about his feelings.

APPENDIX 6

Trauma Response Plan

Pastoral Team Meeting (include Year Head and Class Tutor of deceased student)

1. Agree on a common statement with regard to the crisis giving the facts as they are known.
2. Decide who tells:
 - ❖ The class/student
 - ❖ Close friends of the student
 - ❖ Teachers of the student
 - ❖ All other teachers and staff of school
3. Decide how to inform classes and teachers, (e.g.) through pastoral care/tutor time block by block, through tutor system etc. avoid whole school announcements.
4. Discuss and decide on school routine for the first day including visit to home of the bereaved, time out for staff and students.
5. Arrange a further meeting for later in the day to discuss school routine for the following days, arrangements for the funeral etc.
6. Staff:
 - a. Ask for volunteers from staff to inform students in no larger than class size.
 - b. Allow time for Pastoral team to go through guidelines with these staff members on how to do this. Highlight the support that will be available in the school for students and staff.
 - c. Distribute guidelines on bereavement to all staff.
 - d. Arrange for a meeting of Religion teachers to discuss prayer services/assemblies for the day beginning with the year group of the deceased student.

Trauma Response Plan

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

Contact the available support services, (i.e.) Health Board Crisis Service or private bereavement counselling service.

Home/School Liaison Officer

Be available for visit to home of bereaved to check out needs of the family in relation to school presence at the funeral, and funeral arrangements.

What can you do when a child says "I want to kill myself?"

1. Try to keep your own shock under control.
2. Reply with an open question.
3. Try to find out how long they have been feeling this way.
4. Who else have they told?
5. Can you speak to Mum or Dad?

If “everything” is wrong, start checking “everything” (i.e.) parents, school, friends.

Contact	Name	Telephone
School Doctor		
Local Medical Centre		
Fire Brigade		
Gardaí		
Hospital Emergency Dept.		
Social Services		
Local Clergy		
Counselling Services		
Educational Services		
Voluntary Agencies		
Press Media		

APPENDIX 7

The Range of Reactions to a Critical Incident

Each individual has his/her own way of dealing with feelings, loss and tragedy. There is no right or wrong way to react and any or all of the following can be experienced:

Feelings	Behaviour
Fear	Bedwetting
Guilt	Nightmares
Shame	Thumb sucking
Anger	Over dependency
Regret	Social Withdrawal
Loneliness	Tantrums
Anxiety	Mood Swings
Shock	Loss of Concentration
Yearning	Forgetfulness
Numbness	Irritability
Confusion	Tearfulness
Isolation	Insecure Feelings
	Separation Anxiety
	School Refusal
	Physical/Verbal Aggression
	Misuse of drugs, including alcohol

Physical		Thoughts
Tiredness	Gastrointestinal Problems	Disbelief
Sleeplessness	Bowel/Bladder Problems	Denial
Headaches	Loss or increase in appetite	Sense of unreality
Stages in the Grieving Process		

APPENDIX 8

The Stages of Bereavement

It is acknowledged that while there are distinct stages/phases in the grieving process different people may go through these stages in different sequences and at different paces. Generally, the grieving process in adults is said to take about two years while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended timeframe with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

Denial, numbness, shock (up to six weeks)

- Death of the person may be denied.
- Emerging feelings may be suppressed.
- Refusal to talk about the death.
- Bereaved keeps very busy to avoid thinking about death.
- Bereaved may show signs of confusion and forget everyday routines.
- Children in shock may display either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying/screaming.

Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

- Acute sadness - crying.
- Physical pangs of pain including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep.
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness, lack of concentration.
- Fears of life after death, nightmares, ghosts.
- Disorganization.
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death.
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them.
- Bereaved may reject offers to comfort them.

Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

- People begin to adjust to their lives without the lost person.
- Sense of isolation.
- Fearful of forgetting the deceased.
- Less crying and irritability.
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional behavioural difficulties.

Re-organisation

- Getting on with life.
- Returned sense of humour and play.
- Able to participate emotionally in new relationships.

- Changed relationship with the deceased - able to think of the deceased without pain.
- Reduction in physical/emotional symptoms.
- Less guilt.

It is acknowledged that while there are distinct stages/phases in the grief process different people may go through the stages in different sequences and in different orders. In fact, the grieving process is said to last about two years, while with children it may last even more extended timeframes with different rates arising as they go through the grief process.

Denial, numbness, shock (up to six weeks)

Death of the person may be denied. Primary feelings may be suppressed. Refusal to talk about the death. Thoughts keep a busy pace. In denial thinking about death. There is a sense of confusion and fogged everyday activities. Confusion in thinking, disjunctive thinking, and a sense of unreality of surroundings.

Acute yearning and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

Acute sadness begins. Physical signs of grief including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep. Emotional pain accompanied by lethargy, hopelessness, lack of concentration. Loss of the inner strength, vigour and vitality. Preoccupation. Strong feelings, feelings of sorrow and pain - particularly in the case of a sudden death. Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them. Bereaved may want others to control them.

Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

People begin to adjust to their life without the person. Sense of freedom. Letting go of clinging to the deceased. Letting go and moving on. Reorganisation of existing personal problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional behavioural difficulties.

Reorganisation

Living on with life. Reformed sense of personal and social relationships. Letting go of clinging to the deceased.

APPENDIX 9

Identifying Students at Risk

- Close friends and relatives of the deceased.
- Students with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm.
- Students who experienced a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Students who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past.
- Students with a psychiatric history.
- Students with a history of substance abuse.
- Students with a history of sexual abuse.
- Non-communicative students who have difficulty talking about their feelings.
- Students experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness.
- Less able students.

Students should be vigilant around the time of the inquest and the anniversary of the student's death.

