

ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Rationale

A critical incident can be described as an event or circumstance that causes normally stable and healthy people to experience strong emotional psychological distress which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the time of the event or later.

Major life events or critical incidents confront individuals, families and school communities. The school's approach to dealing with critical incidents and the traumatic responses that they evoke can be decisive in successfully coping with and in shaping healthy outcomes. Most school communities are affected by a significant incident at some time. Giving adequate attention to the health and vitality of collective mechanisms enables school communities to become powerful and restorative healing resources in times of trauma and distress.

Through the development of a critical incident management plan and being thoroughly familiar with the issues involved, St Patrick's College will be in a better position to deal with the unexpected, to make appropriate responses that will assist staff, students and families to deal appropriately with their responses to a crisis and to return to normal functioning as soon as possible.

Procedures

St Patrick's College has a clear pastoral responsibility, and, arguably a legal obligation, under the duty of care to establish a Critical Incident Management Plan. This plan contains:

- Guidelines for identifying events and situations that need intervention
- Procedures that include a chain of response
- Education for school personnel about traumatic response in general and the crisis response procedure specifically

It is important to recognise the existence of the recovery aspect associated with critical incidents. Whilst the initial incident and the immediate response are clearly identifiable in the plan, and are an accepted part of emergency management planning and procedures, it is the recovery activity which will determine the extent to which individuals and groups will cope with the long-term effects which can flow from a critical incident. Experience has shown that:

- A speed of response
- Appropriateness of response
- The opportunity to talk about the event and personal reactions to it, and
- On-going support

can help minimise distress or trauma and enhance the well-being of those involved in the incident.

Critical Incident Management Plan

In the event of a critical incident or crisis happening that affects our school community, the following procedures are to be implemented:

1. Upon receiving news of a critical incident potentially affecting the school community the Principal will contact members of the Leadership Team, Student Welfare Support Services and other school personnel as required to form the Critical Incident Management Team.
2. The Principal will verify information about the event and inform the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office.
3. The Critical Incident Management Team will work out procedures and who could be contacted e.g. College Chaplain, Centacare or other appropriate agencies to provide personnel to assist the school with counselling of students, staff and families.
4. The Critical Incident Management Team will decide how and when to inform staff, students and families.
5. A Staff Meeting will be called as soon as possible. If possible and practical, all staff will be informed at the same time so that they receive the same information. Updates to staff on the current situation during the day are essential. Debriefing at the end of the day is crucial.
6. The Critical Incident Management Team will allocate tasks to staff.
7. Students will be informed simultaneously in class groups. (Public announcement at mass assembly or over a public address system should be avoided)
8. A support centre for students will be set up at an appropriate location in the school. The Chapel will be made available for prayer.
9. Changes may need to be made to timetables and duty rosters.
10. The Principal will deal with any media requests.
11. Other schools in the area will be notified so they too are prepared for any reactions in their schools and to dispel rumours.
12. Parents/guardians will be informed by letter, which will be sent by the Principal advising them of the incident. Parents will be advised about signs of distress that children may display, what the school will be doing to cope with the crisis and the support channels available to them and their families.

The emergency number for Police, Ambulance and Fire Service at all times for all areas is 000.

Reference is to be made Towards Healing and Stability after Distressing Events : Critical Incident Management Guidelines for Schools. Detailed procedures that are to be followed are contained in these guidelines and resources.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's policy review cycle.

Approved by:	Principal/Board
Issuing Group:	Principal
Implementation Date:	30/9/12
Revision Date:	January 2016
Contact Officer:	Principal