



## CRITICAL INCIDENT

### Intent

A critical incident, from the individual and community perspective, is one which has **the potential to impair normal functioning**. Our policy is to respond immediately with the support necessary to aid recovery and avoid the possibility of the debilitating effects post-traumatic stress disorder.

### Summary

A critical incident elicits strong emotions from a sense of loss and the resulting trauma. The sensory inputs are usually extremely stressed. The incident is often:

- Unexpected and untimely
- Violent and shocking
- Involving a degree of suffering

Particularly stressful are:

- The death or threat of death to a colleague
- Injury to, or suicide of, someone close
- The death of a child/student in tragic circumstances
- Large numbers of casualties
- Major disasters (e.g. bus accident)
- A serious incident involving an international student reported by the Queensland Police Service to the school or EQI

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) **is not** grief counselling but a guided discussion process. It occurs ideally within 24-72 hours after a critical incident.

### Policy

How the school community responds in the event of a traumatic incident is an important issue and one that should be planned for. Key persons, roles and tasks need to be identified.

Overall, the aims of the Critical Incident Management Plan are to:

- Restore order
- Minimise hysteria
- Identify primary, secondary, tertiary survivors
- Promote the recovery process



### **Pre-Incident (Whole School)**

- Awareness raising and knowledge of appropriate procedures
- Distinction between critical incident stress debriefing and grief counselling
- In-service new staff each year

### **Procedures**

***When a critical incident involves an International student, the first response will come from the Head of International Studies, or in his absence, the Principal or Deputy.***

### **Immediate Response (Principal and Admin Team)**

- Isolate witnesses.
- Collect all factual information as soon as possible.
- Convene an urgent meeting of the crisis management team to determine level of additional support needed.
- Establish critical nature of incident and identify 'target' group.
- If the magnitude of the incident requires additional support then local Guidance Officers should be asked to assist.
- Provide all staff with the facts of the incident through HODS or whole staff meeting.
- Outline the Management plan to staff.
- Suggest sources of personal support for staff.
- Arrange contact with emergency services, Education Queensland, Education Queensland International etc., if needed.
- Ensure safety of other students and staff, e.g. evacuation if needed.
- Contact District Office.

### **Within 24 hours**

The nature of the critical incident will determine whether some or all of these meetings take place. Not all steps may be necessary. They appear in chronological order:

#### **1. PRINCIPAL**

**Meets with Administration Team, Guidance Officer, Business Services Manager, Year Co-Ordinators, Team Leaders and/or HOD's as soon as possible after the incident, to:**

- Disseminate factual information
- Confirm management plan
- Relieve Head of International Studies of his regular duties to manage the incident if it involves an international student



## **2. PRINCIPAL**

**Whilst Year Co-Ordinators supervise students, Principal meets with staff to:**

- Disseminate factual information
- Inform of any changes in school routine
- Suggest methods by which problems arising in class/playground may be handled
- Monitor staff response

## **3. BUSINESS SERVICES MANAGER**

**Meets with non teaching staff to:**

- Disseminate factual information
- Direct parent contact as required
- Outline media policy
- Inform of changes to school routine
- Monitor staff response
- Set up comfort room(s) – library, staff common room, etc
- Organise refreshments

## **4. HODS**

**Meet with teaching staff (and non teaching staff where relevant) to:**

- Disseminate factual information
- Explain media policy eg no comment, direct inquiries to Administration
- Inform of changes in school routine
- Inform staff of available debriefing
- Model calm and control

## **5. PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**

**Meet with students at whole school assembly to:**

- Disseminate factual information
- Explain media policy
- Inform of changes in school routine
- Inform students of available debriefing
- Model calm and control
- Liaise with Year Co-Ordinators and Team Leaders to determine students who may be closest to the victim(s). Determine membership of sporting teams/ primary school of origin and significant others eg family members. Notify the Guidance Officer of students concerned.
- If a Year 8 student is the victim care should be taken to speak with the form class and identify fellow primary school students from other classes.
- Provide students with a factual letter home to parents explaining the incident, process being followed, and support provided by the school.



## 6. YEAR CO-ORDINATORS AND TEAM LEADERS (if whole school assembly not held)

### Meet with Year Groups with Phoenix Teachers supervising to:

- Disseminate factual information
- Inform students of available debriefing
- Allow student discussion
- Direct affected students to library, staff common room, etc
- Identify students closest to victim(s) and notifies Guidance Officer

## 7. GUIDANCE OFFICER

### Meets with CISD response team to:

- Disseminate factual information
- Determine management plan for students, staff (including ancillary staff) and parent debriefing as applicable
- Co-ordinate CISD debriefing process in association with Principal and/or Deputy

## 8. PRINCIPAL

### Meets with staff at end of day to:

- Update further factual information
- Allow staff discussion/debriefing
- Ascertain staff needs

## 9. HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**When the incident involves an International student, the Head of International Studies maintains contact with the Principal, but manages the incident and informs**

- Homestay Co-Ordinator
- Officer Manager International
- LOTE Teachers
- ESL Teacher
- School Guidance Officer
- School Nurse

The Homestay Co-Ordinator and Office Manager ensure all appropriate legal documentation is prepared. Parent contact is made at the discretion of the Head of International Studies either directly or through an agent.

The Guidelines for Critical Incident supplied by Education Queensland International are then followed.



## Roles

**The Principal, or if absent the Deputy Principal, will be the Co-Ordinator of the plan and will be responsible for the initiation of it.**

### **The Principal/Deputy Principal will:**

- Gather factual information
- Establish critical nature of incident – decide upon immediate course of action
- Ensure safety
- Arrange contact with emergency service if needed
- Convene brief meeting with Administration, Guidance Officer, Business Services Manager and Year Co-ordinators
- Convene staff meeting to present factual information and present management plan
- Arrange for contact with parents of students directly involved
- Be the **only** contact with the media
- Contact District Office
- Contact P & C President
- Contact EQ International if applicable
- Organise a letter for parents of all students
- Monitor the Crisis Management Plan throughout
- Organise some 'closure' event, e.g. commemorative service

### **The Deputy Principal will:**

- Be responsible for evacuation of students if needed
- Contact Year Coordinators and Guidance Officer for meeting to set up debriefing response
- Arrange for school assembly – changing bell times if needed
- Organise for relief staff where necessary
- Meet with Guidance Officer and CISD Response Team called in by Guidance Officer
- Co-ordinate/oversee total plan in conjunction with Principal
- Organise for staff debriefing at end of first day and as needed thereafter

### **Guidance Officer will:**

- Determine facts
- Contact CISD Response personnel
- Meet with Deputy Principals and response personnel
- Co-ordinate debriefing support groups in Resource Centre, Common Room, etc
- Liaise with Year Coordinators and Phoenix teachers to ascertain those students requiring debriefing
- Assist Coordinator and Deputy Principal with debriefing of staff
- Facilitate debriefing sessions with CISD team
- Organise continuing support/counselling/referral for students, staff and parents as needed
- Be alert to ongoing 'triggering' events, e.g. anniversaries
- Begin the grief counselling process with affected students/staff/parents. Where necessary additional Guidance staff will be provided by District Office.



**The Year Coordinators or Team Leaders will:**

- Hold brief meeting with Phoenix Teachers
- Record all names of students identified as 'at risk'
- Provide initial comfort and support to 'at risk' students
- Liaise with Guidance Officer about student debriefing needs
- Provide list of students who were close to victim

**The Heads of Departments will:**

- Monitor staff needs for support
- Liaise with Deputy Principal to provide relief of staff where needed
- Co-ordinate and promote appropriate classroom discussion and activities to assist the recovery process

**Teachers will:**

- Monitor own energy levels and reactions
- Access support as necessary
- Provide factual information to students

**Assist students by:**

- Listening with empathy
- Allowing expression of emotion
- Modelling calm and control
- Setting simple practical tasks to restore a sense of present reality
- Record all names of students considered 'at risk' including those for whom the incident may be a 'trigger' and those who don't have a personal support group – inform Year Coordinators, Team Leaders
- Inform students of support with Year Coordinators and Team Leaders and debriefing in Resource Centre, Common Room, etc.
- Monitor students throughout the first day and ensuing weeks
- Maintain maximum presence in the playground to assist with restoring order
- Check how 'at risk' students are getting home and encourage contact with parents for picking up

**The Librarian will: (If common room is not sufficient in space)**

- Close the Resource Centre
- Organise debriefing area and appropriate physical support resources (water)



**The Business Services Manager will:**

- Brief ancillary staff and delegate tasks
- Ensure communication lines within the school
- Keep a record of procedures which may be required for legal proceedings at a later date
- Ensure that ancillary staff receive appropriate debriefing
- Arrange with ancillary staff for light refreshments in debriefing areas

**The Ancillary Staff will:**

- Maintain an easily accessible and current list of emergency services phone numbers
- Contact parents of students who need to go home
- Provide accurate official information
- Refer media to Principal
- Assist with first aid as required
- Direct students to Year Co-Ordinators as needed
- Organise refreshments in debriefing areas

**48 – 72 Hours**

**Principal/Deputies**

- Restore the school to normal routine as soon as possible.
- Encourage staff to allow students the opportunity to talk about the incident and their reactions to it. (Not something to be forced, but it is important to part of the recovery process).
- Keep parents informed. If a major incident students may need a letter home each day providing a factual update and information regarding the next part of the management plan/healing process. This may include information on a memorial service at school, funeral services, counselling services etc.
- Provide ongoing information regarding possible reactions of students and sources of help for families.
- Hold a memorial service at the school
- Facilitate staff and student attendance at the funeral (s).

**Guidance Officer**

- Encourage staff to take the time to deal with their own emotional responses, including their own mental and physical health
- Inform staff of possible reactions/effects on students
- Provide advice on how to manage student reactions
- Keep students informed of upcoming events e.g. funeral/memorial service.
- If applicable work with class/friends to explain grief process, identify feelings, explain the funeral process and protocol etc.
- Take note of specific students and times for future anniversary issues.
- Provide ongoing grief counselling



#### HOD's

- Ongoing monitoring of staff
- Providing relief where and when needed
- Assisting in 'normalising' school routine

#### Staff

- Ongoing monitoring of students
- Provision of support and 'time out' for students if needed
- Keep parents and Guidance Officer informed if concerned about particular students

**IMPORTANT: ALL STAFF TO MONITOR OWN NEEDS AND THOSE OF FELLOW STAFF FOR SUPPORT**