# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY [2018]

## Rationale

The College recognises the need to prepare for and respond to critical incidents which may affect our community. In the event of a critical incident the College acknowledges its responsibilities and duty of care to implement transparent and consistent procedures and processes to ensure accountability.   In designing this policy, the College seeks to develop a co-ordinated systemic response during a crisis that will restore stability.

## Definitions

A critical incident is an event which causes disruption to an organisation, creates significant danger or risk, and creates a situation where staff, students and/or parents feel unsafe, vulnerable and under stress. As a general rule, a critical incident is determined by its impact on individuals and the community as a whole, rather than by any predetermined list of events.

## Policy Statement/Guiding Principles

The purpose of the College's Critical Incident Management Policy is:

* to further understanding of and restate the commitment of the College to its pastoral care ministry across the school community
* to ensure the school system is accountable in its practices and complies with its "duty of care" legislative responsibilities
* to demonstrate a commitment to the principles of best practice in the management of critical incidents within our school community
*  recognise the impact of trauma on the College community
* minimise that impact through the implementation of best practice principles in the management of prevention, preparation for and responding to critical incidents.
* sustain an effective care network through its commitment to the delivery of 'a sensitive and pastoral response to the distress and suffering that can be the result of significant human crisis'.

## Procedures

Assessment of a critical incident must take into account both the reaction of the individual/s directly affected and the broader members of the school community. The goals of critical incident management include:

* providing accurate information and maintaining communication links within the school and to outside sources
* helping restore and maintaining a supportive, positive learning environment as soon as possible
* providing support systems and a safe place for individuals during this period of time
* reducing psychological suffering and helping the school community contain and resolve the situation
* monitoring and ensuring support and resources are available to the school community.

The decision about when an incident is deemed critical will usually be determined by the Principal who will take into account the impact or likely impact of the incident on the school community as well as the previous critical incident history of the school community. Prevention and/or minimising the impact of critical incidents largely relate to the College's policies and practices that promote mental health and wellbeing.

The procedures and guidelines are aimed at assisting in the planning and implementation of an inclusive response to manage the crisis effectively and restore a sense of safety and security to the College community.

Effective management of a critical incident response requires a clear delineation of responsibilities that are carefully planned, communicated and implemented. The following personnel hold key responsibilities in the event of a critical incident.

**Critical Incident Management Team**

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) consists of the following people:

**College Leadership Team:**

Principal, Deputy Principal, Director Faith & Mission, Director of Learning, Business Manager

**Daily Organiser**

**College Counsellor**

The CIMT is responsible for the management of and response to any critical incident that takes place at the College. The Critical Incident Management Team has a key role in all three phases of Critical Incident Management.

**Protocols**

In the event of a critical incident:

1. Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and Mercy Education are notified
2. CMIT meets to discuss the approach to informing the College community and the roles each may play.
3. A staff briefing is held to disseminate information in which a brief written statement is provided
4. Support staff are supplied with a script to follow in the event of phone calls being made to the Front Office
5. Students are informed of the incident and the College's response
6. An email is sent to parents informing them of the critical incident and the College's response

**Principals' Practice Guidelines:**

- The primary focus is to ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors to the school. Seek personal support and assistance using the resources provided within the system.
- Contact the designated personnel within the system and seek support to share the responsibility of managing the crisis.
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**TEACHERS**

Teachers play a vital role in the re-establishment of safety and normality and assist students to create meaning out of what has happened. Students will turn to teachers in the absence of parents.

**Teachers' Practice Guidelines:**

- Be aware of the limitations of the role.
- Make use of the referral systems to refer students identified as needing further support.
- It can be unhelpful to elaborate in the early stages of a critical incident. Limit information given to the fact sheets provided.
- The involvement of counsellors is crucial for:
    - Assessment of individuals who may be at risk;
    - Appropriate information e.g. Common reactions to critical incidents;
    - Assistance for primary and secondary students articulating disturbing feelings and thoughts in the early stages;
- Engage students in a prayer for those affected.
- Be aware counsellors are more likely to respond to a request for assistance rather than impose themselves. Seek the personal assistance you require to carry out your role.

**SUPPORT STAFF**

The role of Support staff should not be underestimated. They are often in the front line in an emotionally charged atmosphere responding to phone calls, receiving visitors, organising attendance sheets etc.

**Support Staff Practice Guidelines:**

- Maintain calm and adhere to the instructions given by the Principal and Critical Incident Management Team.
- Care should be taken when giving information. Keep a Fact Sheet next to the telephone to ensure consistent and official information is disseminated.
- All visitors must be clearly identified to ensure no unwanted visitors are able to enter the premises.
- Support staff needs to work closely with counsellors and others in the identification and monitoring of 'at risk' students.
- A member of the support staff needs to be included in the Critical Incident Management Team and all support staff should be included in briefings, debriefing sessions, rituals of closure etc.

**COLLEGE COUNSELLOR**

A critical incident requires the specific expertise of counsellors around 'psychological first aid' and the emotional containment of a situation. Counsellors trained in responding to a critical incident understand the impact such an event can have both on a community and at an individual level and can assist school personnel to identify those needing further support. It is crucial that counsellors are involved in the assessment of individuals who may be at risk.

**Counsellor's Practice Guidelines:**

- All counsellors need to work within the parameters of the school's policies and procedures.
- Counsellors need to keep the Principal informed of their progress, and will in all cases notify the Principal of any matters that pertain to the duty of care obligations held by the Principal.

**Related Documents**

Catholic Schools Operations Guide retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/134752/Downloads/Catholic-Schools-Operation-Guide-Updated-20%20Jan%202017%20(2).pdf

CEM Critical Incident Management Guidelines retrieved from:

file:///C:/Users/134752/Downloads/Critical%20Incident%20Management%20(1).pdf

**Date to be reviewed:** December 2018