

KAIKORAI VALLEY COLLEGE



TRAUMATIC INCIDENT PROCEDURE

RATIONALE

Crisis situations such as suicide/death, kidnapping, outdoor party lost, civil emergencies, pandemics and accidents can put the school community into a state of shock. If the school is not cohesive there will be chaos and the crisis heightened rather than managed.

PURPOSE

A school **CRISIS ACTION PLAN** can avoid much confusion and stress among staff and ensures that the best possible help is made available to all involved. It is important for the school to have a strategy for coping with the aftermath of any such crisis.

THE MANAGEMENT OF TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS

Background

Traumatic incidents (the death of a student or a teacher) are by their very nature unexpected events that require timely and efficient management if disruption to normal school routines is to be minimised and the stress experienced by staff and children kept at a manageable level. The two critical requirements for achieving this goal are:

1. **A Traumatic Incident Management Team**
2. **A Traumatic Incident Management Plan**

Establishing a Team

In times of crisis, it is advisable to make decisions within a team context. This allows for the critical examination of those decisions and provides a degree of safety and support for the individuals involved. The team should have:

- *Five or six members*
- Release time to meet and plan a response when a traumatic incident occurs. Include International Director/Dean
- Authority to make decisions without referral to a higher authority
- Recognition across the school as having responsibility for traumatic incident management
- A line of communication with/to the Board Presiding Member

Guiding Principles

The principles on which the management of a school related traumatic incident are:

Inclusion and Ownership - Staff of the facility need to be involved in the management of the incident and feel a sense of ownership in dealing with it.

Normal Routines - Work towards maintaining, as far as is possible, the normal routines of the facility.

Personal Resources and Growth - People can be expected to have the personal resources to cope with this event and will gain skills and knowledge as a result of their involvement in it.

Protection and Recovery - Actions taken to facilitate recovery must be balanced by the need to manage the safety of staff and students.

A Management Plan

This plan is designed to guide the team through the process of managing the traumatic incident. The management plan should involve the following seven steps:

- Establishing the facts
- Planning the response
- Communicating with staff, students, the community, agents and caregivers (where applicable)
- Triage
- Psychological first aid
- Debriefing
- Review

Documentation

It is essential to keep a record of decisions made and actions undertaken.

POSTVENTION CHECKLIST

Immediate Actions

- Information verified
- Principal has informed: Staff, BOT, MOE, Emergency services
- Postvention team formed\ Cultural advisor sought
- Family contacted (agents and international parents where applicable)
- All staff informed
- Media spokesperson appointed
- Front desk person appointed
- Written statement prepared for Staff

Meeting

- Staff meeting arranged
- Written statement for students presented/discussed/amended
- Response for international programme considered
- Management of students' reactions discussed
- Normal structures emphasised
- Counselling/Guidance made available
- At risk student identification/monitoring organised
- Management plan for the next 24 hours drawn up
- System for internal communication established
- Media enquiries planned for
- Extra staff recruited as appropriate
- Empty desk arrangements made
- Funeral arrangements/attendance outlined

Student Wellbeing

- Students informed of counselling services
- Support room established: this may include a separate space for international students based in the international department
- Warm drinks, comfy seating, tissues, drawing/writing materials
- Close friends, siblings, extended family identified and monitored

- Students who have experienced recent losses identified/monitored
- All students monitored for significant, persistent behaviour changes
- Students encouraged to be together
- Children to be sent home?
- Record of children taken home
- Attendance checks. Absences followed up

Staffing Issues

- Staff stress monitored
- Staff informed range of reactions normal
- Regular staff meetings first few days

Liaison with Family of the Victim

- Personal family contact and support
- Visit the injured children
- Discuss funeral arrangements
- Give update of what is happening at school
- Support for individuals returning to school

Communication with the Wider Community

- Letter to caregivers re: School arrangements, possible student reactions, and sources of help
- Funeral/Memorial service arrangements advised
- Notify/Liaise with sibling's school(s)
- Consider memorial service

Longer Term Actions

- Plan for the impact of trigger events
- Acknowledge gifts/support/help
- Ongoing monitoring of students/staff
- Review of postvention by all staff
- Review/Update of school's policy for management of traumatic events

CRISIS ACTION PLAN

Note:

1. This provides the framework for crisis situations, but every crisis is likely to be different.
2. Whoever is first alerted to the situation **verifies that the information is correct** with the family or Police and quickly calls the Crisis Team together.
3. The Crisis Team meets as soon as possible. The Principal (or Deputy Principal, if the Principal is not available) acts as team leader until the crisis is assessed and one of the team is identified as team leader.

*A team leader is **not hierarchical** as experience, skills, and relationships with those involved are the most important factors.*

The basis of membership of the crisis team:

- Principal/ Board Presiding Member
- Deputy/Assistant Principals
- Guidance Counsellor/s

- International Director/Dean
- Whānau Teacher of the victim/s
- Office staff member who handles the telephone.

Depending on the nature of the crisis other people may be called into the crisis team:

- Group Special Ed Crisis Team – Likely In the first instance
- Youth Aid Officer
- Board of Trustees member
- Local counselling agency
- Community liaison workers
- Public Health Nurse
- Civil Defence Agencies

Pastoral Team will need to be relieved from scheduled classes or appointments.

Crisis Team Members are assigned areas of responsibility,
 consultation and communication with the family/ies, international agents
 communication with the media
 staff telephone tree information
 information for parents/caregivers
 action plan for teachers and support staff
 counselling for students in the school and in the community
 school routines.

Information on these on 'Ready to Respond' sheets – acknowledgement, adapted from 'Youth Health Project Training Programme' and 'In a Time of Crisis'.

Staff Telephone Tree: Staff member identified at the top of every branch telephones people in their branch. The team leader will ring the BOT Presiding Member and keep him/her up to date.

Action Plan for Teachers: At the first staff briefing, teachers will be provided with a paper giving an update of the situation, accurate information to give to students, signs to watch out for among students, what to do with a distressed student. After that, staff will be informed of all updates of the situation.

Crisis Room: For some days, usually up until the funeral in the case of a death, a room is made available throughout the day for students, teachers and parents/caregivers to come to whenever they are distressed or need counselling. Counsellors, teachers and support agencies are rostered there to provide personal counselling in crisis resolution, understanding grief, stress management and suicide prevention.

Students most likely will find comfort in being able to play some music meaningful to the deceased, may want to set up a notice board with photos/poems/letters, will need to be provided with tea, coffee and refreshments.

Funeral/Tangihanga Arrangements: Depending on wishes of the family, many students, parents and staff may wish to attend. Call a meeting of those who wish to do so to ascertain numbers and if necessary provide a bus. Encourage students to wear their uniform as representatives of the school. A memorial service may be held at school for the whole school, at a later date.

Ongoing Grief Counselling: Will be available for those who require it. Pastoral staff will continue to monitor students after the funeral and help will be available on an ongoing basis.

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READY TO RESPOND 1

CRISIS TEAM CHECKLIST

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Verify the information is accurate. In consultation with the family, determine what information is to be shared with the school.

All **media requests** to be dealt with by the Crisis Team leader – no other staff member should respond. Students to be reminded that they don't have to speak with the media. In fact it is preferable that they don't do so, but direct all enquiries to the Crisis Team leader.

Any communication with the **international community** shall be through the International Director in conjunction with the Crisis Team leader.

Phone Tree should be established to inform all staff as soon as possible. Staff meeting should be called to explain the situation, respond to questions and to plan strategy for the first day following the sudden death, and any subsequent arrangements for information sharing.

Other schools who may have siblings of the deceased should be contacted to coordinate information and support.

Where a **suicide** has occurred, to avoid '**copy-cattng**' parents/caregivers of students need to be provided with information on warning signs of suicide and where to go for help for their children should they be worried. A meeting for parents can be helpful in ensuring that the correct information about the suicide is given and that the concerns of the parents can be addressed

Contact with the family should be regular with updates about what is being done at the school.

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READY TO RESPOND 2

CRISIS TEAM CHECKLIST

ACTION PLAN FOR TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF

Many expectations will be placed on the staff to be in control and supportive of students. Time needs to be given for the staff to express their feelings and to gain a sense of support from each other.

Staff must be kept informed of all updates in the situation. Students will ask many questions of them and it is important that they are able to supply accurate information. This helps to nullify the multitude of rumours that go round a school.

Crisis Team representatives need to meet with staff to prepare them to talk with the students. This should include ways of facilitating discussion about the death, if it was suicide, how much should be said to the students, signs to watch out for amongst the students and what to do with a distressed pupil.

Staff need to feel comfortable with any task they are asked to do and let someone in the guidance team know if they are not comfortable. Pastoral staff are not just available to counsel/support students but also to support staff.

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READY TO RESPOND 3

CRISIS TEAM CHECKLIST

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Crisis Team should meet as a group to decide how the students will be notified. Mass assemblies are not recommended. A statement should be prepared for teachers to read or discuss with their form class or the first class they have once details of the death are known. This statement should include what support services will be available and where.

Crisis Team as at

- 1. .
- 2. .
- 3. .
- 4. .
- 5. .
- 6.

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