

STRATFORD



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Stratford College Critical Incident Policy

Ratified: Mr Michael Gilbert, School Manager

Date: November 2005

For the purposes of this plan a crisis situation is one where a death has occurred or has been perceived i.e. Suicide, Death or life threatening injury of a student or staff member. The Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) may not be a necessary step in all instances.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Leadership / Family Liaison / Communication/Counselling / Pastoral

Principal: Patricia Gordon Deputy Principal: Roderick Cody

ZION ROAD, RATHGAR, DUBLIN 6. TEL: 353 1 492 2315 FAX: 353 1 4920372
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Crisis Response Team – A Framework

At the core of the framework are the members of the team who carry out the following roles:

- **Leadership**
- **Guidance Counsellor**
- **Pastoral**
- **Family Liaison**
- **Communication**

Leadership Role

The particular role of the principal lends itself most clearly to being a supportive presence to others in the school. This is shown through acknowledging the feelings of those in any way effected providing informal/formal opportunities for people to chat and discuss the incident and its impact on them.

Counsellor Role

A pivotal role in the crisis team will be the school counsellor who will have responsibility to manage the range of counselling services required during times of trauma. Integral to the role of the

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counsellor is the relationship that is built up with the students particularly in the area of social and personal development. They have a role in supporting those students at risk and are also best placed to be a resource to staff and parents in a variety of ways.

Pastoral Role

(S)he has a core pastoral role to play in supporting the family, students and staff.

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Family Liaison Role

The link and involvement with the bereaved family is essential. The designated staff member in the family liaison role is an important resource in the response of the school to the bereaved family and to other families who may be distressed. The impression the family forms from meeting this person will influence their perception of the entire school's response to the death of their child. This underlines the importance of communicating in a sensitive manner.

Communication Role

In times of crisis there may sometimes be media interest that will need to be sensitively managed so that the involvement becomes part of the support effort rather than an unhelpful intrusion. The person in the communication role will also have a major responsibility to support the other the other members of the Crisis Response Team involved in communicating with staff, parents and students. The person selected needs to be comfortable with appearing on television and radio as they, with the principal, should be the only points of contact with the media. They will be responsible for preparing and updating press releases and statements to the school community.

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Intervention Responsibilities:

Leadership / Family Liaison / Communications:

- Confirm the death has occurred. Get accurate information.
- Express sympathy to Family, assure of school's support.
- Ensure the family knows who is the contact person with the school.
- Contact with family on school involvement in funeral. (Family wishes to be respected)
- Organize the crisis response team to meet.
- Prepare an announcement for staff/students.
- Plan a meeting if required.
- Prepare statements and distribute procedures to Class Teachers in breaking the news.
- Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents. (Communication role)
- Have written and/or oral responses to enquiries prepared.

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- Notify School Manager
- Prepare media statement.(Simple, factual and brief)
- Discourage any student or staff from dealing with the media.
- Make decisions on who should attend funeral.
- Should the school be closed on the day of the funeral? (Notification to parents/visitors of closure)

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Intervention Responsibilities

Pastoral / Counselling:

- Set up Crisis Team Room in the college. (Penthouse)
- Outline services available to affected students during the first hours.
- Assist class teacher of the class affected in breaking news.
- Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. Information on grief responses, identifying those with need of counselling and support.
- Take time with the most affected students in Crisis Response Room.
- Organize an assembly for mid-morning, once all the students have been notified. (Optional)
- Contact parents where some students request to go home.
- Encourage those who feel able, to return to class.
- Meet and support any distressed parents and staff.

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- Consultation and liason will take place where required with appropriate outside agencies such as NEPS, external counsellors and mental health professionals.
- A rainbows workshop or support group could be established in the aftermath to help bereaved students.
- Many staff, following a trauma, may need to air their feelings and reactions. This could be done through a de-briefing meeting of the staff; a simple confidential questionnaire to determine the needs of the staff.
- Staff who feel, for whatever reason, that they are unable to be involved in the school's direct response to the trauma should be able to readily opt out.

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Crisis Response Team: Step by Step

1. The principal having confirmed the death makes contact with the family.
2. Crisis Team Meet to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
3. Key tasks are distributed
4. Have all guidelines for Teachers ready.
5. Have written and oral statements ready for all communication with the school.
6. Have a notice at entrances to the school for staff to report to the staff room at 8:45am.
7. Meet Staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff know the news)
8. Crisis Response Team outline to staff the plan for the day and the support available.
9. Location of Crisis Response Room announced (Penthouse)
10. Class Tutors break news to their classes (handouts given on guidelines)
11. Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using base room.
12. D.P. to also ensure that Guidance Counsellor

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is freed from all other commitments for the day.

13. Plan another update staff meeting later in the day.
14. Clarify funeral arrangements for staff later.
15. Crisis Team meet to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral.
16. Day 2: Students who are not coping are referred to Guidance Counsellor on an individual basis. Important for the school to run as normal as possible.
17. Day 3: Crisis team meet to plan CIMP response after the funeral in the next few days. (Involve Class Teacher at this stage)

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Checklist

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's appropriate to say to all concerned.

- ❑ Take time to let the news sink in.
- ❑ Implement the school's crisis plan, i.e. Activate school's response team.
- ❑ Put together as much factual material as you can.
- ❑ Inform staff what has happened.
- ❑ Discuss school routine for the first day.
- ❑ Identify particular students who may need to be told individually e.g. Close friends, relatives etc.
- ❑ Inform 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 students.
- ❑ Make contact with the family of the deceased.
- ❑ Meet the key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format of this.
- ❑ Decide on any other arrangements, which need to be made on the first day.
- ❑ Check in with staff in the staff room during the day and keep abreast of what's happening in the school.
- ❑ Be aware of any particular teachers who may be

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particularly distressed e.g. Teachers who are recently bereaved themselves or who 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.
- Visit 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.

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Sample Statement for Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of Stratford College have learned of the tragic death of ... N.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of N.

On hearing the tragic news the College Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation. The Crisis Response Team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the college community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

The College is offering Counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family.

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Our thoughts and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Contacting staff if tragedy occurs over a weekend.

If it is the death of a colleague, the Principal and Deputy Principal will contact staff by phone.

If it is the death of a student, The Crisis Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed on Monday.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 How teachers can support students in school following a critical incident.

Appendix 2 A Classroom session following a critical incident.

Appendix 3 The range 'normal' reactions to a Critical Incident.

Appendix 4 Guidelines for input with pupils on coping with their reactions to a Critical Incident.

Appendix 5 Frequently asked questions by Teachers.

Appendix 6 Useful Contact Numbers.

Appendix 7 Useful Website Addresses.

Appendix 8 Suggested readings and Resources.

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**GUIDELINES FOR A SCHOOL POLICY ON BEREAVEMENT****1. Death of student/ staff member in School**

- Proceed as for Serious Accident i.e. phone doctor and follow his/her directions

[Where a student is so upset that a teacher cannot deal with it, the student will be accompanied to the Guidance office.]

- Notify staff of the situation and ask them to assemble at 3.45 p.m to discuss
- No announcement to students other than that the patient has gone to hospital
- Contact National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

2. Death of student / staff member after 4.00 p.m.

- Phone all members of staff and ask that they assemble at 8.55 a.m. to discuss procedure for the day.

3. Resources

- i. Guidance Counsellor
- ii. Bereavement Team – those free... volunteer to supervise their classes for the day

Assembly of Staff

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- Inform them of the situation as fully as possible
- **At 9 a.m. each class teacher go to his/her own class (If a member of staff feels unable to break this kind of news to class, teachers who have no class at that time may volunteer to replace**
- **Procedure in classroom**
 - ... tell the class of what has happened
 - ... suggest to the class that they take a few minutes to reflect, then proceed with class as normal
- **It is important the school day continue as normally as possible so that students feel reassured by the very "normality"**
- **The class where the student is missing and his/her friends will need special support**
- **Class Teacher and Class Tutor will go to the class and inform them of tragedy**

[Where a student is so upset that a teacher cannot deal with it, the student will be accompanied to the Guidance Office]

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