



CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE POLICY

Policy Status	CURRENT / Under Review
Policy Classification	Executive Office / Board Endorsed
Policy Established	2005
Policy Last Reviewed	2018
Policy Responsibility	Executive Office

PREAMBLE

A critical incident can occur at any time and in turn will affect members of our College community. The people within our College may experience strong psychological and emotional distress at the time of such an incident, which may then affect their ability to cope at the time of the crisis or after the event.

Critical incident may involve, for example, a natural disaster, bomb, suicide of staff or student, member of the College community, violent/sexual assault, and death of staff or student/s, siege, laboratory explosion, fire or outdoor accident.

DEFINITIONS

A critical incident can be described as any event or circumstance that:

- causes normally stable and healthy people to experience unusually strong emotional or psychological distress which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the time of the event or later.
- endangers the health and wellbeing of staff or students
- endangers property within the College campus.

Critical incidents often have similar characteristics including:

- rapid time sequences
- overwhelming of usual coping responses of individuals or communities
- severe disruption, at least temporarily, to the functioning of individuals or communities, and;
- perceptions of threat and helplessness and a turning to others for help.



RATIONALE

This plan has been developed so that the staff of St Augustine's College, Sydney may respond in the most appropriate manner regarding their "Duty of Care" and expected responsibilities.

Predetermined contingency plans/guidelines can do much to:

- lessen the impact of critical incident events
- lessen the time lost in recovery, and
- restore people to "good health".

AIM

St Augustine's College aims to minimize the traumatic effects of crisis situations both in the short and long term. This is best achieved by a co-ordinated, systematic response that restores stability and creates a sense of safety for members of the community.

PROCEDURES

The Critical Incident Team convene in response to the incident and to decide at what level the policy should be implemented. The Critical Incident Response Policy is designed to deal with plans after an incident has occurred. Evacuation and Lockdown Procedures are outlined in the Staff Administration and Procedures Manual.

STRATEGIES

The most important actions of critical incident management are:

- Follow the College Critical Incident Plan
- Determine the facts
- Respond to the emergency to minimize injury/ensure safety
- Manage information effectively
- Care for students and staff
- Provide closure to the incident

1. First Aid

2. Evacuation Procedures

Fire or Bomb threat evacuation procedure is to be clearly displayed and practised twice per year and should be used for critical incidents.

3. The Critical Incident Team consists of:

- Principal
- Head of Strategy and Compliance
- Deputy Principal - Students
- Deputy Principal – Mission and Wellbeing
- Deputy Principal - Academic
- Assistant Principal - Sport & Co-curricular
- Assistant Principal - Staff
- Head of Primary School
- Head of Business and Finance
- Operations Co-ordinator (as required)
- College Psychologist/s (as required)
- College Chaplain (as required)
- Executive Officer: International Programme (if Critical Incident involves an International Student)



4. **Debriefing**

All staff and students who are involved in or witness a critical incident, or have a close relationship with the victims of a critical incident can participate in debriefing activities organised by the school.

5. **Information Management**

a) Staff

In such situations a full staff meeting will occur as soon as possible where staff will be supplied with:

- Accurate information about the incident
- Strategies to assist students to talk about the incident in a productive manner
- Information to assist in understanding grief reactions
- Strategies for identifying students who should be referred for further counseling.

b) Students

The CIT will decide how to inform students about the critical incident. This will include a whole school assembly. NB. Information needs to be consistent and accurate so that rumours and speculation amongst the student body are minimised.

c) Parents

A letter should be sent to parents as soon as possible explaining the facts of the incident, the College's response, possible reactions of students and sources of assistance for families affected.

d) Media

The Principal is the designated Media Liaison Person and all media enquiries about the student / staff member and the College at the time of the critical incident **MUST** be referred to him. The Principal may seek advice from the Chairman of the College Board and / or the Prior Provincial.

e) Telephone Communication

All staff contacted by the CIT to be advised by prepared statement. All Front Office staff are to be given a prepared statement for any public enquiries and personal visits.

6. **Support, Counseling and Supervision**

Not all people involved in a critical incident require formal debriefing. Students not involved may require emotional assistance to be provided by House and Student Formation Leaders, their Assistants and Tutors in informal class settings.

The College Psychologist will organise and co-ordinate student counselling. During and after a critical incident students will require supervision and comfort. A safe room will be set up by the CIT to assist students and staff who have been emotionally affected by the incident.

If circumstances allow, it is better to keep students at school and to monitor their emotional wellbeing. It is a desirable situation to have classes return to normal as soon as possible after the incident.

7. **People who may be affected by a critical incident:**

- People exposed to incidents (students, staff) who suffer intense trauma including injury
- Relatives and friends – those grieving for the injured or affected
- People with previous trauma and grief – not directly involved but affected because of a previous incident
- Helpers or recovery personnel – those in community not directly involved but affected by the incident.



RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal will:

- develop and implement the Critical Incident Management Plan, reflecting the local conditions in the school
- appoint and monitor a Critical Incident Management Team
- promote knowledge of the existence and content of the Critical Incident Management Plan in the school
- communicate decisions regarding an incident, in line with the Critical Incident Management Plan
- be guided by the Critical Incident Management Plan when making decisions concerning communication with the media. The Principal will act as spokesperson for the College, in line with the Critical Incident Management Plan.

Staff will:

- make themselves aware of the relevant policy and procedures relating to critical incidents
- follow mandatory reporting requirements as required
- follow procedures in the event of a critical incident

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

It is important that the Principal must be contacted whenever a critical incident occurs that has the potential to generate media interest. The College Principal is the spokesperson for the College in accordance with the Media Policy.

If the media enters College property without permission, they may be requested to leave, but this could result in them employing other methods to get the story or pictures. If the media arrives unannounced, they should be referred to the Principal. If the Principal is not yet on the scene, the media should be directed to a safe area where they do not disturb the crisis recovery process. They should be informed their requests would be dealt with as soon as possible.

Summary Procedures for Responding

Procedures for responding to Critical Incident Response Procedures (*see Critical Incident Response Flowchart*) must be displayed in prominent locations around the College and workplace. This procedure sheet must be included in the Staff Administration and Procedures Manual and is available on ATLAS and the College website.

Management of Critical Incidents Occurring Away from the School

The person in charge of managing a critical incident away from College premises should:

- ensure the safety of students and staff;
- assert authority in a calm, reassuring manner;
- ensure students and staff stay together and complete a roll call as soon as possible;
- follow the instructions of the venue management in implementing their emergency plans, as long as these do not conflict with the duty of care of the students;
- advise emergency services of College personnel and students unaccounted for;
- advise the Principal as soon as possible;
- ensure parents will be informed of any delay in returning to the College; and, remain with the group until relieved of responsibility.



Critical Incident Response for an International Student

The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) requires the College to notify the police and DHA as soon as practical after the incident and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's participation, the incident will be reported by the Registrar via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

When an international student dies or sustains serious injury, the College may be required to assist the student's family. This may include:

- hiring interpreters
- making arrangements for hospital / funeral / memorial service / repatriation
- obtaining a death certificate
- assisting with personal items
- assisting with visa issues

Serious Mental Health Incidents - Student Re-Entry Plan – Principles and Process Statement

Should the Critical Incident involve a student's mental health please refer to the addendum statement below.

Recovery Timeline and Checklist

The successful management of critical incidents depends on the College taking appropriate action and providing support during and after a critical incident. The recovery timeline following a critical incident varies, depending on the circumstances. Here is a general guideline.

Immediately (and within 24 hours)

- Gather the facts;
- Ensure safety and welfare of staff and students and arrange for first-aid if necessary;
- Where possible notify the time and place of the debriefing to all relevant persons;
- Manage the media;
- Set up a recovery room;
- Keep staff, students and parents informed.

Within 48-72 hours

- Arrange counselling as needed;
- Provide opportunities for staff and students to talk about the incident;
- Provide support to staff and helpers;
- Restore normal functioning as soon as possible;
- Keep parents informed.

Within the first month

- Arrange a memorial service, if appropriate;



- Encourage parents to participate in meeting to discuss students' welfare;
- Identify behavioural changes and the possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder and refer to Health Contacts for Mental Health Services;
- Monitor progress of hospitalised staff or students;
- Monitor mental and physical health of all helpers;
- Debrief all relevant persons.

In the longer term

- Monitor staff and students for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder – refer for specialised treatment;
- Provide support if needed.

In the long term

- Plan for and be sensitive to anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings;
- Access specialist support if needed.

