



## Our Lady of the Way Primary School

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# Critical Incidents Procedure

*Updated 2023*

## **Rationale**

A Critical Incident can be defined as

*'any situation faced by members of the school community that causes them to experience usually strong emotions which have the potential to overwhelm their ability to cope, either then or later.'*

*(Procedures Handbook for Catholic Schools in Parramatta Diocese 1997)*

At Our Lady of the Way, we believe that critical incidents may affect all community members and that information should be made available to the community in an appropriate manner. Early identification of a potential / actual critical incident will help to ensure the safety of students and staff. We believe that critical incidents can be better managed through the use of a pre-planned course of action

## **Critical Incident Management**

In order to manage a Critical Incident, a management plan has been constructed. In the event of a Critical Incident, we will provide the space and the personnel for community members to talk about the situation in terms of readjustment, acceptance and faith. The appropriate school personnel will be familiar with the processes involved in this plan.

## **Critical Incident Management Team Responsibilities**

### **Principal:**

1. To assess situations which may require emergency action
2. Analyse the requirements of the school to address these situations
3. Liaise with other members of the Critical Incident Management (CIM) Team , CSPD and outside authorities to ensure that all relevant personnel are informed of the situation
4. Inform the parent body

### **Assistant Principal:**

1. To act as the Principal's delegate when necessary
2. To liaise with relevant staff to ensure communication

3. To inform the children of events if necessary and ensure their safety
4. Organise relief staff if necessary

**Religious Education Co-Ordinator:**

1. To liaise with Parish personnel if necessary
2. To provide Pastoral Support for families and students as necessary

**Other Leadership Staff:**

1. To liaise with relevant staff as directed by the Assistant Principal
3. To stand in for the Assistant Principal if necessary

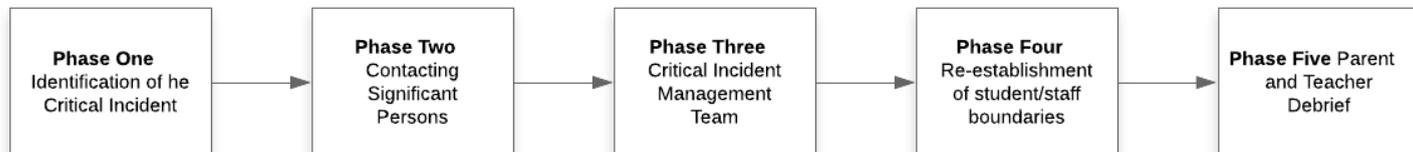
**Office Staff:**

1. To ensure communication occurs as required
2. To provide relevant space for meetings and counseling and provide hospitality as required
3. To monitor comings and goings of all personnel involved

**Critical Incidents Management Plan**

Our Critical Incidents Management Plan will follow the five phases as outline below:

Critical Incidents Management Flowchart



**Phase One: Identification of a Critical Incident**

A Critical incident may include:

- Sudden death, suicide, murder of a community member
- Assault of a community member
- Terminal illness of a community member
- Fire
- Incidents off school premises (eg: accident on school excursion)
- Student absconding from school
- Illness / injury requiring the presence of emergency services
- Serious vandalism
- Act of aggression or violence witnessed by a community member
- Bomb threat

**Phase Two: Contacting Significant Persons**

The following checklist will be followed to ensure that all community members are provided with adequate and appropriate care. This should be done as a priority

- Identify those community member who are ‘at risk’

- ❑ Collaborate with members of the CIM Team
- ❑ Contact CSPD staff including Directors
- ❑ Contact those families identified as 'at risk' to inform them of counseling facilities and school support
- ❑ Make available counseling services for impacted community members

### **Phase Three: Critical Incident Management Team**

This consists of:

- The Leadership Team
- The Parish Priest
- Office Staff

This team may be supported in times of crisis by other members of the staff or wider community.

The team may be required initially for an intensive period of time, followed by a less-intensive period of time over the ensuing weeks, months or term. Long term intervention may require that the individual be referred to an appropriate outside agency.

### **Phase Four: Re-establishment of staff / student boundaries**

Community members need to feel safe and have a sense of normality reached as soon as possible within the school. Therefore, the following areas need to be addressed when it is practical to do so:

- Rules that were relaxed need to be reinforced
- School bells and timetables need to return to normal
- Logical consequences are given for inappropriate actions
- Staff routines re-established
- Newsletters carry positive aspects of the school

### **Phase Five: Parent and Teacher Debrief**

After the re-establishment of student and staff boundaries it is essential that the parents and staff be formally debriefed, thus bringing to a close the Critical Incident.

- A formal meeting with professional input given by an appropriately qualified presenter
- Time for any unanswered questions that parents or staff may have
- Opportunities for all concerned to seek additional information

## **3.0 Evaluation**

The Principal, with delegated responsibility to the Leadership Team will be responsible for the planning, implementation and review of this program.