



RESPONSE TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Introduction

A critical incident is an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the college. The aim of this policy is to assist the college community during a critical incident that might arise due to any of the following:

- The sudden death of a member of the college community from natural causes.
- The loss to life of a member of our college community following an accident, suicide or homicide on or off the college premises.
- A serious physical attack on a member of our college community.
- An intrusion into the college causing serious discomfort or threat.
- Serious damage to the college such as fire, flood or other man-made or natural disaster.
- The disappearance of a member of our college community.
- An accident or tragedy in our local community, including our catchment area.

Crisis Response Team

A list of the members of the Crisis Response Team (CRT) and their role will be displayed in the college staff room and the college office. The college will have a saved group-list for texting and emailing the team, made up of the following personnel

Principal

Deputy Principal

Guidance Counsellor

College Counsellors

Health and Safety officer

Resource area Coordinator

Mentor

Tutors and any group or body relevant to any crisis may also form part of the CRT.

Staff should get refresher training every two years to keep them up to date on their role during a critical incident.

Staff will be given a crisis response pack to assist them in the aftermath of a critical incident. This is furnished through NEPS.

1. On College Premises Incident

- In the event of a sudden death or suicide on college premises, a staff member should call the necessary emergency services, send for help, send for the Principal or Deputy Principal and preserve the scene.
- In the event of injury or death due to fire, staff should raise the alarm, begin clearance of the building, and contain the fire **only** if safe to do so. Staff should follow Health and Safety Protocols already in place in the college.
- In the event of an intrusion or attack on a member of the college community, staff should call the Gardaí, and should **not** put themselves or others at risk.

2. Establish The Facts

- Any staff member who becomes aware of a traumatic incident will notify the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal should assess the situation initially and convene the CRT.
- The CRT should assess all the information available and ensure that all facts are accurate. Appointed members of the CRT should contact different agencies (e.g. hospitals, Gardai, Parents, NEPS, LMETB, and local Clergy as deemed necessary).
- The needs of the families and college members involved will be paramount, and their wishes will always be respected.
- All facts and delicate information will be confidential, and only the Principal or Deputy Principal will share these with the public, if and when appropriate.
- The CRT should arrange to meet on a regular basis to continually assess the situation.

3. Immediate School Response to a Critical Incident

- Specific tasks will be assigned to members of the CRT.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will inform staff by convening a staff meeting during college hours or by inviting staff to college via text or email when out of college hours (**See Appendix A regarding text or Email**).
- It is important that staff members be made aware of the full facts regarding the incident and that they be reminded not to speak to any other party regarding the incident.

- The Principal or Deputy Principal will call a partial-assembly and inform the relevant group of the incident. The mentor system should be used to inform all students of the incident. The students will be asked not to speak to reporters, share images or recordings on or with any media as a mark of respect.
- Mentor Groups should convene so that the Mentors can assess the needs of their students and report back to the CRT. A general statement will be made available to mentors (**See Appendix B regarding Mentor statement**).
- The CRT will be available to the affected group and close friends. The Counsellors will be available to those in need.
- The student support area will be made available where affected students can congregate and will be accompanied by the Counsellor(s).
- The college should continue in as normal way as possible.
- The college will organise an initial short prayer service if appropriate. A general statement will be available for media and will be delivered by the Principal / Deputy Principal or a person appointed by them (**see Appendix C regarding media statement**).
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will visit the home of any families affected by the incident.
- The Principal will contact the Board of Management, the C.E.O of Louth Meath Education and Training Board and the Department of Education including NEPS. The Principal will at all times liaise with authorities at an accident scene.
- The CRT will email students regarding the incident. (**See Appendix D**)

4. Short Term Action

- The CRT will assess those students and staff members whose needs are greatest, and will put in place whatever counselling is required. The support area will be made available as a place of silence and reflection, and other rooms will be made available to accommodate group therapy.
- Staff members on the CRT will be accommodated and, where possible and appropriate, freed from their timetable.
- Staff will be reminded to keep a close watch on students and to report any concerns to the Principal or a member of the CRT.
- Classes will continue unless the Principal or Deputy Principal decides otherwise.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will be the only person to liaise with the media.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal, in consultation with the families affected, will discuss the role of the college community during any funeral/s.

5. Long Term Care

- The college will hold a memorial service in the aftermath of a critical incident. The CRT will continue to assess the situation and identify needs on a daily basis.
- The college will continue to visit the affected families and offer whatever assistance they can.
- Funding will be made available to assist the CRT deal with any consequences of a critical incident.

- The college will assess how it dealt with the critical incident and will endeavour to make improvements where identified.

APPENDIX A

Contacting staff by text, email when an out-of-school incident occurs

In the event of a critical incident taking place out of college term or normal college hours the CRT should be contacted immediately via text or phone call. Staff will be informed via text or email. The text or email will be very short and will not give in detail the type of incident or the name(s) of any person(s) involved.

This message should be authorised only by the Principal or Deputy Principal or most senior manager at the time.

During school

The Principal or Deputy Principal will organise supervision of students and call a general staff meeting. The staff will be informed about the incident and will get further instruction regarding procedures for the remainder of the day.

APPENDIX B

Mentor statement (In the event of the sudden death of a student or staff member)

It is very difficult to understand what has happened today. We would like to offer our sympathies to the people involved and we remember those who died: _____.

We will light this small candle as a mark of respect, and we will have a short reflection with a moment of silence. We know that you are finding it difficult to come to terms with what has happened, and we are here to help you as much as possible. I would like to remind you that there are many services available in the college such as _____, and I would encourage you to use these.

Please remember you might be asked by reporters from the media about the College Management should speak to the media. As a mark of respect we would ask you not to disclose any recordings or images or items to the media, and if you do possess any relevant recordings or images or materials relevant, please make them available to the College Principal.

During the day there will be some disruptions but it is important for us to continue with our studies. If you need any help please feel free to ask me.

Thank You.

APPENDIX C

Media statement (In the event of the sudden death of a student or staff member)

It is with profound sadness that the Management, Staff, Students and Parents of Dunboyne College have learned of the tragic death of _____, a member of our college community.

We would like to extend our sympathies to the families of the deceased. We are unable to issue any further information at this time and we would ask that you, the media, respect the privacy of the bereaved and of our college community. We will endeavour to update you when appropriate.

The college has informed our Critical Response Team and we have put our Critical Response Plan into action.

We cannot answer questions at this time.

Thank you.

APPENDIX D

Statement to students

Dear student,

The college has experienced *the sudden death / other incident* of one of our *students / staff members*. We would like to extend our sympathies to _____.

The college has put into action our critical response plan and we would like to bring to your attention the following support structures available to students.

We would like to remind you that our college services are available at all times. Please feel free to call in, phone, text or email for support

We would ask you not to speak to reporters from the media. Unreliable and unfounded information can often cause distress to friends and families bereaved. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours,

APPENDIX E

The role of the Principal/Deputy Principal

- Establish the facts: Who? What? Where? When? How? etc.
- Contact appropriate agencies.
- Organise supervision; convene the CRT; call a staff meeting.
- Agree a statement of facts.
- Agree statements for media, and appoint different personnel duties.
- Inform students and Identify high-risk students.
- Visit the bereaved families.
- Respond to media.
- Meet with the CRT on a regular basis to update information.
- Maintain as normal a college day as possible.