

**1. PURPOSE**

**Responding to a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved**

- Schools may become directly or indirectly involved in a traumatic or critical incident.
- The College must determine an approach to support not only the affected campus / campuses – but the wider community.
- The College will utilise all support available including DET Procedures and staff.

**2. BROAD GUIDELINES**

- 2.1.** The incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. The incident may occur in the college environment or outside. It may involve staff, students or those close to them.
- 2.2.** The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the college. Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time and may evoke past grief.
- 2.3.** Counselling should be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved.
- 2.4.** The college may be in a position to help grieving families at difficult times, e.g. through the college's participation in the funeral service.
- 2.5.** While the college should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist. It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times. It is essential that a Critical Incident Support Team be formed to manage the short and long term effects.

**3. IMPLEMENTATION**

- 3.1.** **Action to be taken as a result of a traumatic or critical event which involves the college**  
Incidents vary in complexity. The following provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases.
- 3.2.** The following 4 principles must be followed:
  - Obtain accurate information.
  - Deal only with substantiated facts.
  - As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved.
  - Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussions as they arise, dispel rumours.
- 3.3.** Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of the Critical Incident Support Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
- 3.4.** As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
- 3.5.** Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Support Team member to respond to media enquiries. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. Advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre.
- 3.6.** Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
- 3.7.** Provide out of college hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating the Campus Principal's telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the college. A home visit by a Learning Partner, School Nurse or Chaplain may be helpful.
- 3.8.** Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the college, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
- 3.9.** Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.

- 3.10.** Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. All emergency or criminal activity, in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, or where there is a threat to property, must be reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on **(03) 9589 6266**
- 3.11.** Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed especially about what has happened and what the college is doing about it.
- 3.12.** As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the college is doing about it. A follow up letter home may be important.
- 3.13.** Provide counselling services for all. Ensure that there are suitable places in which this can take place. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help.
- 3.14.** The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
- 3.15.** Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
- 3.16.** Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the college community. Be flexible with those in need of help. Be aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time.
- 3.17.** Maintain links with the family. The college and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the college.
- 3.18.** Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
- 3.19.** Look after yourself. EAP counselling is available for all NBC staff at no cost.

**4. LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this policy)**

- 4.1.** <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/emergency.aspx>  
Appendices which are connected with this policy are:
- 4.2.** Appendix A: Critical Incident Response Plan (CIRP)
- 4.3.** Appendix B: Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks
- 4.4.** Appendix C: Emergency Record Form – Template

**5. EVALUATION**

Evaluation of the Plans will follow any critical incident at the college.

<b>Document No.</b>	<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Committee Responsible</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Public Location</b>	<b>Ratified</b>
NBC061	Critical Incident Management	Leadership	July 2019	Compass / Website	July 2016
NBC061A	Critical Incident Response Plan	Leadership	July 2019	Compass /Website	July 2016