



Critical Incident Policy

Context

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for dealing with critical incidents involving staff and students, both inside and outside the College, as well as visitors to St Sheelan's. All persons will be referred to as "the College community" hereinafter. The policy seeks to ensure that critical incidents can be dealt with effectively and promptly, and that appropriate systems and responsibilities are in place to do so. Every member of the college community has a responsibility under this policy.

All member of the college community are reminded that the college places no obligation on them to intervene in any critical incident if this action places their own or another person's safety at risk.

Policy statement

- St Sheelan's recognises that critical incidents can greatly affect people and that co-ordinated and systematic procedures are necessary to facilitate the provision of rapid, appropriate and comprehensive response at the immediate time of the incident as well as post-incident support to members of the college community affected by the incident.

Critical Response Team

A core group known as the Critical Response Team, will exercise a leadership role providing direction, guidance, containment and support when a critical incident occurs. This team will consist of Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor(s), Course Co-ordinator and other members of staff or the college community co-opted by the Principal as appropriate.

Critical Incidents

Any of the following can be deemed as critical incidents

- Major fire
- Violent incident which affects or is likely to affect seriously, a number of staff and/or students in the college
- Hostage or siege situations
- Discharge of firearms

- Vehicle accidents involving serious injury and/or substantial property damage
- Acts of self harm
- Industrial accidents involving serious injury or fatality
- Threat of serious and/or widespread infection/contamination
- Natural disaster affecting the college
- Major demonstration or protest
- Unexpected death of student or staff member in the college
- Minor fire
- Sudden death or unexpected death of student or staff member outside the college
- Physical assault
- Attempted robbery
- Threat to person or property
- Threats of violence to staff/students

Immediate response

Each member of the college community should ensure his/her own personal safety in the first instance if the incident occurs within the college.

Post critical incident

- Confirm the death/incident has occurred. Establish the facts. This may involve contacting hospitals, gardai, emergency services, parents etc.
- Organize the critical response team to meet.
- Express sympathy to family, assure of college's support.
- Ensure the family knows who the contact person for the college is.
- Contact with family on college involvement in funeral. (Family wishes to be respected)
- Prepare an announcement for staff/students.
- Plan a meeting if required.
- Prepare statements and distribute procedures to Class Tutors in breaking the news.
- Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents/family. (Communication role)
- Have written and/or oral responses to enquiries prepared.
- 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 college be closed on the day of the funeral? (Notification to parents/visitors of closure)

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 college's critical incident policy, i.e. Activate Critical Response team.
- Put together as much factual material as you can.
- Inform staff what has happened.
- Discuss college routine for the first day.
- Identify particular students who may need to be told individually e.g. Close friends, relatives etc.
- Inform that a student/staff member has tragically died and explain that this is something everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain college routine for the day and support and back up for students.
- Make clear that support will be available to anyone who needs it through the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor and other support services.
- Clear unambiguous information (the facts as they are known) will reduce the spread of rumour. An agreed script would be helpful but it should be recognised that each person will relate in a particular way to a class group.
- 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 college.
- Be aware of any particular teachers who may be particularly distressed e.g. Teachers who are recently bereaved themselves or who had prior experience of suicide/tragic incident 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.
- ❑ Others to be informed would be the Board of Management, College insurers if relevant and the VEC.

Evaluation

The Crisis Response Team will summarise the events of the preceding days and the management of the process. This summary will be discussed with the appropriate staff and the external professionals who were included in the response. This evaluation is crucial for learning opportunities for the team itself and for other schools in the scheme.

An evaluation will

- Be carried out when appropriate and when personnel are able to cope with it
- Be clear about the recent experience
- Provide feedback for future training
- Indicate ways to modify plan

Sample Statement for Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of St Sheelan's 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 Critical Incident Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical 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.

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 Critical Response Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed on Monday.

List of Contacts

Local Medical Centre 0504-31561

Shannondoc 1850 212 999

Nenagh General Hospital 067 31491

Fire Brigade +353(0)761 065000 9.30 - 4.30 Mon-Fri

NEPS 01 8892700

Media	Nenagh Guardian	067 31214
	Midland Tribune	0509 20003
	Tipperary Star	52 6172500
	Tipp FM	067 44477, 052 25447

Local Gardai +35350432630