

St. Colman's Community College, Midleton. Critical Incident Policy



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Relationship to the school's mission statement

In the light of our Mission Statement, St Colman's Critical Incident Management Policy aims to articulate the school's plan for responding to critical incidents with a view to ensuring a happy, safe and secure environment for the benefit of all students.

Overview and Aim:

The goal of the Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) for St Colman's Community College is to provide a caring, safe, and supportive environment, which respects the whole college community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident knowing that there are structures in place that will help them deal appropriately with the event.

The aim of the CIMP is to help college management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

Though the Principal obviously exercises a pivotal role in the college's response to a critical incident, best practice recommends the formation of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) composed of key college personnel, who will provide a supportive role. The role of NEPS is to support colleges in supporting students and staff.

The rationale for this plan is to enable the college to identify risks and to have a communication plan in place that can be effectively put into action when an incident occurs in the college. It will be used in conjunction with all other college policies and procedures in promoting positive mental health and in creating effective care systems in the college.

Objectives

1. A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) exists in St Colman's Community College. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the Critical Incident Policy and Plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This will contain a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to his/her role to be used in the event of an incident.
2. St Colman's Community College will endeavour to communicate clearly and appropriately with all the relevant stakeholders of its Critical Incident Policy (Cork ETB, Board of Management, Parents' Association, Staff)
3. The management and staff of St Colman's Community College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and name(s) of the person(s) involved in any incident and will be sensitive around the dissemination of any information.
4. St Colman's Community College will develop a good working relationship with the local media based on respect for all parties involved in the communication of events and crisis situations. Communications services procured by Cork ETB will be utilised as appropriate.

Prevention

St Colman's Community College is committed to the welfare of its students. This is currently evident in the relationship between staff and students. Our college curriculum addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, prevention of alcohol and drug misuse, self-esteem, and bullying. All staff have been made aware of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The Principal, Ms Karen Casey is the Designated Liaison Person. Deputy Principal, Ms Mairin Lally is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. The college's Student Support Services Team meet on a weekly basis. College policies are up to date and regularly reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders.

Defining a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the college and disrupts the running of the college. It is recognised that every critical incident will be different and the procedures outlined in this policy will be followed and adapted as appropriate.

Examples of a Critical Incident include:

- Death of a member of the college community through accident, violence, suicide/suspected suicide, or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the college
- An accident involving members of the college community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the college building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the college community
- Health Issues
- Natural Disasters
- Death of a public figure
- Acts of Violence
- Global terrorism

This list is not exhaustive.

Systems in place.

Systems are put in place to help build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community. These systems will therefore form part of the school's response to any critical incident which should arise.

Physical Safety

Examples include:

- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked and dated

- Regular fire drills occur
- Evacuation plan has been formulated
- School grounds are supervised
- Well maintained building

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of St. Colman's C.C. aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Examples include:

- Year Head/Class Teacher and Student Support Team in place
- Anti-bullying policy
- Links are developed with a range of external agencies
- Staff attend CPD
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered
- All school staff are encouraged to identify students at risk and to refer them to receive appropriate support.
- Wellbeing
- SPHE classes
- SEN policy
- The Student Council, student voice and leadership in the school, add to the safe community.

In the event of an Incident in the building it may be appropriate to carry out one or more of the following actions:

Raise the alarm

Contact the Gardaí/Emergency Services/CETB

Evacuate the building for agreed procedures

Contact Parents/Guardians

Alert Staff

Take a roll call

Cordon off an area of the building

Administer First Aid (as appropriate)

The Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Designated Person/s
Team Leader	Máirín Lally (Principal)
Staff Liaison	Máirín Lally (Principal), Colin Manning (Deputy Principal), Yvonne O'Mahony (Deputy Principal), Christine Coleman (Deputy Principal) relevant Year Head/Class Tutor as appropriate
Garda Liaison	Máirín Lally (Principal), Colin Manning (Deputy Principal), Yvonne O'Mahony (Deputy Principal), Christine Coleman (Deputy Principal)
Student Liaison*	Máirín Lally (Principal), Colin Manning (Deputy Principal), Yvonne O'Mahony (Deputy Principal), Christine Coleman (Deputy Principal)
Counselling Coordinator	Siobhan Cashman, Joanne Murphy, Anne Jones
Parent Liaison	Máirín Lally (Principal), Colin Manning (Deputy Principal), Yvonne O'Mahony (Deputy Principal), Christine Coleman (Deputy Principal) Proinsias O'Tuama (HSCL)
Community Liaison	Máirín Lally (Principal), Colin Manning (Deputy Principal), Yvonne O'Mahony (Deputy Principal), Christine Coleman (Deputy Principal)
Media Liaison	Máirín Lally (Principal), CETB
Administrator	Rebecca Walsh, Ashling McCarthy, Stephanie Scanlon (College Secretaries)

*Student support will be made available from Year Heads and Class Tutors.

Other staff and external agencies involved may include: subject teachers, NEPS, counsellors, local clergy, and local Garda

Roles and Responsibilities in the Critical Incident Management Team

Team	Responsibility
Team Leader: Máirín Lally	- Alerts the team members to the crisis - Convenes a meeting informing them of all relevant facts. - Delegates and coordinates the tasks of the team. - Informs and liaises with Cork ETB, the Board of Management, NEPS, Túsla, DES and with the local Gardaí (where appropriate).
Staff Liaison: Mairin Lally Colin Manning Yvonne O'Mahony Christine Coleman	- Briefs staff at the earliest opportunity. Students will be supervised at these times. - The facts, as known, will be disclosed to the staff members who will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Staff will be briefed on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students. - Materials for staff (from the critical incident folder) will be provided. - Staff will be updated as appropriate. - DP to brief the canteen staff and any external staff working in the building
Student Liaison: Mairin Lally Colin Manning Yvonne O'Mahony Christine Coleman	- Informs students of the facts of the incident. - Coordinates information from subject teachers regarding students about whom they are concerned. - Alerts other staff to vulnerable students. - Provides materials for students from critical incident folder(where appropriate) - Keeps records of students seen by external agencies. - Organises supervision of 'quiet room' (Learning Support Room/ Meeting Room to be used with small groups & Social Areas if number of students are too large)
Parent Liaison: Mairin Lally Colin Manning Yvonne O'Mahony Christine Coleman Proinsias O'Tuama	- Liaises with the family. - Visits the family(with another/other appropriate staff member/s - May arrange a meeting of parents. - Discusses issues requiring consent with family. S - Sets up appropriate locations for meeting with parents. - Maintains a record of parents seen. - Meets with individual parents. - Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).
Office/Admin Staff	- Alerts Year Head regarding late arrivals. - Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to. - Designate a point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept. - All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate. - Agree arrangements for dealing with normal school business. - Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts. - Photocopies materials needed

Action Plan For School Management

Initial Assessment of the Incident

1. To assist in assessing an incident, a classification of response levels is proposed, which is linked to a number of factors impacting on the situation. This classification in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event. It is intended to help the school and psychologists assess what level of intervention is needed, including the additional need to request support from colleagues and other agencies.

Step 1 What type of response is needed?	• Response Level 1: The death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of a parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to property. • Response Level 2: the sudden death of a student or staff member • Response level 3: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools
Step 2 Should a psychologist be involved?	• Consider the nature of the event and how you school is coping? What do you need from Neps/other agencies?
Step 3 How do i assess the needs of the school/	• Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event? • Has there been a previous incident? How recent? What find of incident? • If more than one, how many? (Consider staff feelings/abilities to manage the situation) • Is there a critical incident plan/team in place? • Is there a pastoral care system in the school? • Is there media interest in the incident? • Are there other agencies involved?
Step 4 What action do you take?	Level 1 - It may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone. Level 2 & 3 - Contact NEPS - a psychologist will visit the school

2. Gather accurate information: It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident; otherwise rumours may take over and add to the distress of those involved.

3. Establish the facts: What has happened? When it happened? How it happened? The number and names of students and staff involved; are there other schools involved? the extent of the injuries; and the location of those injured.

4. Contact appropriate agencies (see school's Emergency Contact List)

Medical Services

Board of Management

NEPS

HSE

Teacher Unions

State Examinations Commission Parish

Priest/Clergy

5. Convene a meeting with key staff/Critical Incident Management Team. Depending on the incident it is advisable to arrange an evening or early morning meeting to ensure that the team is well prepared and has a plan in place for the school day ahead.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident - Day One

Principal and Deputy Principals

1. Gather the facts of the incident (who, what, when, where)
2. Contact appropriate agencies (emergency services, local Gardaí, Health Service Executive, Community Care Services, NEPS, DES, Board of Management, Cork ETB, Diocese of Cloyne)
3. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team. Organise a time for a debriefing meeting at the end of the day
4. Identify staff who may be affected by the incident
5. Convene a meeting of the Student Care Team

Critical Incident Management Team

1. Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and media
2. Inform all staff of incident – Form of communication will depend on the incident
3. Delegate responsibilities to the CIMT members

All Staff

1. The agreed statement of facts for students will be relayed to staff
2. Inform staff of what outside agencies have been contacted
3. Where necessary, details of the classroom session following news of the critical incident will be shared with staff. *Appendix 4*
4. Staff identify high risk students *Appendix 9*
5. Advise staff to maintain the normal routine, where possible
6. Contact absent staff or retired staff where appropriate

All Students

1. Students will be informed of the incident by the Year Heads/Class teachers in their year group
2. Available supports to be discussed with all students and details of same to be posted around the school
3. Teachers will follow the classroom session guidelines as discussed, when they return to class. *Appendix 4, Appendix 6*

Student Care Team

1. The team will identify students at risk or who may need additional support.
2. A database will be created and shared with the team members *Appendix 10*
3. The team will plan regular meeting times to give updates

End of Day 1

1. Check how everyone is coping as they leave the school
2. Hold an end of day session with teachers
3. Review the events of the day (CIMT) *Appendix 11*

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident - Day Two & Three

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Convene Critical Incident Management Team prior to the beginning of the school day
2. Convene staff meeting prior to the beginning of the school day (decide who will contact absent staff- a friend of absent staff member to make said contact).
3. Staff agenda will be included in the critical incident pack.

Critical Incident Management Team

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours
2. Set schedule for the following days – list tasks and assign roles
3. List items to be addressed by Principal at the staff meeting
4. Go through identified high risk students and staff and review same
5. Develop a plan for monitoring students over the following week

All Staff

1. Principal outlines the schedule for the day and updates staff on any information from the family, funeral arrangements, etc.
2. Teachers who are uncomfortable with providing support will not be required to do so.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident – beyond 72 hours

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	All subject teachers - refer to Student Care Team
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Student Care Team, Year Head (R15 Guidelines)
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM & Student Care Team
Review response to incident and amend plan where necessary	BOM & CIMT

Plan for the return of absent students and staff

A plan for reintegration of siblings, close relatives, injured students etc., involved in the incident is developed by the Student Support Services Team and the relevant year heads.

Administrative Tasks.

1. Contact details will be regularly updated so that communication is effective in the event of a critical incident.
2. Parents/Guardians can be contacted by text via vsware or phone contacts are available on vsware.
3. Lists of staff present and past are available and are updated by the school secretary. These lists are on google drive and are available outside of school opening hours. These lists are available to the Principal and Deputy Principals.
4. A map of the school is displayed in all rooms in the school and is available in the Critical Incident Plan. *Appendix 2*

Information compiled in case of emergency during school trips should include:

1. A list of all students/staff involved and the teacher in charge
2. A list of mobile phone numbers of the teachers accompanying students
3. Up to date medical information on students with allergies, epilepsy etc

Emergency Contact List

GARDA (Midleton)	(021) 4621550
HOSPITAL (Cork University Hospital) (Mercy Hospital)	(021) 4922000 (021) 4271971
FIRE BRIGADE (Midleton Fire Brigade)	999 (021) 4631597
LOCAL GPs Dr E. McGrath Dr. R. Hutch Dr. J. Barry	(021)4631595 (021)463 2288 (021) 4613613
PARISH PRIEST / CLERGY (Parish Office) C.C. V. Rev. John Ryan P.E.,	(021) 4636508 (021) - 4631094 (086)-2697503

C.C. Rev. Eamon Roche	(021)-4621670 (086)-9972539
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	(0906) 442700
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057
HSE/ CAMHS (Social Worker)	(021) 4927000
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST Ms Collette Phelan	(021) 4536390
TUSLA	(021) 4923503
DES	(0906) 483600
TUI	(01) 492 2588
School eircode	P25W658

This list will be displayed in main offices, staffroom and will be available to teachers taking students on trips out of school.

Templates

Prepared templates of letters to parents/others, announcement templates, templates for press releases. These are available on a shared drive so that they can be adapted quickly when an incident occurs. *Appendix 12*

Emergency packs

A small number of key documents are available in Emergency packs for members of the CIMT, these are readily accessible in the event of an emergency and contain emergency contact lists, checklist for first 24 hours, layout of school buildings.

Administration in the course of an incident

- The school's secretary Rebecca Walsh will manage outgoing and incoming calls. The secretary's will also manage the signing in and out of students at the main office. *Appendix 18*
- Rooms will be identified for various purposes at the CIMT meeting - individual and group support sessions will take place in the Principal's office, meetings with parents will take place in the Deputy Principal's office/HSCL office where appropriate, a supervised quiet room will be set up in room 15. *Appendix 9*
- Staff making/taking phone calls will log calls on the record of phone call log. *Appendix 18*
- The office staff will log all calls on a record of phone call log. *Appendix 18*
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate
- One member of office staff will deal with normal school business

Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable Critical Incident Strategy. Crisis Management can only develop with analysis of past incidents, feedback in the light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place.

Issues to be aware of in the light of effective evaluation include:

- The confidence of the Crisis Management Team in their roles in the event of an incident

- Was internal communication effective between staff?
- Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept updated on a consistent basis?
- Was the overall communication strategy successful?
- Was information disseminated quickly to avoid speculation and rumour?
- Was there adequate and effective communication with the family involved?
- What lessons could be learned from an analysis of this strategy?
- Was feedback obtained from staff as to whether they felt sufficiently equipped to deal emotionally and physically with the incident?
- Was there sufficient guidance and support to individual teachers, staff and students?
- Were students adequately supervised during the Crisis Meeting?
- Was there sufficient Pastoral Care provided to deal with the incident?
- Was communication with the media effective?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Were external support agencies met with for feedback in the aftermath of the incident?
- Were all expenses incurred met and dealt with in a timely manner?

Communication of the Plan

- Staff, students and parents will be consulted during the planning stage
- All staff will be made aware of the school's critical incident policies and procedures
- The CIMP will be instantly accessible to the personnel who will have the key roles in putting the plan into action
- Critical Incident Management Plans will be given to members of the CIMP team, copies will be readily available in the school office and on the computer system.
- Students and parents will be informed about the CIMP
- All new and temporary staff will also be informed of the details of the plan.

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be ratified by the Board of Management. Implementation Date 23/11/23

This policy will come into effect after being signed by the Board of Management

Signed. Denis O'Shea _____

Chairperson of Board of Management Date 23/11/23