St. Mac Dara's Community College

Critical Incident Policy

Reviewed and Adopted by Board of Management.

November 2019

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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Átha Cliath agus Dhún Laoghaire
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Education and Training Board

Critical Incident Policy

Introduction

St. MacDara's Community College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. This is confirmed in the mission statement of the college,

We, the community of this College, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential.

The Board of Management, in consultation with the Principal and the staff of the college, has drawn up this Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the college's policies and plans.

A critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will be established which will take responsibility for the implementation of the Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan. The CIMT should consult resource documents provided to schools as well as any other relevant sources.

What is a critical incident?

The staff and management of St. MacDara's Community College recognise a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more staff members, or members of our local community. These incidents may include;

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence,
- Suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An intrusion into the school
- A violent assault on a member of the school community

Other incidents may be considered as critical incidents and may designated as such by the CIMT.

The aim of the school plan and policy.

The aim of the plan and policy is to help school 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 effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

How the college aims to create an atmosphere of physical and psychological safety.

The physical safety of the school community is extremely important.
The following are some of the measures in place to address the physical safety of the college community;

- An evacuation plan has been formulated
- Regular fire drills occur, planned by the Health and Safety Officer
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision is provided in the school canteen
- School doors closed during class time and can only be opened from inside
- Visitors to the school must check-in at reception and when authorised are signed in and must wear a "visitor" lanyard
- Internal and external CCTV is in operation
- Security doors
- 'CCTV is in operation' - Display posters around the school.
- Current fire doors at entry to base areas are under review; subject to change

The management and staff of St. MacDara's 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. The following are examples of some being used;

- St. Mac Dara's is committed to promoting the Wellbeing Principals as outlined in the new Junior Cycle Programme.
- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the college
- Positive Mental Health is promoted
- Guest speakers who enhance the work of the SPHE team and all staff are regularly invited to speak to staff and/or students
- Training is regularly offered to staff to support their work on the SPHE team
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school recognises the importance of being able to liaise with external agencies e.g. TUSLA, the NEWB, an Garda Síochana, the Lucena Clinic, the DDLETB Psychological Support Service, PIETÀ House, Jigsaw etc.
- St. MacDara's has a clear anti-bullying policy in place which lays down the procedures to deal with a bullying situation.
- The care system in place in the school is founded in the college mission statement and in the general ethos of the college. This system is based around the class Tutor, Year Head, the SPHE Team and the Care Team who meet on a weekly basis. Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or chaplain), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of

assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency
- It is important also that staff are supported and advised, when necessary, how to access assistance for themselves.

The Management and procedures following a critical incident in St. MacDara's will use the publications of the DES;
- Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools
- Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools

There is a great deal of advice and information contained within these publications which will inform the college response to a critical incident.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Critical Incident Management Team – Roles

The key roles which may need to be covered are as follows:
• Team Leader
• Garda liaison
• Staff liaison
• Student liaison
• Parent liaison
• Community liaison
• Media liaison
• Administrator

Team leader
• Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
• Coordinates the tasks of the team
• Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; DDLETB; DDLETB PSS; SEC
• Liaises with the bereaved family

It is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.
Team leader is Principal Derek Ward and in his absence, Deputy Principals Noel Donnelly and Cormac Cassidy.

Garda liaison
• Liaises with the Gardaí
• Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
    - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
    - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management). This draft statement will be sent to Head Office before being issued.

Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Critical Incident Management Team of St. MacDara's Community College

Role	Name	Telephone number (mobile and/or home)
Team Leader	Derek Ward-Principal	Nos available on VSWARE to staff
Garda Liaison	Noel Donnelly & Cormac Cassidy; Deputy Principals	
Staff Liaison	Derek Ward Cormac Cassidy Noel Donnelly	
Student Liaison	Deirdre Halligan-Chaplain Diarmid Finnegan-Guidance	
Parent Liaison	Cormac Cassidy	
Community Liaison	Cormac Cassidy	
Media Liaison	Derek Ward	
Administrator	School secretarial staff	

The CIMT may cooperate with other members of staff to assist them should they deem it necessary. In the event of an incident all those on the critical incident management team would be contacted.

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Team leader
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Deputy Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	All Staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Principal Deputy Principal Year Head
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Year head Tutor GC Chaplain
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Principal
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal
Inform parents	Deputy principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	CIMT

- Inform Head Office and seek advice
- Seek legal advice depending on the situation via DDLETB
- Include the agreed media statement on the school website via DDLETB
- At the first meeting the team decide what information is appropriate to include in the media statement in relation to the incident involved. A draft of this statement will be sent to Head Office for approval.

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Principal Deputy Principal Guidance Counsellor Chaplain
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT PSS
Visit the injured	Principal Deputy Principal Year head Tutor Members of the team
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal Deputy Principal Chaplain
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers Guidance Chaplain
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance PSS
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Year Head Tutor Chaplain
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff Parents Students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST
(To be displayed in staff-room, school office and Principal's office etc.)

AGENCY	**CONTACT NUMBERS**
GARDA	01-6666400
HOSPITAL	01-4142000
FIRE BRIGADE	999
TUSLA	01-4527143
DDLETB – Mr. Adrian Flynn (Education Officer)	01-4529600
DDLETB PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICE	01-4529600
ASTI/TUI	ASTI: 01-6040160 TUI: 01-4922588
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	01-4600127
DES	Numbers as appropriate
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	090-6442700

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.
Students and parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.
Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.
Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.
All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal.
The plan will be updated annually.

Signed: Pamela Kearns
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Derek Ward
(Principal)

Date: 19/NOV/2019

Date: 19/11/2019

Date of next review: _____