

EVENT AND INCIDENT REPORTS

a. CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Purpose:

This policy outlines the principles adopted by AIPAH for guiding the prevention, management and recovery processes associated with critical incidents occurring in the School community.

Critical Incidents can impact considerably on the psychological well-being of students, teachers and families causing adverse effects in areas such as learning, occupational performance and family interactions. AIPAH is concerned to reduce the traumatic effects of crisis situations both in the short and longer terms and accordingly shall ensure that adequate and appropriate measures are in place to manage the response to traumatic events.

1 DEFINITION: WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

A critical incident affecting a school is any event that causes a significant number of people to experience reactions that are beyond their normal emotional range. (*Stephen Said, 2001*)

2 PREVENTION

AIPAH is committed to preventing critical incidents, where possible, using the following strategies:

- 2.1 Formation of a critical incident management team, which liaises with committees within the school, including OH&S, and with emergency and community agencies, assists with rectifying risks, develops a management plan, familiarises staff with the plan;
- 2.2 Ensuring the house is in order, meaning staff are aware of Duty of Care and OH&S issues, have been trained in Child Protection policies and can address bullying and other anti-social behaviour effectively;
- 2.3 Taking the time to attend to 'Spot Fires', which means that the school has a culture of dealing with emotional overload, at-risk behaviour and safety issues thoroughly;
- 2.4 Assessing vulnerabilities peculiar to this school, such as a fire or pedestrian accident;
- 2.5 Developing strategies to address vulnerabilities;
- 2.6 Keeping confidentiality, not secrets – refer when necessary;
- 2.7 Maintaining professional boundaries and the adult role in dealings with students;
- 2.8 Challenging dangerous behaviours;
- 2.9 Promoting resilience; and,
- 2.10 Establishing links with support agencies.

3 PLANNING

It is recognised that, in the event of a critical incident, thorough planning as a School Community will allow for:

- 3.1 Quick action when information is received;
- 3.2 Establishment of the facts;
- 3.2 Appropriate information shared quickly with appropriate groups of people;
- 3.4 Demonstration of caring to all affected;
- 3.5 Recovery and return to normal routines;

- 3.6 A sense of control – by doing everything possible to make things as calm as possible under the circumstances; and,
- 3.7 Appropriate appreciation shown to all who assist, to encourage cohesiveness in the School Community

4 IDENTIFICATION

An incident is identified as critical if it meets with the definition above. The concepts behind critical incidents are tragedy, trauma, emergency and crisis. A critical incident is one that causes disruption to an organisation, creates significant danger or risk or traumatically affects individuals within an organisation. Examples of critical incidents are:

- 4.1 Death of a staff member or student;
- 4.2 Destruction of the whole or part of a school;
- 4.3 Break-in accompanied by major vandalism;
- 4.4 Students or staff taken hostage or kidnapped;
- 4.5 Students or staff witnessing serious injury or death;
- 4.6 Violence between students or assault of a teacher or student;
- 4.7 Allegation of sexual assault involving a member of the school community made public
(Note: Allegations of child abuse or misconduct that may involve child abuse made against school employees are handled in accordance with the AIPAH Child Protection Policy and Procedural Guidelines);
- 4.8 Student or staff suicide;
- 4.9 Natural disaster – bushfire, flood/storm, earthquake, extremes of temperature;
- 4.10 Major disaster in the community – explosion/fire, gas or chemical hazard, industrial or transport accident;
- 4.11 Bomb threats;
- 4.12 Unfavourable media attention, and;
- 4.13 Outbreak of a communicable disease.

5 MANAGEMENT

The Critical Incident Management Team consists of:

- The CEO/School Director
- The Principal
- Academic Coordinator
- School Counsellor

The Critical Incident Management Team will be in charge of managing a critical incident and will take responsibility for the following:

- 5.1 Establishing the facts from a reliable source and recording the incident in the Critical Incident Report Form (**AIPAH Server H:\05. FORMS & GENERAL ADMIN\02. STUDENT PROCEDURES\05. CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURE**)
- 5.2 Ensuring the safety of students, staff and visitors if they are at risk, initiating evacuation and providing first aid if required;
- 5.3 Meeting as a Team as soon as possible to implement the Critical Incident Response Plan;

- 5.4 Determining the level of support needed – which groups are most affected and how to help all other students/staff/parents;
- 5.5 Arranging counselling time/s;
- 5.6 Preparing Fact Sheets for:
 - Teachers/Year Co-ordinators to tell students
 - Reception to tell callers
 - Parents
 - The media(Only the Principal or an elected spokesperson should speak to the media); and,

Management of Critical Incidents Occurring Away from the School

The person in charge of managing a critical incident away from the School should:

- 5.7 Ensure the safety of students and staff;
- 5.8 Assert authority in a calm, reassuring manner;
- 5.9 Ensure students and staff stay together and complete a roll call as soon as possible;
- 5.10 Follow the instructions of the venue management in implementing their emergency plans, as long as these do not conflict with the duty of care of the students;
- 5.11 Advise emergency services of School personnel and students unaccounted for;
- 5.12 Advise the Principal as soon as possible;
- 5.13 Ensure parents will be informed of any delay in returning to School; and,
- 5.14 Remain with the group until relieved of responsibility.

This policy is based on the recommendations and guidelines provided by Stephen Said in *Critical Incidents Affecting Schools: Prevention, Preparation and Response* (2001).