

Critical Incident Policy for Coachford College

1. Introduction

Coachford College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. As stated in the Schools Mission Statement “*we are a community, together we share mutual respect in a positive environment*”. The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies would include:

- Bullying Policy
- Discipline Policy/Suspensions and Expulsions Policy
- Guidance Policy
- Mission Statement

2. Definition of Critical Incident

Coachford College recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community. Examples of a critical incident might be:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school

3. Aim of the Critical Incident Plan

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

4. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Coachford College has set up a Critical Incident Management Team consisting of the following personnel:

1. Team Leader - PC
2. Garda Liaison - JD
3. Staff Liaison - EW
4. Student Liaison - SL/BM
5. Parent Liaison - EW
6. Community/Agency Liaison - DD
7. Media Liaison - PL
8. Administrator – JK

Points of information on the CIMT:

- The CIMT has been established in line with **best practice**.
- The members of the team were selected on a **voluntary** basis.
- They will retain their roles for at least **one** school year.
- The members of the team will meet annually to **review and update** the policy and plan.
- Each member of the team has a dedicated **critical incident folder**.
- The CIMT may **co-opt other members of staff** to assist them, should they deem it necessary.

5. Roles of the CIMT

1. Team Leader

Some of the duties of the role are;

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM; DESk; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

2. Garda Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

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

3. Staff Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts 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

4. Student Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

- 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
- Provides materials for students (from critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

5. Parent Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parents meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'Questions and Answers'
- Manages 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy

- Ensures that sample letters are typed up and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- May meet with individual parents
- Provides appropriate material for parents (from critical incident folder)

6. Community/Agency Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
 - 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

7. Media Liaison

Some of the duties of the role are;

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might respond 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)

8. Administrator

Some of the duties of the role are;

- 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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record Keeping:

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, persons met, interventions used and materials used etc.

Confidentiality:

Coachford College is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

6. Critical Incident Action Plans

SHORT TERM ACTIONS (1st DAY)

- Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors.
 - Convene a meeting of the CIMT and delegate responsibilities.
 - Gather accurate information (incident report form).
 - Identify high-risk students.
 - Contact appropriate agencies and organise support.
 - Contact the DESk, the BOM and the VEC.
 - Arrange support for the secretary and caretaker in handling phone enquiries and manning the reception office and the front door.
 - Arrange for the supervision of students.
 - Hold a staff meeting and distribute resource material.
 - Organise a timetable for the day.
 - Hold a Student Council meeting.
 - Inform students and parents.
 - Make contact with the affected/bereaved family.
 - Report to the Health and Safety Authority, if necessary.
- As far as possible maintain normal school routine.**

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Convene a meeting of the CIMT to review the events of the first 24 hours and to delegate responsibilities.
- Arrange support for students, staff and parents.
- Update staff, students and the Student Council.
- Update the media, if necessary.
- Liaise with the family and clarify the school's involvement in funeral/memorial services.
- Plan visits to the injured.
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff.
- Assess the roles of the BOM, the Parents Council and the Student Council.
- Consider the legal and financial consequences.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS (BEYOND 72 HOURS)

- Monitor students and staff for signs of continuing distress.
- Plan the long-term counselling needs of individuals.
- Plan for anniversaries and memorials.
- Evaluate the school's response to the critical incident and amend the Critical Incident Policy appropriately.
- Evaluate the effect on student/teacher relationships.
- Evaluate the long-term effect on the educational progress of students.
- Ensure that new staff has been made aware of the Critical Incident Policy and that they are informed of the students/staff that were affected in any recent incident.
- Ensure that a report is sent to the new school when a student is transferring.
- Evaluate the legal and financial consequences.
- Report to the BOM, the VEC, the Parents Council and the DESk.

7. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy in September of each new school year as an induction for new staff and before the formation of a new Board of Management.

On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and students.

The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Emergency Contact Numbers

EMERGENCY CONTACT **NUMBERS**

GARDAÍ: Coachford Macroom	021 733 4002 026 41724
AMBULANCE	999/112
FIRE BRIGADE	999
HOSPITAL – CUH	021 454 6400
LOCAL GP: Dr Cormac O'Dubhghaill	021 743 4724
HSE	021 496 5511
FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES	021 492 7000
LOCAL CLERGY: Coachford – Fr Brendan Mallon Aghabullogue PP – Fr Peadar Murphy	021 733 4059 021 733 4035
DESK CUSTOMER SERVICES	01 889 6400
SEC	090 644 2700
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	021 453 6358
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 41 10 57
ASTI	1850 41 84 00/01 604 0160
TUI	01 492 2588
IMPACT	01 817 1500
SIPTU	1890 74 78 81

Appendix 2: Short Term Actions

SHORT TERM ACTIONS & ROLES ASSIGNED

1st DAY

TASK	NAME
GATHER ACCURATE INFORMATION	
CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES	
CONVENE A MEETING WITH KEY STAFF	
ARRANGE SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS	
HOLD STAFF MEETING	
ORGANISE TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY	
INFORM PARENTS	
INFORM STUDENTS	
MAKE CONTACT WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILY	
DEALING WITH THE MEDIA	

Appendix 3: Medium Term Actions

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS & ROLES ASSIGNED

24 – 72 HOURS

TASK	NAME
REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST 24 HOURS	
ARRANGE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL/GROUPS/ PARENTS/STUDENTS/TEACHERS	
PLAN THE RE-INTEGRATION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS	
PLAN VISITS TO INJURED	
LIAISE WITH FAMILY REGARDING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS ETC.	
ORGANISE TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY	
ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION AT FUNERAL SERVICE	
SCHOOL CLOSURE	

Appendix 4: Long Term Actions

BEYOND 72 HOURS

TASK	NAME
MONITOR STUDENTS FOR CONTINUING SIGNS OF STRESS	
EVALUATE RESPONSE TO INCIDENT AND AMEND CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN APPROPRIATELY	
FORMALISE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE	
INFORM NEW STAFF AND PUPILS	
DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE WAY TO DEAL WITH ANNIVERSARIES	

Appendix 5: Useful Contact Numbers

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

BARNARDOS BEREAVEMENT HELPLINE	021 431 0591 01 473 2110
THE SAMARITANS	1850 60 90 90/021 427 1323
CHILDLINE	1800 66 66 66
PARENTLINE	1890 92 72 77
AWARE	1890 30 33 02/01 676 6166
NATIONAL SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK	024 95561
RAINBOWS	01 473 4175
CAMHS	021 435 7447
HSE INFO LINE COACHFORD HEALTH CENTRE	021 496 5511 1850 24 1850 021 733 4467