



Critical Incident and Recovery

Plan

Policy review team members:

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This policy was last ratified by School Council on 16/11/2015

Rationale:

Mt Eliza Primary School may become directly or indirectly involved in a tragic or traumatic event. The incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. The incident may occur in the school environment or outside. It may involve staff, students or those close to them. The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the school. Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time.

Aims:

To provide guidelines for responding to critical incidents within the school.

Implementation:

Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases. However, the following 4 principles must be followed:

- provide clear, accurate information,
- describe the actions to be followed,
- provide help for all affected and,
- maintain a normal school program as close as possible.

1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
2. As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved. Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.
3. Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of the Critical Incident Recovery Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
4. As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
5. Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team member to respond to media enquiries. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. Advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre and the DET Media Unit (**9637 2871**).
6. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
7. Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating the Principal's telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
8. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.



9. Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. All emergency or criminal activity, in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, or where there is a threat to property, must be reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on **(03) 9589 6266**.
10. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
11. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it. A follow up letter home may be important.
12. Provide counselling services for all. Ensure that there are suitable places in which this can take place. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help. Staff are able to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by contacting **1300 361 008** for free counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
13. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
14. Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the school community. Be flexible with those in need of help. Be aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time.
15. Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
16. School to reflect upon management of critical incident after it has occurred.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS annual review cycle in November 2016