



Coláiste na Mí

Critical Incident Policy

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Coláiste na Mí on the 17th September 2020.

Date of next review: September 2021

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Coláiste na Mí



The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response. NEPS also encourages schools to develop a Critical Incident Management Plan, outlining who will do what in the event of a tragedy.

The templates outlined below are designed as an aid to schools in drawing up a policy and plan. Each school will need to look at its own particular context and circumstances and draw up its own unique policy and plan. Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90.

Coláiste na Mí aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our Priority at Coláiste Na Mí is to ensure a safe, positive and supportive learning environment for all our students. We consider each student to be unique in personality and in spirit. Therefore, giving praise and rewarding students for good manners, citizenship, improvement, effort and success where appropriate, forms the basis of our approach to positive discipline in the school. From their first day in Coláiste na Mí the students quickly become immersed in the culture, ethos and value system of our school. The Board of Management, through Patrick Carr, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Coláiste na Mí 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 students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *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*

Aim

The aim of the CIMP 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.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to 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.

Physical safety

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Cycle Safety Awareness to students

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Coláiste na Mí 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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. All staff are compliant with procedures.
- 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 students at risk of suicide

- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies such as Jigsaw, CAMHS, and SoSad Navan
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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.
- A weekly Care Team meeting involving key staff members is held which identifies new referrals and monitors current students at risk
- Guidance counsellor is trained in suicide awareness and attends regular CPD for counselling as well as the annual IGC conference
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and 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. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. There is an 'opt-out' option for every member if needed.

Team leader: Patrick Carr

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- In the absence of Patrick Carr, Gemma O'Hart will be the team leader.

Garda Liaison: Michael McCarthy

Role

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

Staff liaison: Patrick Carr, Gemma O' Hart and Michael McCarthy

Role

- 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: Siobhán Shore, Paula Clinton, Ric Pandza, Philip Horan

Role

- 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)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/Agency liaison: Gemma O'Hart & Kevin Reilly

Role

- 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

Parent liaison: Gemma O' Hart

Role

- 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 Role: Patrick Carr

- 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)

Administrator: Maria McGivern, Sharon Hooper

Role

- 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 texts
 - Photocopies materials needed
 - Maintains records
- There will be a dedicated mobile phone number for calls relating directly to the case

Record keeping: Maria McGivern, Sharon Hooper

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.

Olive Coleman will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc. There will be a dedicated log book to log all offers of support and help which can be reviewed at a later time.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Coláiste na Mí have a responsibility to protect the privacy and the good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, **e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use.** The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Staff Room C block	Main room for meeting staff
Guidance room, SEN office and Tionáil area for larger groups	Meetings with students
Meeting room in main building	Meetings with parents
Meeting room at reception	Meetings with media
Guidance office, SEN office and year head offices in main building	Individual sessions with students
Meeting room at reception	Meetings with other visitors

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/guardian 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 Siobhán Shore and/or Paula Clinton

The plan will be updated annually (September 2021)

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Patrick Carr	
Garda liaison	Michael McCarthy	
Staff liaison	Patrick Carr, Gemma O'Hart, Michael Mc Carthy	
Student liaison	Siobhán Shore, Philip Horan	
Community liaison	Gemma O'Hart/Kevin Reilly	
Parent liaison	Gemma O Hart	
Media liaison	Patrick Carr	
Administrator	Maria McGivern	

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Patrick Carr, Gemma O Hart and Micahel Mc Carthy
Who, what, when, where?	Patrick Carr, Gemma O Hart and Micahel Mc Carthy
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Entire team
Contact external agencies: (See List pg 11)	Assign one member per agency to contact
Arrange supervision for students	Michael Mc Carthy
Hold staff meeting	All staff to be present
Agree schedule for the day	Entire team
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately in small groups)	Philip Horan, Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton, Ric Pandza

Compile a list of vulnerable students	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton and Philip Horan
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Patrick Carr, Gemma O Hart and Michael McCarthy
Inform parents and affected family	Patrick Carr
Hold end of day staff briefing	Patrick Carr

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Patrick Carr
Meet external agencies (from page 11)	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton, Philip Horan.
Meet whole staff	Entire team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton and Philip Horan
Visit the injured	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton, Gemma O Hart, Patrick Carr
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Patrick Carr
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Michael Mc Carthy, Gemma O Hart, Patrick Carr
Make decisions about school closure	BOM & Patrick Carr

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers, year heads, Guidance counsellor, Caomhnoiri
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton, Gemma O Hart
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Siobhan Shore, Paula Clinton & Patrick Carr
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	(046) 903 6100
Hospital	046) 9078500
Fire Brigade	(046) 905 1068
Local GPs	(046) 902 3171
HSE	<u>046) 9021595</u>
Jigsae Navan	(046) 907 1702
Child and Family Centre	Tusla Meath: 0469098560 (duty social worker)
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(046)9079350
School Inspector	01-8896553 (Harold Hislop)
NEPS Psychologist	Edel Quinn 0761108635
SoSad Navan	0469077682
TUI	014922588
State Exams Commission	0906442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
Suicide Prevention Officer for Louth/Meath	Sandra.OKOME@HSE.IE 0871321344

Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
Piete House	1800 247247
CHILDLINE	1800666666
Samaratins	1850609090

List of staff with Suicide Prevention Training

Siobhan Shore Safetalk

Sinead Butler Safetalk

APPENDICES

SAMPLE LETTER 1



Date: _____

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great sadness that we convey to you the news of the death of one of our _____ year students, _____. We, as the school community for the past _____ years, mourn their passing and extend our deepest sympathy to the grieving family.

As a mark of respect to _____, an Area of Remembrance has been set up in the school where parents, students and staff may pray and reflect. A Book of Condolences has been placed in this area in the front office.

The funeral arrangements for _____ are as follows:

_____ will be reposing at her home on _____ evening. The removal is from her home on _____ to the Church of _____ in _____ for the Funeral Mass at _____ a.m. followed by burial in _____ Cemetery.

Classes will be suspended on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

We feel it is important for the students to pay tribute to the passing of their fellow student and as an expression of solidarity we encourage you the parents where possible to facilitate your child's attending for Guard of Honour in full uniform, representing the school community.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.

Yours sincerely

Mr. Patrick Carr

Principal

Appendix Sample Letter 2



Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death / event.

(Brief details of the incident and in event of death perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

We have support structures in place to help your son/daughter cope with this (Elaborate)

It is possible that your son/daughter may have some feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help your son/daughter by taking time to listen and encouraging him/her to express his/her feelings. **It is important to give him/her truthful information that is appropriate to her age.**

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following people at the school:

(details)

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Patrick Carr

Principal

Appendix B -Letter to Parents re: outside support



Date: _____

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Following the recent (death) we have arranged professional support for students in the school who need particular help. _____ is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to the students, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/ daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your daughter to receive this support please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by _____.

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Patrick Carr

Principal

I/We consent to having our son/daughter met by a psychologist.

I/We understand that our son/daughter may meet the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements, which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class & Year: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter, _____ to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Name of Parents/Guardians: _____

Signature of Parents/Guardians: _____

APPENDIX C



STAFF CONTACT NUMBERS

As per office and text service (updated yearly)

APPENDIX D



POINTERS TO REMEMBER IF ASKED TO GIVE A LIVE INTERVIEW

- Assign the task to someone skilled or familiar with and experienced in dealing with the media
- Take time to prepare a statement
- Remember that everything you say is on record and therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief.
- Decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate to speak with media

APPENDIX E



SAMPLE LETTER RE SCHOOL CLOSURE

Date: _____

Post-Primary Administration
Department of Education and Science
Cornamaddy
Athlone
Co. Westmeath

For Attention: _____

SCHOOL ROLL NO. 76173K

Dear _____

Further to a telephone conversation with your department yesterday and on advice given, I wish to inform you that due to the death of a ___ year student, I will be closing the school on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Patrick Carr

Principal