

SERIOUS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

MAY 2015

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School Actions	School Policy – Each school is to develop its own policy consistent with and aligned to the principles and practices outlined in the system policy.
Associated Docs	Serious Incident Management Policy Support Documents WHS Act 2011 Workplace Complaints and Grievance Guidelines (in draft) Pastoral Care Policy 2013

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Inspired by the message and example of Jesus Christ, Catholic schools live out a distinctive educational vision. Supported by the Catholic community of which they are a vital part, they invite students and their families into a faith-filled educational experience.

As a key ministry of parishes and the diocese, Catholic schools encourage and support parents in their responsibility for the faith formation of their children. This formation is supported by prayer and opportunities to participate in the life, mission and liturgy of the broader Catholic community.

Our schools commit to:

- nurturing each individual's growth in faith and unique potential
- offering outstanding educational experiences founded on Catholic values
- fostering partnership between parents and staff in the education of their children
- creating communities of respect for each other, the wider society and the earth
- encouraging active engagement in social justice issues, the service of others and the promotion of peace.

Catholic schools are part of a long tradition of Catholic education provided by religious and lay teachers in Australia and this diocese for over 180 years. They fulfil parents' rights to choose the schooling for their children which reflects their own values, beliefs and hopes.

Serious Incident Management Policy

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1. RATIONALE

In our Catholic school communities, we have a duty of care to create and maintain safe environments for all members of the community at all times, especially when a serious incident disturbs or threatens that community. Serious incidents can and will occur within school communities and expose staff and students to the risk of physical, emotional and psychological harm. Schools, and the systems to which they belong, must respond to incidents responsibly, compassionately and comprehensively in order to care for their community members, to promote wellbeing and to ensure recovery.

Appropriate preparation and training, and the provision of effective support, are essential elements that will enable a school community to effectively respond to, manage and recover from a serious incident. It is the responsibility of the Catholic Schools Office to plan and resource the appropriate preparation, training and support to ensure that school communities respond to, manage and recover from serious incidents.

This policy reflects the Nature and Purpose of the Catholic Schools Statement, especially the commitment to:

- nurture each individual's growth in faith and unique potential
- create communities of respect for each other, the wider community and the earth.

2. AIMS

This policy aims to:

- 2.1 Raise school and system awareness of the importance of a comprehensive and effective approach to the preparation for, management of, and recovery from serious incidents in schools. This includes understanding the 4 Phases of a serious incident and the implications for planning and practice.
- 2.2 Establish protocols for cooperation and communication between the Catholic Schools Office and school communities, protocols to be utilised throughout the 4 Phases of a serious incident.
- 2.3 Assist each school leader to develop a school-based Serious Incident Management Policy that includes school-based procedures and practices that will:
 - provide effective support in the event of a serious incident, and
 - optimise the potential for recovery of all concerned in a serious incident

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 What is a Serious Incident?

In 1999 the NSW Department of Education and Training replaced the term 'critical incident' with 'serious incident' in their guidelines for managing such events or incidents in schools. The definition was expanded to include incidents that could interfere with the usual functioning of a school day (Donnelly, M. 2006). A serious incident is any event that lies outside the ordinary day-to-day experiences of the school community and causes significant disruption to the school or sections of the school. It can cause members of the school community to feel threatened, unsafe, and vulnerable to immediate and/or ongoing physical and psychological harm.

A serious incident can be as the result of a sudden unexpected event or the result of an accumulation of stressful events. Within a community, a number of events may occur one after the other and each event may appear to be manageable. However, the accumulation of these events may compromise the wellbeing of the school community, and/or individuals within that community.

Serious incidents may impact on a few members of the school community or they can impact significantly on the whole school community. Consideration must also be given to other schools and communities that may be affected, and to the psychological impact that may occur after a significant tragedy in the wider community.

3.2 Characteristics of Serious Incidents

There are various characteristics of incidents that may have significant impact on a school, or on individuals in the school community. Serious incidents may display some of the following features:

- are dangerous or distressing
- are sudden and unexpected
- occur following long-term exposure to a stressor(s)
- are disruptive to a person's sense of control of events occurring around them
- are disruptive to a person's beliefs and assumptions about the world, people and work
- include elements of physical or emotional loss, or the threat/risk of loss

It is important for school and CSO leaders to understand that an incident or situation that may not be regarded as 'serious' or 'critical' to one person, may present very differently to another. An incident may be escalated in 'criticality' because of unknown personal or environmental factors. This aspect of serious incidents directs CSO leaders to continually monitor the wellbeing of both students and staff.

3.3 Examples of Serious Incidents

Serious incidents within school communities can include but are not limited to:

- Suicide of a student or staff member
- Serious illness or death of a member of the school community
- A student or staff member lost, killed or injured on a school excursion or camp
- A threat to life due to a medical condition, contagious or acute illness in the community
- Threats or actual harm caused to a member of the school community or the school itself
- Student explosive behaviour events, or student violence
- Injury and accidents to students or staff
- Negative attention from media and/or police
- Natural disasters (e.g. flood, earthquake, fire) that impact on the school or the local community
- Chemical spills
- Harm caused to school animals
- Property destruction or vandalism
- Theft of school property, student and staff work products
- Witnessing a traumatic event
- Threats to the school, resulting in lock-down or evacuation
- Enforced school closure
- Violent event in the community
- Violent world events

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) is responsible for providing appropriate training and support for school leaders to assist them in their management of a serious incident. In the event of a serious incident, the Assistant Director (AD) connected to the school is responsible for liaison between the school and the CSO, and is tasked with supporting the Principal in his/her leadership role. Other CSO staff members will also support the Principal and school community as appropriate. In general, media inquiries to the school will be directed to the Diocesan Communications Unit.

4.1 Principal

is responsible for:

- a. Participating in system training for leadership in serious incidents (phase 1)
- b. Developing the school's Serious Incident Policy based on this Diocesan Policy (phase 1)
- c. Forming the Serious Incident Management Team (phase 1)
- d. Developing the school's response to a serious incident (phase 1)

In the event of a serious incident, the Principal is responsible for:

- e. Informing the Assistant Director (AD) who will inform the Director and the Coordinator Student Wellbeing (CSW) (phase 2)
- f. Deciding on the level of response needed, in consultation with the AD and CSW
- g. Managing and directing the response to the serious incident with support outlined below (phase 2)
- h. Continuing to liaise with the AD about the school's needs (phases 2, 3 & 4)
- i. Documentation of supporting information relevant to the serious incident; refer to supporting documents.

4.2 Assistant Director (AD)

is responsible for:

- a. Undertaking training in Media Management
- b. Providing support for schools in the formulation of the Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT)
- c. Monitoring the general wellbeing of the Principal and the school community

In the event of a serious incident, the Assistant Director is responsible for:

- d. Informing the Director of Schools, the CSW and relevant CSO personnel
- e. Providing assistance and support to the Principal immediately following the notification of a serious incident
- f. Liaising with the Principal and CSW about the needs of the school community, including approving additional staffing or other matters as appropriate
- g. Assisting the Principal to complete the document: "*Summary Report After Serious Incident*"
- h. Providing guidance and support in regard to rituals and memorials (see documents phase 4)
- i. Monitoring the possible long term impact on the Principal and staff members
- j. Reviewing the school's and system's responses to the serious incident with relevant CSO and school staff.

4.3 Coordinator Student Wellbeing (CSW)

is responsible for:

- a. Supporting schools in the development of their SIMT
- b. Supporting School Psychologist/Counsellors in their role

In the event of a serious incident, the CSW is responsible for

- c. Liaising with the AD and the Principal regarding the response to the school's needs
- d. Communicating with the School Psychologist/Counsellors allocated to the affected school/s
- e. Communicating to the CSO Head of Services for Teaching and Learning and Senior Education Officer for the Student Support Unit
- f. Assessing the counselling needs of the school and coordinating additional School Psychologist/Counsellor(s) to attend the school/s if required
- g. Co-ordinating support for the School Psychologist/Counsellors who have provided counselling service to the affected school/s: this may include professional, external de-briefing and/or counselling, and consideration of their workload in unaffected schools
- h. Co-ordinating support for the Principal and affected staff members: this may include arranging professional, external de-briefing and/or counselling.

4.4 School Psychologist/Counsellor

is responsible for:

- a. Being a member of the SIMT

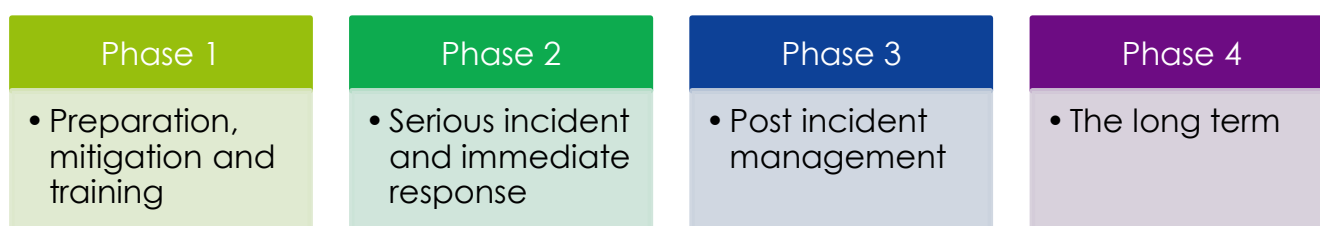
In the event of a serious incident, the School Psychologist/Counsellor is responsible for:

- b. Working with the CSW and the Principal regarding the provision of counselling and/or referrals for students
- c. Providing counselling and/or referral support for identified students, as directed
- d. Communicating with the Principal about vulnerable students
- e. Completing the *Counsellor Brief Report* for each staff or student contact
- f. Liaising with the Principal and the CSW about ongoing needs of the school
- g. Providing resources to the school regarding grief and trauma and where to seek assistance
- h. Communicating with the Principal in relation to staff wellbeing
- i. Discussing support in relation to own self-care with the CSW.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

A serious incident is best dealt with by considering the different needs and impacts that are identified at different phases throughout the experience. While overlapping in time, each phase of the incident has particular characteristics that, once understood, direct the provision of appropriate support. The serious incident is thus considered through four phases.

School leaders need to be familiar with the four phases of a serious incident as outlined in this Policy and the Appendix and Support Documents.



Support Material, attached to this policy, will assist school leaders to establish school-based policies and procedures, and in the management of serious incidents in their schools. The Support Material is organised according to the 4 Phases.

5.1 PHASE 1 PREPARATION, MITIGATION AND TRAINING

Although each serious incident will be unique and will occur in different circumstances, there are features common to all incidents for which preparation, mitigation and training can be developed. Planning provides for a co-ordinated, appropriate response and helps to minimise negative impacts on individuals and communities.

5.1.1 In Phase 1, the Principal will:

1. Communicate to all staff the importance of preparation, mitigation and training
2. Attend CSO provided training
3. Determine training needs of staff, if required
4. Form a Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT), using the support documents in this policy to guide the team's activities and processes
5. Develop a school-based Serious Incident Policy, accessing CSO support if required
6. Establish a budget for the SIMT and Serious Incident response

5.1.2 In Phase 1, the CSO will:

1. Provide training for school leaders on the management of a serious incident. This training will include the following features:
 - a. The use of scenarios and best practice and research
 - b. Management of disruption in short and longer timeframes
 - c. Education on responses to trauma (child, adult) e.g. what's normal in an abnormal situation?
 - d. Media management
 - e. Self-care in stressful situations and for the long term
 - f. How to develop a school-based Serious Incident Management Policy
2. Provide support for school leaders to develop school-based policies and procedures, following the model established in this CSO policy
3. Provide system protocols on funerals, liturgies, rituals and memorials
4. Establish a budget for release for PD/Training, and for resourcing support needs.

5.2 PHASE 2 SERIOUS INCIDENT AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

In Phase 2, when a serious incident occurs or becomes known, a school's Serious Incident Management Plan will be enacted and the SIMT will be convened. Protocols around communication and leadership would already be well understood by the community, these aspects having been attended to in Phase 1.

However, it would be rare for any plan to be totally aligned with any incident. In general, an effective response:

- i) Attends to immediate issues of danger and/or distress
- ii) Maintains calm
- iii) Accesses the available support
- iv) Prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all, especially students.

For school leaders and CSO personnel, keeping calm and following the accepted plan will ensure that safety is maximised and that assistance will be most effective.

Phase 2 includes the initial incident and the following week. This, of course, may vary according to the type and seriousness of the incident, and also on the level of distress experienced by community members. Other factors, such as post incident media attention, may also extend the time span of this phase.

5.2.1 In Phase 2 Principals/School Leaders and members of SIMT will:

1. Assess safety of students, staff, visitors
2. Establish the facts
3. Ensure student safety and wellbeing as a priority e.g. provide supervision
4. Contact emergency services if required
5. Notify the Assistant Director
6. Convene SIMT and allocate responsibilities
 - a. refer to the Checklist : *Serious Incident – Immediate Response Plan*
7. Monitor situation and maintain communication as appropriate (staff, emergency services, CSO, parents)

Once the immediate urgency has passed, the Principal/school leader and members of the SIMT will:

8. Liaise with AD and CSW about the school's needs
9. Attend to communication and information needs of the community, especially parents
10. Attend to physical needs of those affected e.g. food, drink, warmth
11. Attend to support needs of those affected (withdrawal space, privacy, company)
12. Arrange appropriate reflection/prayers (see attached support documents)
13. Complete required documentation, including Serious Incident Report, within 7 days
14. Access support for themselves, in relation to self-care

5.2.2 In Phase 2 responsibilities of CSO Personnel:

1. AD will notify the Director and the CSW
2. AD will ensure Diocesan Communications unit is notified
3. AD and/or other senior CSO personnel will attend the school to support the community
4. CSW will liaise with AD, Principal and School Psychologist/Counsellors about the school's needs
5. AD and CSW will provide appropriate assistance as required e.g. extra staff
6. School Psychologist/Counsellors will support the Principal by providing direct counselling support to students and families as required
7. AD will support the Principal in his/her leadership, their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the school community

5.3 PHASE 3 POST INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

This phase after a serious incident includes the subsequent weeks, possibly up to three months. The initial disruption and distress gives way to a period of time that may be characterised as 'aftermath', in which other impacts of the incident may become more obvious. While schools work to resume normality, individuals may also be experiencing trauma and stress reactions, and these can take a longer time to resolve.

5.3.1 In Phase 3 Principals/School Leaders and members of the SIMT will:

1. Complete, with the support of the AD, any relevant documentation including

- a. *Summary Report After Serious Incident*
 - b. *Assessment of Serious Incident Proforma*
 - c. Any responses to legal and insurance matters that may be required
2. Continue to provide support to all school community members, especially students and those who have been identified as requiring additional support
 3. Refer to school calendar to identify key events that may have an impact on students and/or staff e.g. anniversary of event, graduation ceremonies, birthday
 4. Consider appropriate opportunities for liturgies, rituals and memorials, following established CSO protocols
 5. Review school policies and procedures with AD
 6. Access support for themselves, in relation to self-care, if required

5.3.2 In Phase 3 the actions of CSO personnel will be as follows:

1. AD will continue to support the Principal as needed. This may include the management of any ongoing matters such as media, legal and insurance implications or counselling needs
2. AD and CSW will assist the Principal to monitor the wellbeing of the school community, including the reactions of parents
3. AD will review serious incident response with the Principal using Summary Report After Serious Incident
4. AD will assist Principal to complete other documentation as required e.g. WHS report
5. School Psychologist/Counsellor will continue to monitor student wellbeing and liaise with the CSW and the Principal
6. CSW will monitor the needs of the School Psychologist/Counsellor and provide support as required
7. CSW and AD will liaise with the Principal regarding support requirements and debriefing for staff. This may include arranging professional, external de-briefing and/or counselling
8. AD will advise the Principal of CSO protocols on funerals, rituals and memorials as required.

5.4 PHASE 4 THE LONG TERM

Usually, by approximately 3 months, any disruption to normal school business has been addressed and those individuals who have needed support have been attended to. However, some impacts may not become identifiable until a longer period of time has passed. Phase 4 is the time beyond 3 months after a serious incident, and may continue for an indefinite period of time. There may be some individuals in the community requiring longer term interventions and support. There may be legal proceedings which resurrect media attention and result in stress and distress for those who are involved. School leaders may be particularly vulnerable at this time.

It must be noted that not all incidents will have long term impacts.

5.4.1 In Phase 4, the Principal/school leader and members of the SIMT will:

1. Monitor student and staff wellbeing, with an awareness of what to expect in the long term (see attached documents)
2. Continue to monitor and support staff and students identified as requiring support
3. Continue to work towards the resolution of any unresolved matters e.g. changes to routines, orientation for new staff members
4. Complete a review of the school's Serious Incident Policy
5. Attend debriefing as provided by the CSO
6. Access support for themselves, in relation to self-care, if required.

5.4.2 In Phase 4, the CSO will

1. Continue to support the Principal in relation to wellbeing of the school community
2. Continue to support the Principal regarding any ongoing matters (e.g. media, legal, insurance)
3. Provide opportunities for professional debriefing for Principal/school leader(s)
4. Continue to monitor the wellbeing of school leaders and staff

6. BUDGET

The Catholic Schools Office will make provision each year in its annual budget for:

1. Professional development for relevant CSO staff, school leaders and other appropriate support staff e.g. counsellors in relation to effectively managing serious incidents in schools. This could include, for example, training in media management, managing risk assessments, and dealing with distress in staff and/or children.
2. Provision of additional school psychologist/counsellors and teaching staff to be available at short notice if required and to ensure unaffected school services remain operational.
3. The provision of professional, external de-briefing and/or counselling, as appropriate, for school staff members and CSO staff who have been involved in a serious incident.

7. EVALUATION

This Policy will be regularly monitored by the Coordinator Student Wellbeing. A formal evaluation will occur every 3 years or as the need requires. This evaluation will be based on data provided about serious incidents that have occurred in consultation with schools and relevant CSO personnel.

8. SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

The Support Material contains information and sample documents to be used across the 4 phases of a serious incident. These sample documents can be modified according to the individual needs of each school community. The information and sample documents have been organised according to each phase across a serious incident. For specific information regarding counselling needs following a serious incident and supports schools should liaise with the School Psychologist/Counsellor.

PHASE 1 PREPARATION, MITIGATION AND TRAINING

1. Formation of the Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT)
2. Serious Incident Management Policy and Procedures
3. Checklist: Preparation, Mitigation and Training
4. Resource material

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

1. Roles and Responsibilities Proforma for SIMT
2. Serious Incident Flowchart
3. Vulnerability Assessment Tool
4. Heatmap Risk Assessment
5. Serious Incident Phone Tree – Primary
6. Serious Incident Phone Tree – Secondary

7. Staff Phone Contact Numbers
8. Emergency Contact List
9. Useful Phone Numbers
10. Students with Health Care/Mental Health Care Plans
11. Students with Medical Needs
12. Ten Steps to Protect Your School
13. Media Management for Serious Incident

PHASE 2 Serious Incident and Immediate Response

1. A general approach to the management of serious incidents
2. Serious Incident Immediate Response
3. Checklist: Serious Incident – Immediate Response Plan

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

NB Appendix A for information from HEADSPACE relating to suicide www.headspace.org.au

1. Phase 2 Quick Checklist: Day 1, Next Day, Within A Week Postvention
2. Record of Serious Incident - Immediate Response
3. Staff Meeting Agenda - Sample
4. Announcement Guide for Roll Call/Class - Teachers - Sample
5. Staff Fact Sheet for Serious Incident - Sample
6. Guide to School Leaders to Communicate to Students and Staff – Sample
7. Supporting Staff
8. Self Care for School Staff
9. Serious Incident Support for Students – Information for Teachers - Sample
10. Correspondence to Parent/Carer – Sample 1
11. Correspondence to Parent/Carer – Sample 2
12. Correspondence to Parent/Carer – Sample 3
13. Correspondence from Principal to Staff after Serious Incident - Sample
14. Assisting Police
15. Managing Social Media
16. Serious Incident Report
17. Counsellor Brief Report

PHASE 3 POST INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

1. What to Expect
2. Assessment of Serious Incident Proforma
3. Phase 3 - Summary Report after Serious Incident
4. SIMP Postvention Checklist – Crisis Institute Model
5. Rituals of Remembering
6. Memorials

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

The School Psychologist/Counsellor has available various resources for supporting students, families and staff following a serious incident

Web & Resource Links

www.KidsMatter.edu.au

www.mindmatters.edu.au

www.reachout.com.au

www.headspace.org.au – (provides school support following suicide)

PHASE 4 THE LONG TERM

1. What to Expect in the Long Term – Individual Response to a Serious Incident
2. Responding to Long Term Effects
3. Supporting Staff and Students Over the Long Term
4. Long Term management Checklist
5. Resources

The School Psychologist/Counsellor has various resources available for supporting students, families and staff in the long term.

4 Phases of a Serious Incident

<p>PHASE 1</p> <p>Preparation, Mitigation and Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a Serious Incident Management Team (SIMT). Define roles and responsibilities of team members • Write school policy and procedures • Complete the document “Checklist – Preparation, Mitigation and Training” • Conduct Risk Assessments and action plans to mitigate risks • Develop an action flowchart or procedural checklist • Establish a phone tree, staff contact numbers and emergency contact list • Complete the document “Students with Health Care/Mental Health Care Plans” • Complete the document “Students with Medical Needs” • Adapt the document “Ten Steps to Protect Your School” and inform staff of their responsibilities • Determine training needs and arrange for this to occur
<p>PHASE 2</p> <p>Serious Incident and Immediate Response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the situation and gather the facts • Contact emergency services if required • Ensure safety of students, staff, visitors • Convene SIMT and allocate roles and responsibilities • Communicate – contact relevant people on the phone tree • Monitor situation and maintain communication • Offer & provide support • Arrange appropriate reflection/prayers • Complete Serious Incident Report • Complete required documentation • Review schools response with SIMT
<p>PHASE 3</p> <p>Post Incident Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and evaluate using the Assessment of Serious Incident Proforma • Ensure that response to legal and insurance proceedings is timely and accurate • Provide education and support to all school community members who have been identified as requiring additional support • Refer to school calendar to identify key events throughout the year for example, anniversary of event and graduation ceremonies • Consider Rituals for remembering, memorial and liturgies for the school community • Review school policies & procedures
<p>PHASE 4</p> <p>Long Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor and support schools staff and students identified as requiring additional support • Facilitate further individual support for those experiencing trauma • Monitor and respond to the cumulative effects of a series of incidents on staff/students