

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This Critical Incident Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years.

This Critical Incident Policy was agreed on: 16/11/2022

Signature: Adrian Henchy

(Chair Person to the Board of Management)

Principal: Anthony Creevey

Date for Review: 16/11/2024

Donabate Community College

Donabate Community College is a post primary school which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of County Dublin VEC. The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

As Donabate Community College will be catering in the foreseeable future to an ever-increasing population growth within its catchment area, the Board of Management will review the Enrolment Policy on a yearly basis.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

School Mission

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our school will seek to instil integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

Critical Incident Response Team

- Principal: Anthony Creevey
- Deputy Principal: Marian Flynn
- Deputy Principal: John Doyle
- Counsellor: Alice Chaloner

In addition: Assistant Principals / Programme Coordinator (of group most affected), referred to in this Policy as Facilitator

A copy of this document will be in possession of every member of the CIR team. It is also available on our website.

Critical Incident Management

The trauma caused by a critical incident, challenges individuals mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually and will affect the normal functioning of school.

Definition of a critical incident:

An incident may constitute a critical incident, requiring a response as laid down in this policy document, which:

- Is sudden and unexpected,
- Endangers or threatens a person,
- Overwhelms the usual coping mechanisms,
- Causes severe disruption and is traumatic.

An incident may occur that causes trauma to an individual. Such incidents need to be acknowledged and to be regarded seriously by management and staff. The individual staff member/student needs support and help. However, for the purposes of this document, such an incident does not necessarily constitute a critical incident.

Donabate Community College is a college of the community and is also a community in itself. Its members, staff and students, share common aims promoting and protecting the wellbeing of all in our community. This implies that critical incidents become the concern of all and require appropriate response. In the event of a critical incident, our response will ensure that the community is safe, supported and informed and aims to provide strategies/structures for follow-up and review.

School Management

The Principal is responsible for the management of the school. The Deputy Principals automatically act for the Principal in his/her absence. If both the Principal and the Deputy Principals are absent, the Assistant Principals 1 take over the leadership role.

Critical Incident Response Team

The CIR team is responsible for the management and delivery of the CIR plan. Confidentiality is fundamental principal of the good working of CIR team.

Who:

- ◆ Principal
- ◆ Deputy Principals
- ◆ Counsellor
- ◆ Assistant Principals and Tutors (of group most affected)

What:

1. Implement a critical incident response tailored to the particular incident, which has occurred.
2. Assimilate and verify all available information in relation to the incident.
3. Identify key areas that need to be acted upon.
4. Decide on the particular actions that need to be taken and by whom.
5. Plan follow up.
6. Monitor and evaluate the execution of the plan.
7. If necessary, the Psychological Support Service.

How:

One team member, designated by the Principal, should try to verify all the information as early as possible, before the team meets to decide on a plan of action.

1. All members of the team are contactable out of hours and can convene a meeting as early as possible.
2. Responsibilities for implementing the decisions of the team will be delegated to individual team members and small back up groups formed.
3. Each team member has his/her own back-up group and is familiar with the CIR plan. Team members can consult with their groups to identify/modify actions that need to be taken.
4. Team meets as often as is necessary during the course of the day to update information and modify plan.
5. Communication with staff, observing confidentiality of the situation.

6. Team meets in the short term to monitor progress and plan further actions eg. funeral services, student support, assemblies etc.
7. Team meets to look at long-term implications and 'closure'.
8. Team evaluates the plan and makes recommendations on improving the response.

School Principal

The School Principal is the chairperson of the CIR and is also the designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Who:

The School Principal

What:

1. Consult with Deputy Principals and determine whether it is necessary to activate the critical incident management plan and determine response level.
2. Designate the person/s who will investigate all the details.
3. Nominate the coordinator.
4. Contact CIR team, outside school hours if necessary.
5. Convene and chair CIR team.
6. Activate CIR plan
7. Brief staff
8. Contact and inform Board of Management, Parents Council and if necessary the Student Council.
9. Liase with news media
10. Contact Psychological Services
11. Brief CEO of ETB

How:

1. The Principal should ensure that he/she has up to date telephone numbers and emails of CIR team and appropriate agencies e.g. State Examinations Commission, Emergencies Services etc
2. Brief staff at earliest opportunity and keep them informed of developments as appropriate.
3. Indicate to staff what, if any, information is to be shared with students.
4. Provides relevant literatures and handouts according to the Critical Incident Guidelines
5. Nominate one person to deal with all news media enquiries.
6. If appropriate, prepare a statement for the news media, expressing school's feelings and explaining school's response plans.
7. Agree a specific time for press briefings if situation is 'ongoing'.
8. Nominate a specific location for media briefings.
9. Ensure that the school runs as normally as possible, if appropriate.
10. (Long term) allow time for CIR policy review.

Coordinator

The coordinator, nominated by the Principal, is responsible for the implementation of the CIR plan and for ensuring appropriate support throughout the critical incident.

Who:

The Coordinator is a designated member of the CIR team.

What:

1. Responsibility for the implementation of the decisions of the CIR team.
2. Ensuring that each person/group understands and is fully briefed on his or her role within the response.
3. Responsibility for updating procedures where appropriate and for keeping staff informed of such changes.

How:

1. Ascertain the facts of the situation.
2. Meet with the CIR TEAM
3. Ensure that each member of the CIR team understands fully their role and has the necessary information and support to carry it out.
4. Regular meetings - in the immediate aftermath of the critical incident and in the days that follow - with updated briefings as appropriate.
5. Attendance at in-service and / or other training relevant to a critical incident and to the school's response.
6. Preparation of draft statements in anticipation of a critical incident.
7. Evaluation of the communication process afterwards.
8. Set up the physical environment eg. tea and coffee stand, quiet rooms - organise students eg. Student council

Deputy Principals

The Deputy Principals are responsible for assisting the Principal in his/her role and for administration. They are the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP).

Who:

Deputy Principals

What:

1. Members of the CIR team.
2. Sees the school is running as normally as possible.
3. Makes rooms available for:
 - ◆ Counselling
 - ◆ Quiet Space (for students)
 - ◆ Quiet Space (for staff)
 - ◆ Parents/public to meet
 - ◆ Media (outside)
4. Arrange cover for teachers/SNAs who are
 - ◆ Helping out with students
 - ◆ Helping the coordinator and CIR members.
 - ◆ Know what is happening.
 - ◆ Know where it is happening.

How:

1. In the usual way that the school is administered, but in unusual circumstances.
2. Links with the CIR Coordinator and other CIR team members
3. Is part of the CIR TEAM.

Facilitator

The facilitator is responsible for assessing and managing the various strands of support relevant to the year group concerned.

Who:

The facilitator is likely to be a Year Head or Programme Coordinator depending on the critical incident and what year group is most affected.

What:

1. The facilitator works closely with tutors in order to identify specific needs within the school.
2. The facilitator works closely with the Deputy Principals to relay information regarding
 - ◆ Extra classrooms, which may be needed
 - ◆ Changes in teachers
 - ◆ Extra classroom support (either additional staff in classroom or suspensions of normal class activities)
3. The facilitator in conjunction with the CIR team, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the response to the students.
4. **How:**
 1. The facilitator meets with all members on the CIR team in order to assess the extent of the initial (immediate) school response.
 2. The facilitator meets with the relevant tutors and teachers throughout the days. The information obtained at these meetings will be disseminated at CIR team meetings or to key personnel throughout the day.
 4. The facilitator maintains his/her role as facilitator throughout the critical incident and during the aftercare period.

Counsellor

Who:

Counsellor

What:

1. To support teachers in their implementation of the response in Classroom.
2. To provide counselling/emotional support to students and staff affected by the incident.
3. To ensure follow up and evaluation towards identifying best practice in critical incident response.

How:

1. Offer support to teachers and be present if necessary when story is being verified.
2. Feedback to pastoral care team/CIR team.
3. Support the teacher and year head in the classroom by
 - ◆ Providing resource materials and guidelines on talking and listening to students (available in Counsellor's room)
 - ◆ Checking that teachers are comfortable with their roles and identifying alternatives where necessary.
 - ◆ Helping teachers identify the needs of particular groups of students in relation to one-to-one or group support.
4. Provide space and time for one to one and/or group consultation with students.
5. Provide space and time for one-to one support of staff members affected by the incident.
6. Meet as a group to monitor progress and plan follow-up.
7. Implement follow-up offering individual and group support.
8. Review, evaluate and feed back to CIR team.
9. Develop a resource pack for use in a critical incident.
10. Identify an area in the school where counselling can take place.

Staff

Who:

All members of staff who are not immediately involved in the critical incident.

How:

1. Staff facilitate the normal running of the school keeping routines going, thus ensuring students not involved in the critical incident can return to normal.
2. Support other members of staff in whatever they can.

Parents

Who:

Parents of all students but particularly parents of students affected by the incident.

How:

1. Help notify parents who may not have been contactable.
2. Contact the Parents Council
3. Support students in their homes.
4. Be available to take students home.

Student Council

Who:

Each class has two key people who act as class representatives. These representatives are responsible for liaising with staff members who have particular responsibilities in the key areas such as home/school.

How:

- ◆ The student council will be informed that the students have a part to play in the response, these students will be encouraged to look after their own wellbeing and will seek support from staff if needed.
- ◆ The student representatives may be in a position to inform the CIR team

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR PRINCIPAL

1. Gather the facts - Who? What? When? And Where?
2. Consult Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (Appendix 1)
3. Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1,2 or 3?
4. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
5. Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree roles and procedures
6. Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature
7. Arrange for the supervision of students
8. Agree content of communication for school social media site, if appropriate
9. Address the staff meeting
10. Identify vulnerable students
11. Draft a media statement
12. Prepare for a media interview
13. Draft a letter to parents
14. Meet with the staff group
15. Make contact with the family impacted by the Critical incident.
16. Meet with the CIR team to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day
17. Maintain the normal routine if at all possible