

# Dimboola Memorial Secondary College

## Critical Incident Response and Recovery Policy



### **Rationale:**

Dimboola Memorial Secondary College 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.

Counselling should be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved. The school may be in a position to help grieving families at difficult times, e.g. through the school's participation in the funeral service. While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist.

### **Aims:**

It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times. It is essential that a Critical Incident Recovery Team be formed to manage the short and long term effects.

### **Implementation:**

Action To Be Taken As A Result Of A Tragic/Traumatic Event That Involves The School

- Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases.

**The Department of Education and Training's School Incident Management System (SIMS) must be adhered to.**

The SIMS provides:

- a six-stage approach to 'end to end' management of incidents
- an incident severity triaging based on the impact of the incident
- clear and consistent accountability.

**The six steps are:**



- **Low (Blue) incidents:** Principal manages and governs incident.
- **Medium (Yellow) incidents:** Principal manages and governs incident. Region and Central have visibility of incident.
- **High (Orange) incidents:** Principal manages incident. Area Executive Director governs incident and coordinates supports. Central has visibility of incident.
- **Extreme (Red) incidents:** Principal manages incident. Area Executive Director supports. Director, SEMD (or rostered DET Central Incident Commander) governs incident.

More information from DET

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/Pages/reporting.aspx#link86>

## Reporting incidents

Following notification to **000** schools must report to ISOC any incident:

- **ISOC - 1800 126 126**

As a general rule, a serious incident is one that requires medical attention or a police investigation.

Examples of reportable incidents involving schools include:

- death or suicide of a student, staff member or member of the school community
- self-harm/injury or threats of suicide
- injuries requiring treatment by a doctor, transport by ambulance or hospitalisation
- concerning mental health and traumatic incidents requiring peer
- professional or clinical support
- incidents that did not lead to injury or death but very nearly did
- incidents of a sexual nature
- abuse or risk of abuse or neglect including online child abuse (mandatory reporting obligations may also apply)
- missing student
- online bullying, inappropriate use of social media and/or mobile phones.
- damage to parts of a school building or its content
- loss of essential service
- emergency situation and warnings
- bomb threats
- alleged criminal activity
- aggressive behaviour or actions or behaviours of concern
- forced marriage or human rights abuse
- family violence
- human trafficking
- sexual exploitation
- suspicious activity within or near school environment.

**Note:** Schools should also report any nuisance activity which may not have led to damage, but could lead to crime at a future time. This information is used to implement pro-active security measures such as targeted security patrols, temporary surveillance and intruder detection systems to prevent criminal activity.

### Bomb threats or threatening calls

If a bomb threat or threatening call is received via a telephone call, the school will enact their Emergency Management Plan.

1. call police on **000**

2. notify the Incident Support and Operations Centre on **1800 126 126**
3. implement the school's emergency management plan
4. do not search for the bomb
5. do not allow a search by students or staff
6. if a bomb or other explosive device is sighted in the school grounds, keep staff, students and other visitors to the school calm and promptly clear the area in an orderly and calm manner
7. do not impede an explosives inspector from entering school premises
8. do not handle any explosives found at school.

**Note:** an inspector of explosives may interview students at school on the same basis as a police interview.

### Fires

All fires, including those that have been extinguished and regardless of their size, must be reported to the relevant fire service for the particular locality by contacting **000** and the ISOC – 1800 126 126.

### Helicopter landings in schools in an emergency

The Department has given a general authorisation for the use of school grounds as helicopter landing sites during emergencies for the: air ambulance, fire reconnaissance or crime prevention.

The urgent nature of an emergency may preclude advance notification. The pilot is responsible for ensuring that the:

- area chosen for landing is suitable
- safety of those on the ground is not compromised.

If a landing occurs during school time, students must remain at a safe distance, clear of the departure, and approach paths.

The Department has not given approval for media, commercially or privately operated helicopters to use school grounds. They must obtain permission from the principal before landing.

### Implementation details for Principal (or Principal's delegate, if Principal is absent)

- See Appendices A and B for detailed plans
- Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
- 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.
- 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.
- As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
- 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 Incident Support and Operations Centre and the DET Media Unit.
- Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
- 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.

- Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
- Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
- 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 Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on **1800 126 126**
- Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- 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.
- 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.
- The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
- Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
- 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.
- Maintain links with the family. The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the school.
- Be sensitive to staff and students' needs over a period of time.

**Evaluation:** evaluation of this plan will follow any critical incident that occurs at the school

**This policy was last ratified by School Council in... December 2021 and is due for review in December 2022.**

## Appendix A

### Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)

#### Responsibilities and Procedures

##### 1. PLAN STATEMENT

This Plan is an integral part of the Emergency Management processes of the school.

##### 2. IMPLEMENTATION

**2.1** The Recovery Team will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the Plan (refer to **4.3** for the composition of the team).

##### It will need to consider:

- Establishing the facts as soon as possible
- Developing an action plan of short, medium and long term tasks
- Contact with the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Communicating with the whole staff as soon as possible
- Meeting with staff both as a whole and with individuals or groups for debriefing
- Communicating with the student body
- Meeting with students in groups or individually for debriefing
- Contacting parents/guardians
- Short term and long term counselling requirements for groups or individuals

The relevance of each of the above will depend on factors such as the nature and magnitude of the incident, the intensity of the impact on the School community and the number of people affected.

##### 3. DEBRIEFING

##### Critical Incident Stress Debriefing has three components:

1. Initial discussion about feelings and an assessment of the intensity of the stress responses
2. Detailed discussion of signs and symptoms of stress responses
3. Closing stage - provides overview and information with referral to an outside agency if required

**3.1** The Recovery Team will assist the Principal to facilitate the recovery of staff and students and those of the School community affected by the critical incident.

**3.2.1** The debriefing meeting of the Recovery Team should include a mental health professional and one peer who were not involved in the incident.

**3.2.2** The Recovery Team will decide the structure and composition of debriefing meetings; such meetings should be held within **eight hours** of the critical incident. These meetings will review the impressions and reactions of the persons involved during or following the incident.

**3.3** The Principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer will provide Counselling support and referrals for students and their families initially.

## 4. REVIEW

4.1 The Recovery Team will meet to review the implementation of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan within **seventy two (72) hours** of the critical incident.

4.2 As part of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan, the Principal will set up a Recovery Team at the beginning of each year.

4.3 Following a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Recovery Team as soon as possible.

**The composition of the Recovery Team will be:**

- The Principal
- The Assistant Principal
- The Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- A member of the teaching staff
- A member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- Other support staff as appropriate
- As necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

4.4 The Principal will convene the Recovery Team once each semester to review planning and strategies for the Critical Incident Recovery Plan.

## 5. EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Plan will follow any critical incident at the school.

## 6. Decision Making Matrix

Guides the severity rating of incidents

**Figure 5: Decision Making Matrix to guide the severity rating of incidents**

<b>Factor 2: Impact on school operations or seriousness of conduct involved, with consideration of scale</b>	<b>Severe</b> • normal school operations cease and/or • conduct that requires police notification and immediate intervention Scale • incident may involve numerous students or staff	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	<b>Major</b> • whole-of-school operations disrupted and/or • conduct that requires police notification and intervention Scale • incident may involve many students or staff	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
	<b>Moderate</b> • key school operations temporarily disrupted and/or • conduct that requires police notification Scale • incident may involve multiple students or staff	High	High	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	<b>Minor</b> • minor workarounds could return school to normal operations and/or • conduct that may require police notification Scale • incident may involve a few students or staff	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Extreme
	<b>Insignificant</b> • school operations continue with slight interruptions and/or • conduct that may require staff intervention and notification to the principal Scale • incident may involve a single student or staff	Low	Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
	<b>None</b> Incident has no impact on school operations nor involves conduct that may require police notification and intervention.		Low	Medium	High	High	Extreme
<b>Severity rating</b> Decision-making matrix	<b>None</b> No impact on a student or staff health, safety or wellbeing	<b>Insignificant</b> Minor injury/ill health requiring no first aid or peer support for stress/trauma incident	<b>Minor</b> Injury/ill health requiring first aid or peer support for stress/trauma incident	<b>Moderate</b> Injury/ill health requiring medical attention or stress/trauma incident requiring professional support	<b>Major</b> Injury/ill health requiring hospital admission or stress/trauma incident requiring ongoing clinical support	<b>Severe</b> Fatality, permanent disability or stress/trauma incident requiring extensive clinical support	
<b>Factor 1: Impact on student and/or staff health, safety and wellbeing</b>							

## **Responsibilities and Procedures**

### **1. Emergency Record**

#### *Record Information*

- Nature of the incident
- Location of the incident, number and names of persons involved
- Name of the person reporting the incident
- Time incident reported
- Contact telephone number if away from school

#### *Verify all Details*

- Confirm that the information given about the event is accurate

#### *Record the Incident*

- Notify principal workplace coordinator
- Ensure emergency services have been called notify the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) Centre on **1800 126 126**

### **2. Ensure students and staff are safe from harm or injury**

- Student Managers and Year Level Coordinators cordon off any 'crisis' area and keep students away from there
- Manage the grounds while staff are briefed and ensure media do not intrude
- Check corridors, toilets etc. for stray students - try to prevent students leaving on their own particularly if distressed
- Send all very stressed students to the Recovery area in the Library
- Ensure that students do not make hysterical calls out of school
- Ensure the school continues as normally as possible

### **3. Establish Critical Incident Recovery Team**

#### **The composition of the Recovery Team will be:**

- The Principal
- The Assistant Principal
- The Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- A member of the teaching staff
- A member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- Other support staff as appropriate
- As necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

### **4. Allocate responsibilities**

- Emergency message register
- Emergency contact list
- Evacuation and assembly of staff and students
- Cordon off area of 'crisis'
- Establish a Support Team and Communications Centre to:
  - Manage information and phone calls
  - Coordinate media requests for information

- Provide information to parents arriving at school
- Coordinate routine school activities – maintain where practical
- Notify students, staff and ancillary about the emergency
- Notify parents first, and then siblings in the school
- Establish a recovery room and supervisor for affected students
- Establish a waiting room for parents
- Inform students
- Inform School Council
- Inform School Community by newsletter
- Monitor School Community's reactions
- Liaise with outside agencies and emergency services
- Brief key personnel and review responses

#### **4.1 Recovery Room(s)**

##### *Set Up Recovery Room*

- Set up Library, and if necessary the Staffroom
- Empty adjoining rooms if possible and relocate to other rooms
- Screen windows
- Have available pens, textas, paper, scissors, envelopes, tissues

##### *Appoint Recovery Room Supervisors*

- First Aid staff

##### *Recovery Room Supervisors' Responsibilities*

- Keep calm
- Monitor students for shock reactions, provide first aid if necessary
- Encourage students to gather in small friendship groups rather than bigger ones
- Keep a list of students attending the recovery room
- Give the students a task to undertake such as making a card or writing a letter
- Contact parents of students who remain in the recovery room and alert them to possible concerns

#### **5. Informing Staff**

- Provide teachers and ancillary staff with a brief outline of the incident
- Restate to ensure that staff understand and it sinks in
- Outline recovery management arrangements
- Discuss procedures to be followed by staff during the day
- Discuss the general procedures that Critical Incident Team will be following
- Discuss guidelines for informing students and ways of answering questions from them
- Give staff time to discuss this among themselves
- Provide a brief factual outline to others in the community on a need to know basis
- Inform staff as soon as possible about a serious emergency involving death or injury which occurs after hours, on the weekend or during the school holidays
- Inform staff as soon as possible about arrangements for holding a brief meeting before informing students at the start of the next school day
- Review with staff afterwards any issues and needs
- Provide staff with contact numbers for counselling or support services for themselves

#### **7. Informing Students**

##### *Principal or senior staff*



- Contact the bereaved family or police to ascertain what information may be released within the school
- Prepare a written factual statement, without graphic detail, for use as a reference by teachers when discussing the incident with students
- Determine whether to tell students about the incident at a whole school assembly, by year levels or individual classes, depending on the nature of the incident
- Discuss with teachers who feel uncomfortable raising the event with students and arrange for support from another teacher or a member of the recovery team
- Identify staff who may be too distraught to take classes and arrange replacements
- Inform students soon after briefing staff
- Ask teachers to mark a roll to identify who has been informed and who has not

#### *Teachers*

- Provide a factual account of the incident at the beginning of the first class in a way that ensures all students hear the same information
- Limit speculation and rumours
- Inform students about arrangements of counselling and recovery rooms
- Inform students about arrangements for services, and appropriate ways to express condolences
- Outline the arrangements for the day

#### *Notifying close friends*

- Notify close friends especially girlfriends and boyfriends prior to making an announcement to other students
- Take these students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
- Consider contacting their parents prior to the start of the day
- Ensure individual attention is given to intimate friends who are likely to have special needs beyond those of other students

### **8. Communication Centre**

#### *Organise the following to be on hand:*

- Telephone - dedicated line in case of jamming by incoming calls
- Telephone message if necessary
- Message records
- Phone lists
- Rolls
- Excursion list
- Timetable
- Maps
- Computer and printer
- Photocopier
- Critical incident instructions

### **9. Media Coverage**

- Nominate a media coordinator, prepare the School Council President and Principal to provide on camera interviews
- Contact DET Media Unit on 9637 2871 or 9264 5821
- Prepare a three paragraph report:
  - Briefly outline the facts
  - Outline what the school has done to assist those affected
  - Outline support and recovery arrangements
  - Include a name and contact number for the school media coordinator
- Liaise with the family about any statements made to media

- Exclude discussion of policy matters, limit comment to the emergency and the school response
- Set rules for persistent media
- Keep a record of media enquiries
- Offer scheduled interviews in return for media commitment not to seek uninvited access to staff, students, parents
- Negotiate accepted areas for filming e.g. school/church boundary and not within
- Check that information provided does not conflict with court requirements or police proceedings
- Anticipate renewed interest arising from anniversaries, court proceedings

## **10. Long Term Actions**

- Monitor and support members of the school community, particularly on significant dates such as anniversaries
- Consider longer term intervention activities such as counselling or specialist support
- Consider establishing an area within the school as a place of remembrance
- Reconvene key people at regular intervals to review the school response and effectiveness of planning arrangements
- Review the school emergency management plan in light of experience gained
- Consider a ritual of marking significant dates
- Prepare for legal proceedings if necessary
- Remove students name from the roll if deceased
- Consider article in school magazine

## **11. Reference**

- DET - Managing Incidents in My School – information poster

<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/collaboration/SLA/AreaProfile/Managing%20Incidents%20in%20my%20school%20Protective%20Schools%20A3%20poster%20School%20Update%2028.08.2018.pdf>



# What to do in an Emergency Situation

**REPORT – 000**  
**(Police, Fire, Ambulance)**  
then

**Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC)**  
**1800 126 126**

**Provide information regarding:**

**Who?**

**The number and name of persons involved**  
**Name of person reporting the emergency/critical incident**

**What?**

**The nature of the emergency/critical incident**

**When?**

**Time when reporting person became aware of the emergency/critical incident**

**Where?**

**Location of emergency/critical incident and contact phone numbers**

**Whether?**

**Additional support is required from the Department**

**Verify ALL details**

NB: Many incidents which do not require a 000 response must still be reported to ISOC. Refer to the DMSC Critical Incident Response and Recovery Policy for a list of “Reportable Incidents”.