



Good Shepherd
Lutheran School
A N G A S T O N

Critical Incident Policy

The School's response to a traumatic or critical incident

(This policy last updated 2007)

Rationale

Good Shepherd Lutheran School recognizes the importance of responding in an effective Christian manner when a critical incident arises. This policy aims to provide a workable framework in the event of a critical incident.

A critical incident may be defined as an incident that may occur outside of our normal daily experience; with or without warning. It may result in personal loss or injury which acts as a stimulus for a traumatic response. The impact of the experience for an individual or organization may vary, dependent upon the nature of the experience and the people involved.

Some examples of a critical incident within the school community are:

- death or serious injury
 - fire
 - bomb threat
 - violent threats or actions against an individual or group.
- (this list is not exhaustive)

When a critical incident occurs the following flexible framework is to be used in response. Each critical incident is unique and therefore the response will also be unique.

Policy – In the event of a critical incident

1. Activation of the critical incident team by the Principal. This team may be comprised of: Principal, Parish pastor, staff representative, council member, LSA representative.
2. The critical incident team will develop an immediate Action Plan with the following key components to be considered as a first response:
 - allocation of duties
 - communication processes
 - defusing activities
 - pastoral support
 - advice from other agencies if required (eg. ACCESS, Police)
3. The critical incident team after the immediate response will further develop the Action Plan to incorporate medium to long term strategies in response to the needs of individuals and/or organizations (a continuum approach is recommended). This plan may include:
 - debriefing and demobilizing
 - counselling
 - acknowledgement of incident and/or people involved (eg. Anniversary, remembrance)
4. The timeframe for the Action Plan needs to be open-ended to reflect the nature of the critical incident and the needs of those involved.
5. It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times.

6. Maintenance of normal school program where possible.

Guidelines in responding to a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved.

1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
2. As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved, and School Board Chairperson. Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.
3. Appoint a Skilled Support Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, counselors, external LEA Personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of Support 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. The Principal and/or Public Officer will deal with all media requirements. A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media.
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. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
9. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends.
10. Ensure that counseling help is available.
11. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
12. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed.

13. Provide counseling 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.
14. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn to help.
15. Children wishing to attend funerals should be encouraged to do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
16. Continue normal school routines at school but acknowledge the effect of the 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.
17. 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.
18. Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.
19. Look after yourself...take a break!
20. Review this process after any significant incident.

Guidlines of procedures following notification to school of death of a student.

Notifying Students

If we are notified during school hours:

- That, if possible, the Pastor and the Principal is to tell each class of what has happened beginning with the Year Level of the student who has died, and then pray with the class.

If we are notified outside of school hours:

- That, if possible, a School Chapel is to be organised for the beginning of the next school day during which students are told of the news as a group.

If the death occurs during holidays, the school is to attempt to notify students in the year level of the person who has died, and all staff.

Students are then to be given as much time as necessary to grieve. Classroom teachers will need to put aside some of their own feelings. Staff will need to talk with students - memories and feelings help the grieving process.

Individual students are to resume their classes when they feel ready to do so. Where possible, the normal routine is to be maintained.

Staff meetings will be arranged to brief staff when details are known (including the Funeral service)

Funeral service

Attendance at the Funeral Service is optional for staff and students. If necessary, relieving staff be called in to enable school staff to attend the funeral.

All students would be asked to attend in school uniform

The school will organise buses if required.

An offer is to be made to the parents for volunteers from the school to form a guard of honour outside the church. This will need to be done in consultation with the Pastor.

If the pastor or family request it, students are permitted to lead parts of the funeral service. However- the onus is on the pastor and parents to request this.

If it is agreeable to the pastor and parents, students are allowed to prepare and place in the grave letters or other items.

If the parents request that the service be led by the School Pastor, the possibility should be explored if the School Chapel be used. Other details are to be as above.

School Memorial Service

A School Memorial Service is to be held during the fortnight after the death (but at least several days after the funeral service).

Parents and family are to be invited to this service

In consultation with the parents, some form of memorial is to be prepared. This may take the form of a tree and plaque in the driveway, or some other memorial. The school is to pay for costs.

These are guidelines. Specific amendments will have to be made each time this policy is used.

Contact ACCESS Programs Confidential Counselling 1800 812 300