



Definition

Critical incidents may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. Incidents may occur in the school environment or outside. They 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.

Rationale

Oberon Primary School is committed to responding appropriately to traumatic or critical incidents that may occur.

Policy Statement

Oberon Primary School aims to:

1. Describe the actions required
2. Provide clear and accurate information
3. Provide help for all affected
4. Maintain a normal school program as close as possible.

Implementation

- Refer to the DET Complex Matter Support 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 Complex Matter Support Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
- 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.
- Refer to the DET Complex Matter Support Team if required to support school in responding 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 Legal Division, DET Media Unit and DET Complex Matter Support Team.
- As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
- 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 24 hour Security and Emergency Management Division on (03) 9589 6266.**
- 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 student's needs over a period of time.

Resources

- **DET Emergency Management Planning**
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/mgtplanning.aspx>
- **Emergency and Critical Incident**
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/management/pages/emergency.aspx>

Related Policies

- OPS Privacy Policy
- OPS Duty of Care

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by the School Council on 18/06/2019
Next review date: June 2022

Policy prepared by Genefor Walker-Smith — October 2016