



## **SAN REMO PRIMARY SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

To promote the health and well-being of the San Remo PS community and ensure a safe response to any incident which puts the health and safety of staff and students at risk or which breaks Department of Education regulations, the law or school rules, the following guidelines apply:

### **GUIDELINES**

- San Remo Primary 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
- The general school environment will be secure and safe for all members of the school community.
- All incidents likely to affect the safety and well being of students, teachers or visitors are to be reported immediately and responded to as soon as possible. The safety of all people exposed to the emergency are to be considered all stages ie. intervention and post-vention.
- An emergency may have effects on those involved lasting long after the initial crisis and support to assist the school community may be required.
- The school will establish positive links with community and other external agencies to support this policy.
- While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist.
- 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.

### **ACTION TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF A TRAGIC/TRAUMATIC EVENT WHICH INVOLVES THE SCHOOL**

1. Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases.
2. However, the following 4 principles must be followed:
  - a. provide clear, accurate information
  - b. describe the actions to be followed
  - c. provide help for all affected
  - d. maintain a normal school program as close as possible
3. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
4. 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.
5. Contact Emergency Management (03) 9589 6266 for assistance and guidance
6. Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include School Support Services Officers (SSSO), staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DEECD 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.
7. In consultation with Emergency Management, provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done as soon as possible.
8. Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team member to respond to media enquiries, in consultation with DEECD Media unit.
9. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.

10. 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.
11. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
12. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
13. Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DEECD 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 Emergency and Security Management Branch on (03) 9589 6266.
14. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
18. Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
19. 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.
20. 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.
21. Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

**LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this policy)**

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- [DEECD Emergency Management Planning](#)
- [Emergency and Critical Incident](#)

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix A: Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)
- Appendix B: Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks

**EVALUATION**

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

<b>Ratified by School Council</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2014
<b>School Council President (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Policy committee
<b>Review Date</b>	April 2015

## **Appendix A**

### **Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)**

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#### **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 Early Childhood Development (DEECD)
- liaising with external bodies including the media
- 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** Counselling support and referrals for students and their families will be provided initially by the Principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer.

#### **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
- a member of the teaching staff
- a member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- other support staff as appropriate
- as necessary, SSSO leader, psychologists, counsellors and DEECD 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 Plans will follow any critical incident at the school.

## **Appendix B**

### **Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks**

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#### **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*

- ensure emergency services have been called notify the Department's 24 hour Emergency Communications Centre on **(03) 9589 6266**

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

- Teachers cordon off any 'crisis' area and keep students away from there
- manage the grounds while staff are briefed and ensure media do not intrude
- ensure the school continues as normally as possible
- ensure all students are accounted for as per guidelines in Emergency Management Plan

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

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

- the Principal
- a member of the teaching staff
- a member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- other support staff as appropriate
- as necessary, SSSO personnel, psychologists, counsellors and DEECD personnel.

#### **4. Allocate responsibilities as per Emergency Management Plan**

#### **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

#### **6. 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 hears 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

### **7. Media Coverage**

- Immediately contact DEECD Emergency Management (03) 9589 6266 and DEECD Media Unit on 9637 2871 or 9264 5821
- Follow advice, protocols and procedures as directed by the DEECD Media Unit

### **8. 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
- prepare for legal proceedings if necessary
- remove students name from the roll if deceased

### **9. Reference**

- DEECD's *Managing School Emergencies - Minimising the impact of trauma on staff and students*



Managing School  
Emergencies Booklet.