



Topic:	Crisis Management Planning in Catholic Schools
Policy No:	2-D2
Policy Area:	Community
Year Promulgation:	2004
Year reviewed:	2014
Date for Review:	2018

Rationale

Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for staff, students and members of the community.

Learning outcomes for students and the wellbeing of students, staff and community members can be adversely affected by crisis events. Appropriate planning and intervention can reduce the likelihood of such events and mitigate the impact should a crisis occur.

Definitions

Events that cause severe emotional and social distress may occur at any time and without warning. Such occurrences have been variously called Traumatic Incidents, Critical Incidents, Crises, Disasters and Emergencies.

Raphael (1986, page 6) has identified characteristics of crises in that they involve:

- rapid time sequences
- an overwhelming of the usual coping responses of individuals and communities
- severe disruption, at least temporarily, to the functioning of individuals or communities
- perceptions of threat and helplessness and a turning to others for help

Flannery and Everly (2000) describe a crisis as a response condition and the precipitating event, the stimulus, as a critical incident.

In schools, a crisis might be considered as any situation faced by staff or students that cause them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which may have the potential to interfere with their ability to perform at the scene or later. Crises tend to be far outside of the normal experience of those involved and indeed of most of the population. Accordingly, the individual has little by way of guideline from past experience on how to deal with the event or the reactions to it. Students have even less experience to draw on than adults and usually have a more restricted repertoire of coping responses. Sense of control and self-efficacy are likely to be reduced. Students are likely to be looking to those adults who usually provide support, guidance, direction and leadership to continue to fulfil these roles.

Principles

1. Catholic schools are safe and supportive environments where the 6 principles and 9 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (2003) are practised.
2. Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students, staff and others who may visit the school or be involved in school activities.
3. Catholic schools take actions to:
 - prevent crises or reduce the chance of these occurring, and where these may still occur, acting to mitigate the impact
 - prepare for crisis events by appropriate planning, training and education

- respond with a rapid, organised and effective implementation of actions and mobilisation of resources
 - facilitate recovery by recognising that this is founded within the Planning, Preparation and Response elements (as described in the previous 3 bullet points) and by providing appropriate levels of support to the school community
4. Establishing an effective Crisis Management Plan requires a whole of school community approach that is consistent with the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia's Pastoral Care Framework, the school's Pastoral Care practices and the school's plans for more routine kinds of emergencies such as fire evacuation.
 5. Particular kinds of events such as suicide require an approach that is different to that needed in other kinds of death. It is important in responding to a suicide that actions do not increase the risk of imitative behaviour. *Appropriate actions can reduce risk and have a protective influence.*
 6. Both the involvement and agreement of bereaved parents/caregivers and family are particularly important when putting in place support and recovery processes within the school.

Procedures

1. St Lawrence's has developed a school-based Crisis Management Plan based on the Prevention, Preparation, Response, Recovery (PPRR) model as approved by the Team Leader, Psychology.

PREVENTION OF A CRISIS

1. The appointment and training of an Occupational Health and Safety officer on staff.
2. Procedures in place for the identification, notification and fixing of safety hazards.
3. A maintenance plan for the updating and restoration of the school grounds, equipment and buildings.
4. Cleaning of rooms, toilets, verandah areas and wet areas done daily.
5. Policies and procedures developed and made available to staff in the planning and running of excursions, camps and activities in the school.

PREPARATION FOR A CRISIS

1. Procedure for evacuation and lock down of the school developed and reviewed yearly. This procedure is made clear to staff early in the year and practiced twice a year. The procedure is reviewed with staff after each practice.
2. Emergency cards and whistles located in each room and playground files for quick notification of emergency procedures.
3. Staff allocated a fluorescent vest to wear on playground duty and in emergency situations, for easy identification.
4. All school policies and procedures are in line with CEOWA policies, reviewed regularly and given to all staff members in their staff information file.

RESPONSE TO A CRISIS

1. ACCIDENT

1. When a serious accident occurs, notify the Principal, or an Assistant Principal in their absence. Send emergency card to school office requesting immediate assistance.
2. Make the situation safe/avoid further trauma eg. Ensure proper supervision, area to be screened off, bystanders to be kept away, discourage action which could lead to further trauma. Leave the scene intact for subsequent investigation ie. Don't move or touch anything. As a result of (a) the front office will ring for an ambulance, and/or other emergency services, when instructed by the principal. If an ambulance is obviously required and you are near a telephone ring the ambulance yourself.
 - The front office will notify the Principal immediately.
 - The Principal will notify the parents and/or family.
 - The Principal will notify others as appropriate:
 - Police

- Fire Brigade
- CEOWA, Geraldton and Perth

2. DEATH

When it appears that a death has occurred in school, notify the Principal. The procedures will then be the same as for ACCIDENTS

3. SERIOUS UNCONTROLLED DISTURBANCE

1. In the event of a dangerous intrusion in the school the Principal is to be notified immediately and the whole school will implement the School Lock Down.
2. Principal to advise office to contact Police.

4. DISCOVERY OF A MAJOR HEALTH HAZARD OR PANDEMIC

1. Infected persons, those in contact with an infected person or if notified of an infected member of the school community are to inform Principal immediately, who will then contact appropriate emergency services and health department authorities.
2. If a health hazard occurs in the school inform the Principal immediately and evacuate all bystanders from the affected area.
3. Quarantine the affected area or person and if needed raise the emergency evacuation procedure.
4. Implement full closure or partial closure of school as directed by CEO and Health Department (See attached notes for Closure procedure).
5. Principal to communicate with CEO and school community to keep them informed about procedures for reopening the school.
6. Affected areas of the school are to be cleaned thoroughly before reopening of those areas.

5. OUT OF SCHOOL CRISIS

When an accident/death occurs out of school the person informed will ring the principal both during school activity or otherwise.

6. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA AND ENQUIRIES FROM OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL.

- The Principal will notify the Catholic Education Office.
- The Principal will deal with the media.
- Media personnel will be taken to an appropriate location and made welcome.
- The Principal will consult with CEOWA before providing any information.
- The Principal will inform the front office of information to be given in response to enquiries and/or deal with these personally.

7. TASK CHECKLIST *Immediate/to within first 24 hours*

- Gather information
- Decide on the level of response required
- Principal to communicate information with CEO and receive advice
- Call together Administration team to act as Crisis Management Team
- Enact the School Crisis Management Plan
- Find out facts from police and when school can release these
- Has contact been made with the families of victims?
- Arrange to visit families as soon as practicable
- Prepare or adapt information release for groups in the school community
- Inform staff
- Decide on means of information transfer to students
- Support distressed staff and possibly arrange for relief staff
- Give staff guidelines on the role they can play with students
- Can a telephone line be kept free for essential calls?
- How will the school handle enquiries?
- Do office staff have accurate written statements to use for incoming calls?

- Who will deal with media enquiries?
- Start keeping a record of events
- Provide support facilities for distressed students
- Do outside agencies need to be contacted?
- Establish a support centre within the school and ensure it is staffed at all times
- Are there siblings?
- Do other schools need to be informed?
- Is parental permission required for some kinds of information release?
- Do the most critically involved parent helpers have support?
- Have arrangements been made for staff that may want to stay after school?
- Have arrangements been made for parents who call at the school?
- Are members of the Crisis Management Team maintaining regular contact/meetings?
- Who will attend to the victim's desk/personal belongings?
- Who will attend the funeral?
- Will the school hold its own memorial service or create a memorial for the victim?
- Remember that there may be deaths subsequent to the initial fatalities.
- Has debriefing been considered for the most critically involved school personnel?
- What follow-up is planned for the next day?
- Arrange ongoing or long term relief.
- Arrange that the Crisis Management Team meet at the end of the day.

RECOVERY FROM A CRISIS

1. Staff meeting to be held the next day for Principal to debrief and give information to staff on what happens now.
 2. Principal to organize counselling if they see the need for staff, students and school community through the school psychologist.
 3. Organise and hold a school memorial service if required.
 4. Principal to inform parents of the school if required about the incident.
 5. A written report to be made by the Crisis Management Team outlining the incident, action taken, effectiveness of the action and the recovery process implemented.
2. The Crisis Management Plan is to be reviewed annually or immediately following any incident that invokes the use of the plan.
 3. Leadership team and the OHS officer are to undertake training in Crisis Management Planning when available in order to establish a knowledge base within the school.
 4. The school will provide professional development and appropriate resources to meet the needs of their staff in implementing the school's Crisis Management Plan. This includes providing opportunities for evacuation drills or simulations to be held twice a year.
 5. The school will strive to maintain normal functioning during crisis situations

References

Curriculum Corporation (2003), *National Safe Schools Framework*
 Flannery, R.B.Jr. and Everly G.S.Jr. (2000). *Crisis intervention: A review*. International Journal of Emergency Mental Health, 2(2), 199-225

Related Documents

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy statement 2-D8 'Management of Confidential Information in Schools'
 Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools. Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, 2007