CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY
AND PROCEDURES

APPROVAL OF CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Principal

College Board Chair

Date: 27 May 2014

Review Date: May 2017
VISION STATEMENT

We nurture in our endeavours God’s gifts of holy friendship, a passion for learning and celebration of personal excellence.

OUR MISSION

St Francis de Sales College is a learning community that works together to build an environment in which faith is nurtured in a Catholic Christian tradition. It does this by recognising individuals’ skills and talents while appreciating and accepting their uniqueness.

The College is committed to promoting community and personal fulfillment through life enhancing relationships.

St Francis de Sales, as patron, symbolised the high hopes that are held for every St Francis de Sales student, so that, inspired and guided by his example, each child may:

- promote a culture of life through courage in responding to the challenges that life brings
- foster the engagement of faith and reason
- develop a love of learning and independent thinking
- value and respect individuals, irrespective of position, wealth, racial origin or religious beliefs
- become a socially responsible contributor in the community and to society
- acquire virtue and wisdom and respond generously to others throughout life.

POLICY STATEMENT

We are committed to ensuring that employees are provided with a safe and healthy work environment. This will be achieved, in part, by minimising the impact of critical incidents.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff are aware of what to do when a critical incident arises directly involving St Francis de Sales College staff and/or students.

These procedures are in addition to the usual support and pastoral care offered to employees, students and families.

DEFINITION

Critical incidents occur when a person experiences, witnesses or is affected by a sudden traumatic event which has the potential to harm life or well-being. This sudden unexpected event may be violent and shocking. Such events can challenge our ability to cope and impact on our sense of security.

Examples:

- major injury
- serious traffic crash/accident
- death – accidental or following an illness
- suicide
- abduction
- dangerous intruder on College grounds resulting in Lockdown
- bomb threat
- sexual assault
- fire at school
- hazardous substance spill or explosion
- natural disaster, bushfire, earthquake, flood.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are made available to implement this policy. The Principal is also responsible for the implementation of this policy by ensuring that all staff understand the policy and appropriate procedures.

**Critical Incident Response Team**

- Front office team
- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Business Manager
- Heads of Sub Schools
- Assistant Principal – Religious Instruction and Mission
- Marketing and Communications Manager
- Administration and Strategic Projects Manager
- College Counsellor
- Student Services
- Principal Consultant (CEO)
- Student leaders

**OVERALL STRATEGIES**

These strategies are to be implemented to provide the basis for managing and providing support to staff, students and families following a critical incident:

- to provide timely and accurate information to key stakeholders
- to consult with staff, students and parent/carer groups
- to document and distribute procedures to all staff for dealing with critical events
- to address the need for relevant professional development
- to provide training for key staff in the areas of first aid, fire and evacuations
- to provide all staff with knowledge of evacuation procedures
- to provide assistance or professional counselling to staff or students after a critical incident has occurred.

**PROCEDURES**

The following procedures should be adhered to following a critical incident or major injury, and should be followed in conjunction with the ‘Guidelines for responding to a critical incident’ in Appendix A.

**During school hours on school grounds**

- administer first aid
- contact emergency services
- staff member to stay with student until family member takes over responsibility
- reassure and comfort students and staff involved
inform Principal or the Deputy Principal
Deputy Principal to inform parents/family
if there is an injured student or staff member, a staff member is to accompany the injured person to hospital
students provided with information and offered support/counselling
convene Executive team meeting
convene staff meeting as soon as possible
Principal communicates facts to staff
staff advised of information to be communicated to students
staff offered support – Counsellor / Access Services
information communicated to parent community

During school hours away from school grounds, e.g. day excursions, sport
administer first aid
contact emergency services
students provided with information and offered support/counselling
reassure and comfort students and staff involved
inform the Principal or Deputy Principal
Deputy Principal to inform parents/family
staff member to stay with student until family member takes over responsibility
convene Executive team meeting
convene staff meeting as soon as possible
Principal communicates facts to staff
staff advised of information to be communicated to students
staff offered support – Counsellor / Access Services
information communicated to parent community

Before or after school hours or during school holidays
staff member who learns of a major injury/death of a student or staff member is to contact Principal or Deputy Principal
Principal or Deputy Principal to convene the Crisis Incident Response Team as soon as possible
convene staff meeting as soon as possible
visit the family and offer support
inform College community (if appropriate)
counselling offered at College

Overnight camp/trip
administer first aid
contact emergency services
staff advised of information to be communicated to students
reassure and comfort students and staff involved
inform the Principal or Deputy Principal
if a student is lost, the Police must be informed as soon as possible
Deputy Principal to inform parents/family
staff member to stay with student until family member takes over responsibility
convene Executive team meeting
convene staff meeting as soon as possible
Principal communicates facts to staff
staff offered support – Counsellor / Access Services
information communicated to parent community
students provided with information and offered support/counselling

LIAISON AND COMMUNICATION

Media
The Principal (or nominee) is the official spokesperson for the College. The Principal may obtain assistance from the Principal Consultant to liaise and work with the media.

Enquiries from parents
The Assistant to the Executive and office staff will refer telephone and other enquiries to the Principal, or in the absence of the Principal, a member of the Executive Team.

FOLLOW UP

Follow up with Executive Team and Critical Incident Response Team, as appropriate
Convene a follow up staff meeting
One month later - review procedures
One month later - request staff feedback and review of procedures

MONITOR AND REVIEW

This document will be reviewed within three years of the date of issue. Changes in legislation or Catholic Church Policy may necessitate earlier review and subsequent amendment or re-issue.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Bushfire Policy
Duty of Care Policy
Mindmatters website: Mapping and Managing Mental Health in Schools: Critical Incident Management Policies and Procedures
APPENDIX A: GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The following are elements to consider, where appropriate:

**FIRST 24 HOURS**

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Find out the facts</strong></td>
<td>Collect information about the incident from reliable sources as soon as possible. Identify staff/students or parents at risk.</td>
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</table>
| **Establish a management plan**         | Contact Catholic Education Office and relevant personnel i.e. one or more of the following:  
  - Principal Consultant  
  - Director or Assistant Directors  
  - ACCESS  
  Convene a meeting immediately with available members of the Critical Incident Response Team. College Counsellor is notified for assistance. Determine if additional support from outside support agencies is needed. |
| **Inform all staff**                    | Representative/s of the Critical Incident Response Team provide staff with the facts of the incident. Outline the proposed management plan. Suggest sources of personal support for staff. |
| **Inform all students**                 | Outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity, as appropriate. Use of internal PA system where appropriate. |
| **Set up a recovery room in the school**| Provide, where possible, tea/coffee, comfortable chairs and an appropriate support person. Allow distressed students and staff access to this room for several days after the incident. This could be co-ordinated by a member of the Critical Incident Response Team and a College Counsellor representative. |
| **Liaise with the media**               | Nominate a spokesperson (Principal or nominee). Minimise media contact with staff and students. Provide the media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students. |
| **Inform and update parents and students** | Provide parents and students with relevant facts and possible links to support mechanisms. |
### 48 – 72 HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT

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<th>Restore school to regular routine</th>
<th>Provide structure to help students and staff return to normal functioning.</th>
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<td>Allow time for debrief</td>
<td>Encourage staff to allow students (especially those more directly involved) to talk about the incident and about their reactions. This is an important part of the recovery process but should not be forced upon students.</td>
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| Maintain communication           | Encourage two-way communication between parents and College and ensure that parents are kept informed of:  
  - the College’s management plan  
  - possible reactions of students  
  - sources of help for families. |

### DURING THE FIRST MONTH

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<tr>
<th>Arrange a memorial service at school within a week of the incident if students/staff have died in the incident</th>
<th>Encourage close friends and others directly involved in the incident to participate and be involved in the planning.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Co-ordinate a meeting of key staff in the school who have been affected by the accident</td>
<td>Involve Executive Team, Critical Incident Response Team, College Counsellor and Support Services i.e. ACCESS. Encourage staff to express and share their feelings and concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convene a meeting of parents of students involved in the incident after three or four weeks (where a number of students were directly involved)</td>
<td>Involve counselling professionals to encourage parents to express and share their feelings and concerns about their children’s welfare and to help them understand their reactions.</td>
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### IN THE LONGER TERM

| Monitor staff for signs of stress | Encourage stressed staff to seek professional help.  
Endeavour to provide a supportive environment.  
Allow and provide for increased demand on teacher relief time. |
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<td>Monitor other members of the school community for signs of stress</td>
<td>Everyone in the school community will be affected by the crisis situation at some level. Past losses may be triggered by the incident and current life issues will be felt strongly. Encourage those affected to seek support and/or professional help.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Be alert for and sensitive to the disturbing influences or anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings | Specific support for those affected may be needed again at these times.  
Provide extra staff and services if necessary. |
| Review                           | Review strategy and outcomes after each incident. |

Adapted from: “Traumatic Incidents Affecting Schools”, K. Bidwell and T. McManus, Queensland 1990