ISANA
International Education Association Inc.
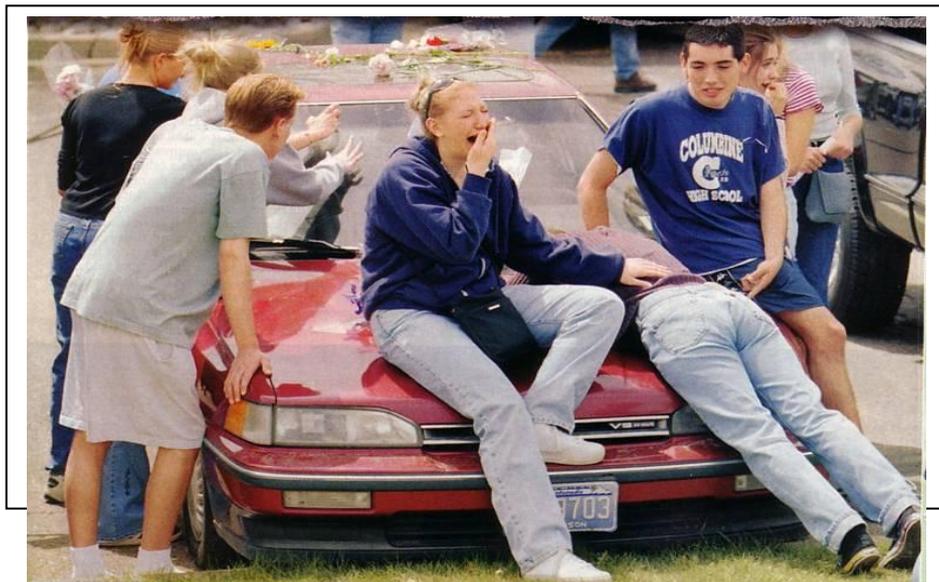
CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Professional issues in the delivery of services

2014

Introduction

The aim of this handbook, in conjunction with the workshop and the Kit, is to give you enough resources, and knowledge that will allow you to devise or revise policy and procedural guidelines for a critical incident or emergency involving international students in your workplace or off-site.

This handbook is designed and intended to be a starting point only, or one of many useful resources you may collect over time.

It is by no means complete.   However we hope that you will add to it any local phone numbers, contacts, reflections or experiences which will better prepare you for handling critical incidents/emergencies on your school/campus.

It aims to get you thinking and hopefully planning for the events no-one ever really wants to plan for, but do happen.

Definition of a critical incident/emergency

Some definitions are:

"Any event which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events which are outside the range of ordinary human experiences."

"A critical incident is defined as an incident in which there is a high likelihood of traumatic effects.   A critical incident evokes unusual or unexpectedly strong emotional reactions, which have the potential to interfere with the ability of the individual, group or system to function either at the time or later".

"An emergency is defined as an event, actual or imminent which occurs on or off-site; endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment; and requires a significant and coordinated response".

Or, the ISANA definition:

"A tragic or traumatic event or situation affecting a student or staff member which has the potential to cause unusually strong emotional reactions in the school/campus community."

Examples of a critical incident

- Death (including death of a dependant)
    - Accidental
    - Suicide
    - Result of an injury or terminal illness
    - Murder

- Serious illness or injury or any threat of these (including coma, permanent or temporary incapacity, or diagnosis of a life-threatening state)

- Natural disaster

- Any powerful event which overwhelms a person's usual ability to cope e.g. severe verbal or psychological aggression

- Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse

- Missing student(s)

- Non-life threatening events could still qualify as critical incidents

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What do we aim to do in a critical incident?

- Provide support and to address immediate practical tasks and facilitate family, friends and loved ones

- Focus should also be on supporting the student population

- Establish levels of order and control as appropriate in what others may perceive as chaotic situations

- Recognise our own limitations and boundaries

How do we identify a critical incident?

Formulate your own set of questions to ask of incidents. For example:

Is this a critical incident?

Is it significantly harmful or pose a threat of harm to students / staff?

Do others think it a critical incident?

Do you know if your institution has a critical incident plan and where to find it?

Does it have a section on dealing with International Students?

Discuss how your organisation identifies a critical incident e.g.
Who is involved in the decision; what criteria are considered

Critical incident preparation

Pre-incident preparation

Staff

If you are new to your organisation become familiar with your organisation's critical incident plan

- Does your institution have a critical incident plan?
- Have you received an orientation to that plan?
- Do you understand your role in that plan?
- Do you understand the role of others in that plan?

Professional staff development for those working directly in the area:

- Participation in workshops
- Internet research
- Discussion with others involved with critical incident management

Increase staff awareness of issues around critical incidents:

- Briefings and/or presentations to senior management groups (including outlines of relevant policy)
- Request budget allocations and agreed use and access to emergency funds
- Use risk management tools

Ask questions to managers up the line e.g. whoever is responsible for critical incident management within the structure of your organisation (there will likely be several depending on the type of critical incident)

Legal

- You need to be aware of many legal obligations under the Governments current laws

- Student support services – such as the Code of Practice in NZ

- The provider should have a documented critical incident policy together with procedures that covers the action to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the required follow-up to the incident, and records of the incident and the action(s) taken.

Processes

Identify the issues:

Who is affected?

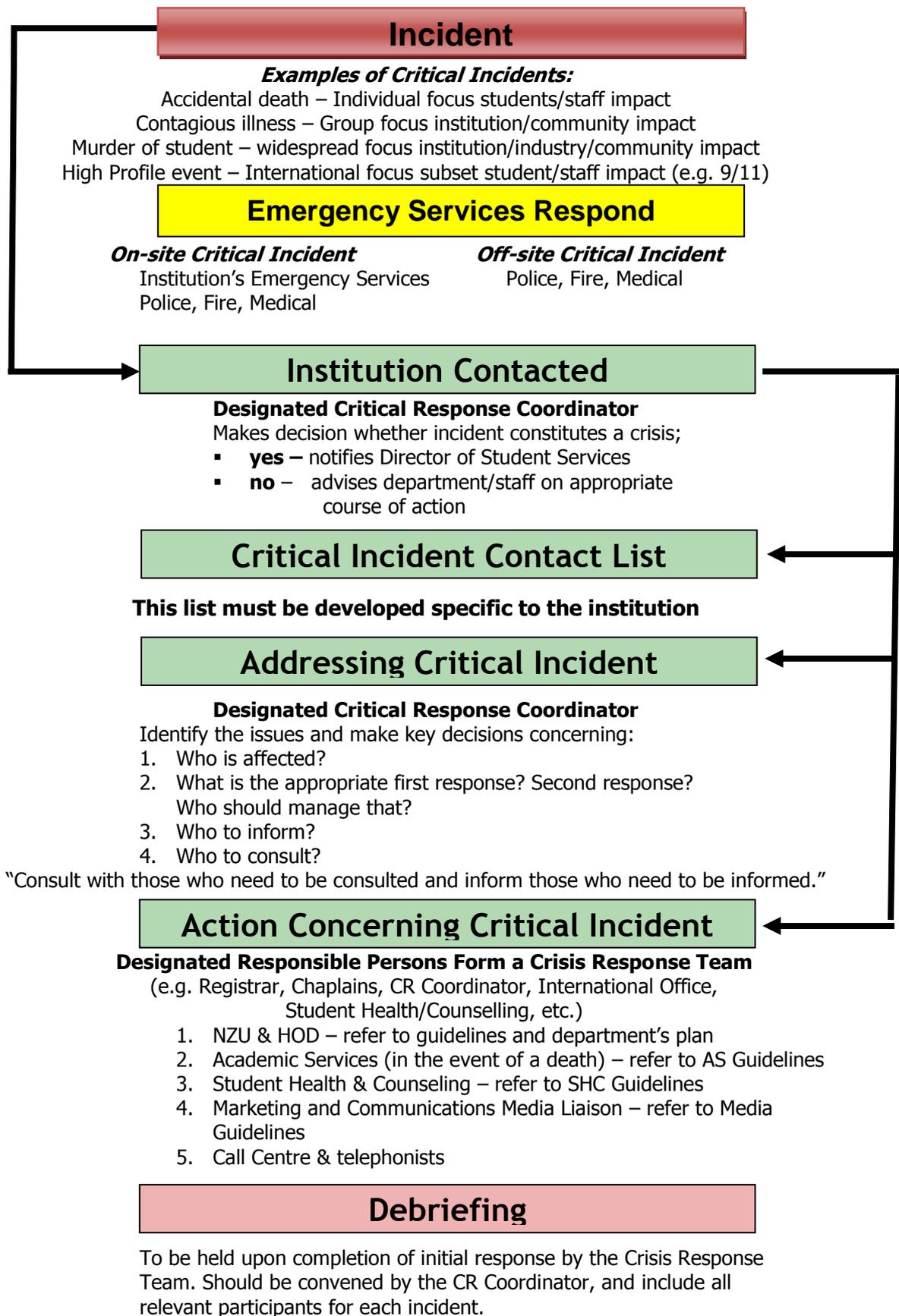What is the appropriate first response? Second response?

Who should manage that?

Who to inform?

Who to consult?

What guidance does the Critical Incident plan give?

Critical incident response plan

Incident

Examples of Critical Incidents:
Accidental death – Individual focus students/staff impact
Contagious illness – Group focus institution/community impact
Murder of student – widespread focus institution/industry/community impact
High Profile event – International focus subset student/staff impact (e.g. 9/11)

Emergency Services Respond

On-site Critical Incident
Institution's Emergency Services
Police, Fire, Medical

Off-site Critical Incident
Police, Fire, Medical

Institution Contacted

Designated Critical Response Coordinator
Makes decision whether incident constitutes a crisis;
- **yes –** notifies Director of Student Services
- **no –** advises department/staff on appropriate course of action

Critical Incident Contact List

This list must be developed specific to the institution

Addressing Critical Incident

Designated Critical Response Coordinator
Identify the issues and make key decisions concerning:
1. Who is affected?
2. What is the appropriate first response? Second response? Who should manage that?
3. Who to inform?
4. Who to consult?

"Consult with those who need to be consulted and inform those who need to be informed."

Action Concerning Critical Incident

Designated Responsible Persons Form a Crisis Response Team
(e.g. Registrar, Chaplains, CR Coordinator, International Office, Student Health/Counselling, etc.)
1. NZU & HOD – refer to guidelines and department's plan
2. Academic Services (in the event of a death) – refer to AS Guidelines
3. Student Health & Counseling – refer to SHC Guidelines
4. Marketing and Communications Media Liaison – refer to Media Guidelines
5. Call Centre & telephonists

Debriefing

To be held upon completion of initial response by the Crisis Response Team. Should be convened by the CR Coordinator, and include all relevant participants for each incident.

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Policy

> *"Critical incident policies ensure the interests of students and their families are managed appropriately. Such policies also ensure registered providers are prepared for such incidents and have clear protocol to follow in what can be a distressing and upsetting circumstance."*

A written critical incident policy must be created to include procedures to be followed if action is required:

The critical incident policy should include contact information for the police and any other organisations that may be able to assist in such a situation, for example community/multi-cultural organisations or phone-counselling services.

Any action taken in regard to a critical incident may be recorded to include outcomes or evidence if the incident is referred to another person or agency. When writing the critical incident policy and procedures, providers should consider relevant information privacy principles

There are many different types of policies; many organisations have critical incident policies that fit within a global context - flood, building damage, bomb threat etc. That's fine but changes to legislation mean we need to be a little more specific.

Policy Development

Required processes are:

- **Developing the Plan with relevant stakeholders.** Leader and other staff considered vital need to be involved in establishing the Plan.

- **Informing those staff who will need to action the Plan**. Communicating the Plan to institution personnel and ensuring a level of familiarity with what the Plan is for, what it involves and where it is stored.

- **Testing and reviewing the Plan.** Testing the Plan at least annually and undertaking a review following emergencies or critical incidents is important in maintaining a current and effective Plan.

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Following are some of the points to consider when developing a critical incident policy. (Some templates are available on the Internet for you to look at). Consider your own organisation and any specific requirements when formulating your policy.

Form a coordinating team:	Team Leader (CI)_____ _____ Others (CI) _____ _____ Chain of Management (next up the ladder) _____ Who: (in office normal work) Team Leader _____
Create a clear understanding of the known facts	▪ Before next of kin/family is contacted, the coordinating team will ensure that it establishes the facts so that it has accurate and up to date information about what happened and about the current situation. This may involve seeking out a number of different sources of information such as the hospital, friends of the student, and police but will occur as quickly as possible so that the family is notified early. ▪ This is where events need to be documented
Plan an immediate response	▪ The coordinating team will discuss the tasks that need to be performed immediately and within the first days following the incident and allocate responsibilities within the team.
Plan ongoing strategies	▪ The coordinating team will discuss the tasks that will need to be performed over the first few weeks following the incident.
Allocate individual roles and responsibilities for tasks	▪ One person from the coordinating team will be appointed as the main point of contact for others – the hospital, relatives, friends, and other parties such as the consulate and police. ▪ That person will make it known to everyone involved that they will be available 24 hours a day

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Make contact with next of kin	▪ The coordinating team will establish whose responsibility it will be to notify next of kin of the incident. Whether or not it is an immediate staff member, next of kin will be informed which staff will be available to them as a source of support. In the case of families who are not fluent in English, appropriate arrangements will be made for using interpreter services or a friend or relative of the student's family who can act as an interpreter. ▪ NB Privacy laws for students over 18 may make it necessary to obtain student permission before notifying other family members
Consulate	▪ The coordinating team will discuss with the consulate respective roles and responsibilities in terms of contacting the student's family, arranging a service, arranging travel to New Zealand, temporary accommodation for relatives, and repatriation of the body if death is the result of the incident
Accommodation provider	▪ The coordinating team will ensure that support is available for the student's friends, housemates, hostel owners, homestay families.
Insurance provider	▪ If the student is in a hospital the coordinator should contact the Insurance provider and get them to contact the hospital and discuss coverage and ongoing coverage issues. ▪ Some funds will appoint a case manager if requested by an organisation
Hospital	▪ The coordinating team will contact the hospital about health cover arrangements for the student and other relevant matters. ▪ In many case you may need to help manage visitors and other concerned or distressed students at the hospital ▪

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Other students	▪ This can often be the biggest area to manage ▪ The coordinating team will ensure that these people are aware of support mechanisms within and outside the organisation and that they are encouraged to stay in contact with the staff on the coordinating team ▪ Need to consider academic as well as personal support
Counselling or welfare staff	▪ contact counselling staff ▪ standby to provide support to students and staff affected by the incident ▪ often use 'networked' contacts so other services can help out
Teaching or academic staff	▪ Contact relevant academic staff ▪ let them know about what has happened ▪ Need to look at special arrangements to assessment, exam etc
The media	▪ develop a strategy for dealing with media inquiries ▪ let the media know that immediate staff are not authorised to speak to the media and that ???? (who) will deal with their enquiries ▪ Ask to respect students privacy and not to come onsite
Organisation, appropriate spiritual or religious support	▪ The coordinating team will establish the student's religion and contact the relevant group or person ▪ Discuss a role that they might play ▪ It is not always necessary to use a person with the same religious affiliation and that helping, coping, and counselling skills are common to all members of the clergy. ▪

Student body or associations	• inform them of the incident • discuss appropriate responses to enquiries from other students, community and the media
Department of Immigration	• The coordinating team will contact Immigration to inform them about the situation and to discuss any implications for Immigration.
Sponsors	• follow any specified procedures in contracts or MOU's • risk manage any long term issues
Record keeping throughout the process	• This is a requirement • The coordinating team will ensure that careful records are kept throughout the response period and placed on a local file that is created specifically for this purpose. • This file will include information provided by the student when they arrived at the Organisation, next of kin, emergency contact details and medical insurance provider. • It will also include a photo of the student. • Detailed records are particularly important in cases where there may be a coronial enquiry, media interest, and police involvement. • The records will include detailed documentation about each step taken in the response process, copies of emails and letters, records of significant interactions that occur, and contact details for significant people in the process. • A note should be placed on the student's central file to the effect that the local area has created a file for the purpose of documenting the response to the critical incident. • If student is deceased make sure records indicate this (you do not want the library chasing down a fine, etc)

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	▪ Check your policy (and privacy laws). Does any third party (i.e. police) requesting access to the student file or your notes need to produce a warrant.
Ensure all staff have enough information	▪ The coordinating team will ensure that all staff have enough information to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities in relation to the incident. ▪ In particular, the coordinating team will initiate a discussion about an appropriate response to be given to staff and students who make enquiries about the incident. ▪ This response will achieve a balance between providing accurate information and respecting confidentiality ▪ This information needs to achieve a balance between providing accurate information and respecting confidentiality. ▪ If a death is a suspected or confirmed suicide, all staff must know exactly what information will be provided to students or staff who enquire about the circumstances of the death. It must provide accurate information while still respecting confidentiality ▪ In such cases, the coordinating team may want to prepare a written statement for other staff to ensure that accurate and consistent information is provided to people who make enquiries about the incident.
Funerals or memorial services	▪ The coordinating team will ensure that it is aware of any specific religious and cultural practices related to the treatment, viewing and disposal of the dead, distinguishing if necessary between death by suicide and death by other causes. ▪ In acknowledgement of the diverse cultures and religions represented in the student population, the

	- coordinating team will ensure that students are given the opportunity to grieve in ways that are congruent with their religion or culture. - If the student dies and their body is to be cremated or buried in New Zealand/Australia, the coordinating team may arrange a funeral service in consultation with the wishes of the family and notify students and staff of the funeral. - If the death occurs in a non-teaching period, the team may, in consultation with the student's friends/family, arrange a memorial service or appropriate ceremony in teaching time to enable students and staff to attend.
Obtain copy of death certificate and related documents	- The coordinating team will obtain a copy of the death certificate and any official reports relating to the incident, eg. medical reports, police reports, coroner's report. - These documents will be necessary for repatriation and in the case of an insurance claim.
Arrange for repatriation	- The coordinating team will establish in consultation with the next of kin, who will be responsible for removal and transportation of the body. - This may be the hospital, health care fund, insurance company, the consulate or your organisation
Pack up the student's possessions	- arrange for the return of the student's possessions in consultation with the next of kin, bearing in mind that if the possessions are sent home with the body, there is no extra charge. - The coordinating team will consult with the student's family about the destination of possessions that aren't to be sent home.

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Finalise outstanding debts and accounts	▪ In consultation with the student's family or the executor of the student's estate, the coordinating team will assist in organising the payment of any outstanding bills and for the cancellation of services (bank account etc) and establish whether or not the student has a will.
Establish what costs can be met by the organisation	▪ The coordinating team will establish what costs can be met by the organisation (if any), insurance, healthcare funds etc. ▪ What costs will need to be met by the family or the consulate. ▪ Keep details of accounts and expenditure!
Discuss fee reimbursement	▪ This is one that helps if it has been discussed prior in preparation for such an event. ▪ Do you refund as per your institutions refund policy ▪ Refund last teaching period? Or Refund all fees student has paid?
Arrange condolence letters	▪ Coordinating team to ensure condolence letters are sent by appropriate staff to the family. ▪ These will include letters from the staff directly involved and the senior management i.e. the Principal, President or Vice Chancellor.
Inform the workplace community	▪ The coordinating team will prepare information about the incident for the workplace community and determine the most appropriate way in which to distribute this information.

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Arrange thank you letters	- The coordinating team will ensure that thank you letters are sent to all those who contributed to responding to the incident. - This may include staff, the consulate, the relevant chaplain and the student associations and community members.
Arrange debriefing	Further information on this follows
Follow-up support	Further information on this follows under self care
Follow-up insurance claim if relevant	- An example here is that students at some University's are covered by an insurance policy taken out by the University. - The coordinating team will need to obtain the necessary documentation and complete the required paperwork if a claim is possible. - This can often take years to finalise

Emergency and Critical Incident Response
AEIOU

The Incident Coordinator will determine the level of response and specific actions taken by considering:

- the potential and likely impact of the emergency or critical incident on the institution community (including students, parents, community members).
- The timing of the incident (time of day, upcoming events etc)
- The extent to which the incident is site specific or community orientated.
- The location of the emergency or critical incident
- Weather conditions
- the age and capabilities of the student population
- the social, cultural, lingual, economical, geographical and other community factors
- the management role that other agencies play under legislature or policy

A   Assess situation, call emergency services,
         assist those in danger

E   Evacuate students, staff and visitors
         If appropriate

I   Inform the Management

O   Organise resources

U   Undertake recovery operations

Guidelines for off-site visits

Emergencies will arise that require staff to meet with students off site.

This is particularly relevant when international students are involved as the Code of Practice stipulates that institutions of learning have a duty of care to maintain the safety and wellbeing of international students studying with them.

Terminology - Definitions for "off-site"

A controlled environment is one which is relatively safe because it is a public place such as a hospital, police station or other government agency, coffee shop, shop, or public building. An additional consideration is that in such places another organisation is responsible for public safety and therefore public liability.

An uncontrolled environment is one that is not in a public place, and where the police or other authority are not already present, such as private homes (homestays) or flats either rented or owned. However such privately owned environments are considered 'controlled' if the police or other agency are present at the time the ISA is to visit.

Risk management guidelines for off-site visits

Staff should avoid off-site visits and adopt alternative solutions wherever possible to do so without risk to the student.

For example: If concerned about a students well being, staff should explore if it is possible for the matter to be resolved over the telephone, by email, a couriered letter or by setting up an appointment for the student to come to the campus in the near future.

Whatever the circumstance with regard to off-site visits it is a useful work practice to devise a checklist (and use it) before attending such off-site meetings.

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Meeting in a controlled environment

Initial Phone Contact
Gather information - may need additional specialised knowledge
Contact specialist eg counsellor

↓

Assessment
Negotiate meeting place and transport
Contact Functional Manager/Supervisor

↓

Meeting - Controlled Environment
Only one person need attend
Follow Checklist for Controlled and Uncontrolled environment
Contact Manager/supervisor on return

↓

Follow up with student
Determine outcome/ assess any further needs

↓

Follow up with other services
Referrals, Contact other staff,
Write incident report

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Meeting in an uncontrolled environment

Initial Phone Contact
Gather information - may need additional specialised knowledge
Contact specialist eg counsellor

Assess Situation
Talk with student or responsible person. Gain consent to attend. Talk with other
Staff. Use specialised knowledge in assessment process e.g. Counsellor, Hospital.
Aim – move student to controlled environment.

Meeting -Uncontrolled Environment
Organise other Staff and Services to attend
Coordinate operations. Assess need for other services to be present.
Two staff in attendance

Negotiate and facilitate movement to and use of other services
Police, hospital, Fire Brigade, etc. Remain with student until safe and supported.
Handover to other care providers / friends when satisfied student is safe
and catered for.
Contact Functional Manager and inform of return

Follow up with student
Determine outcome/ assess any further needs

Follow up with other services
Referrals, Contact other staff, Write incident report

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Goals of Critical Incident Stress Management

- Prevent traumatic stress

- Mitigate traumatic stress

- Contain incidents and reactions to prevent further trauma to self, others, the institution and/or the wider community

- Intervene to assist recovery from traumatic stress

- Accelerate recovery whenever possible

- Restore to function

- Maintain staff and student health and welfare

Self-care tips

Normal reactions

- No one who is involved in a critical incident is untouched by it. Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.

- You may want to stay involved until you feel your work is finished.

- Often if a student is in an intensive care environment this can be a long period (10 days or more)

- You will likely try to override stress and fatigue with dedication and commitment.

- You may deny the need for rest and recovery time. Sounds familiar?

- It is common for staff to push themselves too hard during such an event; it is equally as common for the same people not to be satisfied with their part in the outcome/s of the event.

Making your involvement more effective, efficient and safe

- Pair up with another staff member so that you may monitor one another's stress.

- It is important to realise that at times you have the right 'not to cope' and may need to ask someone to do a task you may find difficult to do.

- Talk about your emotions. Feeling distressed or anxious at times does not mean you are not doing a good job.

- Limit on-duty work hours.

- You need to share the load, you may find yourself at the Airport early in the morning meeting family, coping with your 'normal workload' and other related

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issues at the office in the day and at the hospital managing student visitors and families reactions and needs in the evening

- Make work rotations from high stress to lower stress functions.

- If you sat with a student in intensive care in the last critical incident, you don't have to do it again, ask another staff member to take a turn.

- You need to negotiate your involvement.

- Organise work rotations from the event (scene/hospital) to routine assignments, as practicable.

- Make sure you know who your employee assistance provider (EAP) is and how to access them.

- Carry a diary or notepad and write details of events, people you see, how you respond, something to doodle on etc.

- It is useful to have these notes when you revisit your critical incident policy and procedures after an event.

- Look after your health.

- Drink plenty of water and eat healthy snacks like fresh fruit and whole grain breads and other energy foods.

- If it is late at night stop and have a meal.

- Take frequent, brief breaks from the scene as practicable.

- It won't be the end of the world to indulge in 'comfort foods', e.g. chocolate

- You need to acknowledge the effect such events have on your family and friends. It is a common response to feel scared or insecure.

- Participate in memorials, rituals, and use of symbols as a way to express feelings.

- At some points it is fine to acknowledge your own grief and give yourself permission to cry.

Vicarious traumatisation

- Vicarious Traumatisation (VT) is also known as secondary trauma or compassion fatigue

- It is defined as:

  "a transformation that occurs within. …….as a result of empathetic engagement with client's trauma experiences and their sequelae." (Pearlman & MacIan, 1995:558)

If you (or one of your colleagues) find themselves in this situation:

Do:
- Find someone to talk to

- Understand that the pain you feel is normal

- Start exercising and eating properly

- Get enough sleep

- Take some time off

- Keep up your interests outside of work

- Identify what's important to you

Don't
- Blame others

- Look for a new job, buy a new car, get a divorce or

- have an affair

- Fall into the habit of complaining with your colleagues

- Work harder and longer

- Self-medicate

- Neglect your own needs and interests

Debriefing

- To debrief or not to debrief?

- Is it personal choice, is it a workplace necessity

- Debriefing is a psychological and educational group process designed to facilitate recovery in work place personnel following their exposure to a critical incident.

A debriefing exercise generally follows the phases below:

1. **Initial Phase** – introductions, a discussion about confidentiality, an explanation of the purpose of the session, and a review of some other guidelines for the session.

2. **Fact Phase** - review of what actually happened during the incident (e.g., what each person heard, saw, smelled, touched, thought, and did).

3. **Feeling Phase** - review of the feelings each person had at the time of the incident and in the time since the incident

4. **Symptom Phase -** examination of the physical and psychological aftereffects of the incident.

5. **Teaching Phase** - used to remind everyone that the symptoms they are experiencing are normal responses to the abnormally stressful situations and examples covered in this workshop today.

6. **Reentry Phase -** this is the time to wrap-up, answer any questions, and develop a plan for any future action that may be needed.

RESOURCES

ISANA Critical Incident Kit
- http://www.isana.org.au/files/ISANACriticalIncidentsKit.pdf

Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity
- **Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA)**
  Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity for Operational Police
  http://www.iawp.org/diversity/pdfdoc/ANZPPARelandSpirDiverRef3rd.pdf

Critical Incident Stress
- **Resource Guide for Critical Incident Stress and Debriefing in Human Service Agencies**
  http://www.health.vic.gov.au/archive/archive2004/96ma124/downloads/96ma124.pdf

Interpreters/Multilingual resources
- **There are many resources available**
  - Check out the Ethnic Community Councils in your area.
  - Citizens Advice Offices
  - Department of Immigration and Citizenship's translating and Interpreting service (Australia)
  - Language Line (New Zealand)

  To name a few

Printed materials on dealing with grief

- Do you have access to some printed materials on dealing with grief and loss? There are some great resources available on "the Unabridged Student Counselling Virtual Pamphlet Collection" located at http://www.dr-bob.org/vpc/