

Critical Incident Management

Guidelines for best practice in prevention and response
strategies

Presenter: Desma S. Smith

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Objectives

Equip you to:

- Consider your institutions policies and procedures based on guiding principles and best practice models
- Revise or consider recommendations for revision to your institution's procedures where best practice outcomes may be served
- Enhance skill sets using trauma-informed models
- Manage incident and post-incident follow up for:
 - Self care
 - Care of affected parties
 - Institution reputation and protection

What is a critical incident?

- Let's have a go at defining a critical incident.
- One definition in context, previously put forward by ISANA:

“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.”

Defining incidents

Minor:

A minor incident or injury which causes concern but presents no external threat.

Significant:

A concerning event which has the potential to escalate to a more serious crisis and/ or impact on operations.

Behaviour which is an actual or potential risk to safety of self or others and the person does not consent to or cooperate with intervention.

Critical:

A severe crisis such as a death/fatalities and/or serious injuries. An event which is likely to cause extreme physical and /or emotional distress to staff, students and visitors. It may also be any incident reflecting on reputation and may not necessarily require an initial emergency response.

When an issue arises

Is it a critical incident?

Does it pose a threat?

**Do others think it is a critical
incident?**

Examples of critical incidents

- Critical incidents are not limited to, but could include:
 - missing students;
 - severe verbal or psychological aggression;
 - death, serious injury or any threat of these;
 - natural disaster;
 - issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse;
 - Non-life-threatening events could still qualify as critical incidents, eg: cyberbullying, sexual harassment/assault, racist verbal or physical attacks

Consider how your organization identifies a critical incident and who holds what role/s?

Prevention Preparation

WHY?

- Legislative requirements
- Resources are allocated
- Staff are trained and prepared

HOW?

- Staff professional development
- Request budget allocation and agreed use
- Use risk management tools

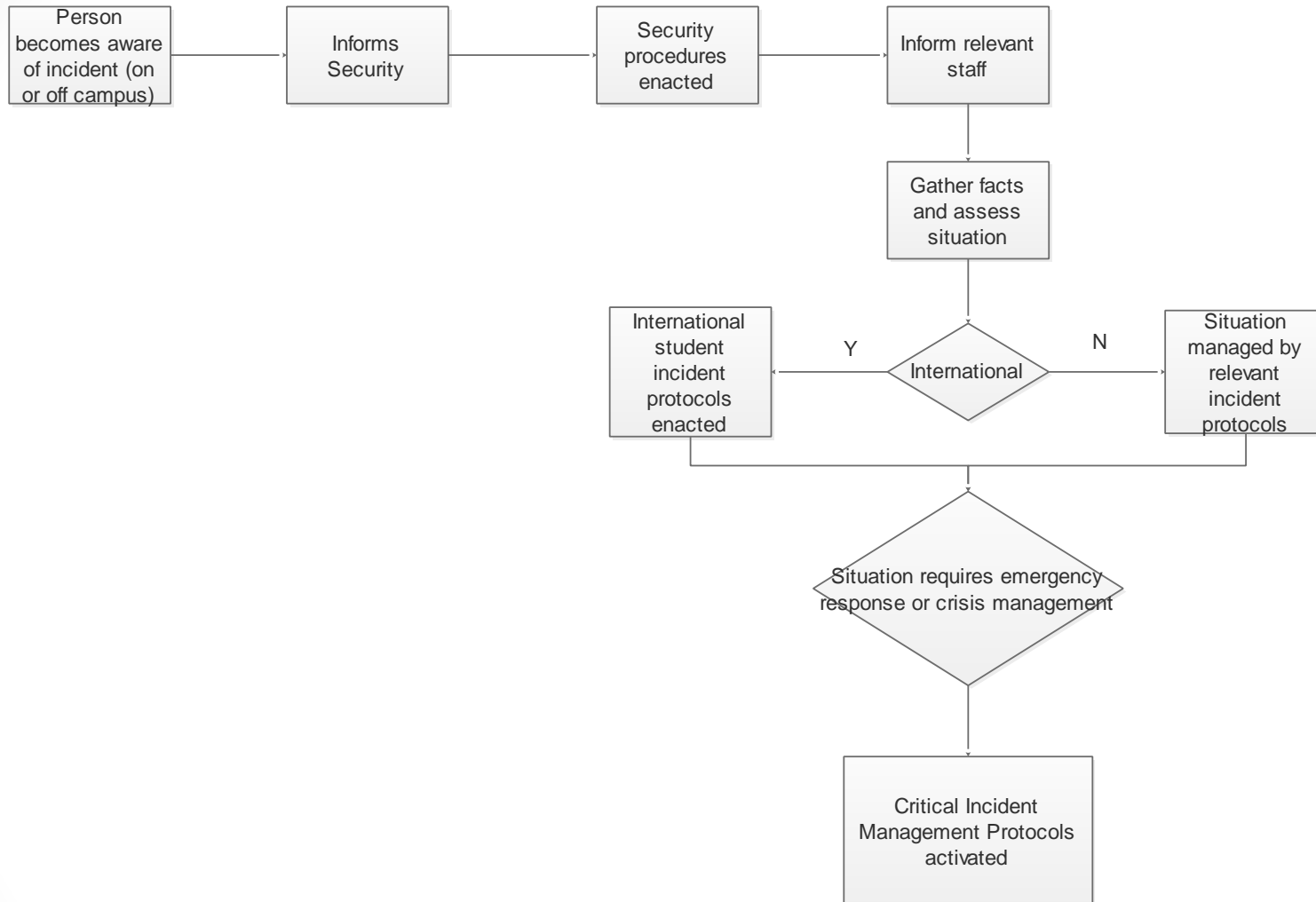
How do we deal with critical incidents?

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/institution community.
- Establish levels of order and control as appropriate in what others may perceive as chaotic situations.
- Recognise our own limitations and boundaries and those of respective roles.

Managing an incident

- Case Manager (CM)
- Initial report – IMPORTANT NOTES
- Reporting lines – Protocol
- What, when and to whom



Processes – initial report

The first report can hold critical information

Wherever possible speak directly to the first reporter

- Who is affected by it?
- Where are they now?
 - Current location and status
- CAN YOU
 - Make safe?
 - Manage any further risk?

Processes – initial report

For example:

- **Name of person reporting incident**
- **Reporting friends details as provided:** **Phone:**
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- **Reported to:** **Date:** **Time:**
- **Name of student/s:**
 Campus:
- **Student ID:** **Phone No:**

- **Nationality:**
 AusAwards/Sponsored/Scholarship?
- **Course of Study:** **Year Commenced:**
- **Emergency contact details:**

Processes – initial report

Goals of receiving a report:

- Make safe
 - Is the situation now controlled?
 - Emergency services?
 - Already with urgent/emergency support?
- Manage any further risk
 - Utilise the services at your disposal

Processes – managing response

Practical considerations

- Duty of Care
- Safety of all involved
- What is needed now
 - Is the situation now controlled?
 - Emergency services?
 - Already with urgent/emergency support?
- Manage any further risk

Utilise the services at your disposal

Processes – reporting lines

What are the immediate needs?

What are your protocols for managing the situation?

- Who do I need to inform?
- Who do I need to consult?
- Remember ALL risk management should be like a hot potato:
 - Somewhere someone needs to know

Processes – response for support

- Case Manager will have been identified during initial response protocols
- As CM –
- Is the person with professional help and treatment
- Emergency contact/s – family informed
- Consider who else is affected and do they have the support they need?

- You don't have to be everything to everyone
- Your referral base of support services is important here

Processes – response over time

- Following the guidelines
- Internal reporting procedures and documents
- Legislative obligations must be met
- Remember Duty of Care and the Reasonable Person Test

Processes – other responsibilities

- Keeping people informed
- Following up on internal processes that may have been promised to student or family
- Tidying up all records
- Review and consider if protocols or procedures need updating

Some points to consider

INCLUDE

- Communication protocols – internal and external
- Resources –internal and external for a range of situations
- Community support
- Religious and Spiritual support
- Interpreting services
- Overseas Student Health Cover providers' details
- Emergency accommodation providers

THINK ABOUT

- Who should be the first point of contact?
- Will nominated staff be compensated for being on-call?
- Will staff be supported with appropriate resources?
- Who are the main staff that need to know of incidents in the first instance?
- What will be your protocols for managing social media chatter?

Self-care tips

Normal Reactions

- No one is untouched.
- You may want to stay involved until you feel your work is finished.
- You will likely try to override stress and fatigue.
- You may deny the need for rest and recovery time.
- Staff push themselves too hard and they tend to be dissatisfied with their part in the outcomes of the event.

Make your involvement more effective, efficient, and safe

How?

- You have the right not to cope.
- You need to share the load.
- Talk about your emotions.
- Organise work rotations.
- Look after your health.

Vicarious traumatisatisation

- Do:
 - Find someone to talk to.
 - Get enough sleep.
 - Take time out.
- Don't:
 - Blame others.
 - Look for a new job.
 - Work harder and longer.

Debriefing

- Never force staff to participate in de-briefing
- Compulsory de-briefing not best practice
- Voluntary participation in group session to share psychological education
- Always follow up with staff post-incident
- But do be aware that any debriefing conversation/s may be valuable in highlighting potential process improvements

Resources

[Religious and Spiritual Diversity Guide for Operational Police](#), Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency

[Contact Points](#), Enabling international students during critical incidents.

[Lived Experience Toolkit](#) (LET) | Mental Health Support for International Students