

A1 CRITICAL INCIDENT

Date Implemented	January 2010
Author	Jo McCarthy / Damien Keel
Approved By	School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date Reviewed	October 2009
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal
Review Date	March 2012 and after any critical incident
References	

BASIC BELIEFS

Yarrowonga College P-12 may become involved directly or indirectly in a tragic or traumatic event involving loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. This may occur inside or outside the school environment and may involve staff, students or those close to them. The College will work with students, staff and parents to provide support and counselling for those who need it, and to assist families through these difficult times.

AIMS

- To support staff, students, parents and families in dealing with a traumatic or critical incident in which the school is involved.
- To ensure that communication is clear, accurate and timely, and includes all required personnel.
- To continue to operate as normally as possible, allowing some flexibility within programs to cater for individual needs.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases. However the following 4 principles must be followed: -

- * Provision of clear and accurate information.
- * Description of action to be followed.
- * Provision of help for all affected.
- * Maintenance of normal school program (as is practical and appropriate)

1. The Principal will obtain accurate information and deal only with substantiated facts.
2. As soon as possible the Principal or Assistant Principal will inform staff, especially those most directly involved, and the School Council president. Close friends and family will be informed individually. Questions and discussion will be allowed as they arise and rumours dispelled.
3. A skilled Support Team will be appointed to assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, Welfare Team members, counsellors, external DEECD personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. The names and roles of Support Team members will be distributed to staff, students and families.
4. The community will be provided with information by the Principal as soon as possible regarding what has happened, and the support processes offered by the College.
5. The Principal and/or School Council president will deal with all media requirements, in consultation with the DEECD Media Unit. Any approaches to the College by members of the media will be directed to the Principal ONLY.
6. An open line of contact will be established with the family or families directly involved by the Support Team.

7. The Support Team will establish out of school hours contact if necessary. Appropriate support staff with contact numbers will be provided to those affected by the incident and in need of additional out of hours support.
8. The College will continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service. This will be done by the Principal or Principal nominee.
9. The Support Team will try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends.
10. The College will ensure that counseling help is available. The DEECD will be contacted for support 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, will be reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on ph: **(03) 9589 6266**
11. The College will continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
12. The Principal or Assistant Principal will call students together as soon as possible and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
13. Counseling will be offered to all students and this process managed by the Support Team. Suitable spaces will be made available in which this can take place. The timetable will be modified as necessary and other arrangements made so that people are free to make use of available help.
14. Class teachers may be the person to whom students first turn for help. In this case class teachers will refer the student to the Support Team for initial contact and to organize appropriate counseling or support
15. Students wishing to attend funerals will be encouraged to do so in the company of their parents. A meaningful program will be provided for those not actually attending the service.
16. The College will continue to operate as normally as possible but will acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the school community. The College will continue to inform staff and ensure that they are flexible with those in need of help. Staff will be made 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 and that the anniversary may also be a difficult time.
17. The College will continue to maintain links with the family or families directly involved. The College will consider they or the broader school community, set up a memorial (e.g. a garden, plaque, or a photo displayed prominently in the school).
18. The College will continue to monitor, be sensitive to, and respond to staff and students' needs over a period of time.
19. The College will review this process after any significant incident.