

TRAUMATIC INCIDENT

PROCEDURE

**RATIONALE**

A traumatic incident is a stressful experience, which often occurs suddenly and unexpectedly. The impact of death or traumatic incidents may trigger intense feelings of shock, guilt, denial, anger and grief, These situations can cause students and the community to experience strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the time the situation arises or later. The school needs to take proactive measures to protect students and staff.

**Traumatic Incidents stages: -**

* + - Pre-impact - time prior to impact. There is usually no warning
    - Impact - the “bad bits” are happening
    - Post-impact - the “bad bits” have stopped happening but we do not know the story
    - Recovery - it is over, we know what happened, it is time to resume normal life while accepting/dealing with the Traumatic Incident.

**PURPOSE**

1. To identify/recognise the risk of specific trauma situations occurring which may involve school staff, students and the community
2. To reduce the likelihood of risk and protect the safety of everyone in the school community and the reputation of the school.
3. To enable a quick, effective response to provide appropriate support to meet the needs of students and staff in the event of a traumatic incident.
4. To have clear guidelines and procedures in place for quickly and effectively managing those involved or affected by the trauma incident.
5. To establish procedures for managing emotional reactions resulting from traumatic incident to enable the school and individuals to cope with the stress and accelerate recovery.

**GUIDELINES**

1. In the event of a major disaster the procedures to be followed are as outlined in School Response Plans i.e.: Emergency Procedures, Pandemic Plan and Traumatic Incident Action Plan.
2. Trauma Management Procedures/Traumatic Incident Action Plan should be reviewed annually along with the Emergency Procedures and Pandemic Plan. Possible crisis situations are identified that would activate these trauma management procedures.
3. Trauma Management procedures are made known to all BOT and staff in readiness to manage the Traumatic Incident Plan.
4. The school and any nearby education facilities (primary, secondary & kindergartens) will provide reciprocal support as needed in the event of an emergency.
5. Copies of procedures are shared with all new staff and displayed with School Response Plans around the school.
6. The level/extent of the response is in accordance with the nature/scope of the crisis or traumatic incident.
7. A copy of Group Special Education “Resource Manual - Traumatic Incident Team” is available for use with trauma situations
8. Procedures for managing the re-establishment of the school both educationally and structurally after a major disaster/trauma are also available.
9. Ownership and Inclusion are critical for the recovery process. The traumatic incident is “owned” by those most closely involved with it (geographic and emotional distance). It is important to include all who “own” the incident in the restoration and recovery process.
10. Professionals from outside the school and/or other specific community members may be called in to help as required.

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## TRAUMATIC INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN & MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

# Phase 1

* Inform the Principal
* Principal calls initial meeting of staff/BOT members who are or will be closely involved
* Verify facts of the circumstance/situation
* Check individual responsibilities
* Determine immediate reactions/arrangements – refer to GSE “Guidelines to assist Management of Traumatic Incidents”
* If required establish group to co-ordinate support and arrangements
* If appropriate call in help from other professionals and agencies

# Phase 2:

* Inform the BOT
* Inform the staff
* Inform other schools that may be affected
* Inform parents at level appropriate to the circumstance/trauma
* Inform students at level appropriate to the circumstance/trauma
* Inform spouses or families of staff members
* Use outside agencies as appropriate to aid recovery
* Board to notify MOE and/or STA

**Phase 3:**

* Principal/BOT Chair visits families
* Staff/BOT ensure - a place is available at school for students

- a place is established for parents coming in

* relief teachers available as necessary
* identification of close friends, siblings, staff who may have close associations either in/out of school
* home contact with above families
* establish a suitable contact person within the school to liaise with family/ies, students, staff

**Phase 4:**

* Allow time for staff/friends to adjust to situation
* Normal schooling continues for all that are marginally affected
* Students and staff given opportunity to participate in bereavement/recovery process

**Phase 5:**

* Principal/BOT Chairperson acknowledges the event to the school at appropriate time
* On-going support arranged/conveyed to family, students, staff affected
* If event happens in the weekend – phone Principal or Board Chairperson, staff informed before coming in to school on Monday
* Debriefing/support arranged for key people involved. Outside support as required

**Other agencies:**

* Victim Support – Police Department
* Special Education Service - GSE
* Civil Defence
* Community Counseling Services
* Church and Youth Groups

**Examples of Possible Traumatic Incidents:**

* School buildings are damaged/destroyed by fire, flood, earthquakes
* Serious injury to student or staff member or prominent community member
* Suicide, death, murder of staff member or student(s)
* Students witness serious injury or death
* Physical, sexual, verbal abuse of student or staff member
* Major vandalism
* Major incident on a school excursion
* Unfavourable Media attention
* Public allegations of sexual assault or physical violence
* Community disaster eg: tsunami, flood, earthquake

**Ongoing Traumatic Incident Considerations:**

* Community disaster eg: tsunami, flood, earthquake
* When teachers take students off-site Risk Analysis Management forms are prepared and approved by Principal/AP at least week prior to trip
* Maintain/regularly review Traumatic Incident folder containing Response Plans, lists of likely resources, key personnel, templates for event logs, GSE “Resource Manual - Traumatic Incident Team”.
* Briefing and rehearsing all staff in plans, procedures, structure and function of Traumatic Incident Response Team
* Identifying key personnel
* Clarifying modes communication best to use
* Logging of events and information
* Practice run annually
* How each Traumatic Incident is debriefed. Use of outside experts to do this where possible
* Providing counselors (eg: GSE)
* Memorial service at school, messages to the family
* Training for staff
* More staff on duty at gates/in playground

**Composition of Traumatic Incident Response Team:**

* Principal/DP - acts as team leader
* Board Chairperson/BOT Representative
* Office Manager – handles the phone
* Class teachers (eg: of the child involved)
* Other professionals as appropriate eg: Public Health Nurse, RTLB

**SCHOOL SPECIFIC STRATEGY for SUDDEN DEATH**

1 A well planned system, involving a crisis management team must be able to be activated should a sudden death occur.

2 The staff member who first hears of any event contacts the Principal (or if not available a deputy principal).

3 The Principal or deputy principal immediately notifies the crisis team. This team includes: Principal and Deputy Principal, Board Chairperson (or delegate), Class Teacher (as appropriate).

4 The crisis team meets as soon as possible as a group in the Principal’s office to discuss the issue. The OM is briefed by the Principal on how to deal with phone or counter enquiries.

5 The Principal verifies that information received is accurate. In consultation with family, the Principal determines what information is to be shared with the school. One or more members of the crisis team delegated to liaise with family regarding arrangements.

6 **Emergency Group Special Education Trauma team notified by Principal – 0800 848 326.**

7 OM activates Phone Tree to inform all staff as soon as possible. Staff meetings are called to explain the situation, respond to questions and to plan strategies for the day.

8 **All media statements are made by the Principal (or Chairperson) only.** No other staff member responds and pupils are reminded that they do not speak with the media to prevent inaccuracies or sensationalism out of respect for the family.

9 After discussion at staff meeting a written statement is prepared for teachers to brief students in their classes.

10 School activities continue as normally as possible. This gives the students some form of security in a time of shock.

11 Other schools that may have siblings of the deceased are contacted to co-ordinate information and support, (after consultation with the family).

12 Best friends identified and supported individually.

13 Outside counsellors made available to talk with staff members and students.

14 Teaching staff kept informed of all updates in the situation. Many questions will be asked of them by the students and it is important that they are able to supply accurate information. Written updates provided to ensure accuracy.

15 More intensive work done with the deceased class by Group Special Education Service Emergency Trauma Team.

16 Students are given the opportunity to send messages to the family with the family’s consent. This is done individually or as a class.

17 When appropriate students are given the opportunity to attend the funeral and may be invited to have an input.

18 If the funeral is at a church, a member of that church is invited to explain to students what will happen at the service.

19 At a later date a memorial service may be held within the school for the deceased, (in conjunction with the family).

**Review Responsibility:**

***Board Chairperson, Board H&S Rep., Staff Board Rep, H&S Co-ordinator, OM, DP & Principal***

**Date Confirmed: 14 February 2017**

**Principal: …………………………………………………………..**