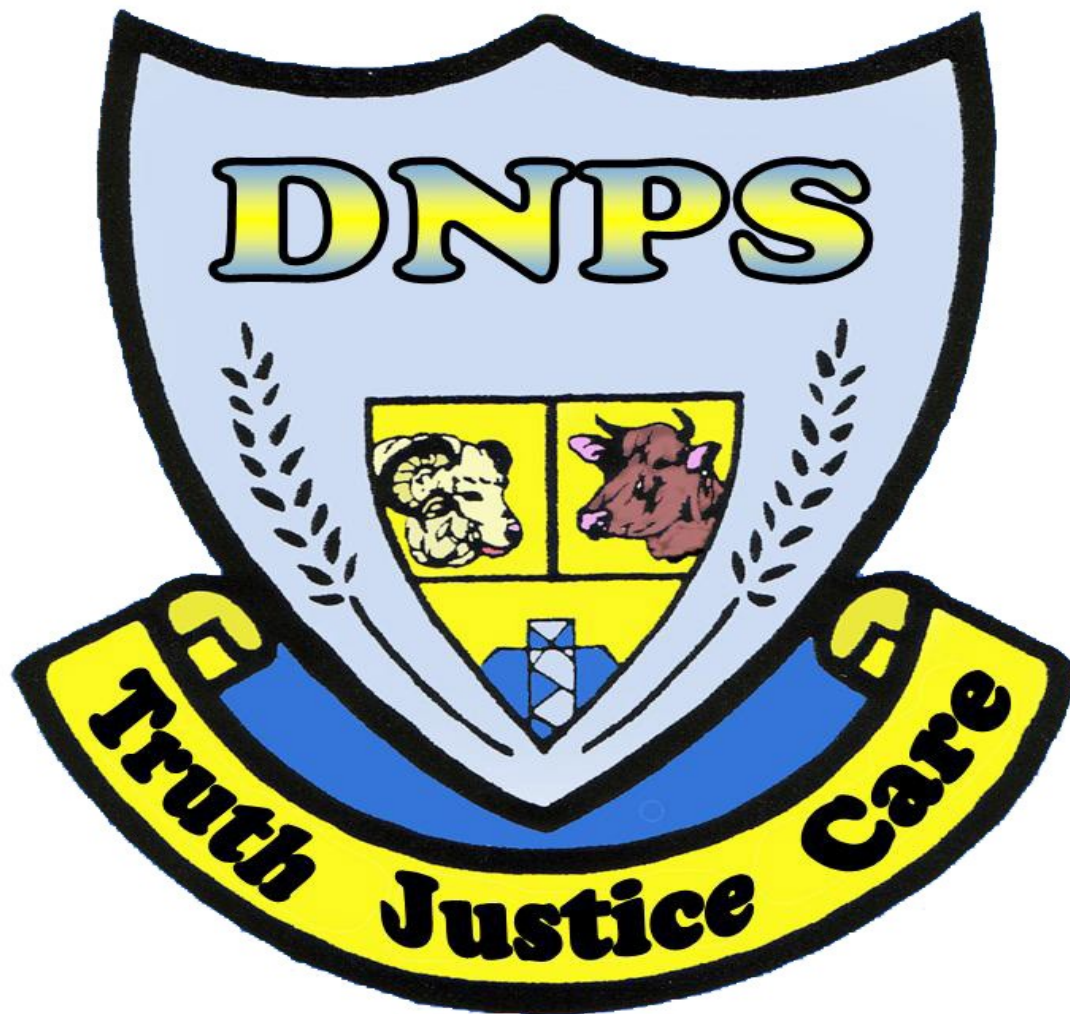


Deniliquin North Public School



Critical Incidents

**DENILQUIN NORTH PUBLIC
SCHOOL
CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY 2007**

Rationale

Schools frequently encounter situations which require staff and students to deal with difficult situations. For instance the serious illness, or death of someone close to a member of staff or a student, may have a ripple effect on those nearby. Under normal conditions the school is able to manage these kinds of difficulties by offering support and comfort to affected individuals.

There are situations where an incident will have a strong impact across the school community. The incident may occur within or outside the school environment. These critical incidents have the potential to create considerable trauma, grief and confusion and require carefully planned procedures and strategies to help alleviate emotional turmoil and to assist both staff and students return to normality as quickly as possible.

This policy is planned to cover incidents which are likely to have a direct effect on students, parents and staff. The purpose of such action is to assure the community at large that a state of equilibrium has been re-established and all those involved in or affected by, the incidents are being supported.

Critical Incident Policy

This policy will be reviewed each year and duties delegated.

The Principal will be responsible for determining the severity of the incident; notifying emergency services, parents, etc; requesting support services and delegating responsibility for procedural management.

The six major procedures to be implemented in instances of a critical incident are:-

1. Notification
2. Information Gathering
3. Information Sharing
4. Support
5. Debriefing
6. Review

The school's response to different incidents will vary depending on the nature and severity of the particular incident. However, the following management plan should be adopted as a general guideline.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS PROCEDURES

TRAUMA RESPONSE:

Immediate Action:

- Attend to the injured immediately—they are the major priority
- Implement school Critical Incidents Policy (& emergency policy)
- Contact school Personnel who are trained in first aid
- Contact emergency services required.
- Evacuate, Lockdown, Lockout if necessary
- Set up a recovery room if necessary
- Remain calm, alert and observant—effective leadership is crucial
- Crowd control if necessary

NOTIFICATION:

Immediately Notify:

- District Director
- Provide ADG with written statement. What has happened. To whom. Where. Current situation.
- Support team and/or alternatively local counsellor
- Contact families where relevant
- Local services

DOCUMENTATION:

Critical Incident Reports

- When in any doubt about a situation, regard it as a Critical Incident
- Complete the attached Critical incident form and fax it the District Director.

TRAUMA MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Make no criticism, implied or otherwise, during the implementation of these procedures.

1. Obtain factual information by identifying and utilising all information sources

- Students
- Staff
- Family
- Witnesses
- Police etc

NB: NO RUMOURS can be tolerated at any stage. Use only facts and if there are rumours use the facts to control them.

2. Inform all staff as soon as possible

- Call Staff together
- Give staff all factual details of the incident
- Outline proposed management plan, including media response
- Outline proposed sources of personal support for staff/students
- At the end of the day have a full staff update and plan ongoing meeting as required.

3.. **Inform ALL Students**

- Provide accurate information in small group situations as soon as possible
- Call K—6 Assembly if need be
- Principal & Staff to determine how much and what information to be distributed to media and students.

4. **Identify “Risk” (of trauma) students and staff**

- Those directly exposed to trauma (i.e. those exposed to the full intensity of trauma).
- Relatives and friends (I.e. those grieving, families, staff, friends).
- Helpers and recovery Personnel (i.e. staff, DOCS, administration/cleaning staff etc).
- Cater for the individual needs of these people. This may include arranging transport home and casual staff employment.
- Return to normality as soon as possible.

5. **Organise Debriefing for staff and students**

- Assess whether debriefing by the Support team is necessary or whether it can be handled internally, eg. Vandalism could be handled locally or under Support team instructions.
- Isolate an area for debriefing and allocate a time suitable for everyone concerned
- Provide relief and worry about the bill later.
- Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating a telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.

6. **Organise Support Personnel**

Principal will organise the support personnel comprising:

- Support team
- District Director
- Casual teachers
- Community Health Team
- Welfare Committee e.g. peer support
- Support Student Services

Provide support personnel with:

- All known facts
- Work areas
- Lines of communication e.g. ample access to fax, telephones
- Refreshments e.g. drinks, food

7. **Managing the Media**

- Organise a press conference as soon as possible
- Prepare a brief factual statement. No rumours. (See attached sheets)
- Inform all staff about what the media has been told.

TRAUMA RECOVERY PROCEDURES

1. **Assess ongoing individual needs of staff, students and school community**
 - Identify behavioural changes
 - Encourage parents to discuss student welfare
 - Monitor all hospitalised staff/students
 - Monitor the caregivers
 - Counselling will be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the incident or individual involved.
2. **Meeting ongoing individual needs of students, staff and helpers**
 - Restore normal functioning
 - Accommodate ongoing class discussion if and where it arises.
3. **Other Issues**
 - Allow attendance at funerals (with parents' consent)
 - Demonstrate school's concern by offering cards and flowers
 - A memorial service may be appropriate
 - Be alert for influences on students e.g. "copy cat" effort at suicide
 - Arrange Workers' compensation forms for any staff traumatised. It may be required in the future.
4. **Evaluation**
 - Evaluate all procedures. Follow up any modifications judged necessary
 - Adjust the plan accordingly
 - Discuss areas of concern with those involved

MEDIA RESPONSE PLAN FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

STEP 1: Take the call: Channel all media inquiries through one person

STEP 2: Tell the person to call back in a set period of time (no longer than about an hour) District Office 58983700 or 131536.

STEP 3: Contact Communications & Marketing Directorate (02) 95618400

STEP 4: Prepare a response either:

(a) verbal, in point form

(b) a prepared statement

STEP 5: Ask the reporter informally:

(1) Who they have spoken to already

(2) What they know about the story

(3) What they want from you

STEP 6: Choose a desirable setting

STEP 7: Keep it brief

STEP 8: Speak to your audience and avoid jargon

STEP 9: Inform all staff about what has been said to the media.

PREPARING A STATEMENT FOR THE MEDIA

The statement should contain:

- 1) **THE FACTS:** Who, what, why, where, when and how
- 2) **HOW THE INCIDENT IS BEING DEALT WITH BY THE SCHOOL:**
Counselling, support services, alteration of schedules, the implementation of programs to counter the Incident.
- 3) **MENTION OF ANY HEROIC ACTIVITY BY STUDENTS OR STAFF**
- 4) **ANY MESSAGE YOU NEED TO CONVEY TO PARENTS OR THE COMMUNITY**
For example: the school will be closed for 3 days, parents come and pick up children, etc.
- 5) **A REASSURING STATEMENT:**

Examples:

- A) The school has been deeply shocked by this incident, but while it has temporarily interfered with school activities, we are making every effort to return things to normal and to help our students to overcome this tragedy.
- B) While this incident has saddened all of us, the staff and myself have acted quickly in ensuring our students are receiving the best possible care and help. We are making sure that school activities will return to normal as quickly as possible.
- C) This incident has upset the whole school, but we have brought in expert help for the students and staff affected by this tragedy, and the long term effects of this incident will be minimised.
- D) Debriefing students and Staff.

1. NOTIFICATION

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Inform Principal</p> <p>Inform District Office</p> <p>Contact School Counsellor</p>	<p>Brief verbal outline of the current situation</p> <p>Detailed statement outlining the incident, School's response and potentially problematic issues.</p>	<p>Staff parents community members.</p>

2. INFORMATION GATHERING

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Establish a school communication centre</p> <p>Obtain accurate information from the appropriate sources.</p> <p>Decide on appropriate information release.</p>	<p>A phone line to be kept open</p> <p>Contact key sources to establish facts e.g. family, hospital, police witnesses.</p> <p>Make key notes on the information received. Note informants information including phone number, address and position in the organisation.</p> <p>Cross-check to guarantee information accuracy.</p>	<p>Principal delegated Staff Member.</p>

3. INFORMATION SHARING

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Staff</p> <p>Inform all staff of basic details as soon as possible -no rumours can be tolerated at any stage. Use only facts.</p>	<p>1. Meeting of Staff</p> <p>Remind Staff:</p> <p>A. Of the need for strict confidentiality and to refrain from comment about the incident.</p> <p>B. That inquiries directed to the staff must be re-directed to the Principal/delegated staff member, telling inquirers that the principal has the necessary details.</p> <p>Staff are to identify (for monitoring) students most likely to be affected (those who travel on the same bus, live nearby, play together, etc)</p>	<p>Principal or delegated staff member.</p>
<p>2. Students</p> <p>Inform students of the details via a prepared statement (Must be within one session even if students remain past the usual lesson break) Students need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A clear statement of what has happened, who will be in the school, what will happen (next 48 hours) & how information will be provided. ● Their comfort level and sense of safety restored. ● To find answers to their questions about the death or incident. ● To know what is happening to them and to adults. 	<p>2. Informing Students.</p> <p>Prepare a written statement of the basic facts so that all information is consistent. To be conveyed in a calm manner designed to enable full understanding.</p> <p>Students should be told in small groups (classes). One staff member to deliver the reading and another noting the reactions of students who may need particular monitoring.</p> <p>Draft a notice for students to take home the same day with clear accurate information about the incident. To be signed by the school principal.</p>	<p>Principal or delegated staff member.</p>

3. INFORMATION SHARING (CONT'D)

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>3. Media</p> <p>Establish a media spokesperson. Principal or delegated staff member will prepare a simple but comprehensive statement for media presentation.</p>	<p>3. Responding to Media Request</p> <p>Each situation will require its own contingency plan. Media statements should only be made by the Principal or delegated staff member.</p> <p>All statements should give an accurate outline of the situation as it is known. Emphasise that all parties are safe and under care. If this is not true, or all factors are not known, defer the interview/release until a later time. Never respond with “no comment”.</p> <p>Arrange for a media conference at a specific time and place.</p> <p>Provide all media contacts with a common written statement. This allows all information gathering action to be completed without undue pressure.</p>	<p>Principal or delegated staff member.</p>
<p>4. Community</p> <p>Parents and the wider community should be advised with a brief statement as soon as practicable.</p>	<p>4. Contacting the community</p> <p>Reassure the community of the school’s planned response and its ability to support all participants, witnesses or peer contacts. The community also needs to know that there will be an ongoing monitoring of the situation.</p>	<p>Principal or delegated staff member.</p>

4. SUPPORT

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Organise support personnel</p> <p>Support Team, Director of Schools/Community Health Team/Welfare Committee</p>	<p>(Do not assume all participants will require counselling)</p> <p>Delegated Staff member to establish contact with counsellors advising that their services may be needed.</p> <p>Counsellors briefed by delegated staff who ensure the earliest possible contact between the counsellor and the person/s requiring support.</p> <p>The delegated person will also act as the co-ordinator and will remain in contact with both parties.</p> <p>Ensure support provision is available for staff and students.</p> <p>Staff should monitor the situation unobtrusively. Signs of grieving or delayed trauma to be responded to in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Ensure that staff, parents and students are aware that help and counselling are available if the need arises.</p> <p>Participants, witnesses or peer contacts must be free to talk about the incident if they take the initiative.</p> <p>As far as possible, the daily routines of the school should be maintained.</p>	<p>Chairperson of the school welfare committee or other delegated staff.</p>

5. DEBRIEFING

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
Arrange for debriefing for staff and students within 72 hours.	<p>Check the state of health of key participants and convey to those interested.</p> <p>Invite all staff to attend debriefing meeting (provide relief if necessary) (This is an opportunity to clarify and finalise the situation after initial reactions have been made and feelings expressed. A time to fully re-establish normal school routines if this has not already happened).</p>	Principal and counsellors.

6. REVIEW

ACTION	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITY
A review is made of the school's response to the incident.	<p>Convene a small group of objective analysts to review the school's response.</p> <p>Review group will consider: Whether the incident could have been avoided? The school response. Responses which could be improved? What the long term effects are likely to be. Changes which need to be implemented. Possible future reactions likely to emerge from the trauma e.g. pending court case, coronial enquiry, anniversary of event.</p> <p>Staff will be alerted to the subsequent reactions likely to accompany such events.</p>	Principal or delegated staff member.

CRITICAL INCIDENT CHECKLIST

BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

1. Update Policy and Delegation

Review Policy

Delegate Duties

FOLLOWING INCIDENT

1. Alert

- Principal
- Director
- District Office
- School Counsellor

2. Information Gathering

- Communication Centre
- Key Source

- Phone Line Clear
- Family
- Police
- Hospital
- Witnesses

3. Information Sharing

- Staff
- Students
- Media
- Community

4. Support

- Those in need

- Students
- Staff
- Parents

5. Debrief

6. Review

Incident Briefing

Critical

Violent

Please Contact (I) District Superintendant by fax 0358815851 or phone 0358983700 within 1½ hours of occurrence of incident.

In accordance with Head Office memo DG 94/011 to Principals, under General Principles, “Violent behaviour must be dealt with swiftly and will result in immediate suspension.”

School _____ **Code** _____

Principal _____ **Phone:** _____

Time of Incident _____

Date of Incident _____ **Initial Report** **or Follow up report**

<p>Tick relevant box(es). The incident involved:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable behaviour involving violence between student/student, student/teacher, parent/student, parent/teacher.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Death of staff or student—provide contact details of next of kin.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Serious injury to staff or student—state nature of medical attention.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Major disruption to school routine—include likely duration of disruption.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Media—describe extent of coverage or likely coverage.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Police or other outside agencies—state action taken or likely to be taken by police.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Intruders—include any relationship to school.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Weapons—describe weapons and methods of use.</p>
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Description of Incident: (including the name, sex and year of students involved). Please print or type.

Action Taken:

Suspension Data				
Name	DOB	SEX	YEAR	DURATION

1. DO listen, and hear what is being said.
2. DO acknowledge that each griever's style of grieving will be unique.
3. DO remember that nobody has to justify their feelings.
4. DO realise the bereaved has suffered a loss.
5. DON'T prevent the bereaved from expressing their guilt or anger if they need to.
6. DO help the bereaved to realise the deceased 'is not coming home'.
7. DO allow the griever time to grieve.
8. DO allow the griever to have real memories of a real relationship with the deceased.
9. DON'T stifle the grieving person's desire to talk about the deceased.
10. DO encourage the grieving person's desire to talk about the deceased.
11. DO allow children to share in the grief process with the adults.
12. DO remember that many who give support immediately after a death do not always continue to give support.
13. DO recognise the intensity of grief that will be experienced at certain significant times.
14. DON'T be turned off by repetitive knockbacks to your efforts to assist.
15. DO encourage those who have a common grief to support one another if they can.
16. DO encourage the griever to live and love again when they are ready to do this.

Policy revised and endorsed by Principal and Staff