

CRITICAL INCIDENT & CHILD SAFETY RESPONSE POLICY



Relevant to:	All staff, all students
Developed by:	Critical Incident Management Team
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Date for Review:	Jun28
Approved:	School Board Jun26
Related Documents:	WHS Policy, Mandatory Reporting and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying & Discrimination Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Emergency Management Plan, Death of a Child Policy and Procedure, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan
CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM	Principal, Business Manager, Senior staff member, Board Chair

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the principles adopted by Tamar Valley Steiner School for guiding the prevention, management and recovery processes associated with critical incidents occurring in the school community.

RATIONALE

Critical incidents can impact considerably on the psychological well-being of students, teachers, families and visitors causing adverse effects in areas such as learning, occupational performance and family interactions. Tamar Valley Steiner School supports the school community, to reduce the traumatic effects of crisis situations both in the short and longer terms. Accordingly, we shall ensure that adequate and appropriate measures are in place to manage the response to traumatic events.

1. DEFINITION

A critical incident is any actual or threatened event that:

- causes or has the potential to cause death, serious injury, illness or trauma;
- significantly disrupts school operations;
- presents a serious risk to students, staff, volunteers or visitors;
- attracts significant public, regulatory or media attention; or
- requires activation of emergency, recovery or business continuity arrangements.

2. IDENTIFICATION

An incident is identified as critical if it meets any of the criteria above.

There are levels of critical incident that require a different response, these are categorised as follows:

Level	Example
Low	Serious non-fatal injury from accident
Medium	Serious behavioural incident or flare up with chronic series of incidents
High	Hospitalisation, assault, missing child
Extreme	Death, suicide, major disaster, serious abuse allegation

Examples of critical incidents are:

- 2.1 Death of a staff member or student
- 2.2 Life-threatening injury or medical emergency
- 2.3 Fires, explosions or natural disasters
- 2.4 Major property damage or onsite hazard
- 2.5 Intruder or violent individual on site
- 2.6 Lost child
- 2.7 Students or staff taken hostage or kidnapped
- 2.8 Students or staff witnessing distressing events
- 2.9 Violence between students or assault of a teacher or student
- 2.10 Allegation of sexual assault involving a member of the school community
- 2.11 Student or staff suicide or attempted suicide
- 2.12 Bomb threats
- 2.13 Significant public interest, social media activity or media attention that impacts on members of the school community or the school's reputation or operations.
- 2.14 Outbreak of a communicable disease
- 2.15 Significant cyber security incident, data breach or technology outage impacting student safety, welfare or school operations.

3. CHILD SAFETY AND REPORTABLE CONDUCT

Where a critical incident involves:

- child abuse
- grooming
- sexual misconduct
- sexual offences
- significant neglect
- physical violence against a child
- causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- failure to report child abuse

the matter must also be managed in accordance with the school's Child and Youth Safe Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy and Reportable Conduct Procedures.

Where required under the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023, the Head of Entity (Principal or delegate) must notify the Independent Regulator within the prescribed timeframe and cooperate with any investigation

4. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The Tamar Valley Steiner School Critical Incident Management Team consists of:

Principal, Business Manager, Senior staff member and Board Chair.

The hierarchy or responsibility / accountability in the team for managing the incident at the time and place it is happening is:

- Principal
- Business Manager
- Senior staff member
- Board Chair

The Critical Incident Management Team are in charge of managing a critical incident and in the event of a critical incident will take responsibility for the following:

- 4.1 Verify all information from reliable sources
- 4.2 Ensure immediate safety and initiate evacuation/emergency procedures
- 4.3 Convene immediately to activate the Critical Incident Response Plan
- 4.4 Allocate roles and manage the operational response
- 4.5 Prepare factual internal and external communication
- 4.6 Ensure only the Principal or authorised spokesperson communicates with media
- 4.7 Ensure emergency contact numbers and procedures are accessible
- 4.8 Document all decisions, actions and communications
- 4.9 Initiate regulatory reporting requirements (see Section 12)\

Members of the Critical Incident Management Team will undertake annual training or scenario-based exercises covering:

- emergency response;
- child safety obligations;
- mandatory reporting;
- reportable conduct requirements;
- media management;
- psychosocial risk management; and
- parent reunification procedures.

5. PREVENTION & PREPAREDNESS

Key focus areas

1. **Risk assessment and mitigation** – all risk assessments will be developed as per our Risk assessment procedure and identify and address hazards that may result in a critical incident, and also address the risk of the impact of critical incidents outside our control (e.g. witnessing serious injury to an unrelated party)
2. **Preparedness** – staff will undertake planning, coordination, training and regular communication to prevent and be prepared for critical incidents.

Specific procedures include:

- Formation of a critical incident management team, which liaises with committees within the school, including WHS, and with emergency and community agencies, assists towards rectifying risks, develops a management plan, familiarises staff with the plan
- Ensures staff are aware of Duty of Care and WHS issues, have access to Child and Youth Safe policies and can address bullying and other anti-social behaviours effectively
- The school develops a culture of addressing emotional overload, at-risk behaviour and safety issues
- Assessing vulnerabilities particular to this school, such as a bushfire or pedestrian accident
- Developing strategies to address vulnerabilities
- Keeping confidentiality
- Maintaining professional boundaries and an adult role in dealings with students
- Challenging dangerous behaviours

- Promoting resilience
- Establishing links with support agencies when necessary

5 RESPONSE PROCEDURE

This procedure is to be followed by the staff who are the first aware that a critical incident has occurred.

For the Death of a Child, follow the Death of a Child Policy and Procedure.

- 5.1 Identify the incident. (Always consider your own safety first. Do not put yourself in any dangerous and/or threatening situations that compromise your own safety).
- 5.2 Respond to the incident. Provide first aid if necessary and alert a member of your critical management team (CMT)
- 5.3 Follow direction of the CMT, if emergency is time critical, call all necessary emergency responders.
- 5.4 Record or preserve evidence that may be needed by emergency services, e.g. photo of blood for paramedics, minimise interference with 'scene' other than to save life, provide first aid, protect safety or prevent further injury/damage (also require for Worksafe)
- 5.5 Evacuate as per the Emergency Management Plan (if necessary)
- 5.6 CMT will then take over the situation and allocate roles and responsibilities and communicate to staff relevant information.
- 5.7 Record decisions and actions regarding the critical incident
- 5.8 Involved staff to write a critical incident report and debrief with member/s of the CMT

Please Note. The staff member witnessing the incident or receiving the news immediately contacts a member of the Critical Incident Management Team (details of the team are located in the table at the beginning of the policy).

6 RECORDING

Once the immediate emergency situation has concluded, details of the critical incident need to be recorded. The following details need to be included. The form should be completed collaboratively between any staff who notified the Critical Incident Management Team and members of that team.

Key details to be reported include:

- Time, location and nature of the incident, e.g. threat, accident, death or injury
- Names and positions of person/s involved, e.g. Teacher or Class 5 students
- Current location of the student/staff member
- Whether emergency services have been called
- Whether an interpreter is required.

The detail requested above are to be documented for further reference.

The critical Incident management team will review the record as part of the critical incident recovery and seek for further information about the incident if needed.

The record should be kept strictly confidential. The CMT will determine when and how to share details with other staff and/or the public when and if necessary, upholding the dignity and safety of all persons involved.

Record retention and storage: Critical Incident Reports will be filed in date order in the school incident filing system.

Records relating to critical incidents, child safety matters, reportable conduct concerns, staff conduct matters and serious injuries will be retained and disposed of in accordance with:

- applicable Tasmanian State Archives requirements;
- Disposal Schedule DA2520;
- any current disposal freezes;
- Child Safe Organisation obligations; and
- any legal, insurance or regulatory requirements.

RECOVERY

The School will assess and manage psychosocial risks arising from critical incidents and provide access to Employee Assistance Program services, counselling, psychological support and other wellbeing resources for affected staff and students.

For disasters, refer to the disaster recovery and business continuity plan. For all other critical incidents, the following steps will be taken by the CMT:

- 7.1 Ensure any students, staff or visitors with medical or other needs are supported.
- 7.2 Determine whether to activate your parent re-unification process or notify next of kin.
- 7.3 Determine if there are any specific information students, staff and visitors need to know (for example, parent reunification process or areas of the facility to avoid).
- 7.4 Undertake 'hot' (on the day or in the moment when everyone is having their first response) and 'cold' (the next day or after people have had space to digest) operational debrief with staff and CMT to understand the impact of the events, determine further psycho-social recovery needed and identify any on-site evacuation and procedural changes that may be required in future.
- 7.5 Provide support with psychosocial recovery as required – may involve bringing a psychologist onsite for a period of time.
- 7.6 Complete a record detailing the Post Emergency actions taken, and review.

7 REVIEW

- 8.1 Follow up with staff involved to ensure emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing.
- 8.2 Review incident to ensure any necessary policy and procedural changes are made, if necessary.

8 MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT AWAY FROM SCHOOL

The person in charge of managing a critical incident away from the school should:

Follow the procedures identified in the risk assessment for the activity which will include the following:

- 9.1 Ensure the safety of students and staff
- 9.2 Assert authority in a calm, reassuring manner
- 9.3 Ensure students and staff stay together and complete a roll call as soon as possible
- 9.4 Follow the instructions of the venue management in implementing their emergency plans, as long as these do not conflict with the duty of care of the students
- 9.5 If required, advise emergency services immediately and inform them of School personnel and students unaccounted for
- 9.6 Notify the school administration and critical incident management team, seek their advice and keep them informed

9.7 Ensure that parents are kept informed – where possible, the school administration or Principal should contact parents to allow staff to continue supervising and caring for students

9.8 Remain with the group until relieved of responsibility

9.9 Write full report of incident and any follow up actions which were implemented offsite for Critical Incident Management Team

9 Notification Chain

The process in which a critical incident is addressed and communicated through the notification chain is crucial. This is to ensure all people/s that need to be informed about the situation are given accurate and appropriate information in the required time.

It is the responsibility of the incident responder to report all necessary information to a member/s of the Critical Incident Management Team. Following this, it is the responsibility of the CMT to then keep communication lines open to all relevant parties in a time appropriate manner.

Following the resolution of the critical incident the CMT are required to write a report to the school board addressing and outlining all information related to the incident. In addition to this, the WHS committee has the responsibility to write a report from a workplace health and safety perspective outlining what changes may need to occur to current policies and procedure to help reduce the risk of another critical incident.

For the death of a child refer to the Death of a Child Policy

Notification following a death (other than a child): recovery, reporting and communication

The Principal or person Acting as Principal or Business Manager will:

- Notify staff as required (if they are not already aware)
- Notify the Chair of the School Board as soon as practicable;
- Notify all staff
- De-brief and offer support and counselling to all staff involved in the incident, including the Educator or Teacher On Duty;
- Subsequent to consulting with the family of the deceased person, ensure a formal letter is distributed to the school community, informing them of the tragedy within 24 hours.
- Be mindful of how the incident is being communicated on social media either by parents or children (if applicable) and be prepared to provide adequate support and/or use social media as per the social media policy to ensure information about the incident is accurate and sensitively shared.

Timely counselling

The Principal or person Acting as Principal will ensure that appropriate support and counselling is offered to those affected in a timely manner, by professional personnel. Parents, students and staff may be offered counselling from professional services in the local area.

Media

All media enquiries must be directed to, and addressed by, the Chair of the School Board, or other nominated spokesperson.

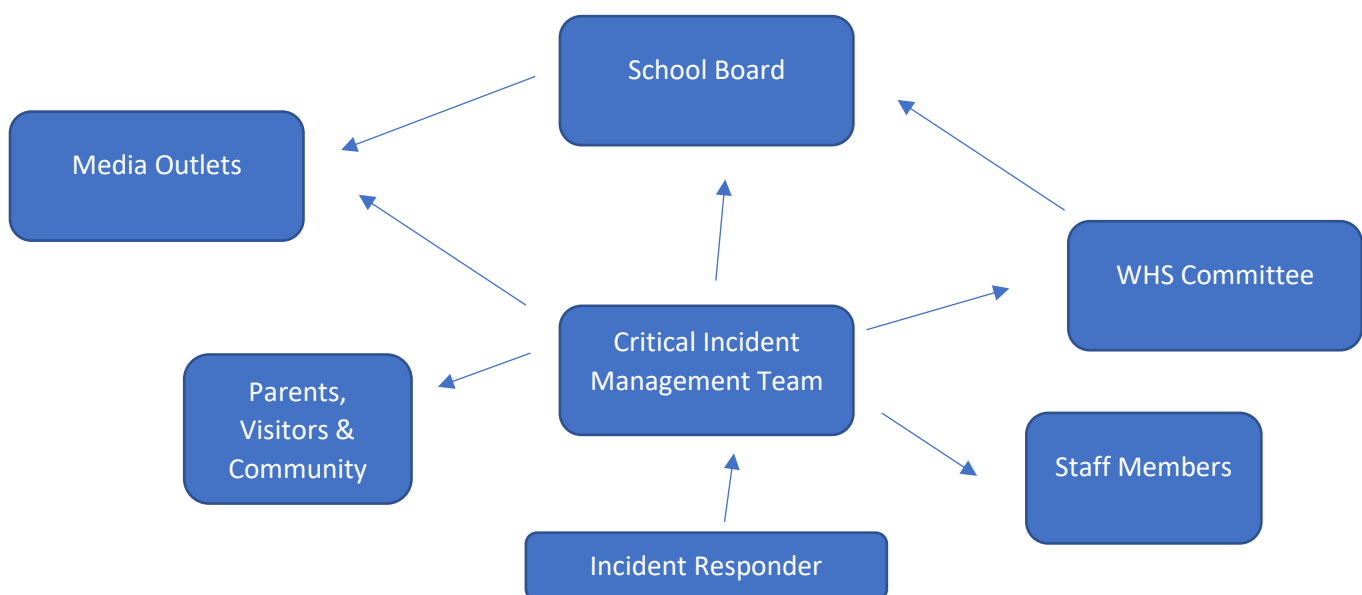
Reporting

Where a student is involved in a serious accident or incident at Tamar Valley Steiner School or any affiliated programs or services, and the accident or incident results in the student's hospitalisation or death, there are specific reporting requirements – these are detailed in the Death of a Child Policy and below.

For all critical incidents involving the safety of students or staff:

- The incident must be reported to WorkSafe Tasmania (Department of Justice) immediately (1300 366 322 within Tasmania; (03) 6166 4600 outside of Tasmania). The initial report must be followed up in writing within 48 hours of the incident.
- Inform the registrar at the OER (Office for Education Registrar) as per Standards for School Registration Standard Five, legislative requirement (4)(a).
- The Secretary, Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) must be notified of the incident no later than the next working day of the circumstances (1800 816 057). A written report must also be provided within three working days.
- In addition to this, where applicable, the Education and Care Unit (Department of Education) will be notified of the incident as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours of the death (refer to section 174 Education and Care Services National Law). This notification must also be made in writing.
- For any accident or major injury in the workplace, Worksafe Tas are notified 1300 366 322
- Critical Incidents are to be reported to the School Board as a standing item in the Principals' report

NOTIFICATION CHAIN – ALL CRITICAL INCIDENTS



END