



**Kerry College of Further Education & Training**  
**All Campus Locations**

**Critical Incident Policy**  
**2023-2025**

**Date of Policy Review: March 7<sup>th</sup> 2023**

**Date of next review: March 2025**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Scope .....	5
Rationale .....	5
Aim.....	5
Policy Content .....	5
The Critical Incident Management Team.....	7
Each Campus location will have a Separate CIMT- See Appendix 1 .....	7
Context for development of the Policy and Plan .....	7
Response to Critical Incidents & Major Emergencies Protocol.....	8
Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents .....	8
Preparation & Planning.....	8
Confidentiality .....	8
A Critical Incident .....	8
Incident Levels.....	9
Aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).....	9
Supportive and Caring Ethos in Kerry College of Further Education & Training.....	9
Physical Safety.....	9
Psychological safety.....	10
Books and Resources .....	11
Specialist Support .....	11
Bullying .....	11
Staff Support .....	11
Roles and Responsibilities in the Critical Incident Management Team.....	11
Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) .....	11
Team Leader – Principal /Manager .....	12
Garda Liaison – Principal /Manager.....	12
Media Liaison – Principal /Manager .....	12
Staff Liaison – Deputy Principals/Assistant Managers.....	12
Student Liaison – Deputy Principals/Assistant Managers.....	12
Parent/Relative Liaison – Principal/Manager & Guidance Counsellors.....	13
Community Liaison – Guidance Counsellors .....	13
Administrator- As per Campus .....	13

Attendance Tracking.....	13
Record Keeping.....	13
Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations.....	14
Critical Incident Rooms (Clash Campus) .....	14
Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident.....	15
Initial Stages .....	15
Meeting of CIMT.....	15
Contacting Members of the College Community .....	15
The College response.....	17
Planning .....	17
Information and Support .....	17
Summary Checklist for Principal or Designate .....	17
1. Timetable Day 1 .....	17
Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team at 8am.....	17
The Role of the Critical Incident Management Team: .....	19
Support Response Team (SRT) .....	19
Role of the Support Response Team (SRT).....	19
Appropriate Actions as required: .....	19
For learners under 18 years of age inform parents/guardians .....	19
Learners directly involved: .....	19
Learners not directly involved.....	20
Staff Meeting at 9am .....	20
Inform Learners .....	20
Book of Condolence.....	21
2. The Rest of Day 1 .....	21
Dealing with the media .....	22
Contact appropriate agencies: Person appointed by Critical Incident Management Team .....	22
3. Medium-Term Actions (24 – 72hours).....	22
Review the events of the first 24 hours .....	23
Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.....	23
Plan for the reintegration of students and staff (e.g. Absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.) .....	23
Plan visits to injured.....	23

Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service .....	23
College closure.....	24
Reopening of College after the Funeral .....	24
4. Longer Term Actions .....	24
Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Response Plan appropriately .....	25
Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future .....	25
Brief new staff on college Critical Incident Policy.....	25
Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)...	25
5. Dealing with the Aftermath of Suicide or Suspected Suicide .....	25
Introduction.....	25
Family .....	26
Organise a staff meeting (if appropriate).....	26
Inform Learners .....	27
Indicators of high-risk learners.....	27
Assessing for suicide potential .....	28
Flood, Fire, Serious Damage to the College .....	28
Staff Training .....	29
Success Criteria .....	30
Monitoring and Review Procedures .....	30
Timeframe.....	30
Appendix 1 - Critical Incident Teams per Campus.....	31
Appendix 2 - Guidance for Breaking the News to Learners .....	32
Appendix 3 - Feelings associated with a Critical Incident .....	34
Appendix 4 - Statement for the Media .....	35
Appendix 5 - Suicide – Guidelines .....	35
Appendix 6 – How to Respond .....	36



# CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY 2023

## SCOPE

Kerry College of Further Education aims to protect the well-being of its learners and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

## RATIONALE

Kerry College of Further Education campuses have taken a number of measures to create a supportive and caring ethos in its campuses. The colleges have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and learners during the normal course of the college day and in the event of a critical incident.

## AIM

The aim of the Critical Incident Policy is to help management and staff react quickly and effectively, and to maintain control during a critical incident. The policy provides a framework to help the colleges to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and learners.

## POLICY CONTENT

The Critical Incident Policy includes:

1. Definition of a critical incident and incident levels
2. Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident
  - The college response
  - Critical Incident Management Team
  - Support Response Team
  - Appropriate actions to be taken
  - List of agencies
1. Medium term actions (24 – 72 hours)
2. Longer term actions
3. Dealing with the aftermath of suicide

4. Flood, Fire, Serious Damage to the College.

# THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

A critical incident management team has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their role for at least one college year.

The team will review and update the policy and plan annually.

Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The Team will meet at least twice annually.

## **EACH CAMPUS LOCATION WILL HAVE A SEPARATE CIMT- SEE APPENDIX 1**

Kerry Adolescent Guidance Counselling will be available to support the college

- To meet and advise staff
- To provide support for teachers in their support of learners.

## CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY AND PLAN

In drawing up this policy and plan the College Management and staff have consulted the following resource documents provided to colleges:

Context for development of the Policy and Plan

In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- o Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- o Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- o Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (NEPS 2014)
- o Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- o Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- o Responding to a Critical Incident: Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2003)

- o Responding to Critical Incidents; Pack for Schools (NEPS 2003)
- o Template for the development of a Critical Incident Policy and Plan (NEPS)
- o Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

## RESPONSE TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS & MAJOR EMERGENCIES PROTOCOL

### PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

#### PREPARATION & PLANNING

Preparation and planning are critical to responding in a coordinated manner in the aftermath of a critical incident / major emergency.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The Principal /Managers is the only person to verify information and to speak to media. The Principal/Manager will contact the Director of Further Education & Training and seek advice and support. Any person who comes across a critical incident must pass the information on to the Principal/Manager – notwithstanding the need to get emergency help. Although the events surrounding a critical incident are often very much in the public domain it is important to ensure that confidentiality is strictly maintained by responding teachers and staff.

### A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The staff and management of Kerry College of Further Education recognizes a critical incident to be -

**“An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the college”.**

Critical incidents may involve one or more learners or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might be: -

- the death of a member of the college community through accident, violence, suicide, suspected suicide or other unexpected deaths
- an intrusion into the college
- an accident involving members of the college community
- an accident/tragedy in the wider community

- serious damage to the college building through fire, flood, vandalism etc
- the disappearance of a member of the college community.

## INCIDENT LEVELS

**Level 1:** a critical incident in a college setting which impacts on a specific number of learners

**Level 2:** a critical incident impacting on a significant number of learners/ and or with a high media profile and/ or involving the wider community

**Level 3:** a major incident that happens in the locality that triggers a broader emergency response at regional or national level

## AIM OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (CIMP)

The aim of the CMIP is to help college management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to all learners and staff.

Having a good plan should also help to ensure that the effects on the learners and staff would be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as a soon as possible.

## SUPPORTIVE AND CARING ETHOS IN KERRY COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and learners, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the college community.

## PHYSICAL SAFETY

Evacuation Plan formulated

Regular Fire Drills occur

Fire Exits and Fire Extinguishers are regularly checked

Personnel present in the college and building, in the morning, during the college day (including break and lunch times) and in the evening.



## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The management and staff of Kerry College of Further Education aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of all learners, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the college and issues and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Some of the prevention measures taken by the College to ensure the psychological wellbeing of the learners include:

- Staff familiar with the new Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures are familiar to all staff
- Adult Learners have access to a Counsellor
- Access to the Open Learning Centre to support them in their studies.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting learners are available.
- The College have an annual health promotion week.
- The College has a designated Student Care Team which meets weekly.
- Members of the staff have received formal training in suicide prevention through the Safe talk training programme.
- The college has developed links with a range of external agencies including:
  - HSE
  - Child and Family Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
  - Kerry Education and Training Board (ETB)
  - Social Services
  - Túsła
  - Jigsaw
  - Pieta House
  - Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
  - FESS (professional Development service for FE)
  - Gardai
  - Neighbouring schools & colleges
- Inputs to learners by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The college has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a care system in place in the college. The team meet each week to review provision of pastoral care and to address specific cases.
- Learners who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of

assistance and support is provided and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency. All Kerry College learners have access to an external Counselling service.

- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves through the Employee Assistance scheme.

## BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Colleges (NEPS 2016) is available to all staff.

## SPECIALIST SUPPORT

The Guidance Counsellor is a trained counsellor. Also the college has access to an external counselling service.

## BULLYING

The college has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with our Anti -Bullying Policy.

## STAFF SUPPORT

Staff have been informed about how to access support for themselves through Kerry ETB and the Employee Assistance scheme.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one college year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. Each member of the team has been assigned a key role in line with best practice.

The key roles are as follows:

- Team leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison

- Agency liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Communications Officer
- Attendance Tracker
- Administrator

### **TEAM LEADER – PRINCIPAL /MANAGER**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, ETB, NEPS, HSE, DES
- Liaises with the bereaved family

### **GARDA LIAISON – PRINCIPAL /MANAGER**

Liaises with the Gardaí

- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

### **MEDIA LIAISON – PRINCIPAL /MANAGER**

- in light of NEPS advice, learners will not be interviewed, photographers will not be allowed onto the premises, nor will photographs of learners be made available.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefing and interviews

### **STAFF LIAISON – DEPUTY PRINCIPALS/ASSISTANT MANAGERS**

- Leads brief meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable learners
- Provides materials for staff (from critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them contact number

### **STUDENT LIAISON – DEPUTY PRINCIPALS/ASSISTANT MANAGERS**

- Co-ordinates information from Teachers & Course Co-ordinators about learners they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable learners (appropriately)
- Provides materials for learners (from critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of learners seen by external agencies

- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet room'

### **PARENT/RELATIVE LIAISON – PRINCIPAL/MANAGER & GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS**

- visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- arranges parent meetings, if held
- may facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed s College policy
- ensures the sample letters are typed up and stored on the college system ready for adaptation
- sets up room for meeting with parents
- maintains a record of parents seen
- meets with individual parents
- provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **COMMUNITY LIAISON – GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key stakeholders, Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.

### **ADMINISTRATOR- AS PER CAMPUS**

- Maintains up to date telephone numbers of Parents/guardians, Teachers and Emergency Services.
- Takes telephone calls and notes that need to be responded to
- Ensures the templates are on the college system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed and maintains records

### **ATTENDANCE TRACKING**

Assistant Principals/Nominated Staff members are responsible for monitoring attendance as per campus

In the immediate aftermath of the critical incident special care will be paid to attendance of learners.

- All absences will be carefully monitored.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc.

The Administrator will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND GOOD NAME CONSIDERATIONS

The management and staff of Kerry College of Further Education have responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident, and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statement.

The members of the college staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that learners will do also.

The term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide and that the family consents to its use. The phrase 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

The word 'murder' will not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT ROOMS (CLASH CAMPUS)

In the event of a critical incident, Rooms will be established in each campus to meet learners/Staff & media.



# PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

## INITIAL STAGES

The Principal /Manager or designate must be contacted immediately.

The Principal or designate will gather accurate information. It is important that accuracy is maintained at every stage so that rumors do not take over and cause panic/distress.

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already?
- Inform Kerry ETB as soon as possible of incident / level of incident
- Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
- Chair the meeting
- Liaise with NEPs
- Ensure implementation of agreed response and actions
- To respond to the media
- Make contact with the bereaved family – whoever is appropriate

## MEETING OF CIMT

Should the incident occur on the way home from College the CIMT should meet later that evening in order to relieve some of the pressures of the following day. The CIMT will also meet at 8am the morning following the incident.

Should the incident occur during a weekend, or during holiday, provision will need to be made for re-opening the College.

## CONTACTING MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY

Two members of the CIMT will be designated as the Staff Liaison members of the CIMT for the duration of the incident.

Once accurate information has been gathered, the Staff Liaison members of the CIMT will contact all members of staff to alert them to the current situation, and remind them to be in College for 9am the following day.

The CIMT will make arrangements for the Board of Management, Kerry Education and Training Board, Student Council and Parents if applicable to be informed.

All groups should receive the same information so that there are no misunderstandings.

# THE COLLEGE RESPONSE

When a critical incident occurs that affects the college community the response will generally involve:

## PLANNING

The college community working together with agencies, to assess the situation and the impact on the learners, their family and the college community

A coordinated response plan for the college

Access college supports and interagency supports

## INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Providing information and support to learners, teachers, staff, parents, relevant agencies and wider community. Providing support for learners, teachers and parents immediately affected. Signposting parents, teachers, staff to available services and agencies. In the first instance, GP referral for learners / staff is recommended.

## SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR PRINCIPAL OR DESIGNATE

1. Gather the facts – Who? What? When? And Where?
2. Contact appropriate agencies i.e. Kerry ETB /NEPS/BOM
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Organise for the supervision of learners
5. Inform staff
6. Agree on a statement of the facts for the media or no comment as appropriate (Family may prefer to respond)
7. Identify high risk learners
8. Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
9. Organise timetable for the day – Maintain the normal college routine when at all possible
10. Inform parents/guardians where appropriate
11. Inform learners
12. Make contact with bereaved family
13. Organise support
14. Respond to the media

## 1. TIMETABLE DAY 1

### MEETING OF CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM AT 8AM

Confirm the roles each of the CIMT members will undertake during the day.

Ensure all members of the CIMT are familiar with the facts and prepared statements for staff meeting

This team will assess, prioritise and manage the response to the incident.

#### THE ROLE OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM:

1. To assess the level of incident and response required
2. To coordinate and lead the response
3. Decide on actions required
4. Decide what staff / agencies need to be mobilised – as appropriate
5. Review and evaluate the response
6. A written statement of the facts for learners, presented where appropriate by the Principal
7. A written statement of the facts for staff, parents and media
8. Delegate responsibilities to the **Support Response Team (SRT)**
9. Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries.
10. Appoint someone to contact appropriate agencies
11. Organise the timetable/routine for the day (Adhering to the normal college routine as much as possible)
12. Decide what staff need to be briefed

#### SUPPORT RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Principal convenes meeting regardless of whether incident occurs in/out of college year.

This team will be appointed by the Critical Incident Management Team to provide the

Front-line response to the critical incident. This team will include Assistant Principals, NEPS, HSE, course programme coordinators, teachers and administration staff (as appropriate to the Kerry College campus involved.)

#### ROLE OF THE SUPPORT RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

To carry out the actions as requested by the Principal

#### APPROPRIATE ACTIONS AS REQUIRED:

#### FOR LEARNERS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE INFORM PARENTS/GUARDIANS

#### LEARNERS DIRECTLY INVOLVED:

- Parents/Guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below:
- The Principal/Manager or Designate will decide and direct who should share information with parents and this should be done.
- Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to avoid duplication of messages
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information
- Set a room aside for distressed learners to meet parents/guardians



- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the college. The Principal or designate will decide and direct who should support parents
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries
- Organise the reunion of learners with parents, if necessary
- Inform learners that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed learners and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time.

#### LEARNERS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED

- The parents of other learners in the college should be informed of the incident and that their child may be upset
- Send a letter to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved.
- Organise emotional support for learners, through meetings with appointed college Counsellors and other qualified counsellors on the staff.

#### STAFF MEETING AT 9AM

Two members of the CIMT will chair/lead this meeting. Other CIMT members will supervise learners. All other staff should be present including non-teaching staff.

A brief statement will be given of the facts as known (previously agreed by CIMT).

Staff should be given an opportunity to express their views/feelings.

Agreement should be reached on how the facts will be relayed to the learners and how staff should respond to student queries.

Staff will be informed of the timetable for the day.

Staff will be informed about which outside agencies are involved and what supports are in place for both learners and staff.

Procedures for identifying and dealing with vulnerable learners should be outlined.

Distribute relevant hand-out material

**All members of staff /College community should be informed as to how to respond to the media. Other than the Designated Media Contact Person on the CIMT all queries /comments must be directed to Campus Management.**

#### INFORM LEARNERS

Careful preparation is important when meeting learners to inform them of a critical incident.

Consideration should be given to the age of the students and the optimum group size. It is best to do it in class groups or sub-groups. The suitability of the 'messenger' should also be considered, remembering that it is generally thought that support is best given by the adults known to students. Any outside 'expert' might help by assisting the staff undertaking this task to prepare for it and by providing advice and support as they manage it. The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how students are informed. This team will be appointed by the Principal to provide the frontline information to the students.

It is important to remember that not all students are going to be traumatised. However, the loss for the College community as a whole must be acknowledged

The course Group of the student who has been affected should be the first to be told in the presence of the Principal and Course Co-ordinator

All other classes will be informed by their Course Co-ordinator.

This should be done in a sensitive but clear way. If any teacher/tutor is uncomfortable with informing a class, the CIMT will accompany them and inform the class if necessary.

Allow students to ask questions tell their story and express feelings

Students should be given the chance to talk among themselves.

Students should be informed of the supports available around the College (internal & external)

Two members of the CIMT will call on each class during the first class to check how things are going and to help students realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident

Students should not be left to their own devices were possible. They should either be in class, with a counsellor, or with friends in a supervised area.

The key points here are give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours, which can cause unnecessary stress

#### BOOK OF CONDOLENCE

If necessary, a book of Condolence will be opened and placed at a central location

## **2. THE REST OF DAY 1**

The College should continue to maintain a calm, supportive environment and, as far as is possible, continue with normal routine whilst allowing for flexibility.

Staff should continue to stress the supports that are available throughout the day.

It is advisable that more staff than usual would mingle with the students during breaks to act as support.

The CIMT will meet at 1pm to evaluate the College's response, gather names of students which colleagues are concerned about and agree a plan for the afternoon.

A brief staff meeting should be held at the end of the College Day to discuss how the day went, identify vulnerable students, plan for tomorrow and detail any funeral arrangements if available.

#### DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Principal usually responds to the media 'no comment' (If appropriate) It may be more appropriate for other agencies and or the family to respond to the media.

However, prepare a written statement to include:

1. The facts about the incident
2. What has been done already?
3. What is going to be done?
4. Positive information or comments about the deceased person
5. Some points to remember if you are asked to give a live interview:
6. Consider assigning the task to someone skilled or familiar with dealing with the media
7. Take some time to prepare
8. Remember that everything you say is on record and therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief
9. Decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate
10. Consider setting aside a room for the media. This may help to control their access to staff and students.
11. Brief staff and students and advise them on dealing with media – no comment unless they are appointed to brief the media

#### CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES: PERSON APPOINTED BY CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- NEPS
- Gardaí
- Fire Brigade
- Ambulance
- Health Board
- Chairperson Board of Management
- Kerry ETB

### **3. MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24 – 72HOURS)**

#### REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST 24 HOURS

Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team

Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping

Decide arrangements for future support meetings for parents/students/staff

Gather feedback from teachers on vulnerable students and decide on an effective means of monitoring vulnerable students

Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments

Be sensitive as to how all staff are coping on a personal and professional level

Establish contact with absent staff and students

#### ARRANGE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS, GROUPS OF STUDENTS, AND PARENTS, IF NECESSARY

Provide a suitable room

Hold support/information meeting for parents/students in order to clarify what has happened. Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant hand-outs

Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out

Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission

#### PLAN FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF (E.G. ABSENTEES, INJURED, SIBLINGS, CLOSE RELATIVES ETC.)

Identify key person(s) to liaise with above on their return to college

#### PLAN VISITS TO INJURED

Identify key person(s) to visit home/hospital if appropriate

#### LIAISE WITH THE FAMILY REGARDING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS/MEMORIAL SERVICE

Designate staff member to liaise with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the college's involvement in funeral/memorial service,

Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service, decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and college management decisions

Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate

Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths



The wishes of the bereaved family will be respected at all times

#### COLLEGE CLOSURE

Request a decision on this from college board of management and Kerry ETB

#### REOPENING OF COLLEGE AFTER THE FUNERAL

Members of the CIMT and other relevant staff members should liaise with students who return from absence due to the incident. Students who are seen as vulnerable should be monitored and referred to counselling.

Students who are finding the events of the last few days stressful and difficult should be invited to a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing session. The session will be facilitated by a counsellor and will involve the Programme Coordinator and /or other Teacher/Tutors who knew the deceased well.

The session will last approx. 90 minutes and aims to enable student to start dealing with grieving process.

Aims; -

- To provide students with a safe, confidential place in which to tell their story and share their feelings.
- To alert the College to individuals who are in need of more specific long term support.
- To prevent the onset of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- To enable the student body to get back to normal as soon as possible.

#### **4. LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

A referral to their GP may be necessary.

For example, if over a prolonged period, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from their GP:

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain; lack of attention to appearance, tiredness  
restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions



- Increased absenteeism

#### EVALUATE RESPONSE TO INCIDENT AND AMEND THE CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN APPROPRIATELY

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business.

#### FORMALISE THE CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Consult with your NEPS psychologist and Board of Governance

#### BRIEF NEW STAFF ON COLLEGE CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Ensure that new staff are aware of the college policy and procedures in this area.

Ensure they are aware of which students were affected in any recent incident and in what way.

#### DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANNIVERSARIES (BE SENSITIVE TO SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS)

Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time

Acknowledge the anniversary with the family and liaise on any proposed commemoration

Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day.

## **5. DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE**

### INTRODUCTION

When a person dies through suicide, those who know the person experience a deep sense of shock. The unexpectedness of the death and the taboo associated with suicide can leave a college community feeling unsure of how to proceed. Again, the key to this is planning.

The term 'suicide' should not be used until it has been 'established categorically that the student's or teacher's death was as a result of suicide'. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

The following is a guide to how a college can support the bereaved family, college staff and students.

#### FAMILY

- The Principal /Manager should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described
- Acknowledge their grief and loss
- Organise a home visit by two staff members
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the college, e.g At the funeral service

#### ORGANISE A STAFF MEETING (IF APPROPRIATE).

All staff should be asked to attend, including auxiliary staff

Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings

Decide whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting

Give staff an account of the facts as known

Give staff an opportunity to express their views and their feelings

Set in place with staff a procedure for identifying vulnerable students.

Distribute relevant handout material

Students need to be with people they know and trust. If possible, it is better if the teachers provide support for students. The external 'expert' visitor should therefore be primarily used to brief teachers.

Help teachers to prepare for breaking the news to learners. Close friends and relatives of the deceased in the college need to be told first. This needs to be done in a private location.

Outline the possible reactions.

Give them information from the colleges pack on dealing with the learners in the classroom and on reactions to grief.

Identify high-risk learners and what supports are available.

Remind them of the college's critical incident plan.

Decide on the strategy to deal with queries from parents/guardians. Prepare a letter setting out the facts, how the college is dealing with the events and how parents or guardians can support their child.

Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for learners/staff.

Hold further staff briefings during the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high-risk learners.

### INFORM LEARNERS

Careful preparation is important when meeting learners to inform them of a critical incident.

Consideration should be given to the age of the pupils and the optimum group size. It is best to do it in class groups or sub-groups. The suitability of the 'messenger' should also be considered, remembering that it is generally thought that support is best given by the adults known to the child. Any outside 'expert' might help by assisting the people undertaking this task to prepare for it and by providing advice and support as they manage it. The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how learners are informed. This team will be appointed by the Principal to provide the frontline information to the learners.

The key points/actions in the process are listed below:

- Give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours, which can cause unnecessary stress
- Allow learners to ask questions tell their story and express feelings
- Help learners realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident
- Create a safe and supportive space for the learners where they can share their reactions and feelings
- Advise them on their possible reactions over the next few days
- Avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalising the suicide
- Advise the learners of the support that is available to them
- Take any talk of suicide seriously and provide support or refer on immediately to parents and advise they visit their GP
- Learners may wish to confide in and seek support from each other rather than adults
- Facilitate this if appropriate and if it is possible. However, information should be provided about how to get further help if they, or their friends, should need it

### INDICATORS OF HIGH-RISK LEARNERS

Close friends and relatives of the deceased

Learners with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm

Learners who experienced a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend

Learners who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past

Learners with psychiatric history

Learners with a history of substance abuse

Learners with a history of sexual abuse

Non-communicative Learners who have difficulty talking about their feelings

Learners experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness

Less able learners

College should be vigilant around the time of the inquest and the anniversary of the student's death

#### ASSESSING FOR SUICIDE POTENTIAL

Where there is a serious question mark or concern about a student, then referral should be made to a person trained in risk assessment, (Guidance Counsellor) and parents informed immediately.

#### FLOOD, FIRE, SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE COLLEGE

In the case of a critical incident of this nature the following procedures will apply; - 1) The Principal will contact An Garda Síochána, the Board of Management, Kerry ETB. 2) A meeting of the CIMT will be convened; -

If the damage is discovered in the afternoon/early evening the CIMT should meet that evening. If the damage is discovered late at night or early morning the CIMT should meet at 8am or as soon as is practically possible.

The CIMT will decide whether it is safe and practical to open the College.

Where it is possible to open the College the CIMT will decide on a plan for the day, including areas that will need to be out of use/cordoned off.

A brief staff meeting will be held at the beginning of the College day to outline this plan and again at the end of the day for feedback...

Where there is a need for the College to close Radio Kerry should be informed. (Information to both should be in the form of a statement agreed by the CIMT)

Once a timeframe for the re-opening of the College has been determined the CIMT should draw up a plan for; -

- a) The period of closure (*alternative accommodation etc.*)
- b) The re-opening of the College.
- c) Response to the media – (*See p.4*)

In the event that a fire/flood etc. occurs during the College Day the College's emergency procedures as outlined in the College's Health & Safety Statement will be implemented. The CIMT will then meet immediately.

#### STAFF TRAINING

Kerry College of Further Education is committed to the ongoing training of staff with regard to Critical Incidents and Dealing with bereaved/distressed learners.



## SUCCESS CRITERIA

This success of this policy will be defined by the following; -

- Critical Incidents are managed effectively and sensitively,
- Communication is handled effectively.
- A level of closure is achieved for those affected.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES


The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through actual experience of critical incidents and with consideration for the changing needs of our college community.


## TIMEFRAME

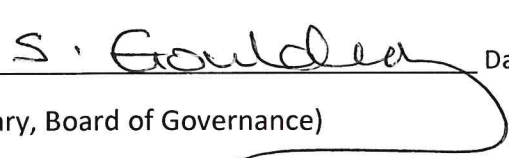
This policy was reviewed in March 7<sup>th</sup> 2023

Modifications were made and ratified by Board of Governance.

Published and circulated.

Signed:  Date: 07/03/23  
(Chairperson, Board of Governance)

Signed:  Date: 7/3/2023  
(Secretary, Board of Governance)

Signed:  Date: 07/03/23  
(Secretary, Board of Governance)

## APPENDIX 1 - CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAMS PER CAMPUS

### Clash/Denny street/Listowel Campuses

Principal – Stephen Goulding

(Deputy Principals – Carmel Kelly & John Skinner

(Assistant Principal - Joe Kelly/Miriam Goulding

(Assistant Principal – Mary Murphy/ Tony Perill

(Assistant Principal- Celia O Shea/

(Guidance Counsellor -Anne Doyle/Mary Dowling /Ita Lane

(Student Supports - Liz Alman/Noelle Carey /Margaret Godley

(FE Teachers –Helen Kelliher/ Bernadette Murphy/Theresa O Brien

Administration- Tomina Shine/Lorraine Feeney/Stephen Lane

### Monavalley Campus

1 Campus Manager	Con O Sullivan
2 Assistant Managers	John Herlihy & Joseph Nestor
5 Staff	George Emerson, Mary Theresa Buckley, Kasia Lyko,   Claire O Shea,Rico Stein
1 Administrator	Danielle Weber

### Killorglin Campus

Team leader (Aodhnait Carroll)

Gárda liaison (Aodhnait Carroll)

Staff liaison (Lorcan McDonnell, Brian O’Flaherty & Colette Lawlor)

Learner liaison (Rhys Llywelyn, Brian O’Flaherty & Colette Lawlor)

Agency liaison (Lorcn McDonnell))

Family liaison (Aodhnait Carroll)

Community liaison (Aodhnait Carroll & Lorcan McDonnell)

Communications Officer (Aodhnait Carroll)

Attendance Tracker (Rhys Llywelyn, Brian O’Flaherty & Colette Lawlor)

Administrator (Lorcan McDonnell & Teresa Foley)

## APPENDIX 2 - GUIDANCE FOR BREAKING THE NEWS TO LEARNERS

- All staff will be furnished with the facts as known. Only these facts should be conveyed to Learners.
- Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family can it be relayed as such to the Learners.
- The course group/ class group of the student/member of staff who has died should be the first to be told.
- Other classes to be told by their Course Coordinator /CIMT person assigned ASAP. It is important to remember that not every class is going to be traumatised. However, the loss for the Campus community as a whole must be acknowledged
- Tell the class that you have sad news and that it is difficult for you to do this.
- Let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- Let them know the facts as you know them (Vital to avoid rumours and added distress)
- Encourage questions, but be careful to only answer with what you have been told as fact. Other questions can be directed to members of the CIRG and relayed back to Learners if appropriate.
- Let the Learners know of common reactions to the tragic news. Shock is usually the most common reaction.
- Don't allow Learners to leave the classroom alone if they are in a state of distress. Learners should be constantly supervised whilst in a state of distress.
- Inform Learners of the people/groups available to support them.
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.
- Allow Learners time to talk to each other and explain how they can support one another.
- Be alert to Learners who are not coping well with the news.

- A moment of silence would be appropriate and may help Learners to relax.
- Some Learners will be able to continue with class. Other will need to go to the counselling services available.
- All Teacher/Tutors/Instructors should try to continue with normal routine where appropriate but allow for flexibility and time for Learners to talk.

### APPENDIX 3 - FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Bewildered	Distress	Sad	Tearful	Confused
Depressed	Helpless	Anxious	Hopeless	Overwhelmed
Grief	Alienated	Hurt	Fear	Anxiety
Dazed	Unloved	Release	Tired	Nausea
Disorientated	Shocked	Insecure	Unhappy	Agitated
Unwanted	Lonely	Apprehensive	Revengeful	Irritable
Denial	Burdened	Relief	Worthless	Disbelief
Panic	Powerless	Guilty	Gratitude	Misunderstood
Redundant	Vulnerable	Pain	Emotional	
Self-Pity	Ashamed	Numb	Disappointed	



## **APPENDIX 4 - STATEMENT FOR THE MEDIA**

An appropriate media statement is held on file in the office for media purposes.

## **APPENDIX 5 - SUICIDE – GUIDELINES**

### **Indicators & Intervention Measures**

Suicide is a particularly traumatic event in the life of any Campus. A study conducted in Ottawa, Canada, revealed a number of behaviours which can be exhibited by those contemplating suicide. Campus Managers/Counsellors may find this list and the suggested forms of intervention helpful.

### **Pointers**

1. Loss of interest in usual activities.
2. Withdrawal from social contact.
3. Difficulty in concentrating, problems with judgement and memory.
4. Dramatic fall-off in Campus performance.
5. Feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness may be expressed in essays.
6. Sleep disturbance – decreased, or sometimes increased.
7. Increased overt displays of anger and rage, verbal or physical.
8. Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol.
9. Promiscuous behaviour.
10. Uncharacteristic delinquent behaviour/thrill seeking.
11. Lack of supportive relationships with friends or family.
12. Previous suicidal threats, gestures, attempts.
13. Statements, verbal or written, revealing wish to die or preoccupation with death.
14. Nihilistic comments – life is meaningless, filled with misery.
15. Gestures to be noticed – self mutilation, scratches.
16. Planning for death, making final arrangements, giving away treasured possessions.
17. Suddenly becoming cheerful after long depression (relief when decision taken).

## APPENDIX 6 – HOW TO RESPOND

### WHAT TO DO:

**TAKE IT SERIOUSLY** –Talk with the person keeping some principles in mind:

1. Remain in control – don't panic, act slowly.
2. Encourage expression of feelings and accept them (give time).
3. Avoid judgemental comments or empty reassurance.
4. Avoid promises you can't keep (e.g. secrecy; call me any time; confidentiality).
5. Empathise and let them know you care (biggest single preventative is knowing someone cares).
6. Encourage them to see a counsellor or therapist (carefully).
7. Inform Management of the Monavalley Campus.
8. If seriously worried, don't leave them alone.
9. Seek advice and support yourself

### WHAT NOT TO DO:

1. Don't assume this person is not the "type" to commit suicide.
2. Don't leave them alone if you believe the risk of suicide is imminent.
3. Don't act shocked at whatever is told to you.
4. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong. This may make him/her feel more guilty and intensify the depression.
5. Don't take responsibility for "saving the person", get additional help.
6. Don't feel that you have to have an answer to all the questions. If you do not know the meaning of life, say so. Make it clear that you are there to help, not to solve problems.
7. Don't be afraid to be the first to mention suicide. Generally it comes as a relief to the person that you are willing to discuss the subject.
8. Don't deny or cover up the person's feelings or intents. Don't be judgmental. Acknowledge his/her feelings without reinforcing the negative. "I believe you are feeling miserable right now. Let's talk about it".
9. Don't abandon the person because the problems are too overwhelming. Follow through in getting him/her help. Don't be another loss or rejection to him/her.
10. Don't wait too long because you hope he/she will get over it. It can't hu