

## **AP 166 Appendix: Critical Incidents Response Team (CIRT) Protocol**

### **1. Critical Incidents Response Team (CIRT) Response to Call From a School**

- 1.1 The CIRT will meet with the Principal, and staff designated by the Principal, to outline team activities and expectations. (i.e. defusing and debriefing)
- 1.2 The CIRT, working in consultation with the Principal, shall meet with all school personnel thereby providing an opportunity to discuss the impact of the event, to provide information on the traumatic event and to inform personnel of the plan of action.
- 1.3 The CIRT leader coordinates all personnel providing supportive services.
- 1.4 Defusing and debriefings will be provided to 'at-risk groups' as identified. This will include the class group (teacher may be involved), team groups (sports, drama, etc.) or peer group.
- 1.5 For the remainder of the day CIRT members will be available for individual and/or small group CIRT defusing/debriefing. (i.e. parents, teachers, students, etc.)
- 1.6 At the end of the school day the CIRT will meet with all the school personnel to review the events of the day to provide an information update and to respond to any inquiries.
- 1.7 The CIRT will meet with the Principal/counsellor to identify high-risk individuals who may require further follow-up.
- 1.8 Follow-up will be coordinated by means of phone consultation with the Principal or designate.

### **2. CIRT Roles**

- 2.1 CIRT Leader
  - 2.1.1 The CIRT leader for the affected school will be identified in consultation between the Principal and the Deputy Director of Education or designate as soon as a critical incident is reported.
  - 2.1.2 Discuss/clarify the incident with the Principal to determine a course of action and prepare an information brief to share.
  - 2.1.3 Review the entire protocol and make sure that the CIRT understands their roles.
  - 2.1.4 Assess impact on other schools. Initiate the mobilization of a secondary CIRT for other schools.
  - 2.1.5 Take action to call in the CIRT, both internal and external depending upon scope of need.
  - 2.1.6 The team leader coordinates all personnel providing supportive services. Coordinate the immediate CIRT response, including:
    - Staff debriefing
    - Student debriefing
  - 2.1.7 Ensure, in consultation with the Religious Education Coordinator, that the overall CIRT response incorporates Catholic Faith teachings.

## 2.2 CIRT Roles

When a crisis occurs, the team will model calmness. The team will proceed at a measured pace, taking time to meet with all people on the school staff, and setting up in a manner that will allow an orderly, calm response.

### 2.2.1 Screener

These will be professionals who have been chosen by the CIRT leader to assess individuals functioning to determine if traumatization exists. This assessment will be based in current psychological functioning (BASIC.) Screeners may refer students to crisis group or individual crisis counselling as appropriate. Screening is an ongoing process that will begin prior to the initial crisis groups and runs concurrently with the crisis groups and counselling.

The screener must set a location to be based out of, however through out the incident they may be moving throughout the school. All staff members must know where the screener will be set up for the duration of his/her time in the school.

### 2.2.2 Crisis Counsellor

These will be counsellors who are trained in crisis counselling. They will meet with clients individually and focus on people who are traumatized and therefore not good candidates for groups and will address the immediate issues arising out of the trauma. Crisis counsellors will identify issues for ongoing counselling and ensure clients are aware of appropriate resources for follow up. Crisis counsellors will not do Crisis groups around the traumatic event in which they provide crisis counselling to avoid burn out or exhaustion, and conflict of interest situations with clients seen individually. Crisis groups need to be differentiated from crisis intervention counselling.

### 2.2.3 CIRT Group Leader

These team members will be trained in leading crisis groups according to the modified CIRT protocol. Crisis groups are single session structured groups focusing on the recent traumatic event. It is a one time only preventative intervention for people who might otherwise be traumatized by an incident. It is not a therapeutic or counselling group, but focuses on teaching ongoing skills, normalizing feelings, thoughts, and physiological responses. A co-facilitator will be involved in these sessions.

## 2.3 Principal – When a Critical Incident Happens

2.3.1 Clarify facts around incident (death) with family, police and school if applicable.

2.3.2 Clarify the wishes of the family or families involved regarding the sharing of information surrounding the incident.

- 2.3.3 Call the Deputy Director of Education or designate to initiate CIRT Protocol.
- 2.3.4 Call the Vice Principal
  - 2.3.4.1. Provide update regarding critical incident
  - 2.3.4.2. Meet to review CIRT procedures (i.e. roles/ responsibilities of school-based administrators)
  - 2.3.4.3. Together notify all staff including secretaries, caretakers, library staff, cafeteria, teacher assistants, rehab assistants regarding implementing a CIRT response based upon recommendation by the CIRT Leader
- 2.3.5 Wait for contact from CIRT Leader (coordinator)
  - 2.3.5.1. Discuss incident
  - 2.3.5.2. Plan day and schedule of events
  - 2.3.5.3. CIRT Leader is in charge of debriefing/defusing
- 2.3.6 Together with Vice Principal, or designated staff, review schedules/ events that need to be cancelled/postponed.
- 2.3.7 Together with Vice Principal, or designated staff, set rules/guidelines for the day (e.g. people leaving the school need parents' permission and need to have adult in home).
- 2.3.8 Call a staff meeting (before school begins for the day) which all available staff must attend (CIRT leader may provide debriefing/defusing for staff at this time). Staff not at the school should be notified and encouraged to attend the staff meeting or join the staff at school.
- 2.3.9 Arrange for substitute teachers to assist teachers under distress as determined.
- 2.3.10 Provide written statement for secretaries to pass on to concerned parents and general public who may call for information. Consult with Deputy Director of Education prior to providing a statement.
- 2.3.11 Prepare letter for the parents/guardians of all students at the school explaining the facts surrounding the critical incident along with the procedures the school is following. Community resources and evident stress indicators information should also be provided.
- 2.3.12 Have substitutes and/or additional secretaries available to help answer the phones or provide relief for impacted staff and secretaries.
- 2.3.13 Maintain the general operation of the school in accordance to the CIRT response.
- 2.3.14 Send letter of sympathy to family or families involved on behalf of school.
- 2.3.15 Check on all people entering the school who may want to help.
- 2.3.16 Facility organization – Determine:
  - CIRT Team Room (e.g. Vice Principal's office)
  - Location for public (parents)

- Screening room(s)
  - Debriefing room(s)
- 2.4 Deputy Director of Education (or designate)
- 2.4.1 Determine the CIRT Leader, in consultation with the Principal.
- 2.4.2 Provide on-site support and assistance to the Principal and CIRT as deemed necessary.
- 2.4.3 Inform all Principals regarding the critical incident and monitoring procedures.
- Note: The Director will be the media contact. No in-school filming or interviewing of staff or students will be allowed.
- 2.5 Vice Principal: Maintenance of School Operations
- 2.5.1 Meet with Principal and counsellor to:
- 2.5.1.1. Go over information
  - 2.5.1.2. Plan procedures, to ensure operations of the school to facilitate a CIRT response
  - 2.5.1.3. Phone all staff (including staff temporarily away [sick, on leave, etc.]
  - 2.5.1.4. Identify people most impacted by the event and contact them along with staff advisors
- 2.5.2 In consultation with the Principal:
- 2.5.2.1. Review schedules/events that need to be cancelled/postponed.
  - 2.5.2.2. Set rules/guidelines for day. (e.g. students leaving the school need parental permission and need to have an adult in the home). Monitor students/staff leaving.
  - 2.5.2.3. Set up necessary substitutes for impacted staff and see to relief of secretaries in manning phones in office.
  - 2.5.2.4. Find facilities for groups to meet.
- 2.5.3 Determine if other schools are involved (e.g. siblings/close friends of those involved in critical incidents). Make contact with these schools to coordinate support.
- 2.5.4 Hydration concerns - be sure to have snacks and juices available after debriefings. Make arrangements to order lunch for all staff.
- 2.6 School Counsellor (if not part of CIRT Team)
- 2.6.1 Meet with Principal and Vice Principal
- 2.6.2 Coordinate all efforts through the CIRT Leader.
- 2.6.3 Upon request, assist the Principal in planning a staff meeting involving the CIRT Leader.

- 2.6.4 Check on individuals, staff and students
  - Get them into debriefings/defusing
  - Individual counselling/support/referrals
- 2.6.5 Keep tabs on those most at risk/most impacted. Communicate a plan for follow up debriefing following the day of the incident. Make sure a clear referral process exists.
- 2.6.6 Deal with parents who are impacted if the support is requested or the need for support is readily apparent.
- 2.7 Secretaries
  - 2.7.1 Answer phones – provide information supplied by written statement of Principal.
  - 2.7.2 Communicate if relief or additional assistance is needed.
- 2.8 The Integration of Catholic Faith Support
  - 2.8.1 Parish Priests
    - 2.8.1.1. The CIRT Leader will contact the parish priests to determine if they may provide faith support to the CIRT Response.
      - Support immediate families in crisis.
      - Support the personal and faith needs of a school staff so they are able to support the grieving needs of students.
      - Provide faith guidance to / during the process of debriefing.
- 2.9 FIT Members
  - 2.9.1 Support staff in their personal grieving within our Catholic Faith.
  - 2.9.2 Provide faith leadership by ensuring that the CIRT process incorporates Catholic Faith teaching by assisting in prayer.

## 2.10 Staff

All staff:

- 2.10.1 Must be conscious of personal emotional/mental state.
  - 2.10.2 Must request support for themselves, as deemed necessary.
  - 2.10.3 Must support colleagues and students most directly impacted by the critical incident, guiding them to seek out necessary resources.
  - 2.10.4 Are encouraged to participate in defusing for staff and appropriate student gatherings (e.g. Team / extra-curricular groups, homeroom, and class subject).
  - 2.10.5 Shall incorporate Catholic Faith teachings where appropriate in the follow-up interactions with students.
  - 2.10.6 Will proceed with scheduled instruction and school routine. The CIRT and administration will direct alterations to regularly scheduled school operations.
- 2.11 All individuals entering the school should be directed to report to the school office.

## 3. Staff Meetings

- 3.1 Written details will be provided to staff by the in-school administrator.
- 3.2 Defusing shall be a priority.
- 3.3 Staff shall be informed of postponements/cancellations.
- 3.4 Staff shall be informed of support services (both within and outside the Division) available for them and their students.
- 3.5 Provide an outline of the support planned, including the role of the CIRT Team.
- 3.6 Meet before and after school. Staff debriefings should be lead by Division personnel when possible.
- 3.7 A follow-up meeting with the CIRT Team may be required.