

**GAIRMSCOIL MHUIRE**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT  
15/06/2010**

**APPROVED BY CO. GALWAY VEC  
21/06/2010**

**THIS POLICY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS, STUDENTS, STAFF,  
THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND COUNTY GALWAY VEC**

## **LINK TO MISSION STATEMENT**

We aim to protect the well being of our students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Dealing with death, loss and trauma is inevitable in a school community. It is recognised that responding to tragedies can never be fully prepared for - each situation is unique. Nonetheless this does not absolve the school community from considering what elements of preparedness can be in place. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited.

## **PASTORAL GOALS FOR THE SCHOOL**

Schools which have a good network of relationships, where there is a concern for the whole person throughout the life of the school, will be in a better position to respond healthily to crises when they inevitably occur. We therefore strive to attain the following core pastoral goals:

- Personal attention to value and develop every student
- Acknowledgement of, and support for, each person's role in the school community
- Promoting an environment which meets students' needs
- Priority given to the nurturing of teaching and learning relationships
- Recognition of talents and abilities
- Clear values that animate the school
- Strong collaborative leadership
- Clarity of policies, roles, responsibilities and tasks
- Support for an engaging curriculum - content & methodologies
- On-going monitoring of progress at every level for the student
- Accountability, support and evaluation at every level
- Involving all concerned in the life of the school

In relation to responding to crises, we seek to:

- Provide a range of supports for all in the school community to call upon in a time of crisis - both in the short and long term.
- Raise issues of trauma in a variety of locations throughout the curriculum.
- Outline a policy for dealing with common traumas in the context of the school.
- Regularly review the structures of support and referral available in the school.

## **RANGE OF CRISIS**

The life of the school is affected by many and various traumas:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- school fire or explosion
- severe physical violence in the school
- accident on a school trip

## **CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM – A FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of a **Crisis Response Team** is to deal with any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the school. Suicide, for example, is clearly one such trauma that will require the activation of the team. For the purposes of this policy suicide is used as an example for the use of the framework. It is recommended that this team be in place on an on-going basis.

At the core of the framework are the members of the team who carry out the following roles:

- Leadership
- Counsellor
- Family Liaison
- Chaplaincy
- Communication

### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES: PRINCIPAL / DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**

#### **Prevention Responsibilities**

- Develop and implement a policy on suicide prevention, intervention and postvention
- To have in place a trained Crisis Response Team
- Provide in-service to staff around issues of loss and trauma
- Promote the inclusion of programmes that deal with bereavement, loss and related issues in the curriculum
- Put in place a resource list of personnel and agencies including: school psychologist, mental health professionals, clergy, Garda, local doctors and relevant voluntary agencies

#### **Intervention Responsibilities**

- Confirm the death has occurred
- Express sympathy to the family and assure them of the school's support.
- The principal will identify a contact person for the family with the school, explain their role and how the family can make contact with them
- Clarify the facts surrounding the death
- Activate the Crisis Response Team by organising a meeting
- Prepare announcement for staff and students
- Decide on when, how and who will break the news
- Organise special staff meetings as required
- Devise a process to deal with telephone enquiries particularly from concerned parents
- Notify the Board of Management
- Prepare a media statement
- Devise a process to deal with all media

#### **Postvention Responsibilities**

- Ensure the provision of on-going support to students, staff and parents
- Hold a meeting of the crisis team to evaluate the effectiveness of the response
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events

## **COUNSELLOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Prevention Responsibilities**

- Assist with the development of programmes dealing with bereavement and suicide prevention
- Support and resource those teachers involved in the facilitation of such programmes within the Social, Personal and Health Education programme
- Contribute to the organisation and delivery of in-service to staff around issues of loss, crisis management and suicide
- Co-ordinate a panel of personnel from within the staff who will assist in the support of students and staff in distress. Any staff member who has received training in the area of bereavement counselling can be a member of this panel.
- Developing a network of, and a working relationship with, the school psychologist, mental health professionals, clergy, Garda, local doctors and relevant voluntary agencies

### **Intervention Responsibilities**

- Clarify their role as co-ordinator of the counselling services that will be offered throughout the school community
- Outline the specific services available in terms of what, who, where and when
  - What: individual and group support
  - Who: the panel of trained support staff
  - Where: the rooms available
  - When: the times allotted
- Put in place a clear referral procedure to support staff in dealing with students in distress
- Address immediate needs of staff:
  - Information: on grief responses, signs of students at risk, referral and support strategies
  - Counselling: alerting staff to opportunities for personal support as required
- In conjunction with the year head and class tutor attend to the needs of the class group to which the deceased student belonged
- Be available to students to support them, assess their needs and refer on as necessary. A referral will involve contact with individual parents
- As required make contact with relevant educational and community support personnel and agencies

### **Postvention Responsibilities**

- On-going support to vulnerable students with a particular eye to the concern around copycat incidents. An effective identification and referral strategy will be a significant resource in this area.
- Continue to monitor the bereaved class group
- With the Crisis Response Team, evaluate the overall effectiveness of the school's response and put in place any changes necessary. In particular, the counsellor will be concerned with the effectiveness of the referral procedures; support panel of staff; the liaison with outside personnel/agencies and the programmes dealing with loss, bereavement and suicide

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/CHAPLAINCY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Prevention Responsibilities**

- Contribute to the various programmes for students dealing with bereavement, loss and suicide
- Annual liturgy to remember deceased friends and relatives

### **Intervention Responsibilities**

- Visit the home of the bereaved when appropriate
- Assist with any prayer services that may be arranged
- As required, work with the panel of trained staff dealing with distressed students
- Make contact with local clergy and offer support particularly in relation to funeral arrangements and the involvement of the school
- Be available as a personal and spiritual support to the staff

### **Postvention Responsibilities**

- Take part in the evaluation of the Crisis Response Team – the chaplain will be especially concerned with the liturgical and spiritual aspects
- Provide follow-up support to the families in conjunction with the Home-school Liaison

## **HOME SCHOOL LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Prevention Responsibilities**

- The relationships this person has developed over time with families will be of great benefit in times of crisis
- In developing working relationships with support personnel and agencies in the community (s)he will assist the Crisis Response Team in putting together a contact list of such people and groups
- Organise bereavement, loss and suicide awareness seminars for parents in addition to parenting programmes which aim to develop overall parenting skills

### **Intervention Responsibilities**

- Following a first contact by the principal with the family, the family liaison person will co-ordinate any further contact as families can feel very confused and pressurised having to address the same issues with too many people
- With the chaplain, consult the family about the involvement of the school in the funeral services
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by the crisis – this may involve drawing up a letter to parents, guidelines for telephone enquiries and meeting with distressed parents

### **Postvention Responsibilities**

- Provide on-going support of the bereaved family – a visit in the weeks following the funeral and at significant times in the following year
- Involve, as appropriate, the family in school liturgies or memorial ceremonies for their bereaved child
- Offer to link the family with community support groups such as Beginning Experience, Barnardos, Rainbows, Samaritans
- Participate in the evaluation of the crisis response strategy

## **COMMUNICATION ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Prevention Responsibilities**

- Establishing contacts with various media representatives before a crisis occurs will make communication easier and procedures smoother during a crisis
- Determine the nature of access that will be offered to media in a crisis situation
- Gather templates of statements that could be adapted to a particular context

### **Intervention Responsibilities**

- Contact Press Ombudsman for advice and help
- With the Crisis Response Team, prepare a concise statement which expresses the school's sadness at the tragedy and outlines the steps in the school's response
- The protection of the bereaved family's privacy is paramount and therefore underlines the importance of discouraging teachers and students independently communicating with the media
- Put in place a designated room where reporters can gather and be addressed as a group by a school representative. It is important to ensure that the media do not have free access to the remainder of the school
- The school needs to respond promptly as to delay may allow the media to obtain misinformation elsewhere
- Provide assistance in drawing up the written and oral communication with parents, students and staff
- Co-ordinate the approach taken to telephone enquiries from parents and others

### **Postvention Responsibilities**

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication role in the crisis response of the school. Part of this review may be to take the opportunity to help educate the media about responsible suicide reporting in order not to sensationalise the event given the potential danger to adolescents at risk.

## **RESPONDING TO A TRAUMA**

### **1. ESTABLISH FACTS**

- It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore it is important that senior and involved staff gather to establish the facts - this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Garda, parents.

### **2. OUTLINE AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

- This group of senior and involved staff need to agree an immediate plan of action which may involve:
  - informing students and remaining staff
  - contacting parents
  - visiting the home of the bereaved
  - organising a school assembly
  - deploying the pastoral team
  - alerting outside agencies
  - liaising with those at an accident site (e.g. in the case of an out of school crisis)
  - agreeing a common statement with regard to the crisis
  - assigning tasks within the group

### 3. INFORM

- It is vital that all those needing information receive it as soon as is practicable. It is helpful if a common statement is agreed when informing students and others. Such a statement will reduce the spread of rumour. Attempt to alert and inform staff in the first instance. If at all possible, the students should be told at the same time in no larger than normal class size. The statement should seek to:
  - be communicated in a sensitive manner
  - give the facts as they are known
  - highlight the supports that will be available
  - indicate the actions that are planned
- In the case where an accident has occurred on a school trip, a similar statement is needed to assist those who will be telephoning relatives. It is preferable to have a group of people involved so that all concerned are informed in or around the same time. Some further considerations in contacting parents:
  - offer any practical help needed - transport, phone numbers, contact names
  - enquire if the parent is alone or has someone to offer support
  - carefully review with the parent that the information given has been fully understood
  - alerting parents to the trauma will help them when they subsequently make contact with their child.
- Liaising with the Press: If there are to be enquiries from the press, it is important that the school cater for this possibility by nominating one person only to act as a liaison. In preparing a press statement thought should be given to the following suggestions:
  - priority to be given to the sensitivities and needs of those affected directly by the crisis
  - the non-release of names, addresses and telephone numbers unless authorised to do so by the family
  - rely on facts and avoid speculation
  - consider likely questions and a response to them
  - agree with the press a time for briefings if this is necessary in an on-going situation
  - nominate a specific location for press briefings
- Others to be Informed: When possible, inform the chairperson of the Board of Management and decide whether an emergency meeting of the Board is necessary. Consider when, or if, it is appropriate to inform the school's insurance company and other concerned agencies.

### 4. SHORT-TERM ACTION

The action that is needed in the short term will obviously be very dependent on the nature of the crisis. Actions will come under a number of headings:

#### STUDENTS

- **Sustaining an atmosphere where it is okay to talk about the experience.** This will require the availability of staff and others. It will entail sensitivity to the time needed for such sharing. Care should be taken to balance the need to continue with the normal routine and the accessibility of support personnel for students.

- **The most essential quality in adults needed by students is that of listening.**  
The school needs to put in place a support system for students in this regard. Such a system may involve those staff who are willing and able to offer support, outside professionals where required, time and resources to carry out their role, a method of supporting each other, and a review of their effectiveness.
- **Encourage contact with home in the initial stages of a crisis.**  
Parents need to be able to contact the school if they have information that will help the school in any way in caring for their child.
- **Involvement of students in any funeral or other services.**  
This requires invitation, planning and review. The families involved need to be consulted, the students invited to take part, time given to prepare for this participation and finally a debriefing of those concerned.
- **Some form of ritual in the context of the school.**  
Students should be carefully consulted as to the nature of such a ritual. Such an experience may also be of great benefit to staff and parents.
- **Attention needs to be given to the possible signs of distress being exhibited by students.**  
In noticing possible signs, it is important to say that these are not necessarily indicative of stress in relation to a trauma. Rather they are merely prompts to staff as they ‘watch out’ for the students in their care. Such signs will be related to uncharacteristic behaviour for example, being unusually quiet. It is important that staff can check-out signs with others before drawing conclusions.
- **Students need to be asked their ‘permission’ regarding discussing their feelings and reactions to a crisis.**  
The guidance counsellor is a key person in addressing the needs of individual students.
- **Freedom to be upset is important for anyone responding to a trauma.**  
The school needs to ask itself how it creates a safe atmosphere for this to occur.
- **Students not directly involved with the trauma should also be recognised as some may be effected.**  
Allowing students to express their sympathy can be a catalyst for such students-writing a card, attending a service.
- **Constant reminders will need to be given in relation to the supports that are available.**  
Students will react in different ways and at different times.
- **Focus on the friends of a bereaved student as they can be the best source of support.**  
Often the bereaved student may not wish to speak to an adult and may rely heavily on friends. These friends may need support as they attempt to find ways to be of help.

## **STAFF**

Many staff, following a trauma, may need to air their feelings and reactions. It will be helpful to consider a number of possibilities such as: availability of the pastoral team; contacts for professional help; a staff ritual; a de-briefing meeting of the staff; a simple confidential questionnaire to determine the needs of the staff.

- Care needs to be taken of those staff directly involved with a trauma that they receive support, are not overworked, are able to de-brief.

- Staff who feel, for whatever reason, that they are unable to be involved in the school's direct response to the trauma should be able to readily opt out.
- Those staff having any concerns about students or others in relation to the trauma should have easy access to personnel who can assist them.
- The guidance counsellor, chaplain and other members of the pastoral team will be the key resource in short and medium term response. They need to be facilitated, resourced and supported in their task. It is vital that they regularly meet with the principal in reviewing progress. It will be this group who can liaise with and support the staff.
- The principal will also need to ensure (s)he is receiving support.

#### **PARENTS**

- The school will have some role to play in supporting parents concerned with a trauma. This will vary depending on the nature of the crisis and the resources available to the school.
- Provide contact people for parents to liaise with, particularly in regard to monitoring the progress of their children.
- Put parents in contact with each other if it is appropriate.
- Discuss with involved parents and/or the parent's council what action can be taken to support those concerned.
- Where available, the home-school co-ordinator is an invaluable resource.
- Involve parents in a school liturgy or ritual following a tragedy.

#### **FUNERAL SERVICES.**

- Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential, where possible, to consult the family concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will appreciate a very public presence of the school.
- Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to a major grief. Take time after the event to de-brief students.
- For those students who wish, encourage and assist them to write a personal message of sympathy. Consider also a common expression from students and/or staff.
- Check out, perhaps with the funeral directors, the arrangements concerning floral tributes. Any accompanying message should be handwritten.
- If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, phone ahead to check that this is appropriate. Visiting the bereaved may be distressing - support those involved.

#### **5. MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM ACTION**

The following are merely a selection of the possibilities worthy of consideration.

- Students returning to school after a major accident or bereavement cannot easily be categorised in terms of their needs. The pastoral team will be a useful resource in seeking to support each student appropriately. Care should be taken to monitor: the relationships with peers and teachers; falling behind in academic and other work; involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Consider if a special day of reflection/retreat would benefit the class effected by a tragedy.

- offer a Rainbows/Spectrum/Beginning Experience/Bernados workshop to students. Such bereavement related groups will be a resource to the school in responding to the medium to long term needs of young people and adults in the school community most effected by a tragedy.
- These groups will also be of assistance in providing a programme such as the Living with Change and Loss programme devised by Michael Ryan published by IAPCE 2000.
- The pastoral team will benefit all in the school by constantly reviewing the needs of students, staff and parents in relation to issues of trauma.
- Review of curricular provision, specialist staff training and links with outside agencies in the area of change, loss, death and crisis issues.
- When a subsequent bereavement occurs in the school setting, take care to support those who were bereaved previously as this subsequent trauma may trigger deep emotional reactions.
- An annual remembrance service for all those connected to the school community who have died. Students, staff and parents can be encouraged to record the names of those they would like remembered.
- The dedication of a tree, special garden, piece of artwork, notice board to recall those that have died.

## **6. REVIEW**

It is vital to review procedures in the light of experience. It is most helpful to take time to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and procedures subsequent to their application. It will also be supportive to contact other schools and professionals to assess courses of action both proposed and taken.

## **7. CONTACTS SHEET**

In times of crisis it will be very useful to have a list of names and numbers of key personnel and organisations. Such a list needs to be easily accessible and regularly updated.

See Appendix A

Appendix B contains Useful Addresses and Relevant Resources

### **REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY**

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be a done by senior management in conjunction with the staff, parents and the board of management on an ongoing basis. It is envisaged that the policy would be reviewed on a formal basis two years after the date of adoption by the board of management.

**Date adopted by the Board of Management    15 June 2010**  
**Date approved by co Galway VEC            21 June 2010**

**Appendix A**  
**Key contacts for Critical Incident Policy**

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Ambulance</b>                                    |                     |
| <b>Fire Brigade</b>                                 | <b>091-844289</b>   |
| <b>Local Garda (Station)</b>                        | <b>091-844016</b>   |
| <b>Local Garda (Mobile)</b>                         |                     |
| <b>Garda Millstreet</b>                             | <b>091-538000</b>   |
| <b>VEC –</b>  |                     |
| <b>CEO of VEC- Joe McDonagh</b>                     |                     |
| <b>Chairperson of BOM- Seamus Hynes</b>             |                     |
| <b>Chairperson of Parents Council- Maria Conlon</b> |                     |
| <b>Health Centre</b>                                |                     |
| <b>Dr McGloin</b>                                   | <b>844489</b>       |
| <b>Dr Brennan</b>                                   | <b>844034</b>       |
| <b>Chaplain Fr King</b>                             | <b>087 2360272</b>  |
| <b>Fr Charlie</b>                                   | <b>0868193884</b>   |
| <b>Presbytery:</b>                                  | <b>844076</b>       |
| <b>State Examination Commission</b>                 | <b>090 64 83600</b> |
| <b>DES Communications Unit</b>                      | <b>01 8892388</b>   |
| <b>SEC – EAM John Corcoran</b>                      | <b>568922</b>       |
| <b>Educational Psychologist: Frank Kavanagh</b>     | <b>864518</b>       |
|   | <b>0876501692</b>   |
| <b>BARNARDOS</b>                                    | <b>01450355</b>     |
| <b>THE SAMARITANS</b>                               | <b>1850609090</b>   |
| <b>CHILDLINE</b>                                    | <b>1800666666</b>   |
| <b>PARENTLINE</b>                                   | <b>1890927277</b>   |
| <b>AWARE</b>  | <b>016766166</b>    |
|   | <b>1890303302</b>   |
| <b>NATIONAL SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT<br/>SUPPORT</b>     |                     |
|   | <b>02495561</b>     |
| <b>RAINBOWS</b>                                     | <b>014734175</b>    |

**BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE**

**018391766**

**Jigsaw Galway**

**091-84549252**

**Diocesan Pastoral Centre Galway**

**-Bereavement Counselling Sr. Cait O Leary**

**091565066**

**Press Ombudsman, John Horgan**

**www.pressombudsman.ie**

**1890 208 080**

### **Appendix B**

#### **Useful Addresses & Relevant References for Critical Incident Policy**

#### **THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

An organisation of bereaved parents who offer support. It is open to all parents who have suffered the loss of a child of any age.

Dublin Tel 01-8322197

Donegal Tel 075-41493

Cork Tel 021-291892

Clare Tel 065-20024

Cavan Tel 049-38436

#### **IRISH FRIENDS OF THE SUICIDE BEREAVED**

Support group for individuals bereaved by suicide. P.O. Box 162, Cork. Tel 021-294318

#### **Solas - BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING FOR CHILDREN**

Bereavement service for children and their families following the death of a parent, carer or siblings. Barnardo's, Christchurch Sq, Dublin 8. Tel 01-4540355

#### **BEGINNING EXPERIENCE GROUPS**

A nationwide group providing weekends for those bereaved through death or loss. The Young Adult Beginning Experience (YABE) is a connected group. Their Dublin address: St Audoen's, High St, Dublin 8. Tel: 01-6791018.

**The following is a mere selection of what is available and includes references to books cited in these set of guidelines.**

**Living with Death** by Judith Bisignano. Good Apple USA 1991.

A workbook for 12-15yr olds.

**The Grieving Child - A Parents Guide** by Helen Fitzgerald. Simon & Schuster New York 1992.

An excellent guide for parents and adults in a caring role.

**Good Grief: Talking and Learning about Loss & Death** by Barbara Ward & Janice Houghton. White Crescent Press Luton 1987.

A pack format exploring the sensitive issues around death and loss.

**The Mourning Handbook** by Helen Fitzgerald. Simon & Schuster New York 1994.  
A comprehensive resource.

**Death and Dying: A Resource Pack** Produced by Noirin Hynes and Margarita Synnott. Available from MREI, Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9.  
A valuable teaching resource pack particularly for religion teachers.

**When Someone Close Dies.** Available from the Medical Social Work Department, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9. Tel 01-8093290

**Death - Helping Children Understand.** Available from Solas, Bernardo's, Christchurch Sq., Dublin 8. Tel 01-4540355

**How it Feels when a Parent Dies** by Jill Krementz. Victor Gollancz London 1988.  
An excellent resource for a student bereavement group.

**The Chaplain - A Faith Presence in the School Community** by Luke Monahan & Caroline Renehan. Columba Press Dublin 1998.  
Has a very practical chapter addressing death and bereavement in the school setting.

**Sorry for Your Trouble - Helping the Bereaved: A Tape** by Christy Kenneally.  
An excellent personal resource.

**Communicating with the Sick and Dying:** A Tape by Christy Kenneally.  
Christy offers invaluable insights. Both these tapes are available through Veritas.

**Echoes of Suicide** edited by Siobhan Foster-Ryan and Luke Monahan. 2001 Veritas: Dublin. A set of resources with particular reference to the school community.

**Suicide Among Young People. Northern Ireland Guidelines. 1996.** ISBN 1 897592 051  
A very clear and practical resource for a whole school response to this issue.

**W.I.N.N. Against Suicide** by Robert Nelson jr R&E Publishers California 1993.  
A brief tour through the facts about, and responses to, suicide.

**Suicide and the Inner Voice** by Robert Firestone. SAGE Publications London 1997.  
A very complete volume on the topic.

**Suicide and the Irish** by Michael Kelleher. Mercier: ISBN 1 85635 149 1  
A comprehensive study.

**Suicide: The Irish Experience** by Sean Spellissey. On Stream Cork 1996.  
A comprehensive study for the Irish context.

**A Special Scar: The Experiences of People Bereaved by Suicide** by B. Allison Wertheimer. Routledge London 1991.  
Based on a study of 50 bereaved people - offers practical help.

**The Long Sleep: Young People and Suicide** by K. Hill. Virago London 1995.  
A good study of this area.

**Suicide, Bereavement and Loss: Perspectives and Responses** edited by Luke Monahan. 1999: Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Education, Dublin: 1999.  
Contains resources to guide schools in dealing with trauma.

**Wise Before the Event - Coping with Crisis in Schools** by William Yule and Anne Gold. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation London 1993. Distributed by Turnaround Distribution Ltd.  
An excellent brief guide for schools.

**Guidelines for Schools on how to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student. ASTI 1997.**  
A very useful practical guide for schools.

**In the Event of a Tragedy - A Response.** Available from the Nth-Western Health Board, Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim. Tel 071-60222.

**Children in Crisis: A Team Approach in the Schools** by Sharon Morgan. Tavlor & Francis Ltd London 1985.  
Focuses on the crisis situations faced by children in our society such as, bereavement, depression and suicide.

**Adolescent Problems** by Doula Nicolson & Harry Ayers. David Foulton Publishers 1997.  
A practical guide for parents and teachers.

**The Year Head: A Key Link in the School Community** by Luke Monahan. Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Education, Dublin 1998.  
Examines the role of this core role in the pastoral school.

**Emotional Problems in Children and Young People** by L. Winkley. Cassell London 1996.  
Provides a good understanding of a range of issues.

**Barnardos. (1999). Responding to youth suicide and attempted youth suicide in Ireland: Barnardos Policy Briefing 1.**

**Department of Education, Northern Ireland. (1996). Suicide among young people: Managing the issue in schools.**

**Support/additional material**

**Short term actions and roles assigned  
1<sup>st</sup> Day.**

| Task                                  | Name |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Gather accurate Information           |      |
| Contact appropriate Agencies          |      |
| Convene a meeting with Key staff      |      |
| Arrange supervision of Students       |      |
| Hold staff meeting                    |      |
| Organise time table for The day       |      |
| Inform parents                        |      |
| Inform students                       |      |
| Make contact with the Bereaved family |      |
| Dealing with the media                |      |
|                                       |      |

**Medium term actions and roles assigned.  
24 – 72 hours**

| Task  | Name |
|---|------|
| Review the events of the First 24 hours                           |      |
| Arrange support for Individual/groups/parents/ /students/teachers |      |
| Plan the re-integration Of staff and students                     |      |
| Plan visits to injured  |      |
| Liaise with family Regarding funeral Arrangements etc.            |      |
| Attendance and Participation at funeral Service                   |      |
| School closure  |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |

**Long term actions and roles assigned.  
Beyond 72 hours**

| Task  | Name |
|---|------|
| Monitor students for Continuing signs of Stress                               |      |
| Evaluate response to Incident and amend Critical incident plan Appropriately. |      |
| Formalise plan for the Future   |      |
| Inform new staff and Pupils   |      |
| Decide on appropriate Way to deal with Anniversaries                          |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |
|   |      |

## SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our students/staff. We are deeply saddened by this death/injury

*(Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost)*

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy.

*(Elaborate)*

It is possible that your son may have some feelings that he may like to discuss with you. You can help your son by taking time to listen to him and encouraging him to express his feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to his age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school *(Details)*

Principal.

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of Outside Professionals.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy/ death of x) we have arranged specialist support for students in the school who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your son to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by .....

If you would like further information on the above or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the school.

Principal.

I/We consent to having our son meet with .....

I understand that my son may meet x in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_.

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Parents /Guardians)

## SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **After a known fatality...**

We are taking this time to think about ....., a .....Year who died last night in a road traffic accident. .... was travelling with her family to ..... We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one is injured seriously.

.....'s funeral is being held at ..... on ..... A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let's take a moment of silence to think of ....., to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

### **After a suspected suicide...**

A tragedy has happened. ...., a .....Year pupil, has died suddenly. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in ..... Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

### **Sample Press Release 1**

Date

#### **School grieves sudden death of pupil**

As reported by the Gardai, a pupil at ..... School died tragically on ..... The circumstances of ..... 's death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to ..... 's family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the NEP's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school

to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember ..... has been arranged for  
.....

Contact: ..... Principal, ..... School at .....

## **PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA**

We are sorry to learn of the tragic.....of .....

We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time.

NB: If the Principal wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

- Sporting achievements
- Musical talents
- Academic success
- Personal attributes