

## Purpose:

The aim of this Critical Incident Procedure document is to help management and staff react quickly and effectively, maintaining control during a critical incident. This document will aid a college/centre to respond in a structured and supportive manner, allowing the college/centre to return to normality as soon as possible while limiting the effects of the incident on staff and students.

## Scope:

This procedure applies to all further education and training provision provided by Teagasc centres or other centres who deliver Teagasc Programmes whether accredited or unaccredited.

## Definition of a Critical Incident

Teagasc recognises a critical incident to be an accident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the college/centre, and disrupts the normal running of the college. Critical incidents may involve learners, staff, the college or the local community. Examples of a critical incident include;

- The death of a member of the college/centre community, through sudden death, accident or suicide.
- The disappearance of a member of the college/centre staff or learner.
- A physical attack on a staff member or learner.
- Intrusion into the college/centre.
- Serious damage to the college/centre through fire, flooding, vandalism etc.
- Outbreak of a serious disease.
- Abnormal severe weather conditions that make the environment unsafe.
- National Emergency (Government Lead)

## Responsibilities

### Teagasc Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

#### *a. Establishment of CIMT*

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is a team designated to lead and manage the response to a critical incident.

Teagasc education centres will form critical incident management teams.

Critical incident management teams will draft individual critical incident management plan in preparedness for such an incident, which can then be implemented in the event of a critical incident.

Critical incidents by their nature are difficult situations, and have to be managed in different ways depending on the context and nature of any individual critical incident.

### ***b. Roles and Responsibilities***

Key players in the CIMT include:

- Team Leader (College Principal / Regional Manager)
- Assistant College Principal / Education Officer
- Nominated staff members
- Administrator

The Critical Incident team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them should they deem necessary.

#### **Key Roles:**

The following gives details of some key responsibilities of the relevant team members.

#### **Team Leader;**

- Alerts team members to the crisis – convenes a meeting of the team.
- Co-ordinates / delegates tasks to other team members.
- Liaises with the Head of Education and HQ.
- Contacting emergency support services.
- Delegation to other team members.
- Briefing and advising the staff and noting their feelings and concerns.
- Organising supervision in the college.
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments/progress.
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation.
- Taking care of “Vulnerable students / vulnerable staff”.
- Liaising with external agencies for support or referral.
- Meeting with parents/guardians if required.
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident.
- Preparing a press release and liaising with the media.
- Preparation of an ‘incident room’ and providing a ‘Debriefing’ by a qualified therapist for anyone affected by a college related trauma.

#### **Gardaí Liaison: Principal/Regional Manager**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**Staff Liaison: Assistant Principal / Education Officer**

- Leads briefing 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 students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises staff of the availability of Employee Assistance Services and other relevant services available to them

**Learner Liaison: Assistant Principal / Education Officer**

- Alerts senior management and other staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for learners (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records
- Looks after setting up and supervision of room for vulnerable students
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room
- Helps contact parents of students identified as vulnerable

**Family Liaison:**

- Contacts/Visits the bereaved family with the Team Leader, if appropriate
- Arranges meetings, if required
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues around sharing information
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up,
- Sets up room for meetings
- Maintains a record of people seen
- Meets with individuals
- Provides appropriate materials for family (from their critical incident folder)
- Helps contact parents of learners identified as vulnerable

**Administrator**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers for
  - Next of kin for all learners
  - Teachers/Staff
  - Emergency services

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- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that letter templates are ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopy materials needed
- Maintain records

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, emails, meetings, interventions etc.

### Media Liaison:

- Teagasc Public Relations Department should be consulted.

### *c. Key Considerations (Confidentiality)*

Teagasc is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. If the team leader is unavailable, a nominated deputy is in place to lead proceedings.

## Critical Incident Management Plan

### *a. Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident*

In the event of a critical incident of a Critical Incident occurring onsite, the first response is to ensure safety, contact the emergency services and activate evacuation plans in line with Teagasc Health and Safety policies.

The College Principal/Regional Manager (Team Leader) should be contacted immediately. They will gather accurate information on key details of the incident which can be shared with the CIMT.

The Team Leader will convene a CIMT meeting to plan next steps. This should occur as soon as practically possible in order to decide next steps depending on the severity of the incident. It is essential that each CIMT member understands their role and are aware of the facts.

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i. Short Term Actions (initial 24 hours)

Task	Key CIMT	Name
Ensure safety, contact the emergency services and activate evacuation plans	First respondent	
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Team Leader	
Convene a CIMT meeting	Team Leader	
Contact external agencies	Team Leader	
Arrange supervision for students (if appropriate)	Learner Liaison	
Hold staff meeting	Staff Liaison	
Agree schedule for the day	Team Leader	
Inform students	Learner Liaison Administrator	
Inform parents/guardians (if appropriate)	Family Liaison Administrator	
Compile a list of vulnerable learners/staff	Staff Liaison	
Consult with PR Dept. in relation to appropriate Media Presence	Team Leader contacts Teagasc PR Dept. for guidance	
Hold end-of-day staff briefing (discuss how the day went and plan for the next day)	Team Leader	

ii. Medium Term Actions (24 – 72 hours)

Task	Key CIMT	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day One	Team Leader	
Meet external agencies (Spectrum etc.)		
Staff Meeting	Team Leader	
Agree schedule for the day		
Arrange support for learners, staff, family	Team Leader Learner Liaison Staff Liaison Family Liaison	
Liaise with bereaved family re: media, funeral arrangements	Team Leader Family Liaison	

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(if appropriate)		
**Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team Leader Family Liaison	
Decisions made about coming days (Cancelling classes, closure of college/centre etc.)	Team Leader	

*\*\*This is done by consultation with the bereaved family. Family wishes must be respected. If appropriate the Team Leader will liaise with the CIMT regarding who may represent the staff at the funeral service.*

iii. Long Term Actions

Task	Key CIMT	Name
Monitor staff for signs of continuing distress	All CIMT	
Monitor Learners for signs of continuing distress	All CIMT	
Liaise with external agencies	Team Leader	
Plan for return of bereaved learners/staff	Team Leader Learner Liaison Staff Liaison	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	ALL CIMT	
Amendment of Quercus details as relevant	Team Leader / Learner Liaison	
Informing relevant persons (PLP Specialist etc. of change of circumstances)	Learner Liaison	
Review response to incident and amend plan	ALL CIMT	

## Staff

The CIMT will take into consideration the impact the Critical Incident may have on staff and will ensure appropriate measures are in place to support them adequately.

## Appendices

### a. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Role	Name	Contact Details
Team leader		
Garda liaison		
Staff liaison		
Learner Liaison		
Family Liaison		
Administrator		
Media liaison		

### b. Critical Incident Rooms (Template)

Critical Incident Rooms In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name	
Staffroom/Boardroom	Main room for meeting staff
Library	Meetings with students
Room	'Quite' Room
Room	Meeting with most vulnerable students
Room	Councillor (Individual sessions with students)
Room	Councillor (Individual sessions with students)

### c. Spectrum Life / Councillors and Support Workers

Freephone: 1800 903 542

Online: <https://app.spectrum.life/login> (Organisation code: Teagasc1)

**Spectrum Critical Incident Support (CISM) can be activated by a nominated Teagasc's authorisation person. In this instance the Head of Education.**

By email directly: [cism@spectrum.life](mailto:cism@spectrum.life)

Via the 24/7 support Freephone number that the students use: 1800 903 542 and ask for the critical incident stress management (cism) team.

### d. Support Material (Draft Templates)

### ***Sample CIMT Agenda***

- Key information
- Determining the Critical Incident Level
- Identifying Roles & Responsibilities
- Identifying Critical Incident Rooms
- Developing briefing material for staff and learners (importance of accurate and factual information)
- Importance of all team members will keep written records of phone calls, emails, meetings, interventions etc.
- Confidentiality
- Schedule for the day / coming days
- Preparation of a letter to learners/next of kin (as appropriate)
- Discussion of support services/agencies whose support may be needed and agreement about who will contact them.
- Contacting Teagasc PR Dept. re media protocol
- Time set for end of day briefing
- AOB

### ***Sample Staff Meeting Agenda***

- Attendance of all staff essential
- Provide accurate and clear information
- Guidelines for supporting learners
- Information on supports for staff
- Media protocol (Teagasc PR to Lead)
- Schedule for the day / coming days
- Time set for end of day briefing
- AOB



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### Critical Incident Management Plan Templates

#### Short Term Actions (initial 24 hours)

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Ensure safety, contact the emergency services and activate evacuation plans	First respondent	
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Team Leader	
Convene a CIMT meeting	Team Leader	
Contact external agencies	Team Leader	
Arrange supervision for learners (if appropriate)	Learner Liaison	
Hold staff meeting	Staff Liaison	
Agree schedule for the day	Team Leader	
Inform learners	Learner Liaison Administrator	
Inform parents/guardians (if appropriate)	Family Liaison Administrator	
Consult with PR Dept. in relation to appropriate Media Presence	Team Leader contacts Teagasc PR Dept. for guidance	
Hold end-of-day staff briefing (discuss how the day went and plan for the next day)	Team Leader	

#### Medium Term Actions (24 – 72 hours)

Task	Key CIMT	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day One	Team Leader	
Meet external agencies (Spectrum etc.)		
Staff Meeting	Team Leader	
Agree schedule for the day		
Arrange support for learners, staff, family	Team Leader Learner Liaison Staff Liaison Family Liaison	
Liaise with bereaved family re: funeral arrangements (if appropriate)	Team Leader Family Liaison	
**Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team Leader Family Liaison	
Decisions made about coming days (Cancelling classes, closure of college/centre etc.)	Team Leader	

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*\*\*This is done by consultation with the bereaved family. Family wishes must be respected. If appropriate the Team Leader will liaise with the CIMT regarding who may represent the staff at the funeral service.*

*Long Term Actions*

Task	Key CIMT	Name
Monitor staff for signs of continuing distress	All CIMT	
Monitor Learners for signs of continuing distress	All CIMT	
Liaise with external agencies	Team Leader	
Plan for return of bereaved learners/staff	Team Leader Learner Liaison Staff Liaison	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	ALL CIMT	
Amendment of Quercus details as relevant	Team Leader / Learner Liaison	
Informing relevant persons (PLP Specialist etc. of change of circumstances)	Learner Liaison	
Review response to incident and amend plan	ALL CIMT	

### e. Support Organisations

Emergency Contact List	Telephone Numbers
Emergency services (Gardaí, Ambulance, Fire brigade)	999 or 112
Local Hospital	
Security	
Local GP's	
Local Clergy	
The Samaritans	1850 60 90 90
Spectrum - Student Assistance Programme	1800 903 542

### f. Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q. What do we do first on hearing news of the incident/death?**

If the source of the news is the affected family, express condolences and get as many facts as possible – sensitively. If it is from another source, check for veracity; obtain the facts; the numbers injured etc. Ascertain who is to contact the next of kin. The Gardaí may have already undertaken this role.

#### **Q. Who do we contact for help?**

If the college/centre is closed (weekends/holidays) contact members of the Critical Incident Management Team with a view to setting up a meeting. Contact the Head of Education.

#### **Q. How do we handle all the phone calls?**

Assign one or two suitable people to take calls. Clear guidance should be given to those involved on what to say. An agreed factual statement should be available to the telephone operators.

#### **Q. How do we handle the media?**

Teagasc Public Relations Department should be consulted, with protocol agreed.