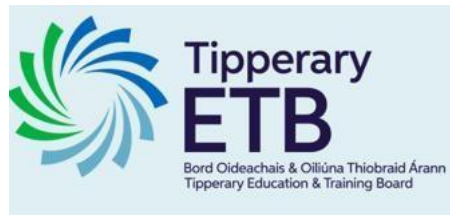




## **Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed, Thurles**

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

**May 2026**



Policy Area	Schools
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## **AIM OF THE POLICY**

Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed has established a Critical Incident Management Team which is responsible for prevention, intervention and postvention in relation to students whose welfare is deemed to be 'at risk' and in the event of a critical incident (CI). A CI management policy is included in this document as one element of the school's policy and practice. This policy aligns with our core values of excellence in education, care, community, equality and respect.

### **Other policies that support wellbeing at Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed include:**

- Health and Safety
- Pastoral Care
- Anti-Bullying
- Code of Behaviour
- Wellbeing Policy
- Internet, Computer and Chromebook/iPad Acceptable Use Policy
- Guidance and Counselling Plan
- One to One Counselling and Teaching Policy
- S.P.H.E. Programme
- Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Inclusion (SEN policy)
- Administration of Medicines Policy
- CMCO Sports Policy
- CMCO Visiting Speakers and Guest Speaker Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Student Support Team Policy

### **UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS TO PROMOTE SCHOOL WELLBEING INCLUDE:**

- a) Acknowledgement of and support for each person's role in the school community
- b) Promoting an environment which meets student physical, psychological, social and emotional needs
- c) Priority given to the nurturing of teaching and learning relationships
- d) Recognition of competences, talents and abilities

- e) Clear values that promote a student-centred ethos
- f) Strong collaborative leaderships between student, staff and parents/carers
- g) Clarity of policies, roles, responsibilities and tasks
- h) Support for an engaging curriculum
- i) On-going monitoring of progress for the student
- j) Involving all concerned in the life of the school

In relation to responding to a CI the school will seek to:

- a) Provide a range of support for members of the school community to call upon in a time of crisis and in the longer term.
- b) Have in place a policy for dealing with critical incidents in the context of the school.
- c) Regularly review the structures of support and referral available in the school.

### **CREATION OF A COPING SUPPORTIVE AND CARING ETHOS IN THE SCHOOL**

Systems are in place to help to build resilience in both students and staff, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

### **PHYSICAL SAFETY**

Measures to address the physical safety of the school community include the following:

- a) An Evacuation Plan has been formulated. This plan is brought to the attention of all staff and students during the school year.
- b) Fire drills are held at least once a term.
- c) Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly inspected.
- d) CI (Critical Incident) drills take place annually.
- e) Parents/guardians, where appropriate, are informed of the pre-opening supervision arrangements, whereby students can gain access to the school building from 8.40am.
- f) Expectations of general student behaviour, encourage positive relations and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community and prohibit bullying in any form.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**

The management and staff of Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion through the following:

- a) Guidance and Counselling is a key resource available to all students in the school.
- b) Social, Personal and Health Education are integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; wellbeing; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying /cyber bullying and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- c) Staff have access to training for their role through training e.g., SST/SPHE, etc.
- d) A student support team (SST) is in place in the school to respond to issues that students might face
- e) Relationships and Sexuality Education is timetabled for all Senior Cycle students
- f) Staff receive regular reminders about the Child Protection/Safeguarding Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is the principal, Denis Quinn and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is the deputy principal, Clare Wallace
- g) Students who are identified as being at increased risk are referred to the Student Support team where concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents may be informed and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency
- h) Staff members are informed about how to access support for themselves through employee assistance provision.
- i) The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy including cyber bullying.
- j) Staff members accept their role in the care of students and colleagues
- k) The school recognises that staff is a key resource in promoting our ethos.
- l) Resources on supporting those in difficulty in the schools will be accessed when required.
- m) Several staff members have received Suicide awareness training.
- n) The school has links with a range of external agencies

- NEPS
- Barnados
- HSE
- Jigsaw
- Pieta House
- CAMHS
- BelongTo

The involvement of external service providers is decided in the context of what Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed. is already offering, building, where appropriate, on programmes already set in place. Inputs by external providers are considered carefully taking account of the safety and well-being of students, the appropriateness of the content of materials provided, and whether such materials are based on sound evidence. External speakers are approved by the Student Support team in line with the visiting speaker policy.

All provider organisations are expected to supply evidence showing how they quality assure their services. All practitioners within those organisations, whether employed or acting in a voluntary capacity, are expected to be bound by professional and regulatory standards, to have successfully undergone appropriate vetting procedures, demonstrate expertise and experience of working in similar settings and with similar target groups, provide references from reputable agencies, have public or professional liability insurance and follow a recognised ethical code. [See *External Visiting Speakers Policy*]

Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed has established a Student Support Team comprised of a group of staff who have volunteered to:

- a) Develop a structure to work in a preventative way with students experiencing intense stress including child/vulnerable adult welfare/protection, self-harm, suicide, mental health, substance misuse, etc.
- b) Deal with any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the school
- c) Lead the response of the school in the event of a CI e.g., attempted suicide, sudden death, major event, fire, crash, etc.

The SST is usually selected based on competencies including counselling skills, prior expertise and interest in student wellbeing and welfare. Each member of the team has a dedicated role and is responsible for the development and maintenance of the team. Members of SST must seek training for their specific role in the team. These roles comprise the following:

- a) Principal
- b) Deputy Principal x2
- c) Student Voice Facilitator
- d) Home School Community Liaison
- e) Guidance Counsellor x 2
- f) Behaviour for Learning Teacher
- g) Learning Support Coordinator
- h) SPHE Coordinator
- i) Wellbeing Coordinator

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM**

The purpose, role and responsibility of the Critical Incident Team is to undertake the following:

- a) To provide support within the school to students experiencing critical stress.
- b) To conduct evidence based planned observations and risk assessments on critical student support issues.
- c) To design, implement and review a plan of intervention to directly work with students in difficulty.
- d) To sensitively communicate with staff regarding students in difficulty.
- e) To recommend that all interventions are carried out. This may include partnership with students, parents/guardians, school community and external support agencies.
- f) To maintain records of all interventions which have clear indicators and outcome data.
- g) To liaise with the school leadership and management team on an ongoing basis.
- h) To engage in team supervision and support if required as a means of tracking plans and providing support to the team on its work.
- i) In the event of a CI in the school, the Critical Incident Team will implement the protocol on CIs. These protocols will be reviewed / evaluated annually.

### **ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL**

The Principal oversees the remit of the Critical Incident Team.

### **FUNCTION OF THE COORDINATOR**

- a) Liaises with the Principal on the outcome of each meeting and on an ongoing basis to review the CI plan, in the absence of Management from the meeting.

- b) Liaise with the Principal to ensure that all students and staff profiles are up to date e.g., current telephone numbers, next of kin, parent/guardians contact details etc... on an annual basis.
- c) Responsible for the organisation of the Critical Incident Team meeting.
- d) Agrees the agenda and ensures all minutes of team meetings are recorded.
- e) Follow up with team members to support any actions.
- f) Ensures that all files are stored securely and comply with data protection requirements.
- g) Liaise at an interagency level with the TETB and other agencies as required.
- h) Facilitates annual induction and review of the SST and the CIMP and checklist.
- i) Prepares an annual report for the board of management.
- j) In the event of an unforeseen significant event and the Principal/Deputies are unavailable, the Coordinator shall convene a Critical Incident meeting. It is recommended that a minimum of three members can form a quorum to commence the CIMP. Other team members may be released throughout the day if required. A review meeting is convened at the end of the day and a full report will be made available to the Principal/Deputy on the event, plan and outcome.
- k) Supports the Principal to ensure that members of the school community are aware of the evacuation and lock down procedures e.g., alternate warning signals for different circumstances to normal drills such as pulse to notify 'shelter in place' or air horn to move to a place of safety, etc... Identify evacuation routes, assembly points including an alternative in event of a 'bomb' threat, access to registers to account for all persons in the building
- l) Ensures that incident logs are distributed and recorded by all.
- m) In the event of a telephone call relating to an external threat, make prompt cards, with the principal, with key questions available for administrative staff.

#### **FUNCTION OF THE STUDENT LIAISON**

- a) Liaises with Coordinator/Principal to ensure student records are up to date annually including mobile numbers, addresses of 3<sup>rd</sup> person contact, etc.
- b) Maintains links between staff and students (takes updates from on vulnerable students).
- c) Alerts other staff to vulnerable students observing confidentiality and boundaries on a need-to-know basis.
- d) Recommends referrals to Guidance Counsellor as appropriate.
- e) Has Student handouts ready in the event of CI.
- f) Provides material as appropriate to colleagues.

- g) Liaises with the Principal.
- h) Identifies a designated room for students to receive support in the event of a CI.
- i) Where appropriate, has access arranged to a 'buddy' establishment i.e., a place of safety in the community.

### **FUNCTION OF THE STAFF LIAISON**

- a) Ensure staff records are up to date annually including mobile numbers and 3<sup>rd</sup> party/ next of kin contacts, etc.
- b) Has staff handouts ready for handling a classroom session and common reactions after a CI.
- c) Prepares a sample statement for administrative staff for use when answering phone calls.
- d) Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outlines what supports are available.
- e) Outlines relevant contacts and supports available to staff, including details of Employee Assistance Programme.
- f) Monitors and supports vulnerable staff.
- g) Ensures that the 'Grab Bag' is ready (contains copy of the emergency plan, first aid kit, high vis vests for Critical Incident team, back up of all persons' contact details, map of school, mobile phone and charger, remote access to the school system by at least two members of staff, log sheets, etc...).
- h) Identifies key holder/s when the school is closed and develops a staff contact cascade plan with the Critical Incident Team to inform all staff promptly and uniformly. Has a caretaker's number for when school is closed.

### **FUNCTION OF THE PARENT LIAISON (H.S.C.L.)**

- a) Identifies him/herself as the named contact for parents/guardians (groups).
- b) Is available to meet with parents/guardians (groups).
- c) Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready to for adaptation.
- d) Has literature on potential reactions, coping with loss, etc...
- e) Compiles support information, contact details, etc... for parents/guardians.
- f) Has room designated for meeting parents/guardians in a CI.
- g) Meets with individual parents/guardians as required.
- h) Keeps a record/log of parents/guardians seen.

\* Parents will be liaised with and where appropriate when the student is over 18 years we will be dealing with the students directly.

### **FUNCTION OF THE MEDIA/COMMUNITY LIAISON**

- a) Maintains an up-to-date list of contacts including NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services (see emergency contacts list), TETB, Duty Social Worker, CAMHS, HSE Mental health, Safeguarding Adult Services, local GPs, etc...
- b) Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents.
- c) Maintains an up-to-date list of Parents' Council members.
- d) Prepares a sample press statement and ensures it is available on the school system.
- e) Updates details of Critical Incident Team members, staff and relevant staff at external agencies.
- f) Retains a copy of the Media Protocol Reporting a Critical Incident, NUJ.

## **FUNCTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LIAISON**

- a) Maintains up-to-date telephone records of parents/guardians, teachers/tutors, emergency services, etc...
- b) With the Coordinator of the Critical Incident Team, prepares statements ready for telephone calls from parents/guardians and takes telephone calls recording any significant interaction.
- c) Ensures that templates of letters, etc... are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- d) Organises photocopying of materials needed.
- e) Prepares and sends out letters, texts, e-mails, other social media formats ~~and faxes~~ with support from staff. Arranges system changes to ensure texts are not sent to bereaved family/families.
- f) Ensures isolation rooms are identified in the event of an outbreak.

## **TEAM SUPERVISION**

Supervision is a process whereby an external supervisor is available daily by telephone and to visit the school if required to support the Critical Incident Team in fulfilling its role and responsibility. It is recommended that the Supervisor meets with the Critical Incident Team as required to review the student plans including the assessment of risk, referral pathways, records and team support. Individual supervision should be available on request to Management for any member of the Critical Incident Team. The Supervisor may co-ordinate the CI debriefing for staff where relevant.

The aim of supervision is to equip team members with the knowledge and skills to intervene effectively with students on a range of critical student support matters including the following:

- a) To assist the team to identify signs of risk.
- b) To develop and implement evidence-based plans of intervention using reflective practice and positive solution focused techniques.
- c) To attend to individual and/or team support and development issues.
- d) To clarify the Critical Incident Team roles and responsibilities.
- e) To ensure accountability for the work undertaken by the team.
- f) To provide regular and constructive feedback and review on assessments, student support plans and outcome of intervention.
- g) To ensure that records are maintained as per TETB standards.
- h) To review the Critical Incident Team policy annually.

## **THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (CIMP)**

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to respond quickly and effectively in the event of a CI, to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the psychological effects on the students and staff will be limited. The CIMP should enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible.

### **DEFINITION OF A CI**

‘An incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.’

CIs may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of the school/ centre or local community. The following are examples of critical incidents, but are not limited to these:

- a) The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.
- b) An intrusion into the school.
- c) An accident involving members of the school community.
- d) An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- e) A physical attack on a staff member, student or school community.
- f) Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc...
- g) The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- h) A serious accident involving cars, machines or equipment.
- i) Robbery.
- j) A phone call or notice of imminent danger.
- k) A serious issue involving other public or private facilities within close proximity.
- l) An accident / incident on near-by access roads.

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

The CIMT is comprised of members of the SST and additional members of staff may be included as required in the event of a CI. It should also be noted that it is the duty of all staff to promote and safeguard the welfare of learners and staff following the occurrence of a CI.

In order to ensure the school is in a position to respond effectively to any crisis that it may encounter, the SST Coordinator will review the CIMP at the beginning of each year, reviewing roles and responsibilities, including training on CI procedures. All staff should have digital access to the CI policy. The CI team will have access to the CI shared drive which contains the school's policy, plan, and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Following an incident deemed to be of a critical nature, the SST/CIMT will be contacted by the Principal to meet at a designated location. The notification will inform them of the type of incident and the exact location of the incident. When the SST/CIMT arrive at the scene they need to:

- Manage the incident scene where appropriate.
- Remove people at risk.
- Call the emergency services and alert first aiders etc...
- Follow the instruction of competent personnel – Gardaí, Fire Personnel, etc...
- Cooperate with the external services if they assume control of the incident
- Liaise with the media.

If an incident happens during the night or at the weekends or during holiday periods, the SST/CIMT needs to respond to it in an appropriate manner. A judgement needs to be made of how best to deal with the event at the school and in the wider community. The Team Members may be contacted on mobile phone, etc... The SST/CIMT may need to initiate actions to allow the school to carry on its work. A decision will be made by management in conjunction with the SST/CIMT as to which protocols / procedures to implement depending on the CI.

### **CI PROCEDURES: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE - SHORT TERM UP TO 12 HOURS**

**Hearing the News:** Once a CI comes to the attention of a member of the school s/he should, where possible and practical, inform the senior management of the school. However, where it is apparent that an emergency situation exists, it may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.

**Establish the Facts:** Before taking any action, 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 hospitals, Garda Síochána, emergency/ medical services, parents etc.

**Summary Checklist** - for Principal/Deputy and Coordinator available members of the CI Team:

- a) The Principal/Senior Management Team has overall responsibility in the event of a CI and will facilitate the operation of the CI plan.
- b) It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis
- c) Consult appropriate agencies e.g., TETB, NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services, (see emergency contacts list), TETB, DES, SEC, etc...
- d) Gather together the SST/CI Team.
- e) Inform staff and students and where feasible, staff should be informed in the first instance
- f) Inform the Director of Schools in Tipperary ETB who will then inform the CE and TETB Senior Management team.
- g) Organise the supervision of students.
- h) Have administrative staff photocopy appropriate literature.
- i) Convene a staff meeting and inform attendees of the immediate plan; decide whether or not an outside professional will be invited to that meeting; where students are going to be in the school, it is critical that appropriate supervision be put in place for all students whose teachers/tutors/supervisors may be involved in the meetings.
- j) Identify high-risk students and staff.
- k) Appoint someone to deal with phone queries and /or to deal with the media
- l) Organise a timetable for the school to respond to the crisis, wherever possible adhering to normal timetables and routines while avoiding any signs of insensitivity to those touched most intimately by the crisis.
- m) Inform students and parents/carers.
- n) Make contact with the bereaved family, including a visit to the family.
- o) Withdraw siblings.
- p) Organise support.
- q) Prepare a statement/respond to the media.
- r) Draft a letter for parents/carers.
- s) Meet with SST to review the day.

**Staff Meeting:** All staff should be invited to the meeting. The following matters should be addressed by the meeting:

- A sensitive account of the facts as known, having regard for the privacy of those involved in the incident. Information needs to be provided on a need-to-know basis.
- The views and feelings of staff.
- How, by whom and in what setting students and other members of the school should be informed of the incident.
- An outline of the timetable that the Team has drawn up for responding to the CI; the timetable may, if necessary and feasible, be amended at this meeting.
- Details regarding the external agencies that have been contacted and the support programme that will be put in place for staff/ students and other members of the school/community
- The procedure for identifying vulnerable students.

**Informing students:** It is important that all those needing to be informed of the CI receive necessary information as soon as is practicable.

## **GUIDELINES FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS/PROCEDURES**

- In consultation with the family/carers, inform families/carers of the school policy in relation to arrangements.
- In the event of a death, including a death by suicide, it is not recommended by NEPS that the school host a guard of honour or in any way give undue attention to the cause as this may initiate copycat suicides and glamorise the tragedy.
- The school in consultation with the family may participate in the service e.g., choir, reading, etc...
- In the event of the death of a staff member, the school Management/Senior Management may decide to close the school for the funeral.
- In the event of a death of a student it is recommended that the school remains open as normal routines assist students to cope.
- Other students under the age of 18 who wish to attend may attend accompanied by their parents/cares. The parents/carers should accompany the student under the age of 18 to and from the funeral. The parents/guardians will have to sign the student who is under the age of 18, in and out according to school rules. Parents who sign out students will be asked to keep them in their care until the following school day.

- In the event of the school taking a few representative students, staff will brief students in advance (in consultation with parents) about the funeral plan and the appropriate etiquette required.

## **CI PROCEDURES – FIRST MEETING AGENDA**

Role of the Principal/Senior Manager/Coordinator in a CI

The First Meeting with the Critical Incident Team

The first meeting with the Critical Incident Team and other key staff members will be convened and chaired by the Principal/Senior leadership team and facilitated by the Coordinator. The agenda should include the following:

- Provide clarity on the CI to ensure that all in attendance have **accurate** information. In the case of sudden death of a student, the information must not make reference to the cause
- Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and the media
- Delegate responsibilities of the Critical Incident Team as per designated roles and responsibilities
- Discuss what support services to contact.
- Prepare what to say to staff.
- Prepare what to say to students.
- Prepare a statement/letter/text/notice for social media for parents/carers of students who are under 18 years. In the case of vulnerable adults/guardians may be contacted where appropriate either by phone or through usual means letters, etc...
- Prepare (possibly written) what to say to the media. Only the Media Liaison member of the Critical Incident Team or another nominated person will talk to the media at a pre-arranged time and place.
- Make a decision about the school closure.
- Organise the schedule/timetable for the day.
- Ensure that a phone line remains open for the day and is available for enquiries.
- Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
- Organise a staff meeting.
- Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings
- Arrange for the copying and printing of letters for parents/guardians (where appropriate).

- p) Decide which external agencies should be involved.
- q) Allocate time for students to reflect/talk about the CI with key staff and arrange for staff to have handout on managing a class after a CI.
- r) Allow for any member of staff to be given the opportunity to withdraw from the process if they feel unable to offer support at this time.
- s) Ensure that the TETB Director is briefed, and advice and guidance sought, where necessary.
- t) Notify other relevant TETB Staff as appropriate – see contact list.

### **CI PROCEDURES: RESPONSE - MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS 24-72 HOURS**

**Summary Checklist** for Principal/Coordinator/the CI Team:

- a) Review events of the first 24 hours.
- b) Arrange support for individual students, groups of students /parents/carers etc...
- c) Plan for the reintegration of students and staff.
- d) Liaise with family regarding arrangements/ participation at the service, and with their consent arrange a place in the school, with a photograph and book of condolences for students and staff to pay their respects.
- e) In consultation with parents/guardians, arrange attendance and participation at service.
- f) Decide on school closure.
- g) The Critical Incident Team will establish the need for outside services and contact them as required.
- h) The timetable will operate as normal to maintain routine and re-integrate students who had been absent.

### **CI PROCEDURES: RESPONSE - LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

**Summary Checklist** for Principal/Coordinator/the CI Team:

- a) Monitor students.
- b) If the CI relates to the death of a student, remove the name of the deceased from the school's communication systems including those used for text messaging.
- c) Evaluate the response to the CI and amend the plan appropriately.
- d) Formalise the CI plan for the future.

- e) Keep new staff, students, parents/carers informed about SST policy.
- f) Decide appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries.
- g) Ensure that the SST meet to review the response to the CI and to process this response accordingly
- h) Assess the need for any additional counselling by consulting the ETB's counselling service and, where appropriate, maintain contact with those affected by the CI
- i) Assess the need for any additional support from outside agencies or services
- j) Assess the need for and organise debriefing sessions for all those involved in the incident including, if appropriate, the wider ETB community.
- k) Organise debriefing sessions depending on circumstances and need including:
  - Technical debriefing e.g., of security or emergency staff, etc...
  - CI stress debriefing and/or initial defusing conducted by professional counsellors trained in CI stress debriefing for those affected by the CI and/or CI Management Team debriefing.
- l) Ensure a copy of the review findings is placed on the file for the relevant CI.
- m) Refer to the Inspire EAP service for more information on Staff Wellbeing.

### **ROLE OF THE STUDENT LIAISON IN A CI**

- a) Arranges access to student records.
- b) Maintains links between staff and students (takes updates from the Year heads/ supervisors on vulnerable students).
- c) Observes vulnerable students.
- d) Alerts other staff to vulnerable students.
- e) Advises and recommends counselling as required.
- f) Provides material as appropriate to students.
- g) Provides material as appropriate to colleagues.
- h) Sets up a 'quiet room' to share reactions and feelings which is supported by a member of the Critical Incident team.
- i) Advises students on possible reactions to the CI.
- j) Keeps a record of students seen internally and referrals made to external agencies.
- k) Liaises with the Principal/Senior Manager on an on-going basis.
- l) Where appropriate, has access arranged to a 'buddy' establishment.

## **ROLE OF THE STAFF LIAISON IN A CI**

- a) Leads briefing of staff on the facts as they are known. Takes questions from staff and outlines the routine for the day
- b) Helps teachers/tutors to prepare for questions from students Outlines possible reactions and distributes handouts on handling a class/group post a CI.
- c) Prepares a statement of facts to be read out to all students.
- d) Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outlines what supports are available.
- e) Distributes appropriate material for staff.
- f) Meets staff again later in the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high-risk students and act as required.
- g) Ensures quiet locations are made available in the school.
- h) Identifies support services within the school.
- i) Establishes the need for outside services and provides contacts.
- j) Makes contact with all staff including those who are absent e.g., on Maternity or Sick Leave, etc.
- k) Identifies vulnerable staff members and advises them regarding counselling and supports as appropriate
- l) In the event of an evacuation, ensures that the 'Grab bag is ready (which includes a copy of the emergency plan, first aid kit, high vis vests for Critical Incident team, back up of all persons' contact details, map of school, mobile phone and charger, remote access to the school system by at least two members of staff, log sheets, etc...)

## **ROLE OF THE PARENT/CARER LIAISON IN A CI**

- a) Visits bereaved family with the Principal/Senior leader identifies him/herself as the named contact for parents (groups).
- b) Is available to support the Principal/Deputies to meet with parents (groups) and to take phone calls.
- c) Facilitates meetings with parents/guardians and manages 'questions and answers'
- d) Arranges to have compass statements ready and distributed. It is important that the media person is liaised with in the preparation of this statement.
- e) Distributes literature on potential reactions, coping with loss recommended by NEPS

- f) Distributes support information, contacts etc... to parents/guardians.
- g) Sets up room for meeting parents/carers.
- h) Meets with individual parents/carers or coordinates support for parents/carers who arrive at the school unannounced.
- i) Keeps a record of parents/carers seen.

#### **ROLE OF THE MEDIA/COMMUNITY LIAISON IN A CI**

- a) Assists the Principal/Senior Manager in contacting relevant agencies
- b) Makes contacts list readily available to staff, Critical Incident team, administrative staff, parents/carers
- c) Prepares a draft press statement for delivery by the Principal/Senior Manager
- d) Delivers press statement with the Principal/Senior Manager
- e) Supports the Principal/Senior Manager in all enquiries from the media and identifies a room to contain media if they arrive on campus
- f) Supports the Principal/Senior Manager in contact with the Communication section of the DES
- g) Liaises with community agencies for support and onward referral
- h) Updates the Critical Incident Team and staff on external agencies

#### **ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LIAISON**

- a) Maintains up-to-date telephone records of parents/guardians, teachers/tutors, emergency services
- b) With the Coordinator of the Critical Incident team prepares a statement ready for telephone calls from parents/guardians, takes telephone calls, recording any significant interaction
- c) Ensures that templates of letters, etc... are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- d) Organises photocopying of materials needed
- e) Prepares and sends out letters, texts, e-mails, other social media formats and faxes with support from staff; is careful not to send texts to the bereaved family
- f) Ensures that the incident log is distributed and recorded, the isolation room is identified in event of a pandemic, the prompt card with key questions for admin staff is ready in the event of a telephone call issuing an external threat

## **RECORD KEEPING**

In the event of a CI, each member of the team will keep an incident log of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used, etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters/social media, photocopying materials, etc. A team of teachers will need to be available to support the administration team to make outgoing calls checking on absent students.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The management and staff of Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used as in the absence of an autopsy and without the consent of the parents/carers. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' will not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed.

### **Policy on Confidentiality**

School personnel will treat in confidence all information about students including name, address, biographical details and other descriptions of the student's life and circumstance which might result in identification of the student/ learner except as outlined hereunder where such matters should be discussed with the Principal/Senior Manager:

- to protect the interests of the student
  - to protect the interests of society
  - to safeguard the welfare of another student or individual
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- a) A staff member should always respect the nature of a relationship occasioned by the sharing with him/her by a student of personal information
  - b) Consent of the student and/or of the parent/guardian to disclose personal information should usually be sought where possible
  - c) Personal details about the lives of students that either they themselves or their families have confided in a staff member will not be discussed among staff or shared with others unless to promote the safety of the person concerned. In this instance, this will occur after the student has been informed of the reasons for doing so. However, it is essential that this information is

only shared on a need-to-know basis. The test is whether or not the person to whom the information is being passed on has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue. This does not include conferring with or reporting to a superior or passing to a colleague, on a need-to-know basis, information relating to the personal circumstance of a student, in the interest of that student.

- d) Access to personal information will be available to designated school personnel only.
- e) Staff, therefore, should be clearly informed about the policy and procedures regarding when they can share information and with whom they can discuss their concerns i.e., the reporting procedures for their school.
- f) Staff should make it clear to the students that they cannot promise to keep information confidential. Students need to know that any information they share with staff regarding anything illegal will be passed on in a sensitive way to the appropriate person(s). If a staff member suspects that a student under the age of 18 is at risk, this information will be passed on to the designated liaison person. If the student is over 18 years and discloses abuse identifying an alleged abuser, this must be reported as it becomes a child protection issue. If they do not reveal a name then the member of staff who receives the disclosure should encourage them to identify this person, especially if the alleged abuser has access to children.
- g) The legal principle that the welfare of the child/student is paramount means that considerations of confidentiality should not be allowed to override the rights of the students to be protected from harm. In other words, protection of the student is more important than confidentiality. Information should therefore be shared on any concerns about a child's or an adult's behaviour.
- h) It should be clearly understood that information, which is gathered for one purpose, must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided the information.

**Checklist for the Critical Incident Team Year**  
**To be completed annually at the beginning of the academic year**

**A2**

Completed		
Has the CI been convened?	Yes	No
Have the team received training?		
Are all the CI roles assigned and CI packs ready as set out in the CI guide? e.g., Co-Ordinator?		
Student Liaison: Next of kin contact details for all students, letter templates etc...		
Parent Liaison: Up to date contact details of all parents and emergency contact details		
Staff Liaison e.g. Key holder/s identified, and staff contact cascade plan developed, caretakers number for when school is closed, next of kin contact details for staff		
Network and Administrative Support: e.g., TETB, NEPS, Garda, HSE, TUSLA details		
Have the Network been contacted/met?		
Is the policy and plan written and approved?		
Are team members timetabled to meet?		
Have copies of the plan been circulated/ published for all stakeholders?		
Have all staff received awareness training on mental health concerns? Signs of concern, how to respond to a crisis, who to contact and the limits of confidentiality?		
Are members of the school/ community aware of the evacuation and lock down procedures? E.g., alternate warning signals, evacuation routes, assembly points including an alternative in event of a 'bomb' threat, access to register to account for all persons in the building		
Is the local emergency contact list up to date? Specific contacts for maintenance, utilities, transport provider, insurance etc...		
Are individual Student support plans and records stored securely in compliance with data protection?		
Is support in place for the team? Debrief? Who?		
Has a 'buddy' establishment been agreed? Access etc... (A place of safety nearby agreed in advance such as a community centre)		
Is the 'grab' bag ready? (Copy of emergency plan, first aid kit, high vis vests for SST, 'back up' of all persons contact details, map of school, mobile phone and charger, remote access to the school IT system by at least two members of staff, log sheets etc...)		

Is there a range of prevention measures in place promoting mental health at a whole school level?		
Are there targeted programmes for student with additional needs? e.g., cultural needs and vulnerable/ distressed students		
Are there a range of monitoring systems in place for highly vulnerable students?		
Have the SST completed an annual critical incident 'live' drill/table-top exercise?		

## Student Support Team (SST)

A3

The Principal will identify staff as SST members in advance of a CI and will clarify their key roles in terms of who will do what, when and how. A contract of work should be completed at the beginning of each academic year.

### MEMBERS

ROLE	NAME	CONTACT
Co-ordinator	Clare Wallace Annmarie Bergin Patricia Hickey	
Student Liaison	Patricia Hickey Lorna Byrne	
Staff Liaison	Anne Marie Purtill Julie Delaney	
Parent Liaison	Mary C Ryan Paddy Stapleton	
Administration Liaison	Maggie Smith Shelley Martin	
Media/Community Liaison	Denis Quinn Paddy Stapleton	







**Contract: Critical Incident Team (contd.)**

**A4**

We, the undersigned, agree to work in a co-operative way to promote and develop the Student Support Team.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**LIST ANY ADDITIONAL AREAS AS AGREED:**

# Record of Meetings: **Critical Incident Team**

A5

Agenda	Matters Arising	Action Plan	Who Initial	Time

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

Coordinator SS

## Annual Review - Critical Incident Team

A6

To be completed at the end of each academic year

1. Does the team have a clear idea of its purpose?

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2. Did the team have the opportunity to meet regularly?

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3. Identify three areas that worked well throughout the year:

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4. Identify three gaps in the team performance plan:

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Agree a strategy to deal with any issues that may have arisen in Question 4:

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**Annual Review - Critical Incident Team**

**A6**

5. Identify three gaps in the team performance plan:

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Agree a strategy to deal with any issues that may have arisen in Question 5:

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6. Can the team discuss issues openly and share feelings honestly in meetings? This is particularly critical given the nature of the work

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7. How does the team deal with conflict? Is it effective?

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8. Is the team encouraged to make decisions after full discussion and do the team members agree to support such decisions?

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**Annual Review - Critical Incident Team**

**A6**

9. Does the team have a means of evaluating its performance? How?

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10. How do you celebrate the success of your team?

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**Thank you for your invaluable contribution to the team  
throughout this academic year!**