

**CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES  
APPENDICES**

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**Rationale**

A critical incident can trigger overwhelming emotional responses in students and staff. It is possible that members of the School Division will face a critical incident at some time. An established response plan and process for responding to such an incident can be a support to Division staff, students and members of the community.

The purpose of this manual is to recommend an organizational structure to support the appropriate responses to a diversity of critical situations that may impact the Northwest School Division and provide procedural guidelines for school staff to use in responding to a critical event.

A proactive approach to a critical incident is one that is organized, planned and practiced. This will provide more positive results that may have a dramatic effect on reducing the short and long-term consequences of the critical incident on the individuals and school personnel.

Critical incident response is no longer delegated to the school administration or members of a school crisis team. Effective management of a critical incident is an integrated effort of school personnel, community and critical incident response teams.

## Beliefs

- Critical incidents, violence and disasters affect not only students and teachers, but the entire community.
- A well-planned response to a critical incident can be an effective support to students, school personnel and the community.
- The focus of critical incident intervention should emphasize the ability to cope while recognizing that life must and will go on.
- Grieving is a natural, necessary individual process.
- Critical incidents require responses specific to the nature of the incident. Provision for flexibility is incorporated into the response.
- Compassionate attitudes and immediate action following a critical incident are crucial factors in initiating the "healing" process.
- Communication and established roles of school staff members and workers in community agencies contribute to the effectiveness of a plan.
- The Critical Incident Response Plan will deal with initial emotional responses as well as the logical responses in people affected by a critical incident.
- For many of the people affected by a critical incident, recovery is a long-term process. Provision for longer term interventions is an important extension of the plan.
- By diffusing feelings of shock, guilt, anger, anxiety and/or denial, through a thoughtful process, future tragedies such as suicide, may be prevented.

## Definition of the Critical Incident Response Plan

The Critical Incident Response Plan is a comprehensive set of guidelines for responding to critical incidents before they happen rather than simply reacting and hoping for the best. The plan outlined is based on the Mitchell Model, which is a comprehensive multi-component crisis intervention system that provides the basis for the formal processes outlined in the guidelines for the NWSD, and for the training of the NWSD Critical Incident Response teams. The comprehensive plan includes an emergency management plan, a Division-Based CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) Team and a School-Based CISM Team to take the leadership role and make decisions concerning the needs of students and staff.

The Critical Incident Response Plan will incorporate plans for support services to assist students, staff and the community with the issues that present and help them understand the emotional response involved in a critical incident. With trained personnel providing the support, interventions can be conducted in individual, group and family modalities. The initial hours and days following a critical incident are essential to begin the difficult journey of emotional healing.

The plan provides guidance in response to:

- Natural death of a student or school staff member,
- Unexpected death of a student, school staff member, parent or other identified person,
- Tragedy of major proportion which affects the students and school staff; and
- Serious injury of a student or school staff member.

This plan involves the school in co-operation with community agencies and organizations. This is in an effort to prepare staff prior to a critical incident and to help with implementation of procedures at the time of the incident. This response plan is an organized and planned response to address traumatic loss in such a way as to attempt to meet the emotional needs of all involved and to serve as a powerful support tool.

A further purpose of the plan is to provide the school with strategies to deal with inquiries from the news media and the public, and to guide the dissemination of information about the critical incident to those who need to know. This ensures that only accurate information is presented, thereby providing protection for the school, family and community.

Finally, the plan provides guidance in defining the roles for school staff and external support staff in response to a critical incident.

These procedures are established to provide general guidelines. Each critical incident should be treated in a manner that responds to its uniqueness.

# Responding to Critical Incidents in the NWSD

## Division-Based CISM Team

Outlines Division wide plan for responding to school crisis.  
Superintendent of Student Services, Coordinator of Student Services, Communication Officer, Educators, Psychologists, Counsellors, North & South Team Leaders, 3 Members at large.

Develop  
Procedural  
Guidelines

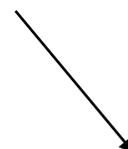
Provide  
Feedback  
on Policy



(At times of critical incident provides assessment and extent of resources required.)

## School-Based CISM Team

Principal, School Counsellor, Wellness Coordinator,  
Trained CISM Staff Members



### Division-Based Support Team

Educational Psychologists  
North/South Team Leaders  
CISM Team Members  
Counsellors  
Communication Officer

### Resource-Based Support Team

(Outside of Division)  
Mental Health Agency  
Clergy  
Identify Trained Community Members  
Victim Services  
Elders

## School-Based CISM Team

### Membership

Membership shall consist of:

- School-Based Critical Incident Stress Management Team
- School Principal
- Vice-Principal
- School Counsellor
- Wellness Coordinators
- Teacher Representatives

### Roles of Site Coordinator

- Site coordinator assigned by Principal. (May be school secretary, staff member, or other).
- Remain in the office to take phone calls.
- Direct resource personnel to assigned area.
- Determine what information can be released. (As designated by the School-Based Team)
- Direct all media inquires through principal or designate coming to the school.
- Direct volunteers and visitors from outside to the principal.
- Direct staff and students asking about counselling/support personnel to the School-Based CISM Team Coordinator.
- Contact the members of School-Based Team.  
(E.g.: phone inquires or someone from outside the school coming into the school.)
- Obtain and make available to the CISM Team, lists of student and parent phone numbers along with alternate contact information.

### Roles of the School-Based CISM Team (General)

- Appoint a coordinator for the School-Based CISM Team.
- Conduct at least two regular meetings per year. It is suggested that the initial meeting be held early in the school year to establish a School-Based CISM Team and to review the procedural guidelines. The second meeting should be held late in the school year to evaluate the work of the School-Based CISM Team.
- Forward CISM response recommendations to the Superintendent of Student Services, or designate.
- Participate in in-service(s) organized by the NWSD
- Access services and professional devolvement, as required, from the Division-Based Resource Team.
- Determine the number of members and assignments of the School-Based Team.  
(Refer to *Responding to Critical Incidents in School* section)
- Implement the procedural guidelines.

## Roles of the School-Based Team (Immediate Responses)

- Assess the magnitude of the critical incident.
- In collaboration with the Division CISM Coordinator, determine the target groups and the type of support required from the Division-Based Support Team.
- In collaboration with the Division CISM Coordinator, determine the support required from the Resource-Based Support Team.
- In collaboration with the Division CISM Coordinator, invite the identified support personnel from the Division-Based CISM Team to attend the School-Based CISM Team meeting as soon as possible.
- Invite the Resource-Based Support Team personnel to attend the CISM meeting.
- Designate rooms for support teams to work.
- Discuss with support persons the roles and responsibilities of each team member.
- Direct media calls to the Director of Education. Use the utmost discretion when dealing with the media.
- Direct general inquires to the principal.
- Select one or more staff members to be the ongoing contact person(s) with the family. A home visit may be appropriate.
- In collaboration with the school staff, identify high-risk individuals in the student and staff population and ensure support is provided as necessary.
- Assign school employees who do not have immediate classroom responsibility to monitor the school entrance, hallways, and washrooms, and to provide extra recess supervision.
- Determine if volunteers are required for specific tasks and assign individuals the responsibility of contacting the volunteers.
- Determine how to deal with anxious parents of other students.
- Devise a plan for continuous monitoring of the situation throughout the school day.
- Notify other agencies (Mental Health Services, Social Services, Addiction Services, etc.) because of other high-risk students presently receiving counselling/services from these agencies.

### **Roles of the School-Based Team (Intermediate Responses)**

- Meet as a group twice during the day to debrief staff. (Once in the morning and once midday or afternoon)
- Advise the staff that they should be aware of students congregating in large, unsupervised groups as this may result in intensifying traumatic emotional responses.
- Advise the staff not to permit grieving students to leave the school during school hours without parental permission.
- Recommend that parents or designates may be requested to accompany their children home if necessary.
- Plan and coordinate a parent information meeting if requested, or if necessary.
- Arrange to meet with the parents of the student(s) involved.
- Encourage the parents to keep in contact with the school to keep the school informed about the on-going situation.
- Inform the parents of the services and resources available to them and to their children.
- Make a formal expression of sympathy to the families. (Flowers, card)
- Obtain information on the funeral arrangements and the family's wishes with respect to the attendance of the students and staff at the funeral.
- Determine in consultation with the family, if a memorial service would be appropriate, and when it should be scheduled.
- Arrange a future meeting to determine if further supports are required.

### **Roles of the School-Based Team (Long Term Responses)**

Follow up on referrals for those requiring ongoing support and services. (Counselling, etc.)

#### **In the event of a death:**

- Determine, in consultation with parents, how and when to obtain the deceased student's belongings.
- Determine, in consultation with parents, how and when to remove the student's desk from the classroom.
- Discuss (with the parents) transition plans for brothers/sisters to come back into the school.
- Continue to advise the staff that personal grieving reactions are acceptable and normal and that support personnel are available.
- Coordinate staff in-service (if needed) following the critical incident. (E.g. further information on the grieving process, etc.)
- Make recommendations to the Division-Based CISM Team Coordinator for revision of the protocol based on the experiences during this event.

**C3.....Division-Based Support Team**

**Division-Based Support Team**

**Membership**

Membership shall consist of:

- Superintendent of Student Services
- Coordinator of Student Services
- Communication Officer
- North and South Team Leaders
- Educational Psychologists/Counsellors
- Members at Large

**Roles**

- In collaboration with the School-Based CISM Team, provide the support that is required.
- NWSD CISM Coordinator consults with school principal to provide rapid assessment of the impact of the event and evaluate the status of the staff and students and establish appropriate intervention strategies.
  - o In collaboration with the School-Based CISM Team they will decide on the number of CISM Team members that will be needed.
  - o Determine the type of intervention required.
- Participate in in-service organized by the Division-Based CISM Team.
- Participate in School-Based CISM Team meetings and/or staff meetings at the request of the school Principal.

## Resource-Based Support Team

### Membership

The Resource-Based Support Team may include:

- Agencies, organizations or individuals which the School-Based Team identifies as being a resource to assist them in dealing with the critical incident. Commitment, interest, skill level and related experience shall be the criteria used for membership.

### Members may include:

- CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management)
- Victim Services
- North West Crisis Center
- Mental Health/Addiction Services
- Saskatchewan Community Resources
- R.C.M.P.
- S.T.F. Counsellor(s)
- Métis Nation of Saskatchewan
- First Nation Elders
- Clergy
- Saskatchewan Health (e.g. . physician(s), medical nurse(s), public health nurse(s), etc.)
- Psychologist(s)
- Psychiatrist(s)
- EMT Staff
- Neighboring Crisis Response Teams
- Other

### Roles of Resource-Based Support Team

- Provide direct assistance and information, relative to their area of service, in accordance with what the School-Based CISM Team requires.
- Participate in any in-service(s) organized by the Division-Based CISM Team, when applicable.
- Where necessary, provide long-term support. (E.g. counselling)