Policy title: CRITICAL/NON-CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING
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Legislation: Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Privacy Act 1988
Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997
Children and Young People Act 2008
Public Sector Management Act 1994
Education Act 2004
Freedom of Information Act 1989
Territory Records Act 2002
Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Procedures

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Procedures.

POLICY STATEMENT

○ All schools are required to have programs, procedures and strategies in place for managing and reporting incidents and for promoting learning environments that are safe and supportive.

○ Any incident, whether critical or non-critical in nature, that results in serious harm or injury or puts the safety of students, staff or visitors at significant risk, or poses a real threat to property or the school environment, must be reported immediately to the Directorate.

○ All school and Directorate staff have a duty of care responsibility for their students and colleagues during the management of incidents and for the provision of support following stressful and traumatic incidents.

RATIONALE

○ The purpose of this policy is to ensure all school and Directorate staff are aware of the correct procedures for managing and reporting incidents, by providing clear advice on:
  • the level of criticality of an incident
  • which incidents are immediately reportable to the Directorate
  • the purpose and intended outcome of incident reporting, and
  • roles and responsibilities in managing and reporting incidents.
DEFINITIONS

- Critical and/or emergency incident – an event that causes severe impact, such as significant disruption to the school routine, an emergency management situation, loss of a sense of control, or threat to the safety of students and staff.

It may be sudden or protracted, extremely dangerous, involve police or emergency services personnel, and generally be outside the normal range of experience or expectation of the people affected.

It may involve:
- a siege/hostage situation
- terrorist activity
- natural disaster – bushfire, flood, earthquake, severe storm
- a bomb threat
- a lock down, evacuation or temporary closure
- disappearance or suspicious removal of a student
- death on campus or a at a school activity

- All critical incidents must be reported immediately to the Directorate.

- Non-critical Incident - An event unanticipated or outside the accepted social norm, for which the school has strategies and procedures in place to manage with little or no external assistance and in the experience of the general community, would not be considered an extraordinary occurrence or situation. It may involve:
  - accident or injury
  - harassment
  - bullying
  - misconduct
  - sexual harassment
  - racism
  - conflict
  - theft
  - brief interruption to the supply of a utility
  - intruders
  - first aid
  - minor flooding
  - minor property damage
  - absenteeism.

- Any non-critical incident that deteriorates, resulting in serious injury or harm, puts the safety of students, staff or visitors at significant risk, or poses a real threat to property or the school environment, should be treated as a Critical Incident and reported immediately to the Directorate.

- Accident - An event or mishap involving a student enrolled in an ACT public school, staff member, volunteer, contractor, parent or visitor occurring at school or while involved in an
approved school-organised activity, where the student or staff member is injured and requires first aid intervention and/or professional medical services.

- Bullying - is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is intended to cause harm, distress and/or create fear in a less powerful individual or group. Bullying can be overt or covert behaviour. Conflict and single incidents are not defined as bullying. See also Cyberbullying, Physical Bullying, Verbal Bullying, Covert Bullying.

- Conflict - A disagreement where the needs of one or more parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not perceive equal power.

- Covert Bullying - describes a set of non-physical bullying behaviours that are more subtle or easier to hide from adults than other forms of bullying. Covert bullying behaviours may include threats to an individual’s reputation, sense of safety, threatening gestures, manipulation, spreading rumours or repeatedly ostracising others. These bullying behaviours aim to inflicting harm by reducing a person’s connection to peers. Covert bullying behaviours are unacceptable.

- Cyberbullying - refers to bullying through the use of information and communication technologies.

- Harassment - involves unwelcome conduct and words that are offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening behaviour directed at a person or group because of a particular characteristic(s) of that person or group. It includes sexual and racial harassment. If harassment is repeatedly directed towards the same person(s) it is considered to be bullying.

- Notifiable Incident - A notifiable incident as defined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 is:
  - the death of a person
  - a ‘serious injury or illness’ of a person, or
  - a ‘dangerous incident’ arising out of work carried out by a business or undertaking and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work.

- Notifiable incidents may relate to any person whether an employee, contractor or member of the public.

- Parent(s) - refers to the person(s) with parental responsibility for the student.

- Physical bullying - is repetitive unwanted physical contact or threats of unwanted physical contact with a person, group of people or their property. It can include hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing or tripping. Physical bullying behaviours are unacceptable.

- Racism – refers to any belief, attitude, behaviour or practice that reflects an assumption, stated or implied, of superiority of one cultural group over another. It is expressed through prejudice, discrimination and harassment. It can be overt or covert and directed against
individuals or groups. Racism can also be institutionalised into policies, practices and structures. Racism is directed towards individuals or groups on the basis of their race, colour, descent, nationality, and/or ethnicity. It can be based on actual or supposed features of body, culture, language, religion, history or other attributes. See also Racial Harassment.

- Racial Harassment - can be verbal, physical or written. It is any unwelcome comment or conduct including threats, abuse and insults based on a person’s race, nationality or ethnicity or a characteristic belonging to, or generally believed to belong to, a particular group. Racial harassment can be directed towards individuals or groups.

- Sexual harassment – can be verbal, physical or written. It is any unwelcome comment, advance, request or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person or group feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. The term “sexual harassment”, is used in its widest sense and includes harassment because a person is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gender questioning people.

- Sexual assault and sexual abuse - is any unwelcome sexual contact. Sexual assault or sexual abuse, are criminal offences. All allegations should be referred to the police or Care and Protection Services as appropriate.

- Student – is an individual who is enrolled in an ACT Public School.

- Verbal Bullying - is repetitive spoken or written comments directed at a person or group of people. It can include using put-downs, name-calling and insulting language. Verbal bullying behaviours are unacceptable.

- Violence - Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person through the threat or use of force to inflict injury or cause destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

LEGISLATION

- The Critical/Non-Critical Incident Reporting and Management policy is governed by the following legislation:

  - The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 that aims to secure and promote work safety, eliminate risks to work safety at the source, to protect people at work from injury and illness, to foster cooperation and consultation between employers, workers and third parties to provide a framework for continuous improvement and higher standards of work safety.

  - The Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth) and the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997 which contain principles governing the collection, safeguarding, access to, use and disclosure of personal information and personal health information.

  - The Children and Young People Act 2008 aims to:
    - provide for and promote the wellbeing, care and protection of children and young people in a way that:
recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and
takes into account the responsibilities of parents, families, the
community and the whole of government, for them
- ensure that children and young people are provided with a safe and
  nurturing environment by organisations and people who, directly or
  indirectly, provide for their wellbeing, care and protection
- prohibit the release of information contained in a child protection report, a
  child concern report, and a child protection appraisal (Section 846).

- The **Public Sector Management Act 1994** which sets out a number of obligations for public
  employees including that of confidentiality of information.

- The **Education ACT 2004** which seeks to ensure that each child is given every opportunity
  and support to enable them to meet education participation requirements.

- The **Freedom of Information Act 1989** which provides a right to seek access to government
  documents and sets out a number of exemptions allowing for non-release of documents
  including that of unreasonable disclosure of personal information.

- The **Territory Records Act 2002** which sets out requirements for record keeping and
  authorises disposal schedules detailing the periods for which records must be retained by
  the Directorate.

**PROCEDURES**

- **Managing and reporting incidents**
  
  **Responding**
  
  It is essential that all incidents of a serious nature are responded to immediately by
  following the school’s *Emergency Management Plan* and procedures or the Directorate’s
  *Emergency Response Guide*, and that appropriate emergency response services such as
  police or ambulance, and the School Network Leader (SNL), are notified as a matter of
  urgency.

- The principal or their delegate must take all necessary action to ensure staff and students
  are removed from any imminent or potential danger and, where possible prevent any
  further injuries or incidents.

- If the incident is less serious, such as an accident, bullying or interruption to electricity
  supply the policy and procedures for addressing such situations (refer to section 7) should
  be enacted promptly.

  **Reporting**
  
  The purpose and intended outcome of efficient and accurate reporting is to ensure the
  legislative and duty of care obligations of principals and Directorate staff are met, and to
  ensure the effective resolution of any identified gaps or issues in providing safe work and
  learning environments. A consistent reporting approach to incident reporting also allows
  for:

**Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting**

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that this is the current and complete version of the document, located on the
Directorate’s website.
• information about critical and serious incidents affecting school communities to be provided to the Minister and the Director-General in a timely and precise manner;
• risk management and media issues to be managed effectively; and
• the Directorate to monitor and respond proactively to both site and system-wide critical incident related trends, hazards and issues.

• The mandated reporting requirements are set out in the Directorate’s Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Procedures. The information sheet Determining Incident Criticality, and flow chart Directorate Critical Incident Reporting Process, enable principals to determine which incidents must be reported immediately to the Directorate and the required reporting processes to be followed.

• Recovery and preparedness

• It is essential that following a critical incident, recovery processes are implemented and monitored to facilitate a return to the normal daily routine of the school as soon as possible and ensure persons involved were well supported. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the school’s management of the incident and recovery processes should be undertaken to reinforce what worked well and to refine and improve processes should a similar incident occur in the future.

• It is also essential that any school policies and practices or other measures that may contribute to reducing the risk of a similar critical incident occurring again, or minimising the impact of a similar incident on students and staff, are reviewed and revised as appropriate. These may include planning, staff training, acquisition of specific safety equipment, additional infrastructure, and increasing the safety of the school grounds.

  • Roles and responsibilities

  • The roles and responsibilities of principals and school network leaders in managing and reporting incidents are clearly articulated in the Directorates’ document Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Procedures.

Complaints

Any concerns about the application of this policy or the policy itself, should be raised with:

  • the school principal in the first instance;
  • the Directorate’s Liaison Unit on (02) 6205 5429;
  • online at http://www.det.act.gov.au/contact_us;
  • see also the Complaints Policy on the Directorate’s website.

POLICY OWNER

  • Director, Governance and Assurance.

  • For support in relation to this policy please Governance and Assurance on (02) 6205 9328.

RELATED POLICIES

  • Providing Safe Schools P-12

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Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools
Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools
Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools
Student Accidents/Incidents
Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer of Students in ACT Public Schools
Temporary Closure of Schools

- Related documents

  - National Safe Schools Framework
  - Protocols for Student Management
  - Unwelcome Visitors to Schools Handbook 2005
  - School Emergency Management Plan
  - Emergency Response Guide
  - Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Procedures
  - IEU Critical Incident Management Guidelines