1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1. 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. 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.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. 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.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. Critical 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:
3.1. **Critical Incident** - An event or situation requiring urgent or immediate attention due to potential harm to students, staff, or the school environment, and includes:
- violence or serious physical assault;
- serious medical, physical or psychological injury requiring urgent professional medical treatment or hospitalisation;
- a siege/hostage situation;
- criminal/terrorist activity;
- disappearance or suspicious removal of a student;
- natural disaster – bushfire, flood, earthquake, severe storm;
- internal fire/smoke - explosion, electrical fault, deliberately lit;
- severe chemical hazard or dangerous gas leak;
- major vandalism;
- weapons, blades or other sharp instruments;
- use or supply of drugs;
- sexual assault;
- a bomb threat;
- a lockdown, evacuation or temporary closure;
- death or attempted suicide.

3.1.1. **All critical incidents must be reported immediately to the Directorate.**

3.2. **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.

3.2.1. **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.**

3.3. **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.

3.4. **Bullying** - The repeated negative actions by individuals or groups of individuals against a target individual or group which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take
different forms – verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or discrete.

3.5. **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.

3.6. **Harassment** - Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic circumstance status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

3.7. **Racism** - 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 or discrimination and may take various forms, including verbal, physical, social, psychological and electronic. It can be overt or covert and directed against individuals or groups. Racism can also be institutionalised into policies, practices and structures.

3.8. **Sexual harassment** - Any unwanted or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship. It includes behaviour which creates a sexually hostile or intimidating environment, such as unwelcome touching, staring or leering, suggestive comments or jokes, sexually explicit pictures, unwelcome requests for sex or intrusive questions about a person’s private life.

3.9. **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.

3.10. **Notifiable Incident** - A notifiable incident as outlined in the Work Health and Safety Act is:
- the death of a person;
- a ‘serious injury or illness’; or
- a ‘dangerous incident’ arising out of work carried out by a business or undertaking or a workplace.

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

4. **LEGISLATION**

4.1. The Critical/Non-Critical Incident Reporting and Management policy is governed by legislation including that relating to the reporting of Notifiable Incidents, workplace health and safety, child protection and the release of personal information and personal health information. Legislation relevant to this policy includes:
- the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT) 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 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 to:
  o 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;
  o 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;
  o 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.

5. PROCEDURES

5.1. Managing and reporting incidents

5.1.1. Responding

5.1.1.1. 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.

5.1.1.2. 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.

5.1.1.3. 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.

5.1.2. Reporting

5.1.2.1. 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:

- 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.

5.1.2.2. 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.

5.1.3. *Recovery and preparedness*

5.1.3.1. 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.

5.1.3.2. 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.

5.2. *Roles and responsibilities*

5.2.1. 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*.

5.3. *Complaints*

5.3.1. Where there are concerns regarding the application of this procedure or the procedure itself, people should:

- contact the school principal in the first instance;
- contact the Directorate’s Community Liaison section; or
- access the Directorate’s *Complaints Resolution* policy, which is available on the [Directorate’s website](http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z).

6. **POLICY OWNER**

6.1. Director, Information, Communications and Governance.

6.2. For support in relation to this policy please contact Information, Communications and Governance on (02) 6205 9328.
7. RELATED POLICIES

7.1. Providing Safe Schools
Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools
Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools
Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools
Student Accidents
Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer in ACT Public Schools
Temporary Closure of Schools

7.2. Related documents

7.2.1. 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