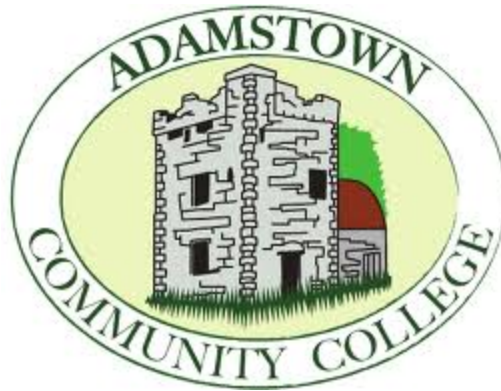


# **Adamstown Community College**



## **Critical Incident Policy**

### **Definition of a Critical Incident**

"A critical incident is any incident which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the College and disrupts the running of the College".

### **Critical Incidents include but are not limited to**

- Death of a member of the College community through sudden death, accident, serious illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the college premises.
- Serious damage to the College building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the College.
- The disappearance of a member of the College community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.

### **Aim of Critical Incident Plan**

The aim of the critical incident plan is to ensure that management and staff will react effectively and promptly to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also assist the college community to return to normal as quickly as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

We acknowledge the complex nature of traumatic events/ bereavement which may have far reaching consequences, and can affect attitude, performance and the ability to cope. It is, therefore, important for the College to have clear supportive strategies in place for our students and staff.

## **Preventative Measure in ACC:**

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students

Adamstown aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the College where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same through the following:

Pastoral Measures:

- Tutor Care Teams
- SPHE Programme
- Code of Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying policy
- Guidance policy
- Cara Aire Programme (aire@adamstowncc.ie)
- Mentor Programme
- DDLETB Psychological Support Service
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- Staff has access to books and resources which may help and support members of the college community.
- The College has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of its members.

Physical Environment Measures:

- Entrance doors are magnetically locked during college hours.
- Students must swipe in on entry to the college building.
- Students who leave the college building during college hours must sign out before doing so.
- college registers are kept both electronically and in hard copy to allow students to be accounted for in the case of an emergency evacuation of the college building.
- Visitors are asked to report to and sign in at the college office and issued with a Visitor badge.

## **Confidentiality**

The College 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.

## **The Crisis Response Team**

The Crisis Response Team should include the Principal, Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors, DDLETB Psychological Support Service and other staff members that are directly associated with the student(s).

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Role of college Management**

- To confirm the event and to clarify facts surrounding the event.
- To alert members of the Crisis Response Team to the crisis and to convene a meeting of the team, and subsequently the whole staff.
- To coordinate / delegate tasks to members of the Crisis Response Team members.
- Liaise with the Board of Management, E.T.B., D.E.S., S.E.C. etc as appropriate.
- To make contact with family to express sympathy.
- To ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students.
- To facilitate any appropriate memorial events.
- To outline specific services available in college.
- To put referral procedures in place
- Inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management and decide if an emergency meeting needs to be called.
- If appropriate, inform the college's insurance company or other agencies.
- To nominate one member of staff to deliver an agreed Public Media Statement from the Crisis Response Team. This should:
  - Give the facts as they are known.
  - Highlight the supports which are available
  - Indicate any action which are planned

If an incident occurs on a college trip an issued statement should include assistance with telephone numbers and making contact with any students affected.

### **Role of Crisis Response Team Members**

- The Crisis Response Team will establish a staff chain of communication to disseminate relevant information.
- The Crisis Response Team will ensure that new staff are made aware of the Critical Incident Plan.
- To brief and advise staff members.
- In case of bereavement, to clarify funeral arrangements.
- To liaise with other relevant support agencies, e.g. Psychological Support Service, Counsellors, etc.
- Alert staff to vulnerable students.
- Facilitate group and one-to-one question and answer meetings with staff and parents.

### **Counselling Role**

- To monitor class / students most affected and to facilitate ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Visit home, if appropriate.
- Liaise with family to provide support.
- Be available as support to staff.
- Supervise the critical incident room (room 1).

\*Please note that it is quite likely that some of the counselling may be carried out by members of the crisis response team.

### **Action Plan**

#### **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)**

- Immediate contact with family / families. It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident. Clarify the family's wishes regarding the college's involvement.
- Convene a meeting with the Crisis Response Team.
- Contact appropriate agencies, e.g. emergency services, medical services, E.T.B., H.S.E., Psychological Support Service, BOM, DES / college Inspectorate.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students / staff, e.g. Critical Incident Room and counselling service. (Room 1)
- Organise timetable / routine for the day (Adhering to the normal college routine is important, if this is possible).
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted i.e. list of friends or any other relevant information and report to the college office.
- Prepare a media statement, ensuring that all information is accurate and up-to-date.
- Have a staff briefing again at the end of day.

#### **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Refer any students who are a cause of concern to the relevant people / bodies.
- Attendance and participation at the funeral to be decided - in accordance with parents' wishes and college management decisions.
- Preparation of students / staff attending the funeral.
- Facilitation of student / staff responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc in the context of the religious beliefs of the bereaved family.
- Possible memorial within the college – as guided by advice from Psychological support service and religious leaders.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff, e.g. siblings, close relatives, etc. In particular, planning for the reintegration of students should take place as soon as possible following a critical incident.

## **LONG TERM ACTIONS**

- Take note of anniversaries and be aware that some staff / students may be particularly sensitive at these times.
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need continued support. Communication with family is essential.
  1. Uncharacteristic behaviour.
  2. Deterioration in academic performance.
  3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness.
  4. Inappropriate emotional reactions.
  5. Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Policy appropriately.
  1. What went well?
  2. Where were the gaps?
  3. What was most/least helpful?
  4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  5. Is there any unfinished business?
- New staff to be informed about Critical Incident Policy
  1. Ensure that new staff are aware of the college policy and procedures in this area.
  2. Ensure new staff are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
  3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new college, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new college.
- Update and amend College records.

## **Informing Staff & Students**

### **Staff**

- In the event of the death of a colleague, the Principal / Deputy Principals will contact staff by phone.
- In the event of the death of a student, the Crisis Response Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed subsequently.

Similar procedures will be followed if a critical incident occurs during college holidays or while a group of staff and students are away on a college trip. If an incident occurs on a college trip contact details for all staff and students on the trip should be with the office (see Extra-Curricular Policy).

## **Students**

- Only if an incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students.
- The tutor class of the student(s) affected should be the first to be told with the Counsellor(s) and tutor present.
- Other classes to be preferably told by their tutors.
- Room 1 is the designated Crisis Response Centre

## **Suicide as a Critical Incident**

Great care should be taken in the use of the term 'suicide'. It should not be used until it has been established with a good degree of certainty that the death was as a result of suicide. Families may be very sensitive about the use of the term. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

## **Suicide prevention**

Adamstown Community College has a role and responsibility in the prevention and management of suicidal behaviour among its students. We feel that delivering programmes focused directly on raising student awareness of suicide may appear desirable, but they may carry the risk of increasing suicidal behaviour among young people through normalising it as a legitimate response to adolescent stress.

The college aims to:

- Promote positive mental health rather than the prevention of mental health problems.
- Create a positive college culture through continuous and long-term programmes rather than brief class-based prevention programmes
- Focus on enhancing generic social competences - coping skills, good peer relationships, self-efficiency.
- Implement primary prevention programmes for all students within the context of the college's SPHE provision.
- Build awareness amongst key college staff and parents, through inservice and invited speakers, of the difficulties faced by some young people who have multiple problems of personal adjustment and life stress.
- Implement targeted interventions for pupils who need help to overcome difficulties and manage their distress.
- Have a clear procedure for the referral of distressed or at risk students, initially to the guidance counsellor(s), and where necessary to the local health services.
- Develop procedures for ensuring the coordinated, supportive return of students to college after treatment for suicidal behaviour. Such procedures should provide the necessary information and guidance to college personnel before the adolescent returns to college (only on a need-to-know basis).
- The college will seek guidance from any outside agencies who are providing counselling and/or therapy to students under risk.

### **External Programmes and speakers on suicide**

Some programmes that aim to reduce suicidal behaviour among young people may have positive outcomes for some students but unintended negative consequences for others. Safety for students is paramount, which suggests that great care should be taken in deciding whether a particular programme might be offered in a college.

### **Programme criteria**

It is imperative that;

- The programme principles and content are congruent with the approach to SPHE promoted by the SPHE support services. It supports the college's whole college approach to mental health and well being.
- The programme content is appropriate for the age, gender and cultural background of students.
- The programme has an appropriate and explicit theoretical or research base and the benefits claimed are being tested by ongoing evaluation.

### **Safety criteria**

- Programme providers must have good, established and ongoing relationships with key people in the college and in the community, including NEPS, the SPHE support teams, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Parents/guardians must consent to their student attending the programme.

### **Warning signs to watch for**

See Appendix 6

### **Proposed steps to follow when concerns are raised**

- Concern is reported to guidance counsellors/year head/deputy principals/principal/DLP.
- A meeting takes place with the guidance counsellor(s) and the student.
- Parents are informed of concerns, feedback is given to the original source of the referral and a plan is drawn up for monitoring the student.
- Where a concern is confirmed, the guidance counsellor(s) reports to the Principal, and may seek a consultation with NEPS or with local Mental Health services.
- The Principal informs parents or caregivers right away.
- A management plan appropriate to the level of risk is put in place, including onward referral to the family GP.

### **Responding to attempted Suicide**

Advice should be sought from the mental health professionals caring for the young person as they may be able to provide considerable assistance. A support plan should be developed and approved.

The following parties should be consulted when devising the plan;

- the student
- the family
- mental health professionals.

When meeting with the student's family, critical areas for sensitive discussion are:

- The information to be provided to various sections of the college community
- The support plan for the student's return to college
- The support for any siblings in the college
- Liaison with the mental health professional

### **Guidance for college staff where a student has died from suicide/suspected suicide.**

#### **Family**

- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the college

#### **Students**

- Give the facts as agreed with the bereaved family.
- Inform close friends and relatives separately.
- Create safe and supportive spaces for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings.
- Advise the students of the support that is available to them.
- Give handout Appendix 2 - "Grief after Suicide or Suspected Suicide".

### **Note on care of students following a funeral:**

It is important following the funeral of a student who has died by suicide that students and parents are encouraged to come back to the college for support. The college may consider providing tea and coffee as this is a particularly vulnerable time for students, especially if it is on a Friday. Encouraging students to return to the college until the usual finishing time can provide a much needed routine.

#### **Resources**

"Young People and Loss, A Handbook for colleges", Robin Cooper

"Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response", Rainbows

"Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for colleges", DES

"Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for colleges", DES

Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary colleges, Joint Managerial Body



## **Appendix 1 - Emergency Telephone Numbers**

### **General**

Ambulance Emergency	112 or 999
D.D.L.E.T.B.	01 45239600
D.D.L.E.T.B. Psychological Support Service	01 4598446
Lucan Garda Station	01 6667300
Clondalkin Drugs Task Force	01 4579445
Bawnogue Youth and Family Support Centre	01 4572938
Lucan Youth Services	01 6217640
Dochas Family Centre	01 6234531
Beacon of Light Counselling Centre	01 4578700
Pieta House	01 6010000
Parentline	1890 927277
Irish Association of Suicidology	01 6674900
Rainbows	01 4734175
Barnardos	01 4530355
Samaritans	1850 609090
Childline	1800 666666
Aware	1890 303302

### **Medical**

Tallaght Hospital	01 4142000
James Connolly Memorial Hospital	01 8213844
Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin	01 4558111
St James Hospital	01 4537941
Ballyowen Health Centre	01 6214388
Lucan Health Centre Sarsfield Park	01 6281395
Lucan Pharmacy	01 6280652

### **General Practise**

Mary Boyd, Hillcrest	01 6244300
Denise Collins, Esker Lawns	01 6280654
Feeney/Walsh, Dodsboro	01 6241181
Teresa Golden, Finnstown	01 6212288
Panos Harris, Lucan Village	01 6280652
James Lee, Ballyowen	01 6214224
David Lombard, Esker Lawns	01 6280654
Paul Stewart, Ballyowen	01 6214224

### **Schools/Colleges**

Adamstown Castle NS	01 6540088
St. John the Evangelist NS	01 6540358

Colaiste Cois Life, Gleann an Griffin	01 6211825
Coliaste Phadraigh Roselawn CBS	01 6282299
Lucan CC, Esker	01 6282077
Lucan Ed Together	01 6281298
Griffeen Ed Together	01 6240160
Lucan East Educate Together	01 6212690
St Andrews NS	01 6280975
St. Annes NS	01 6281972
St. Josephs Presentation College	01 6281160
St. Marys Boys Chapel Hill NS	01 6281857
St. Thomas NS	01 6282691
Scoil Mhuire Lucan Road NS	01 6280056
Scoil Mhuire Woodview NS	01 6240203
Archbishop Ryan Senior college	01 4670689
Archbishop Ryan Junior college	01 4573095
Lucan CC	01 4056858/4572900
Lucan Youthreach, Esker Hill	01 6282840

Parish Info

Esker St. Patricks CC	01 6280948/6283205
Lucan Methodist Church	01 6280666
Lucan Presbyterian Church	01 6281233/6280217
St. Andrews Church of Ireland	01 6249147/6245412

## **Appendix 2**

### **GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE**

Handout for Students:

Remember there is no right or wrong way to react when someone you know dies. People will have many different reactions to what has happened.

- Know that you can survive. Come to terms with your grief, even if you feel you can't
- You may feel overwhelmed and frightened by your feelings. This is normal. You're not going crazy; you are grieving.
- You may not feel a strong reaction to what has happened. This is ok.
- You may experience feelings of guilt, confusion, forgetfulness and anger. Again these feelings are all normal.
- You may feel angry at the person who has died, at yourself, at everyone and everything. It is ok to express it.
- You may feel guilty about what you did or did not do. Suicide is the act of an individual, for which we cannot take responsibility.
- You may never have an answer as to "why" but it is ok to keep asking "why" until you no longer need to ask or you are satisfied with partial answers.
- Sometimes people make decisions over which we have no control. It was not your choice.
- Feeling low is temporary, suicide is permanent. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. If you are feeling low or having a difficult time, ask for help.
- Allow yourself to cry, this will help you to heal.
- Healing takes time. Allow yourself the time you need to grieve.
- Every person grieves differently and at a different pace.
- Delay making any big decisions if possible.
- This is the hardest thing you will ever do. Be patient with yourself.
- Spend time with people who are willing to listen when you need to talk and who also understand your need to be silent.
- Seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed.
- If you are thinking of trying to kill/harm yourself, you must talk to a trusted adult.
- Avoid people who try to tell you what to feel and how to feel it and, in particular, those who think you should "be over it by now."
- Ask in college about a support group for survivors that provides a safe place for you to express your feelings, or simply a place to go to be with other survivors who are experiencing some of the same things you're going through.
- Allow yourself to laugh with others and at yourself. This is healing.
- Useful websites: [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie); [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie); [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au).

**Appendix 3 – Key roles assigned by Team Leader**

**CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM**

Dave Anderson	(Principal)
Clare Moloney	(Deputy Principal)
Shane Comiskey	(Deputy Principal)
Jane Halloran	(Deputy Principal)
Yvonne Brannigan	(Secretary)
Bridget Kenny	(Counsellor)
Elaine Lanham	(Counsellor)

**Appendix 4 - Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy/ death of x) we have arranged specialist support for students in the college who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your son/daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the college by .....If you would like further information on the above, or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the college.

Principal.

I/We consent to having our son/daughter meet with .....

I understand that my son may meet (X) in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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

(Parents /Guardians)

**Appendix 5 - Sample statement for the media and letter to parents**

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of Adamstown Community College, have learned of the tragic death of .....

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of .....

On hearing the tragic news, the College Critical Incident Plan was put into immediate operation.

The Crisis Response team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the College Community affected by this loss are given the help they need to cope at this time.

The College is offering Counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy and has sought the support of a number of support agencies to help students cope at this difficult time.

Students may attend and participate in the funeral service in consultation with the wishes of the family.

Our thoughts and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

## **Appendix 6**

Below is a list of factors which indicate that a person is troubled or distressed. The list is not exhaustive, and there may be other signs which those familiar with a student may notice.

There may be an increased likelihood of suicide or suicidal behaviour if a number of these signs are present:

- An unexpected reduction in academic performance
- A change in mood and marked emotional instability, either more withdrawn, low energy or more boisterous, talkative, outgoing
- Withdrawal from relationships, separation from friends or break-up of a relationship
- Getting into trouble at college, discipline problems, suspension or expulsion, trouble with the law
- Loss of interest in usual pursuits, study, relationships
- Ideas and themes of depression, death or suicide
- Hopelessness and helplessness
- Giving away prized possessions
- Stressful life events, including significant grief
- Bullying or victimization
- A history of mental illness
- Alcohol/drug misuse
- A history of suicidal behaviour or deliberate self harm
- A family history of suicide/attempted suicide
- Students may learn of a fellow student's intentions to harm him/herself and report this to a teacher
- A note may be found in which a desire for death or for an end to problems or to an 'impossible' situation is expressed. This might also be found on internet sites used by young people
- The young person may share his/her thoughts about suicide with the staff member, directly or indirectly.

Where a number of these signs exist, or when information about a student's expression of suicidal ideas is brought to staff attention, a plan needs to be put in place to explore what is going on and to offer help. Concerns about suicidal behaviour should never be dismissed on the grounds that the student is merely seeking attention and will not make a suicide attempt.