RATIONALE

Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for staff, students and members of the community. Learning outcomes for students and the wellbeing of students, staff and community members can be adversely affected by crisis events. Appropriate planning and intervention can reduce the likelihood of such events and mitigate the impact should a crisis occur.

DEFINITIONS

Events that cause severe emotional and social distress may occur at any time and without warning. Such occurrences have been variously called Traumatic Incidents, Critical Incidents, Crises, Disasters and Emergencies. Raphael (1986, page 6) has identified characteristics of crises in that they involve:

- rapid time sequences
- an overwhelming of the usual coping responses of individuals and communities
- severe disruption, at least temporarily, to the functioning of individuals or communities
- perceptions of threat and helplessness and a turning to others for help

Flannery and Everly (2000) describe a crisis as a response condition and the precipitating event, the stimulus, as a critical incident. In schools, a crisis might be considered as any situation faced by staff or students that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which may have the potential to interfere with their ability to perform at the scene or later. Crises tend to be far outside of the normal experience of those involved and indeed of most of the population. Accordingly, the individual has little by way of guideline from past experience on how to deal with the event or the reactions to it. Students have even less experience to draw on than adults and usually have a more restricted repertoire of coping responses. Sense of control and self-efficacy are likely to be reduced. Students are likely to be looking to those adults who usually provide support, guidance, direction and leadership to continue to fulfill these roles.

PRINCIPLES

1. Catholic schools are safe and supportive environments where the 11 principles and 6 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (2003) are practised. These are attached below.
2. Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students, staff and others who
may visit the school or be involved in school activities.
3. Catholic schools take actions to:
   • prevent crises or reduce the chance of these occurring, and
     where these may still occur, acting to mitigate the impact
   • prepare for crisis events by appropriate planning, training
     and education
   • respond with a rapid, organised and effective implementation
     of actions and mobilisation of resources
   • facilitate recovery by recognising that this is founded within
     the Planning, Preparation and Response elements (as
     described in the previous 3 bullet points) and by providing
     appropriate levels of support to the school community
4. Establishing an effective Crisis Management Plan requires a whole of school
   community approach that is consistent with the Catholic Education
   Commission of Western Australia's Pastoral Care Framework, the school's
   Pastoral Care practices and the school's plans for more routine kinds of
   emergencies such as fire evacuation.
5. Particular kinds of events such as suicide require an approach that is different
   to that needed in other kinds of death. It is important in responding to a
   suicide that actions do not increase the risk of imitative behaviour.
   *Appropriate actions can reduce risk and have a protective influence.*
6. Both the involvement and agreement of bereaved parents/caregivers and
   family are particularly important when putting in place support and recovery
   processes within the school.

**PROCEDURES**

1. All schools shall develop a school-based Crisis Management Plan based on
   the Prevention, Preparation, Response, Recovery (PPRR) model or other
   similar, comprehensive approach as approved by the Team Leader,
   Psychology.
2. The Crisis Management Plan shall be informed by a comprehensive safety
   audit and assessment of vulnerabilities that might precipitate a crisis.
3. The Crisis Management Plan shall include statements defining the roles and
   responsibilities of all members of the Crisis Management Team. Additionally,
   all staff members shall be made aware of their own responsibilities in crisis
   situations.
4. The Crisis Management Plan shall be developed using a broad, consultative,
   participative and educative process involving students, staff and parents
   *whenever possible and appropriate*. The completed Plan shall refer to any
   other relevant policies or procedures and shall be disseminated and
   promoted to the school community.
5. The Crisis Management Plan developed by schools shall be monitored and
   have regular review. A recommended period is annually or immediately
   following any incident that invokes use of the plan.
6. Key staff members shall undertake training in Crisis Management Planning in
   order to establish a knowledge base within the school.
7. When schools intend to use external agencies as part of crisis management,
   these agencies shall be involved from the planning stage such that there is
   agreement on roles and responsibilities.
8. Schools shall provide professional development and appropriate resources to
   meet the needs of their staff in implementing the school's Crisis Management
   Plan. This includes providing opportunities for drills or simulations.
9. Schools shall establish a record keeping process such that timely,
   comprehensive documentation is made and maintained on any incident
   which invokes use of the school's Crisis Management Plan.
10. Schools shall plan a communication process to be effective in difficult circumstances and that allows information to flow to and from those who need to know what is occurring.
11. As part of the communication process, principals shall ensure that the Director of Catholic Education and, for Order owned schools, the Congregational Leader are advised at the onset of any situation that involves enactment of the school's Crisis Management Plan.
12. Schools shall strive to maintain normal functioning during crisis situations.
ATTACHMENTS

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

1. Principal
2. Assistant Principal
3. Coordinator of Learning and Curriculum

The Crisis Response Team (CRT) is responsible for:
- The implementation of all procedures within the school to a crisis involving a students or other members of the school community.
- Coordination of and liaison with all outside agencies eg. Police, Non-Governmental School Psychology Services, Catholic Education Office, FESA, SES.
- Media Liaison – The Principal alone has the responsibility of liaising with the media.

A trauma has an effect on the whole school community. Our aim is to help the school community deal with the trauma, assign quite clearly various roles and responsibilities and assist the school to function and return to ‘normality’ as soon as possible.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines for action to be taken when news of a tragic or traumatic event occurring to a member of the school community is received.

1. Staff member receiving the news immediately contacts the Principal or, if unavailable, another member of the CRT. The Principal arranges for all members of the CRT to be informed.
2. The CRT meets as soon as possible (that same evening or the next morning before school) to allocate tasks for each member and decide on the action to be taken by the school. Areas to be considered include:
   i. Liaison with parents and families
   ii. Appropriate manner of contact with the affected family
   iii. Identifying those members of the school community most closely involved
   iv. Arrangement for informing appropriate staff and students and other organisations associated with the school.
   v. The Principal will disseminate information to staff, students and parents
3. The Principal should convene a special staff meeting at the earliest possible time.
4. The Principal will provide guidelines about handling student reactions and the referral of distressed members of the school.
5. The CRT will reconvene on the same day to consider two main items. The ongoing support for the affected members of the school community and any further arrangements necessary for the upcoming weeks.
6. The Principal or the designated member of the CRT will keep all staff fully informed of further arrangements.
7. The Principal should conduct a one week follow up and them one month follow up meeting with the CRT to ensure all actions have been followed and to provide additional support and assistance to any member in need.
8. Review the response plan.

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM TASKS

Principal
- Brief Staff
- Provide pastoral support for staff/students/community
- Update staff continually
- Liaise with families/Parish Priest/CEO
- Liaise with media
- Liaise closely with and brief CRT as to what information is to be passed on
- Contact CEO
Team Members
- Contact relief teachers for CRT members’ classes
- Set up support centre in school
- Brief administration office of handling of information over the phone and face to face (as per Principal’s instructions)
- Document information for staff (may be ongoing)
- Document information for parents and students (may be ongoing)
- Liaise with Psychologists to organise any necessary counselling for students, staff and affected community members
- Monitor staff/student reactions
- Provide pastoral support for staff
- Provide relief teachers if necessary

CRISIS MANAGEMENT FLOW CHART
EVACUATION PLAN

Evacuation: In the event that an evacuation is required, the fire bell will be engaged. Staff are required to collect the class register and Asthma and Allergies File and calmly line their classes up and move to the emergency meeting area (school oval) as outlined in the diagram above.

Specialist teachers who have control of the students at a particular time will be responsible for taking students directly to the emergency meeting area. Classroom teachers will meet their class on the oval with the class register and Asthma and Allergies File.

BOMB EVACUATION PROCEDURE
Should a suspicious object be found, the following procedures apply:

- Do not touch
- Clear people away from the immediate area, change evacuation route if applicable.
- Secure the area
- Inform the Principal

FIRE:

If a fire is noticed, alert others in the immediate area then evacuate the building.

EARTHQUAKE:

Wait until the tremor ceases, then evacuate buildings

At all times attempt to stay as calm as possible.
EMERGENCY NUMBERS

POLICE 000 9049 1000
AMBULANCE 000 9041 2209
FIRE BRIGADE 000
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE 0427 412 266
SYNERGY 131 351
WATER SUPPLY 131 375
DOG RANGER 0419 867 317
FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES 9049 1046
SOUTHERN CROSS SHIRE COUNCIL 9041 1611
HOSPITAL 9081 2222
POISONS INFORMATION CENTRE 131 126
SOUTHERN CROSS MEDICAL CENTRE 9049 1152
CHILD HEALTH CENTRE 9049 1321
NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROVISION OF A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Australian schools:
1. affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
2. promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
3. implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment
4. recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
5. develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
6. ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
7. recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
8. have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
9. focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
10. regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
11. take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures
3. Provision of education/ training
   • School staff
   • Students
   • Parents
4. Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation
5. Providing support for students
6. Working closely with parents