

Critical Incident Management Plan

Drumshanbo Vocational School



Table of Contents

Section One

Introduction

Links to School's Mission Statement

Definition of a 'Critical Incident'

Aims of the Critical Incident Management Plan

Supportive and Caring Ethos in Drumshanbo Vocational School

Response Level to Critical Incident

Critical Incident Response Team

Useful Telephone Numbers

Student's Needing Assistance During an Evacuation

Section Two

Management Responsibilities

School's Internal Response to Student's Needs

Action Plan on Hearing of a Critical Incident

Critical Incident Management – Media Arrangements

Medium Term Actions (24 – 72 hours)

Long Term Actions – Critical Incident Management Aftercare

Section Three - Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sample Letter to Parents – Sudden Death/Accident

Appendix 2 – Sample Consent Letter – Individual or Group Support Session

Appendix 3 – Sample Letter – Seeking Advance Parental Agreement to Child Being Seen

Appendix 4 – Factual Verification Report

Appendix 5 – Sample Announcement to The Media

Appendix 6 – Critical Incidents During State Exams

Appendix 7 – Requirements to report child protection issues – NEPS psychologists

Appendix 8– Student Contact Record

Appendix 9 - Useful Advice for Parents

Appendix 10 – Useful Advice to Students /Parents on Normal Reactions Following a Traumatic Incident



Introduction

Critical incidents occur from time to time. Due to their gravity and sudden nature, they produce emotional reactions among the school community and the local community. It is very important for the long term healing process, that such incidents are handled in a sensitive, caring and organised manner. This policy applies to all critical incidents that may happen within Drumshanbo Vocational School, or that involve a member of the school community either directly or indirectly. It involves the engagement of all school policies, processes and programmes in the development of the appropriate structures, roles and resources to support the school community in dealing with a critical incident.

This policy was formulated by the staff of Drumshanbo Vocational School in conjunction with best practice as outlined in *Responding to Critical Incidents-Guidelines for Schools* and *Responding to Critical Incidents-Resource Materials for Schools*. (NEPS 2008) This policy is intended to be a summary.

Links to School Mission Statement

Drumshanbo Vocational School including students, teachers, parents and community, seek to provide for the intellectual/curricular, physical, social and personal education of the student. The school aims to establish, develop and nurture attitudes, values and behavior which will enable the whole school community to reach its full potential.

All students are encouraged to find their own strengths in order to grow into self-confident and responsible adults. Within a firmly established program of pastoral care, we seek to enhance the spiritual aspects of our students' lives.

Definition of a 'Critical Incident'

The staff and management of Drumshanbo Vocational School recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school".

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include, but are not limited to:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- A serious accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.

- The abduction or disappearance of a member of the school community
- Serious accident involving a school bus on a school trip or travelling to or from the school

Aims of the Critical Incident Management Plan

- To ensure that a response/process can be quickly and effectively put in place to deal with the critical incident.
- To ensure that a consistent response/process is put in place.
- To facilitate students to cope with trauma that may be associated with the critical event.
- To provide support for students, teachers and parents.
- To help prevent the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- To make students aware of what is a normal reaction to such an incident.
- To identify students at risk.
- To have a plan in place to ensure that normality returns as soon as possible.

Supportive and Caring Ethos in Drumshanbo Vocational School

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

1. Physical safety:

Some of the measures taken by our school to ensure the physical safety of students include:

- Evacuation plan formulated and clearly visible in each room
- Regular fire drills
- Fully functional and regularly serviced fire alarm system
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Health and Safety Plan (and rules) for all practical rooms and laboratories
- Supervision in the school before and during the school day (including break and lunch times).
- Fully trained first aid providers
- Defibrillator and staff trained on its use
- Printing of the Code of Behaviour in all homework diaries
- Induction for all new students and staff

2. Psychological safety

The management and staff of Drumshanbo Vocational School aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the psychological wellbeing of the students include:

- Social, personal and health education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and alcohol and drug prevention. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Teachers have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures, are familiar to all staff
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Students have a designated Class Tutor and Year Head that can listen to the concerns of students in their care and respond accordingly. Assembly time is allocated each week for each class group to meet with the Class Tutor.
- Provision of staff training and resources
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including:
 - NEPS psychologist (currently Aideen O'Brien)
 - HSE
 - Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- The school has a qualified Guidance Counsellor
- There is a Pastoral Care and Student Support Team (PCSST) in place. This team meets once every week to review provision of pastoral care and to address specific cases.

- The school has in place systems and procedures for the identification of students at risk. Concerns raised are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

Response Level to a Critical Incident

A classification of response levels is proposed, which is linked to a number of factors impacting on the situation. This classification in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event. It is intended to help management and staff in Drumshanbo Vocational School and psychologists assess what level of intervention is needed, including the additional supports a psychologist may need to request from colleagues and other agencies.

What type of response is needed?

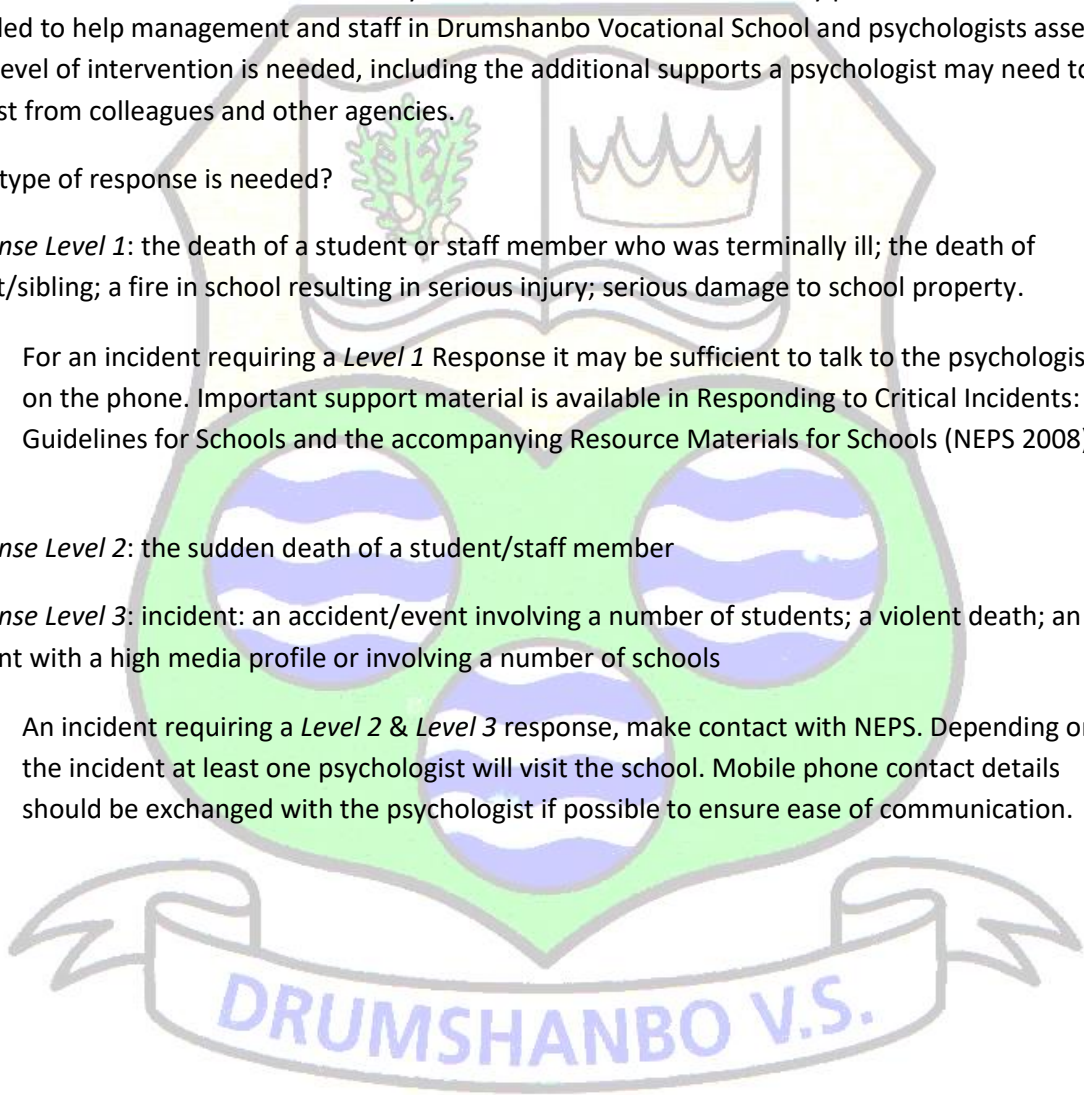
Response Level 1: the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property.

- For an incident requiring a *Level 1* Response it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologists on the phone. Important support material is available in Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools and the accompanying Resource Materials for Schools (NEPS 2008)

Response Level 2: the sudden death of a student/staff member

Response Level 3: incident: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

- An incident requiring a *Level 2 & Level 3* response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident at least one psychologist will visit the school. Mobile phone contact details should be exchanged with the psychologist if possible to ensure ease of communication.



Critical Incident Response Team 2023– further notice

Principal

Mr Martin Fallon

Deputy Principal

Ms Siobhan Evans

Guidance Counsellor

Mr Daithí Hughes

Pastoral Care & Student Support Team

Ms Lorraine McLoughlin

Ms Carmel Fitzpatrick O'Neill

Anne Shanley

& Year Heads

Health & Safety Co-ordinator :

Mr Adrian Martin

Other members of staff may be co-opted to the team as required and depending on their area of expertise.

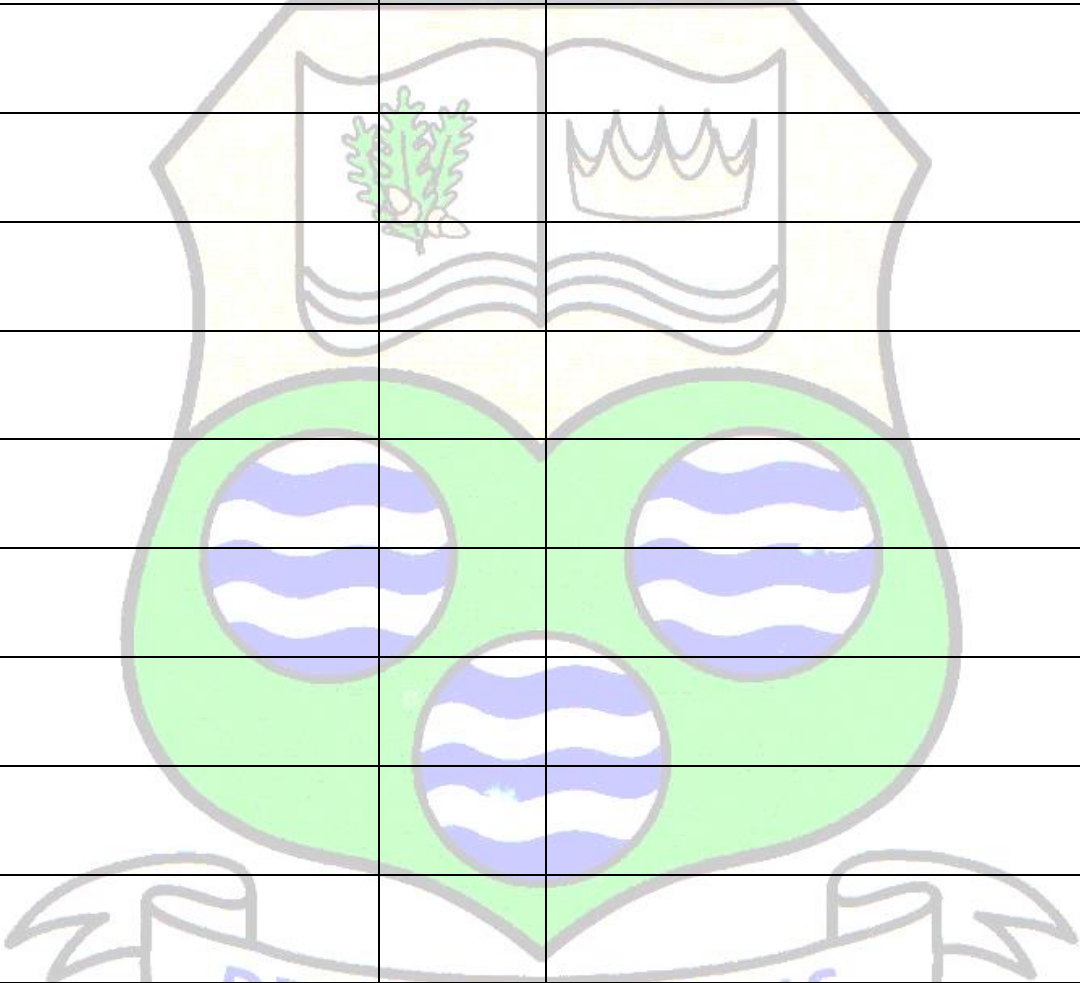
The ETB and Chairperson of the Board of Management will be notified of any critical incidents as soon as is practicable.



Useful Telephone Numbers

Name/Title	Phone Number 1	Phone Number 2
Gardaí : Drumshanbo Carrick-on-Shannon	071 9641002 071 9650510	
Ambulance/Fire Brigade Drumshanbo Fire Station	999 or 112 071-9620005	
ETB	094 9024188	
Sligo General Hospital	071 9171111	
Local GP's: Drumshanbo Health Centre (Dr. Loftus)	071 9641105	
Tusla (Child and Family Agency)	071 9650324	
Chairperson BOM:		
Local Clergy: Fr. Murray	071-9641010	
SEC	090 6442700	
DES – Communications Unit	01 8896400	
NEPS Psychologist: Main Office	076-1108701 076 1108688	
TUI	01 4822588	

Students Needing Assistance During an Evacuation

Name of Student	Class	Type of Assistance Needed
		

Management Responsibilities

- Confirm the incident has occurred. Get accurate information. Liaise with the Gardaí/emergency services.
- In a case where the incident has occurred during the school day or during school activities, it is vital that accurate accounts of what happened are recorded immediately, or at the earliest possible opportunity. Where appropriate, witness accounts be taken and kept.
- When a tragedy occurs (and has been verified) over the weekend/holidays all staff to be informed via a text message approved by the Principal to their personal phone.
- When tragedy occurs during the course of the school day, all staff members will as far as possible be verbally requested to attend an emergency meeting. Notification of the meeting will also be conveyed via text and/or on the school Management Information System (VShare).
- If the death of a student occurs, the Critical Incident Team and ETB need to be informed immediately by the Principal/Deputy Principal. Other staff will be informed later.
- Ensure family knows who the contact person within the school is.
- Consult with family on school involvement in case of death and ascertain what they wish to communicate. (Family wishes to be fully respected)
- Prepare an announcement for staff/students
- Plan a staff meeting if required
- Prepare statement and distribute procedures to class teachers on breaking the news
- Designate office staff for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents. Office staff will work from a prepared statement.
- Prepare media statement (Appendix 5)
- Discourage any student or staff from dealing with the media.

School's Internal Response to Student's Needs

- Set up Critical Incident room in the school.
- Outline services available to affected students during the first hours (access to counselling and pastoral support). Where it is deemed necessary additional counselling resources may be requested from NEPS
- Principal/Deputy Principal to assist Year Head of the affected class in breaking the news
- Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support. In particular encourage questions, but make students aware you don't know all the answers at this time. *Refuse to be drawn into speculation* as what is said may be taken out of context or misrepresented and may be very harmful to people already suffering.
- Take time with the most affected students

- Critical Incident Members to organize a Year Group prayer service for mid-morning, once all students have been notified.
- Office staff to contact parents where some students request to go home
- Class teachers to encourage those who feel able to return to class.
- Principal/Deputy Principal to liaise with family re any possible school involvement in the funeral arrangements.
- Principal to liaise with ETB during the day regarding staff and student welfare.

Action plan on hearing of an incident

1. The Principal, having confirmed the incident, makes contact with the family
2. Critical Incident Team to meet as early as possible to plan strategy, keeping in mind the *Guidelines for Schools: Responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS 2008*
3. Key roles/tasks are distributed as per management and pastoral responsibilities. Some possible roles are :
 - Team Leader
 - Garda Contact
 - Staff Contact
 - Student Contact
 - Parent Contact
 - Community/Agency Contact
 - Media Contact
 - Administrator
4. Have all written and oral statements ready for communication within the school
5. Meet staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all members of staff hear the news).
6. Critical Incident Team outlines to staff the plan for the day and the support available
7. Decide on location of critical Incident room
8. Class teachers break news to class as per written guidelines (*R7 Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools*).
9. Deputy Principal to make sure that Guidance Counsellor, and members of Critical Incident team are freed from class.
10. Plan another meeting for staff, to update later in the day.
11. Clarify funeral arrangements for staff where appropriate and if available
12. Critical Incident Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral where appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of the family.

Critical Incident management – Media Arrangements

- Principal/Deputy Principal will take the role of media liaison
- With the assistance of the CIM Team the Principal will prepare a short statement (Appendix 5) to address the following :
 - Facts as known at the time

- Reference to sorrow of staff and students
- Schools sympathy for the bereaved family
- Outline the supports that are in place for students
- The above statement should be held by the secretary and emailed to press on request; if a media briefing has been scheduled they may also send details of when and where this will be held.

- In the event of a media briefing, staff and students should be made aware of the following:
 - Only the Principal/Deputy Principal (acting as the media liaison) will be interviewed
 - The interview will consist of the prepared statement and any pre-agreed questions only; quotes by others will not be responded to.
 - The media will be requested not to photograph staff or students.
 - Staff and students will be asked to respect the privacy of the bereaved family by not engaging with the press or referencing the situation on social media or by any other public means.

Medium-Term Action Plan (24-72 HOURS)

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours
2. Have a Critical Incident Management Team review meeting
3. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with the involvement in support meetings a choice of opting out
4. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group, debriefings or support meetings with parental permission (Appendix 2)
5. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
6. Request a decision from school management re. school closure (if appropriate)
7. *Adhere to the normal school routine if at all possible*
8. Facilitate students/staff members in responding with sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc. ...
9. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/members of staff
10. Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parents, if necessary
11. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives, etc. ...
12. Preparation of students/members of staff attending the funeral
13. Facilitate students/members of staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family

14. Plan the visit to the injured. Family Liaison person, class teacher and principal to visit home/hospital. Decision to be made in accordance with parents'/guardians' wishes
15. Plan attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service. Decision will be made in accordance with parents'/guardians' wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends

Long term Actions - Critical Incident Management Aftercare

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to members of staff and students
 - Monitor students/class most affected for signs of continuing distress. If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need referral to the appropriate support agency.
 - Uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Deterioration in academic performance
 - Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 - Inappropriate emotional reactions
 - Increased absenteeism
 - * Constant communication with the student's family is essential.
- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Plan a school memorial service. Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure new staff are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school.
- Update and amend school records

Appendix 1

Letter to Parents – Sudden Death/Accident

*Co. Leitrim Vocational Education Committee
Drumshanbo Vocational School*

Telephone: Office 071 – 9641085 **Website:** www.dvs.ie **email:** info@dvs.ie

Principal:

Mr. Martin Fallon B.Sc., M.Ed.
Dip. Comp. Ed.
email: principal@dvs.ie



Deputy Principal:

Mr. Sean Wynne M.I., B.A., M.A.

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of *Name of student(s)*. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).

Our thoughts are with (family name). We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. *(Elaborate).*

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (*Details*).

Principal's signature

Appendix 2

Consent Letter – Individual or Group support Session

Co. Leitrim Vocational Education Committee

Drumshanbo Vocational School

Telephone: Office 071 – 9641085 **Website:** www.dvs.ie **email:** info@dvs.ie

Principal:

Mr. Martin Fallon B.Sc., M.Ed.
Dip. Comp. Ed.
email: principal@dvs.ie



Deputy Principal:

Mr. Sean Wynne M.I., B.A., M.A.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following (specific reference to the incident).

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- a) Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- b) Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- c) Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from ...
- d) Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible.

If you would like for your son/daughter to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact (**Name and phone number of contact person**).

I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session
Student Name

Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Yours Sincerely,
School Principal

Appendix 3

Letter seeking advance parental agreement to child been seen

Co. Leitrim Vocational Education Committee

Drumshanbo Vocational School

Telephone: Office 071 – 9641085 **Website:** www.dvs.ie **email:** info@dvs.ie

Principal:

Mr. Martin Fallon B.Sc., M.Ed.
Dip. Comp. Ed.
email: principal@dvs.ie



Deputy Principal:

Mr. Sean Wynne M.I., B.A., M.A.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Drumshanbo Vocational School has developed a plan for responding when a tragedy occurs.

When such an event happens, schools are offered support by psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), an agency of the Department of Education and Skills. If we feel it is necessary, we would like to be in a position to have your child seen by the psychologist who can offer advice and support.

Before any child is seen by a NEPS psychologist parental consent is usually required. We will make every effort to obtain this. However, in the unlikely event of being unable to contact you, we are writing to seek your consent to your child being seen by a member of NEPS as part of our school's immediate response. This is to allow us to support your child in the best way possible. Your child may be seen individually, in a small group or as part of a class group.

If you wish to discuss this, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Principal's name



Appendix 4

Factual Verification Report

Date of incident _____

Time of incident _____

Location of incident _____

Detailed description of the incident

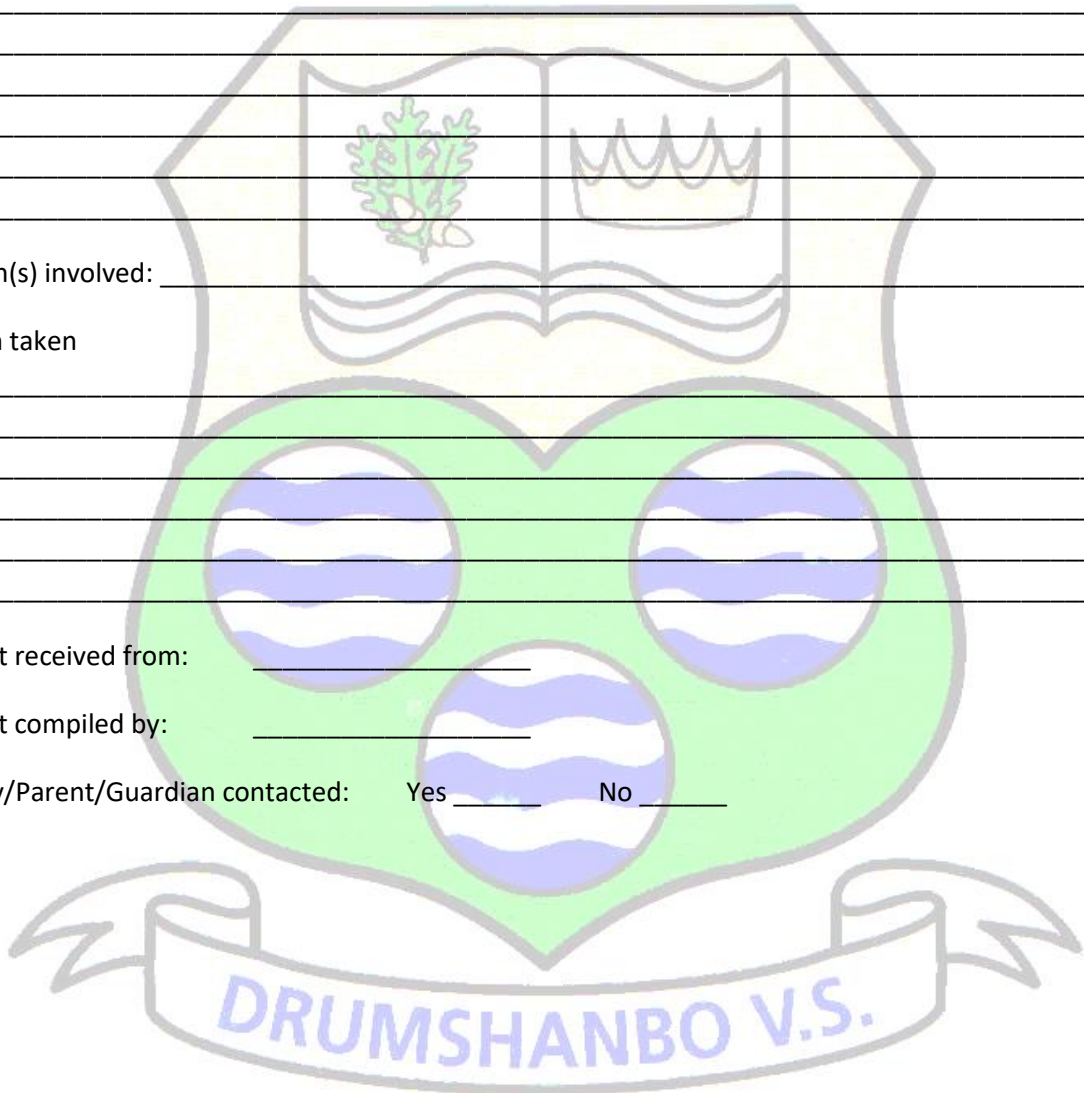
Person(s) involved: _____

Action taken

Report received from: _____

Report compiled by: _____

Family/Parent/Guardian contacted: Yes _____ No _____



Appendix 5

Sample Announcement to the Media

Co. Leitrim Vocational Education Committee

Drumshanbo Vocational School

Telephone: Office 071 – 9641085 **Website:** www.dvs.ie **email:** info@dvs.ie

Principal:

Mr. Martin Fallon B.Sc., M.Ed.
Dip. Comp. Ed.
email: principal@dvs.ie



Deputy Principal:

Mr. Sean Wynne M.I., B.A., M.A.

My name is *(Name)* and I am the Principal of *(Name)* School. We learned this morning of the death of *(one of our students or Name of student)*. This is a terrible tragedy for _____ family (ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with *(Name)* family and friends.

Name of student/students was a (5th year boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and *(insert other information if relevant)* have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

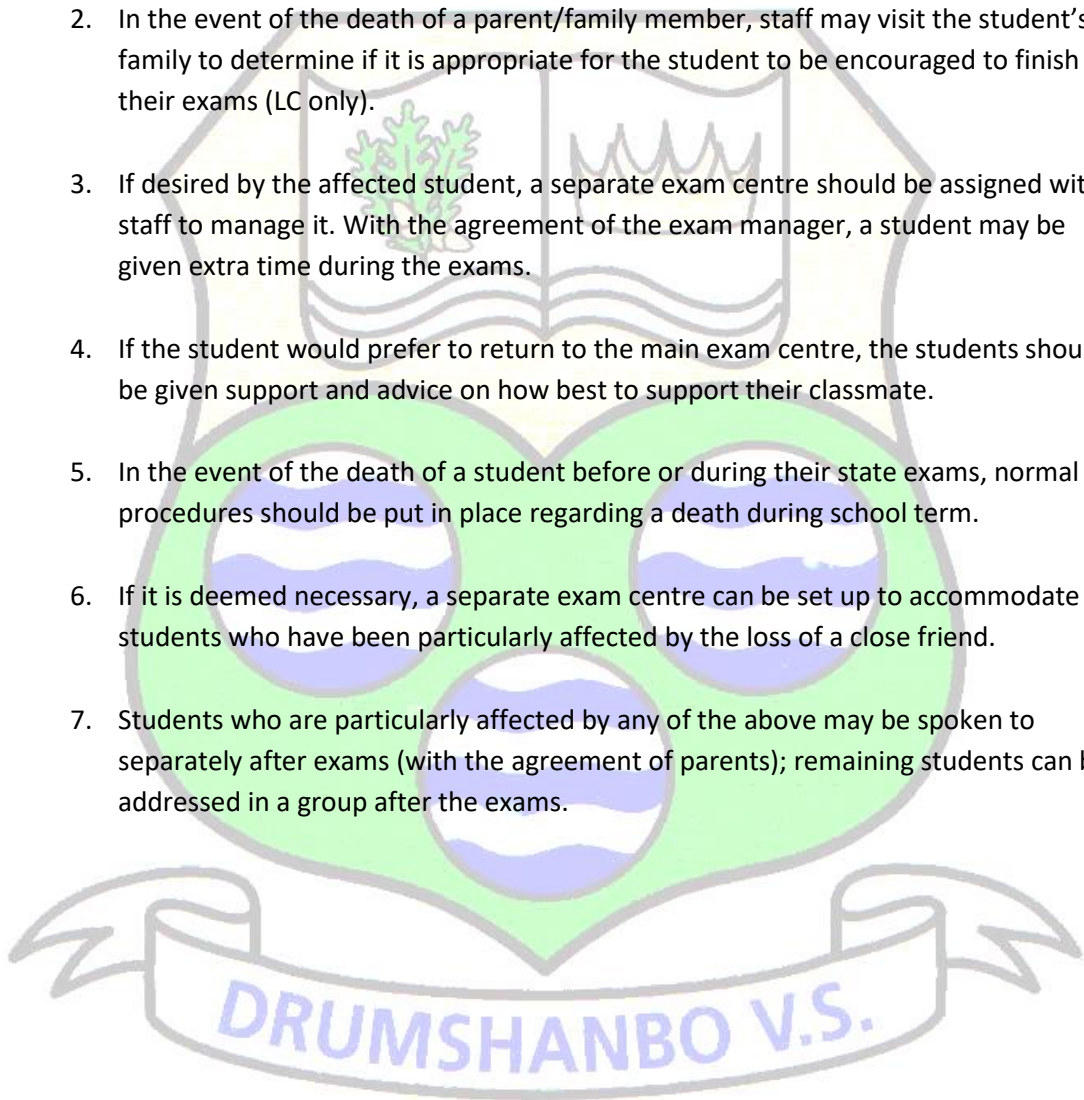
Thank you

Appendix 6

Critical Incidents During State Exams

In the event of the death of someone close to a student sitting state exams, the following procedures should be put into action:

1. Ring SEC to alert the Exam Manager for the school
2. In the event of the death of a parent/family member, staff may visit the student's family to determine if it is appropriate for the student to be encouraged to finish their exams (LC only).
3. If desired by the affected student, a separate exam centre should be assigned with staff to manage it. With the agreement of the exam manager, a student may be given extra time during the exams.
4. If the student would prefer to return to the main exam centre, the students should be given support and advice on how best to support their classmate.
5. In the event of the death of a student before or during their state exams, normal procedures should be put in place regarding a death during school term.
6. If it is deemed necessary, a separate exam centre can be set up to accommodate students who have been particularly affected by the loss of a close friend.
7. Students who are particularly affected by any of the above may be spoken to separately after exams (with the agreement of parents); remaining students can be addressed in a group after the exams.



Appendix 7

Circular Re: Requirements to report child protection issues – NEPS psychologists

I am writing to advise you about the responsibilities of NEPS psychologists when working with schools, in regard to child protection. The Department of Education and Skills (Des) adheres to the Health Service Executive, Children First: *National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. Consequently an internal circular has issued to all staff of the DES outlining procedures to be followed, when information related to child protection concerns comes to attention during the course of their work.

As Department employees, NEPS psychologists are required by this circular to bring any information regarding child protection concerns to the attention of the DLP in the relevant school and also, to make a written report for the DES in all situations.

It is not the role of the psychologist or the Department of Education and Skills to investigate individual allegations and it remains the primary responsibility of the DLP to follow the appropriate procedure for reporting to the HSE as set out in the *Des Child Protection Guidelines for Schools Primary and Post Primary (Department circular 0065/2011)*. If a report has not already been made by 999999the DLP to the HSE the psychologist will advise that this is done immediately.

When a NEPS psychologist receives any information relating to a child protection issue they must first complete a Des, Standard Incident Report Form. This includes all relevant details such as, name of the school, name and address of the child, name of the person who brought the concern to the attention of the psychologist, name of the person against whom the allegation has been made and summary details of the alleged child protection concern. This report is sent by the NEPS psychologist to the Des, Principal Officer with responsibility for child protection.

The DES will then write to the school requesting confirmation that the matter has been/is being dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*. As well as referring a specific allegation to the school, at the same time the Des notifies the relevant Child Care Manager in the HSE.

Received from Marie Leahy, Regional Director, NEPS (January 2013)

Appendix 8

Student Contact Record

This form can be used by school staff or external agency staff to record the details of students seen following a critical incident. This information should be collated centrally.

Name of staff member: _____

Date Student's name Class/Year Outcome (include need for follow up)

Appendix 9

Some Useful Advice For Parents

Young people react in different ways to trauma. Some will cope extremely well, some will get over it quickly and others will find it more difficult and will take more time.

It often depends on how well they knew or how close they were to the person who died.

Routines

Many families and young people have found great value in keeping to their usual routines, as far as possible. Students should be encouraged to keep up social activities, hobbies and sports. This will help with managing stress and prevent them from dwelling too much on the traumatic experience.

To talk or not to talk.

Give you son or daughter the message that they can talk about their thoughts and feelings to you but also allow them to choose when and if they do. Reassure them that having strong feelings is normal at this time.

Sometimes young people prefer to talk to someone outside the family. Be supportive and nonjudgmental. Trauma can be experienced differently by each of us and all of these experiences are equally valid.

Support from others

Encourage them to spend time with supportive friends. Talk to others who may be involved with your son / daughter (e.g. teachers) so that they can understand how he or she has been affected and what they can do to help. Consult your son or daughter in this so that they feel they have some control in matters affecting them.

Activities

Encourage them to keep up social activities, hobbies or sports etc. This will help with managing stress and not dwelling too much on the traumatic experience.

Being Firm

Keep to your usual expectations of your son or daughter while allowing some flexibility for things that are less important. Set firm limits on behaviour that involves aggression or self-harm. Seek professional help for such behaviour.

Humour

Feel ok to use humour when it is natural to do so. This can be a welcome way to lighten the situation.

Professional help

Be aware of how your son or daughter is coping at home, in school and with friends. Seek professional help for any signs of depression, accident proneness, restlessness or persistent change to personality.

Be reassured

With time and care young people can make a full recovery from trauma. Treatment is available if they need help.



Appendix 10

Handout to Students/Parents on Normal Reaction

Coping with a traumatic incident can be difficult and stressful. It can affect the way we feel, think and behave. The following information will help you understand some of the feelings and reactions you may experience within hours, days or weeks after the event. There are also some suggestions on what may help you during this time.

Physical and Behavioural Reactions.

It is quite normal to experience tiredness, sleeplessness, nightmares, headaches, loss or increase of appetite, bowel / bladder problems, loss of concentration, irritability. Sometimes people feel generally unwell.

Emotional and Cognitive Reactions (How we feel and think)

You may experience:

1. **Shock** – at what happened. Things may feel unreal. Shock sometimes causes people to deny what has happened. This does not mean you don't care.

You may feel like withdrawing, crying or becoming hysterical.

2. **Fear** – of the unpredictability of everything, especially life, of a similar incident happening again, or breaking down or losing control, of being alone.

3. **Guilt** – feeling responsible in some way for what has happened, for not being able to make things better or not being able to help others, for being alive and better off than others

4. **Shame** – for not reacting as you thought you should,

– for needing support from others.

5. **Anger** – at someone or something, wanting to blame someone or something for what has happened

– at the injustice of the event.

6. **Confusion** – about the event, how you should react, having mixed feelings about everything.

7. **Pain** – at the loss of the person,

– of associating this with other incidents, bereavements or losses that you may have experienced before.

8. **Left Out** – that people are not acknowledging your involvement in the incident or your relationship with the person who is injured

It is important to ask questions and clarify what actually happened after an incident. Rumours spread quickly and hearing different information can be confusing and stressful.

Remember

You need to look after yourself.

You are normal and are having normal reactions to an abnormal event

There are people you can talk to

You may NOT experience any of the above feelings

If you do there is little you can do to avoid these uncomfortable feelings and thoughts

But there are things you can do to help you recover.

What can help?

1. **Talk** – Try to talk about the event and how you feel. Don't bottle things up.

Sharing your experience with others who have had a similar experience may help.

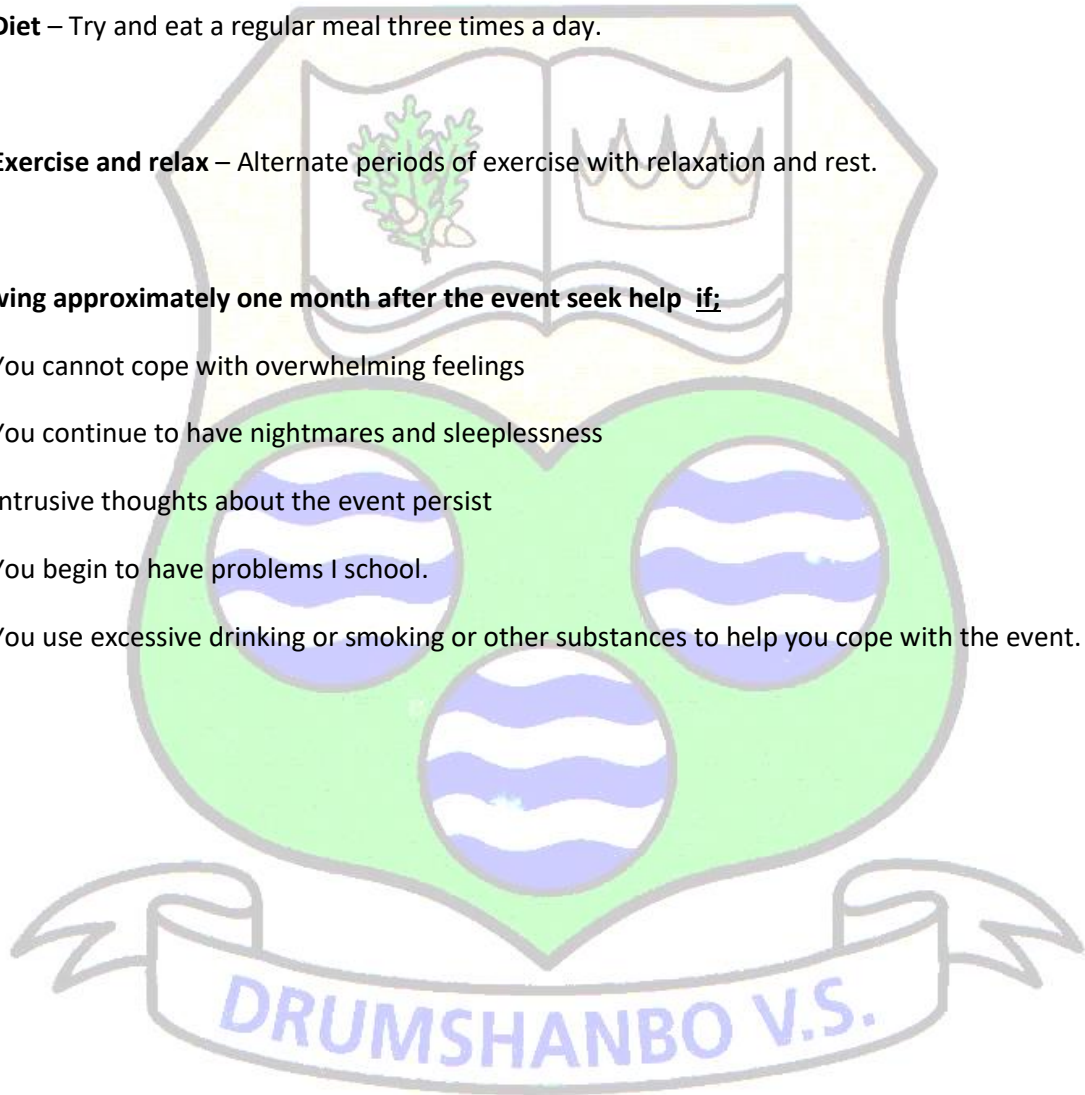
Let someone know if you are not coping well. If it is difficult to talk, keep journal of how you are feeling or draw your experiences or emotions.

2. **Thinking over the incident** – you need to process the incident and allow it more into your mind over time. With time you may need to talk about it, write about it, and dream about it over and over again to help you to eventually accept what has happened.

3. **Going back**- returning to where the incident has happened may help you deal with the incident.
4. **Attending memorials** – going to funeral services
5. **Helping others** – doing things to help others may bring some relief.
6. **Diet** – Try and eat a regular meal three times a day.
7. **Exercise and relax** – Alternate periods of exercise with relaxation and rest.

Following approximately one month after the event seek help if;

1. You cannot cope with overwhelming feelings
2. You continue to have nightmares and sleeplessness
3. Intrusive thoughts about the event persist
4. You begin to have problems I school.
5. You use excessive drinking or smoking or other substances to help you cope with the event.



Ratification by the Board of Management & ETB

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____.

This policy will be implemented from _____ and replace earlier Critical Incident policies from this date.

Signed _____ Date _____

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed _____ Date _____

(Principal)

Signed _____ Date _____

(Chief Executive, MSLETB)

