

Youthreach Sligo

Critical Incident Policy

Youthreach Sligo aims to protect the well-being of its young people and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Mission statement;

To unlock potential in a safe learning environment and to encourage development of personal well-being, abilities and interests.

Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education Training Board through Ultan Mulvihill as coordinator of Youthreach Sligo have drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the centres policy and practice.

The staff and management of Youthreach Sligo have a number of policies and procedures to ensure the physical and psychological safety of both staff and learners, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the centre, in ordinary times and in times of crisis. They have established a critical incident team (CIT) to implement the plan in case of tragic incidents.

Critical Incidents.

The staff and management of Youthreach Sligo recognize a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the centre. Critical Incidents may involve one or more learners or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include;

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

Critical Incident Template for Centre plan

Resource for Centres: R 22

Critical Incident Team

Role	Name	Telephone number (home and mobile)
Team Leader	ULTAN MULVIHILL	086-0419746
Garda Liaison	MARIE MAGILL	087-9831630
Staff Liaison	EAMON KELLY	087-6391032
Young people Liaison	EILEEN RYAN	087-7901022
Parent Liaison	DAMIAN BEIRNE	087-2756812
Community Liaison	EAMON KELLY	087-6391032
Media Liaison	REFER to ETB.	
Administrator	ULTAN MULVIHILL	086-0419746

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information: Who, what, when, where?	The Staff Team
Convene a CIT meeting – specify time and place clearly	ULTAN MULVIHILL
Contact external agencies where necessary	
Arrange supervision for learners	ULTAN MULVIHILL
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	ARRANGED BY ULTAN MULVIHILL
Inform learners –(close friends and young people with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	The staff Team
Compile list of vulnerable learners	The staff Team
Contact/visit the bereaved family	PHILL CORCORAN + DAMIAN BEIRNE
Prepare & agree media statement and deal with media	REFER TO ETB.
Inform parents	ANN GALLAGHER + MARIE MAGILL
Hold end of day staff briefing	ULTAN MULVIHILL

CONTACT A.E.O. ; FET DIRECTOR, 34 + C.E.

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIT meeting - review the events of day 1	CIT <i>ULTAN MULVHILL</i>
Meet external agencies	<i>EAMON KELLY</i>
Meet whole staff	<i>ULTAN MULVHILL</i>
Arrange support for learners, staff, parents	<i>ULTAN MULVHILL</i>
Visit the injured	<i>ULTAN MULVHILL</i>
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	<i>PHILL CORCORAN DAMIAN BEIRNE +</i>
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	<i>The staff TEAM</i>
Make decisions about Centre closure	BOM <i>Refer to ETB.</i>

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

TASK	NAME
Monitor Young people for signs of continuing distress	Instructors <i>(staff team)</i>
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	<i>PHILL CORCORAN</i>
Plan for return of bereaved	<i>ULTAN MULVHILL</i>
Plan for giving of 'memory collection' to bereaved family	<i>DAMIAN BEIRNE</i>
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff and parents
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM/ VEC <i>ETB.</i>

Emergency Contact List

Resource for Centres: R 23

(To be displayed in staff-room, Centre office and Coordinator/Manager's office etc)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	071 - 915700
HOSPITAL	071 - 9171111
FIRE BRIGADE	071 - 911403
LOCAL GPS (medicentre)	071 - 9142550 + 1800411057 <i>canecall</i>
HSE/Community Care Team/ Family Centre	
INSPECTOR	
PSYCHOLOGIST/COUNSELLOR	
DES	
UNION	
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	071 - 9145028
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	0906 - 442700

Learner Contact Record

Resource for Centres: R1

This form can be used by Centre staff to record the details of young people seen following a Critical Incident. This information should be collated centrally.

Name of Centre staff member: _____

<u>Date</u>	<u>Learner's name</u>	<u>Outcome (include need for follow-up)</u>

Team leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; ETB; SEC; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family

A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g., centre closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)

You need to consider what to do in the absence of the team leader.

Gárda liaison

(This may be seen as part of the team leader's role)

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths is checked out before being shared

Staff liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable learners
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and talks to them individually. Advises them of availability of supports and gives them relevant contact numbers.

A staff member known and trusted by the staff.

Learner liaison

- Co-ordinates information from staff about learners they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable learners (appropriately)
- Provides materials for learners (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of learners seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

A trusted and familiar figure to the young people.
A bigger centre may need a number of such people.

Community/agency liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, e.g. those associated closely with the centre
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds outside agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community.

Parent liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed centre policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the centre's system that are ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Someone known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents.

Media liaison

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. young people being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the ETB, regional organisers, relevant staff unions, etc.
- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by the critical incident team)

Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person.
A person who is able to set limits without being offensive.

Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Instructors
 - Emergency support services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that require response
- Ensures that templates are on the centre's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

If the centre has clerical support this person can act as the administrator.

Sample Letters for parents after an accident or violent death

- **Open Data folder**
- **Click on Staff folders**
- **Click on 01 Policy Documents**
- **Click on Critical Incident Plan**

R6: Sample letter to parents – sudden death/accident

Resource for staff

This letter can be used as a template for centres when informing parents of a tragedy. It offers some advice and outlines what is involved in the centre's response.

Dear Parents

The centre has experienced (*the sudden death, accidental injury*) of one of our young people. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident) Our thoughts are with (*family name*).

We have support structures in place to help your son/daughter cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate) It is possible that your son/daughter may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give truthful information.

You can help your son/daughter by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All young people are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for some 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 young person and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

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

(Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (*date, time and place*). At that time, further information about helping young people to grieve 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 centre. (*Details*)

Coordinator/Manager signature

R7: **Sample letter to parents** – violent death

Resource for centre staff team

This letter can be used as a template for centres when they are informing parents of a violent death, offering some advice and outlining what the centre's response involves.

Dear Parents

I am informing you about a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using words such as murder or suicide as the facts will not be established until a court case or inquest has been held)

A young person from the neighbourhood, who is the (brother, sister, cousin, friend) of _____, a learner here at the centre, died as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all saddened greatly by his/her death.

We have shared this information and discussed it with all of our learners. Staff members have been available for all our young people today. Other support personnel (*including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available for (*specify time*).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. Death may cause a variety of reactions in your son/daughter. Some young people are afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that sudden deaths are rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are around the centre and may approach you or your son or daughter. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your son/daughter at the centre and our general advice is that you should not let your child be interviewed as they may say something they will regret later.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (*date, time and place*).
Our thoughts are with (*family name*) and with each of you.

Yours sincerely

Manager/Coordinator

R19: Ways to help your son/daughter through this difficult time

Handout for parents

Young people do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide the safety, atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal.
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". Traumatized people are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them.
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling.
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back.
- Telephone if you are out for a long time and reassure them.
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting.
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it.
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen.
- Work with the centre's support services and other available support agencies.

R12: How to cope when something terrible happens

Handout for learners

- Reach out – people do care.
- Talk to your friends, family and the centre's staff members. Talking can be healing medicine.
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad.
- It is ok to cry.
- It is ok to smile and laugh.
- If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently.
- When the stress level is high there is a temptation to try to numb the feelings with alcohol and drugs. This complicates the problems, rather than relieving them.
- Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you.
- Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure.
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful.
- Make a special effort to look after yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk.
- Sticking to your "normal" routine helps. Structure your time and keep busy.
- Take time out – go for a walk or kick a football.
- Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something fun or special. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc. Laughter is good medicine. Watch a funny movie or play a silly game with younger people to lighten your spirits.
- Visit useful websites such as www.spunout.ie, www.youth.ie, www.reachout.com.au.
- Be conscious of what you post on Facebook or anywhere else on the internet (photos or comments) or send on your phone.
- Above all, realise that what you are experiencing is normal following a traumatic event. Be understanding and kind towards yourself and others.

R13: Reactions to a critical incident

Handout for learners

As a result of this traumatic event, you may experience some strong emotional or physical reactions. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel but here is a list of difficulties you might experience:

EMOTIONAL

Fear
Guilt
Shame
Anger
Regret
Loneliness
Anxiety
Mood swings
Shock
Yearning
Numbness
Confusion
Isolation
Insecure feelings

THOUGHTS

Disbelief
Denial
Sense of unreality
Preoccupation with images of the event
/person

BEHAVIOURAL

Nightmares
Social withdrawal
Irritability
Tearfulness
Loss of concentration
Forgetfulness
Physical/verbal aggression
Misuse of drugs, including alcohol
Excessive internet use

PHYSICAL

Tiredness
Sleeplessness
Headaches
Gastrointestinal problems
Bowel/Bladder problems
Loss or increase in appetite

R14: Grief after suicide or suspected suicide

Handout for learners

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, 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 okay.
- 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 God, 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 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 understand your need to be silent.
- Seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed.
- If you are thinking of trying to kill 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 the centre about a support group that provides a safe place to express your feelings, or somewhere to be with other survivors who are experiencing some of the same things you are feeling.
- Allow yourself to laugh with others and at yourself. This is healing.
- Useful websites: www.spunout.ie; www.youth.ie; www.reachout.com.au