

## CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

*Note: This policy and procedure are based on a template developed by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) and the International Education Association (ISANA).*

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## Purpose of the policy:

This policy and related procedures have been developed to assist BIOT staff and students in responding appropriately to incidents that may cause trauma to an individual and/or affect the campus as a whole. It establishes basic procedures and reporting systems to cover prevention, immediate responses and follow-up actions to deal with the immediate consequences and the longer-term implications of a critical incident. In accordance with the requirements of the National Code the policy includes specific processes for dealing with critical incidents affecting international students. When an international student is involved the RTO management will necessarily take on tasks that would normally be handled by the family. It is important to have efficient, sensitive and supportive strategies for dealing with such an occurrence that minimise confusion, conflicts and breaches of confidentiality. A further useful resource is 'Pandemic Planning in the Workplace', published by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2009), available at: [www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/pandemic/docs/Pandemic\\_Planning\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace.pdf](http://www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/pandemic/docs/Pandemic_Planning_in_the_Workplace.pdf)

## 1.0 Policy

This policy/procedure supports *RTO 2015 standards and Student Support Services and Standard 14.2 – Staff capability, educational resources and premises* of the 'National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities & Providers of Education & Training to Overseas Students 2007' which states:

*"The registered provider must have a documented critical incident policy together with procedures that cover the action to be taken in the event of a critical incident, required follow-up to the incident, and records of the incident and action taken."*

This procedure ensures that any critical incident that occurs is documented, reported and action taken by RTO (BIOT) where required.

This document outlines the RTO policy, support mechanisms and procedures for managing a critical incident. The policy ensures the RTO has:

- An effective approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur
- Appropriate support and counselling services available to those affected
- Appropriate training and information resources provided to staff.

## 2.0 Definitions

A Critical incident is defined as '*a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.*' (Definition from National Code 2007).

A Critical Incident is a traumatic or tragic event or situation, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia) affecting an RTO student or staff member that causes extreme stress, fear or injury and emotional distress within the Academy community. Critical incidents are not limited to but could include:

- Death (including the death of a dependant residing in Australia for an international student)
- serious illness causing declining health of a student or staff member over time
- serious injury preventing or severely affecting a student's ability to continue with a course
- severe verbal or psychological aggression
- natural disaster
- domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse.
- Non-life-threatening events could still qualify as critical incidents.

Such Critical Incidents are not limited to but may include:

- Missing students
- Severe verbal or psychological aggression
- Death, serious injury or any threat of these
- Natural disaster
- Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse

Examples of critical incidents that may occur to an International Student are:

- **Death** (Including death of a dependant residing in Australia)
- Accidental, Suicide, Result of an injury or terminal illness, or Murder
- **Serious Illness** which causes the deterioration of the student/staff member's health over time.
- **Serious Injury** which prevents or severely affects the student's ability to continue with or complete the course.

## Reporting:

Police must be notified in any case of sudden unexpected death.

Police actions include:

- Reporting such death to the Coroner
- Notifying next of kin
- Obtaining official identification of the deceased (this must be done by someone who has known the deceased for some time)
- Conducting investigations on behalf of the Coroner, eg interviewing witnesses and others who may have been involved, collecting clothing and other items for use in evidence, delivering specimens for analysis. The Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 requires the college to notify the Department of Education and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) as soon as practical after a critical incident involving an international student and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance, the incident will need to be reported via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

### On-campus Incidents

If the incident is on campus, the first action will be to contact the emergency services - fire, ambulance or police (Calling "000") – as would be the case with other WH&S matters. The General Manager/Student Support Manager must also be contacted immediately when the incident involves death, serious injury or a threat to life or property.

### Off-campus Incidents

If the critical incident involves a student or staff member and is off-campus, the person receiving the information must immediately contact the General Manager/Student Support Manager who will communicate other staff as appropriate. Emergency 24 hr contact number for BIOT is 0431 101 950.

### Key Details to be Reported 0431 101 950

Key details to report include the time, location and nature of the incident (e.g. threat, accident, death or injury), names and roles of persons involved (e.g. staff, international or domestic student).

Non-life threatening events could still qualify as critical incidents although serious illness or injury would probably not be considered a critical incident in the broader campus community.

### 3.0 Procedure

Procedure Immediate Response (within 24 hours) When a critical incident has been identified, whether occurring on or off campus:

The staff member witnessing the incident or receiving the news immediately contacts the general manager, Mr.Anil Bathini on 0431101950 (or if he is unavailable, the CEO of BIOT, Mr.Dhan Rai Bharuah on 0450702998).

Key details to be reported include:

- time, location and nature of the incident, eg threat, accident, death or injury
  - names and positions of person/s involved, eg staff, international or domestic student
  - current location of the student/staff member
  - whether emergency services have been called
  - whether an interpreter is required.
1. The above details should be documented for further reference. The management will seek additional information about the incident and will request that details are not immediately made public, if appropriate. The management will communicate with other staff as appropriate, including the student admin officers (if an international student is involved) and the RTO manager.
  2. The management or nominee calls an immediate meeting with the following staff to make decisions as to how to proceed:
    - Academic manager
    - RTO Manager
    - Student support officers
    - Trainers

This group becomes the Critical Incident Team. One member of the team should scribe for all meetings to keep a record of all content and decisions made.

3. At the initial meeting of the Critical Incident Team the tasks are to:
  - create a clear understanding of the known facts
  - plan an immediate response
  - plan ongoing strategies
  - allocate individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks.
4. Issues to be considered include:
  - Notifying next of kin/significant others. What is the most appropriate manner of contact?
  - Arrangements for informing staff and students
  - Guidelines to staff about what information to give students
  - Issuing a written bulletin to staff if the matter is complex
  - Briefing the student support officer/other staff (if an international student is involved) and other staff; delegating a staff member to deal with inquiries
  - Liaising with necessary emergency services/hospital/medical
  - Managing media/publicity
  - Identifying those students and staff most closely involved and therefore most at risk.

These people are likely to be:

- those directly involved
- personal friends/family of those involved
- others who have experienced a similar past trauma
- other students and staff.

- Arrange a time and place for an initial group/individual debriefing session with counsellor/s. This session provides an opportunity to share the impact of the event, discuss various interpretations of

the event in cultural/ethnic terms, the sense of vulnerability, the experience of painful emotions and the normalisation of reactions.

- Organise tasks, timelines and individual responsibilities for the next hours/days, etc. See the list below in Additional Action (48 – 72 hours)
- Plan ongoing feedback and regular meetings so the Critical Incident Team is in constant touch and working together
- If the case of a student's death, notify the general manager and relevant teaching staff so records are stopped
- Confirm access to Academy emergency funds if necessary
- If the incident involves death or serious injury to an international student, assist the student's family as needed.

This assistance may include:

- liaising with consular staff
- hiring interpreters
- making arrangements for visits from family and friends, eg accommodation, travel, crisis support and referral to appropriate services
- making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation – obtaining a death certificate
- assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues – assisting with visa issues
- notifying the student's Homestay or accommodation provider.

- Complete a Critical Incident Report (see Appendix 9 for proforma).

#### Additional Action (48 – 72 hours)

Issues to be discussed at subsequent meetings of the Critical Incident Team may include:

- Who is the decision maker?
- Who will follow up?
- Availability of mobile phones
- Notification of and liaison with sponsor/agent if applicable
- Liaison with police, doctors, hospital etc.
- Hiring independent interpreters
- Death notices
- Funeral/memorial service requirements
- Refunds of tuition fees to pay repatriation or associated expenses
- Copy of death certificate
- Consideration of personal items and affairs (including household and academic)
- Insurance matters (including OHSC cover, ambulance cover)
- Formal stress management interventions required for students and/or staff (release from classes, leave, rescheduled assessments or exams)
- Liaison with academic staff or supervisors
- Arrangements for further support/counselling sessions for groups/individuals as necessary
- Liaison with DIBP re visa issues if studies will be interrupted
- Fee issues if applicable
- Legal issues if applicable, eg access to legal services, right to sue
- Condolence letters to family
- Financial assistance for victim's family if residing in Australia
- Roster of staff/students for hospital visits
- Restore normal functioning of Academy Follow-up – Monitoring, Support, Evaluation
- Assess need for ongoing support for affected students/staff
- Maintain contact with any injured/affected individuals
- Critical Incident Team to evaluate effectiveness of critical incident management plan, with feedback from staff/students and relevant community personnel.
- Be aware of any possible longer term issues, eg inquests, legal proceedings Policy

## Reporting procedure

The critical incident policy works together with other policies and procedures serving the students by taking necessary actions during any incidents and record keeping of the incidents and action/s.

The RTO management will identify and report all critical incidents which includes the incidents occurred outside of Australia that can affect a learner e.g. a natural disaster in the region or village where the learner comes from that has affected their family, and the learner returns to their home country immediately.

The management notifies the department of immigration and border protection (DIBP) of a change of the students visa status in accordance with section 19 of the ESOS Act within 14 days after the event specified below occurs:

- any termination of an accepted student's studies (whether as a result of action by the student or the provider or otherwise) before the student's course is completed;

Where a Critical Incident is identified the following procedures must occur. As part of the reporting process the General Manager/Student Support Manager shall confirm that the incident falls under the definition provided above of a 'Critical Incident.'

When a staff member feels, a critical incident has occurred, they are required to contact emergency services where required and contact the General Manager/Student Support officer immediately.

- A 'Critical Incident Report' (Appendix 9) is to be completed by the appropriate staff member involved in the incident or notification of the incident. Where appropriate the report will be completed/verified by the Student Support Manager and given to the General Manager/CEO.
- The 'Critical Incident Report' is to contain as much information as possible and indicate the people directly involved in the incident.
- The Educational Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) requires BIOT to notify the appropriate government agency(s) soon as practical after the incident and in the case of a student's death or other absence affecting the student's attendance; the incident will need to be reported via the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

### Consultation of Action Plan

- The General Manager/CEO will assess the Critical Incident and implement a plan of action to follow up the Critical Incident.
- Where required, a meeting with appropriate staff/students will be organised to follow up the incident. This meeting will determine issues and responsibilities relating to :
  - Assessing risks and response actions
  - Liaison with emergency and other services
  - Contact with students' relatives and other appropriate contacts
  - Liaison with other external bodies, such as home stays, carers or foreign embassies, and
  - Counselling and managing students and staff not directly involved in the incident.
  - Media Management (Where required)
- Where appropriate, BIOT may be required to provide support to the family in the form of:
  - Hiring interpreters
  - Making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation
  - Obtaining a death certificate
  - Assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues
  - Assisting with Visa issues

### Follow up & Review of Critical Incident

Where a critical incident has occurred and all immediate action and reporting requirements have been fulfilled, BIOT will conduct a follow up and review of the specific critical incident. This follow up and review will involve those staff members initially involved in the incident and action plan meeting and will ensure:

- Any required follow up such as de-briefing, counselling and prevention strategies have been completed.
- All staff and students involved in the incident have been informed of all outcomes from the incident
- A recommendation as to the response to the critical incident is documented and included in the continuous improvement submissions
- Any further follow up required is documented and responsibilities allocated to appropriate staff.

#### Record keeping requirements of a Critical Incident

All records of a critical incident are to be maintained by BIOT and it is the responsibility of the General Manager/CEO to ensure that all paperwork, immediate action, and follow up action is completed.

## **Stress Management**

The student counsellor is responsible for implementing and delivering stress management strategies, including the following stages:

- 1 Debriefing as soon as possible after the event on an individual or group basis
- 2 Further debriefing one or more days after the incident
- 3 Follow up 2 to 3 week's later, individual or group basis.
- 4 Ongoing counselling as required.
- 5 Recovery time for staff involved and the Critical Incident Team members

## **Appendices to the Critical Incident Policy and Procedures**

Appendix 1: Managing the Media

Appendix 2: Specialised Skills and Knowledge Needed Within the Critical Incident Team

Appendix 3: A Critical Incident in a Cross-cultural setting: Preparing Yourself and Others

Appendix 4: Police Involvement

Appendix 5: Funeral Information

Appendix 6: The Grieving Process

Appendix 7: Things to Remember Appendix 8: Emergency Numbers for Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

Appendix 9: Critical Incident Report Form

Appendix 10: Incident notification letter to the parents



## Appendix 1: Managing the Media

### Hints for Handling Publicity Surrounding a Critical Incident

In anticipation of some requests for comment from the media regarding a critical incident involving Academy students, it is advisable to have a press release drafted by media staff just in case. Listed below are some helpful hints, which can be used and applied within the role of the Critical Incident Team.

1 'No Comment' = Not a good idea.

2 A good press release should answer the following questions:

- What?
- How?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?

3 Add a joint statement from the Director/CEO and student representatives (or from staff representatives with a student support focus) that will signify unity and dissuade the press from looking for an 'alternative angle' on the story. The statement should include an expression of surprise and sadness at the tragedy, as well as compassion for the family of the victim.

4 A comment should be included explaining the RTO policy on responding to this kind of situation. In addition, if the situation warrants, it would be appropriate to comment on what measures will be put in place to ensure that any future events of this nature are avoided.

5 A telephone contact for further information is always left at the bottom of a press release. The Coordinating Team should determine who will be responsible for media inquiries, and all staff should be alerted to the procedure for directing media inquiries to this person.

### Sample Media Release for a Critical Incident Involving an International Student

An international male student from India, 31, has died at ....., in metropolitan area, Melbourne. The Director/CEO, ....., said the incident had saddened [name of college] staff, its student body, and the international student community. 'We are all dispirited at the loss of a very promising young man. Our profound condolences go to his family,' ..... said. A memorial service held at the college campus yesterday was attended by more than ..... people, including academic staff, International Student Support staff, family, friends, and classmates.

NOTE: The release is short and to the point. It depicts the college as a caring institution, a position reinforced by the fact that the memorial service was held on the college's own grounds.

Note that the release was issued after the memorial service, to avoid the likelihood of media coverage at the service itself. The cause of death has not been revealed, because of the young age of the deceased. Should media investigate further, it is suggested that the Director/CEO respond with a statement saying simply, 'We are sure you will understand that we are not prepared to discuss any of the personal issues which may have been associated with this young man's death. It has always been our policy to respect the privacy of our students and their families.' Each critical incident is unique and the dynamics of each situation will have to be assessed when it occurs. It is important that a structured approach to media management is developed and is included in the management plan to ensure the most positive and supportive response from the media.

### Take the Media Calls



The Director/CEO or nominated person should handle the initial media calls. Be sure to return media calls as soon as possible. It is important that the story is balanced. Therefore avoid answering questions with 'no comment'. Respond to questions accurately; however, it may be necessary to explain to the media that you are unable to answer their questions at this time because i) of the sensitive nature of the issue, or ii) you do not have the information available. It may be necessary to check with the police, ambulance or fire brigade etc, before making a statement.

### **Response Time is Important**

Staff likely to be contacted by the media needs to be alerted immediately and kept informed as more details come to light. Inform Reception staff as soon as possible that the incident has occurred, even if the details are unclear. The Marketing Manager will need to be informed of the incident and will be able to assist by handling media inquiries, liaising with the Director/CEO regarding the situation.

### **Channel All Media Inquiries through One Person**

The Director/CEO will liaise directly with the media as more details are known.

### **Relate to Journalists in a Positive and Friendly Way**

Enlist the support of the media to report accurate information and avoid being defensive. Journalists are professionals too. They have been assigned the job of reporting the story. They feel the public have a right to know and they will report the story with or without the college's cooperation. In a major disaster, the media is an essential means of communicating information, eg providing hot-line phone numbers, etc.

Working with the media representatives as professionals and providing them with accurate information about the incident means staying in control. Cooperation can make the difference between inaccurate reporting resulting in a story that reflects negatively on the college and one which shows our caring role and our ability to respond effectively in a crisis. In media comment emphasise the support available to students and staff.

### **Determine What the Official Response Will Be**

The Marketing Manager may be able to provide advice to staff about other developments or broader issues that may need to be considered when framing the response. They may also be able to offer advice about the most effective methods of responding to newspaper, radio and television interviews.

### **Express concern. Restrict answers to facts. Accentuate the positive.**

It is appropriate to state the facts about what has occurred and what is being done, eg when and where it occurred, how many people were involved or hurt, how much damage has been done.

Describe the assistance being provided for students and staff who may have been traumatised.

Explain that the whole college has been deeply shocked, that all available resources and support services have been gathered and what steps are being taken to rectify the situation and get things back to normal as soon as possible.

It is imperative to avoid making comments that imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications.

Official inquiries, eg by the police, are likely to follow serious incidents. Media comments on the public record may have a bearing on proceedings at such inquiries.

## **Appendix 2: Specialised Skills and Knowledge Needed Within the Critical Incident Team**

Key skills required in members of the Critical Response Team dealing with a critical incident involving an international student include the following:

- Cross-cultural skills • Training skills in cross-cultural communication
- Awareness of one's own values and biases and how they may affect the students
- Knowledge of resources on and off college premises
- Uninterrupted access to those resources
- Communication skills
- Organisational skills
- Liaison skills
- Networking skills
- Stress management skills
- Delegation skills
- Maintenance of clear and direct communication channels with decision makers
- Panic diffusion skills
- Skills to eliminate time lags
- Sensitivity to the issue of confidentiality
- Sensitivity towards different cultural expressions of grief and other emotions
- Protocol knowledge (eg: for repatriation to home country)
- Diplomacy skills
- Debriefing skills
- Monitoring skills for those affected by incident
- Recognition skills re: warning signs of risk to students affected by the incident
- Follow-up skills
- Advocacy skills (for students)
- Referral skills to legal, medical, religious assistance
- Recognition of one's own limitations
- Self-care skills

## Appendix 3: A Critical Incident in a Cross-cultural setting: Preparing yourself and others

**Preparing Yourself** How does one prepare for dealing with a critical incident in a cross-cultural setting? The attitude you assume is of the utmost significance.

The following tips are useful guidelines.

- Expect the unexpected. Not everything occurs between 9am and 5pm.
- Do not be easily upset or disturbed by even the most extreme situations.
- Convey empathy and respect for the emotions of those involved.
- Worry and fear should not be conveyed to the person.
- Provide a sense of stability and strength.
- Be able to alleviate tension and anxiety.
- Listen to what is said. • Listen to what is not said.
- Create a personal equilibrium between your own values and those of a different value system, but keep the values of the client foremost in your mind.
- There will be times when you are unavailable. Don't be consumed by guilt. As long as policy and procedures are in place, there will be someone else who can step in and fulfil the required role.
- Network with ethnic groups in the local community. Keep a list of useful contacts who may be able to assist in matters not directly related to the college: religious customs, family support, interpreters, embassy or consulate contacts.
- It is not always important to remain within the specific religious affiliation to receive help in an emergency situation. Helping, coping, counselling skills are not religiously oriented...sensitivity is common to all members of the clergy. Keep this in mind when seeking assistance.
- Learn as much as you can from foreign nationals about how they would deal with specific scenarios – ask questions,

eg:

- 'How the body of a Muslim car accident victim should be handled when the Coroner demands an autopsy and religious custom prohibits?'
- 'How does one act at a Chinese Buddhist funeral service? What is the proper way to express condolences?'
- 'How is mental illness regarded in your country?'
- 'What is the attitude toward rape in your country?'

The idea is to gain knowledge in advance, whenever possible.

- Keep in contact with support networks like ISANA (International Education Association), the representative body for international education professionals in Australia. Whether by telephone or email, there will always be someone available to use as a sounding board.

ISANA's details are:

Phone: 07 3366 0411

Email: [secretariat@isana.org.au](mailto:secretariat@isana.org.au)

Website: [www.isana.org.au](http://www.isana.org.au)

### Preparing Others

Many staff responds that they are not qualified to handle international students in crisis. Eradicate this 'us and them' attitude by engendering teamwork among staff with regard to assisting international students. Let them know that they can be of invaluable assistance in a crisis by offering short-term training and workshops. Below are some strategies to raise awareness and skills.

- Establish and maintain your own network of 'contacts'. Try to include as wide a variety of types and levels of staff as possible.
- Keep in regular contact whether formally or informally, as these contacts will be your most reliable allies at a moment's notice.
- Conduct training regarding the Critical Incident Policy for international students. It is important for staff to be aware of the existence of such a policy.
- Conduct a resource workshop to locate all relevant community resources in your immediate local area: Funeral Directors, Police and Medical Authorities, Religious Leaders, Ethnic Group Leaders, Media Representatives, Insurance Representatives, local Embassy or Consular representatives.
- Coordinate and conduct a mock exercise to simulate a critical incident. Have the exercise observed and assessed by an outside party.
- Follow up with a debriefing and feedback session, inviting Counsellors to educate participants about Stress Management, Post Traumatic Stress and general counselling principles when dealing with international students.
- Conduct general Cross-cultural Awareness training at regular intervals.

## Appendix 4: Police Involvement

### Police Involvement

The police are required to investigate all cases of sudden unexpected death. Police actions include:

- reporting such death to the Coroner
- notifying next of kin
- obtaining official identification of the deceased (this must be done by someone who has known the deceased for some time)
- conducting investigations on behalf of the Coroner, eg interviewing witnesses and others who may have been involved, collecting clothing and other items for use in evidence, delivering specimens for analysis.

### Coronial Investigations

Every death reported to the Coroner must be investigated. The body of the deceased will be taken to the morgue where it may be viewed by the relatives but not touched. Once the coronial inquiries are complete (and this may take some time), the body will be released to funeral directors to await instruction from the next of kin. At this stage the body may be touched.

### Post Mortems (autopsies)

Most reported deaths require a post mortem examination to determine the medical cause of death. This usually involves an internal and external examination of the body, and of tissue, organ and blood specimens taken from the body. Cultural and religious objections to a post mortem may be discussed with the coroner or a court social worker. However, these objections very rarely influence the coroner's decision to conduct an autopsy.

### Inquests

An inquest is a public hearing before a coroner (and occasionally a jury) to decide the circumstances of death. Once initial investigations are completed, the Coroner may (as in 90% of cases) dispense with an inquest. However, the Coroner may order an inquest or, in certain circumstances (such as murder), an inquest may be legally required.

## Appendix 5: Funeral Information

### Funeral Information

This information is taken from materials published by the Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA, [www.afda.org.au](http://www.afda.org.au)). A variety of reading material is available. Inquiries may be directed to: Australian Funeral Directors Association PO Box 291 Kew East VIC 3102 Phone: (03) 9859 9966 or email: [info@afda.org.au](mailto:info@afda.org.au)

### Arranging a Funeral

When faced with having to make funeral arrangements, most people have no prior experience in organising such an event, and little idea of what to do.

Initial interviews with the funeral director can be at a location nominated by you. While some people may have a fairly clear knowledge of the arrangements they want to make, others may want to consider a myriad of alternatives before making any decisions. The funeral director is there to guide and advise on the many matters that need to be considered.

Decisions to make will include:

- Time and location of the funeral
- Type of service
- Burial/cremation (reflection of the religious or ethnic attitudes and family traditions)
- Type of coffin
- Viewing arrangements
- Choice of participants
- Floral arrangements, motor vehicles and other relevant matters

### The Funeral Director

The funeral director will take responsibility for arranging, with the family concerned, the time and place for an appropriate funeral service by coordinating and liaising with clergy members, doctors, hospitals and cemetery or crematorium officials.

The funeral director will lodge notices in the press, arrange floral tributes, provide a hearse and other vehicles, a funeral chapel and any other facilities and personnel required to carry out the wishes of the family being served.

All official forms must be completed and taken to the appropriate people at the right time. The funeral director, for example, registers the death with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The funeral director ensures that human dignity both of the deceased and the survivors is preserved, and performs tasks in a sensitive and understanding manner. Kindness, helpfulness, understanding and the empathetic handling of funeral arrangements are the vital psychological components of the funeral director's role.



## **When Someone Dies**

When death occurs, the first practical consideration in most cases will be the need for a doctor's attendance. In Australia today, relatively few people die at home and in most cases the medical necessities and formalities will be taken care of by the relevant hospital or other authorities.

The deceased's doctor or the hospital authorities will explain what steps, if any, are required to establish the cause of death and complete the necessary death certificate. Meanwhile, the family may begin making their desired funeral arrangements, which can be completed when the death certificate has been signed.

**The Funeral Ceremony** All reputable funeral directors are able to provide a broad range of services to suit the precise requirements of the bereaved family. Funerals can be as different as the people they are for, with their main purpose being to help the bereaved in the first stages of grief.

The order, style and content of service can all be varied to suit the family's needs. A personal tribute from a family member or close friend, or perhaps including appropriate cultural traditions, may make the service more meaningful.

## **Special Circumstances**

Deaths from suicide and AIDS may sometimes present special problems because of old religious discrimination and/or social stigma. Nevertheless, the need for people to mourn and the rituals of the funeral are still essential for friends and family.

When there is no body (eg: drowning accidents, abduction) it is still important to acknowledge the life of the deceased and help the family and friends to accept that death has occurred. A special memorial service to allow everyone to say goodbye and be able to get on with their grieving is essential. The use of photos, significant objects associated with the deceased's life, and perhaps candles are a great help to use in place of the body.

## Appendix 6: The Grieving Process

Grieving Grief is not a single response, but a complicated series of feelings, emotions and even physical manifestations of a person's reaction to the bereavement.

Grieving is an intensely personal process. Each death is unique and everyone affected will respond differently. Most survivors however, will pass through similar stages of grief from initial shock, numbness, and often denial and anger to realisation, acceptance and finally readjustment.

The intensity of grief experienced will be affected by a number of factors, including the degree of attachment to the deceased and the duration and quality of relationship with them. The greater the attachment, the longer it is likely to take to resolve grief.

However it is not the passage of time itself that brings resolution, but the working through of stages of grief. A meaningful funeral service can play a significant part in the crucial early stages of grieving.

### Recovery Timeline

The successful management of critical incidents depends on the Academy taking appropriate action and providing support during and afterwards. The recovery timeline following a critical incident will vary depending on the circumstances.

#### 1 Immediately (and within 24 hours)

- Gather the facts
- Ensure safety and welfare of staff and students and arrange for first-aid if necessary
- Where possible notify the time and place of the debriefing to all relevant persons • Manage the media
- Set up a recovery room
- Keep staff, students and parents informed.

#### 2 Within 48-72 hours

- Arrange counselling as needed
- Provide opportunities for staff and students to talk about the incident • Provide support to staff and helpers
- Debrief all relevant persons
- Restore normal functioning as soon as possible;
- Keep parents informed.

#### 3 Within the first month

- Arrange a memorial service, if appropriate
- Encourage parents to participate in meeting to discuss students' welfare
- Identify behavioural changes and the possibility of post traumatic stress disorder and refer to Health Contacts for Mental Health Services
- Monitor progress of hospitalised staff or students
- Monitor mental and physical health of all helpers.

#### 4 In the Longer Term

- Monitor staff and students for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post traumatic stress disorder— refer for specialised treatment if necessary
- Provide support if needed.

#### 5 In the Long Term

- Plan for and be sensitive to anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings

- Access specialist support if needed.

## Appendix 7: Things to Remember

1 In the event of any critical incident, the first thing to do is calm the affected party/parties down and offer hope. Communicate simply, take control and give clear and practical directions in order to reduce the anxiety and connect the logic of the affected party/parties.

2 You are not superhuman. Managing a critical incident can be a very lonely time, especially if you are regarded as the focal link with international students at your institution. While you are busy providing care or support to those directly affected by the incident, your own health and emotional wellbeing may be at risk. Self-care should NOT be forgotten in your management strategy.

3 Take time out each day to telephone or email another colleague. This will give you not only a chance to debrief, but also to compare notes with sympathetic colleagues who have had similar experiences and a real understanding of what you are feeling. You are helping others while you help yourself.

4 Customise this kit to your particular needs. Insert as many local telephone numbers and contacts, and as much information as you can so that you can refer to the kit as a 'stand alone' resource, thereby allowing you to take effective and immediate action when necessary.

### Who Are You?

As an Academy staff member, you are a person who interacts with all students, including international students, in a professional capacity.

You may be one of the first people notified in the event of a critical incident.

In the life of an international student, you are ultimately a concerned, caring, informed, capable, 'significant other'. The student's own family structure will be unavailable, so assume that you will be helpful and a positive influence, in spite of your 'outsider' role. You, as an individual, will be more readily accepted than You as the Teacher or You as the Counsellor or You as the International Student Coordinator.

Optimise your own personal traits. Remember that it is more than likely that the international student has sought you out because of who you are, not what you are. So, follow your instincts and act accordingly.

## Appendix 8: Emergency Numbers for Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

Police / Ambulance / Fire 000

AIDS Helpline 1800 133 392

Asthma Victoria 1800 645 130

Cancer Helpline 13 11 20

Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) Crisis Line 9496 5770/1800 806 292

Care Ring (formerly Crisis Line – 24 hour) 13 61 69

Coroner's Office 1300 309 519

Crisis Counselling:

- Lifeworks 8650 6200 / 1300 543 396
- Lifeline (24 hour) 13 11 14
- Care Ring (24 hour) 13 61 69

DirectLine (Drug and Alcohol Counselling – 24 hour) 1800 888 236 Doctor (General Practitioner):

- Bridge St Clinic (141 Bridge St, Port Melbourne) 9646 3551 After hours 9429 5677
- Port Melbourne Medical (1/405 Bay St, Port Melbourne) 8686 0500

Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria 9885 0318

Electricity: Origin Energy 9251 2311

Epilepsy Association 1300 366 162

Gambling Helpline 1800 156 789

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard 9827 8544

Griefline 9596 7799

Hospitals:

- Alfred Hospital (Commercial Rd, Prahran) 9076 2000
- Alfred Emergency and Trauma Centre (24 hr) 9076 3405
- Dental Hospital (720 Swanston St, Carlton) 9341 1000
- Emergency: 1300 360 054 Royal Melbourne Hospital (Grattan St, Carlton) 9342 7000
- Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital (32 Gisborne St, East Melbourne) 9929 8666
- Emergency: 9929 8333 Immigration 13 18 81 Interpreting Services (24 hour) 13 14 50

Law Institute of Victoria (referral service) 9607 9550

Legal Aid Victoria 9269 0120

Mental Health Foundation of Australia 9427 8544

Men's Line Australia 1300 789 978 Police (South Melbourne) 9257 3800

Quitline 13 18 48

SANE Mental Illness Helpline 1800 688 382

Suicide Helpline (24 hour) 1300 651 251

Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26

Pregnancy Helpline (24 hour) 1300 139 313

Vicdeaf 9473 1111

Victims of Crime Helpline 1800 819 817

Water: South East Water 9552 3000 For water and sewerage faults (24 hr) dial 13water (139 2837)  
 Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service 1800 015 188 Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE) 1300 134 130  
 WorkCover Authority 9628 8115

## Appendix 9:Critical Incident Report

**Critical Incident Report to be completed after all critical incidents.**

Name of RTO Employee:	
Role within the RTO:	
Date of Critical Incident:	
Location of the incident	
People involved in the critical incident (& their role within the RTO):  Brief Description of incident (Include who, what, why as appropriate) Attach additional pages/documentation if required	
Description of Critical Incident:	
Immediate action taken:	
Witnesses/Other key people involved:	
Name (Please print full name clearly) Student/staff/other Phone no:	
Further action required:	

Did the incident involve an international student?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Emergency Service involved:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Police / Ambulance / Fire) <input type="checkbox"/> No
Follow up required for people involved in critical incident:	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling <input type="checkbox"/> Police Statements <input type="checkbox"/> Notification to family <input type="checkbox"/> Other Details of follow up: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Reported Critical Incident to:	

Please give the original form to the RTO Manager who will place it on the student's file, and forward a copy to the CEO and General Manager.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date



## Appendix 10: CRITICAL INCIDENT NOTIFICATION LETTER

### LETTER TO PARENTS

(Sample letter in the event of a tragedy)

Dear Parents,

It is with regret, that I inform that RTO has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death/events.

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

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following people at the school:

CEO/Student Support Manager

Yours sincerely,