

Saint Aloysius' College

Policy on Crisis Response (Revised April 2016)

Policy statement on the College's plan for response to a critical incident or a crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1. This Policy Statement has been devised and published by the Board of Management of Saint Aloysius' College, "the College", following collaboration and consultation with the following partners and interested parties:
 - 1.1.1. - the College Management Team, the Student Support Team and Teaching Staff of the College,
 - 1.1.2. - the Parents' Association of the College,
 - 1.1.3. - the Trustees of the College,
 - 1.1.4. - the Students' Council of the College.
- 1.2. This policy statement was ratified by the Board of Management on _____, and replaces all previous policy statements on this topic.
- 1.3. The College's Ethos and Operating Context are detailed and explained in the Admissions Policy statement, which is available from the office.
- 1.4. Recognising that the College Community consists of school management, the student support team, parents/guardians, teachers, and non-teaching staff as well as the students, it is the aim of the College to promote an environment which enhances the self-esteem and personal well being of all its members.
- 1.5. Cognisant of the fact that crises and traumas do occur and that members of the College Community will need support in times of crisis or trauma, the College authorities endeavour to foster an environment in which people are valued and supported.
- 1.6. The College authorities are concerned that members of the College Community are prepared for possible crises and traumas and that people be supported in every way possible at times of crisis or trauma.
- 1.7. The College authorities recognise that the process and procedure of responding to crises, tragedies and unexpected critical incidents cannot be fully prepared for as each situation is unique.
- 1.8. Nonetheless, it is the intention of the Board in presenting this document for the attention of all who are part of the College Community that:
 - 1.8.1. the elements of preparedness that are in place are appropriate in a general manner,
 - 1.8.2. that the general set of outlined responses and/or procedures would be known to all who work at the College.
 - 1.8.3. that the role of the College as one possible element in responding to crises be recognised, and
 - 1.8.4. that the College's role in support and, where appropriate, partnership with other organisations be recognised.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

“Our mission is that this school community both in its teaching and environment affirms the uniqueness and fosters the potential of each individual.”

3. CONTEXT

3.1. The impact on the College Community of a crisis can be significant. The following are examples of events considered in the context of this policy statement:

- 3.1.1. the death of a student or staff member;
- 3.1.2. the suicide of a student, family member or staff member;
- 3.1.3. a family bereavement;
- 3.1.4. a fire, explosion or violent occurrence involving or affecting students or staff;
- 3.1.5. a serious accident involving a member or members of the College Community;
- 3.1.6. serious violence or threat of violence impacting on a member or members of the College Community.
- 3.1.7 an intruder in the building
- 3.1.8. post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

4. CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

4.1. The Principal of Saint Aloysius' College will set up a Crisis Response team in the College consisting of the student support team and will include the following members:

- 4.1.1. The Principal, / Deputy Principal
- 4.1.2. The College Chaplain(s),
- 4.1.3. The Guidance Counsellor(s),
- 4.1.4. A teacher skilled in communications,
- 4.1.5. A staff member or members skilled in bereavement counselling,
- 4.1.6. Other teachers representing the various year groups,
- 4.1.7. A representative of the Board of Management. (optional).
- 4.1.8. Other persons whose involvement would be considered useful by the Team may be co-opted.

4.2. The membership of the Crisis Response Team will be renewed at the start of each school year, and all staff will be informed of its membership.

4.3. Where appropriate, in-service training will be provided for members of the Crisis Response Team.

4.4. The Crisis Response Team will prepare and agree an outline Crisis Response Plan which will be general in nature.

4.5. The Crisis Response Team will meet at least once a year to review the role of the Team and the outline Crisis Response Plan. Meetings will be chaired by the Principal or his/her designate.

5. PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF A CRISIS:

- 5.1. On hearing news of the event, the Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management, and will, as soon as possible, call a meeting of the Crisis Response Team.
- 5.2. The team, under the direction of the Principal, will establish the facts relating to the case. This may involve liaison with the Gardaí or other reliable source of information such as hospitals or parents.
- 5.3. A written report detailing the facts relating to the situation will be prepared and agreed by the Team members and will be disseminated to all interested parties as soon as possible.
- 5.4. The Crisis Response Team will set out a plan for proceeding as follows: This plan will be clearly drawn up and will be communicated to all concerned. Possible duties for members of the Crisis Response Team are:
 - 5.4.1. agreeing tasks for team members and preparing an agreed written statement
 - 5.4.2. organising a staff meeting and assemblies of students and staff,
 - 5.4.3. informing students and staff,
 - 5.4.4. alerting outside agencies,
 - 5.4.5. contacting individual parents/guardians or students,
 - 5.4.6. co-opting specialists, such as counsellors, on to the team as required.
 - 5.4.7. visiting the home(s) of the affected person(s)
 - 5.4.8. agreeing a statement for the media,
 - 5.4.9. arranging or organising the involvement of the College in ceremonies.
- 5.5. It is the intention of the College authorities that rumour and/or speculation will be avoided in such distressing situations. The Crisis Response Team will endeavour to:
 - 5.5.1. offer support, comfort and help to people affected by the situation,
 - 5.5.2. deal with the impact of the crisis on the College Community.
- 5.6. The members of the Crisis Response Team will carry out agreed duties and tasks, and will meet regularly for briefings and updating.
- 5.7. One person, preferably but not essentially, the Principal, will take charge of all communication with the media regarding the event.
- 5.8. The Principal will report to the College's insurers as appropriate.
- 5.9. The Crisis Response Team will continue to monitor students and staff well being for a period after the crisis.
- 5.10. The Team will set out a programme for the reviewing of the whole experience of the trauma at an appropriate time.

6. ROLE OF THE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

6.1. IN RELATION TO STAFF:

- 6.1.1. College staff will be informed as soon as the facts of the matter have been determined and clarified, and a statement has been agreed by the Team members.
- 6.1.2. If possible, staff members will receive a copy of the agreed statement.
- 6.1.3. Staff members will be asked for their support, involvement and co-operation in dealing with the crisis.
- 6.1.4. Staff members will have the option of excusing themselves from direct involvement in dealing with traumatic situations.
- 6.1.5. Staff members will be informed of what is expected of them in the College's strategy for dealing with the crisis.
- 6.1.6. Staff members will be informed of support services available to them.
- 6.1.7. The Crisis Response Team will ensure that teachers will not be left alone or unsupported in dealing with the crisis.

6.2. IN RELATION TO STUDENTS:

- 6.2.1. Priority will be given to those most directly affected by the crisis.
- 6.2.2. Students will be informed of the crisis as soon as possible.
- 6.2.3. Information will be given in a sensitive manner.
- 6.2.4. Students will be shown concern and assured that they will be kept informed, involved and supported as members of the College Community.
- 6.2.5. In so far as is possible, all students will be informed at around the same time.
- 6.2.6. Students will be met by their teachers in class size groups or, where that is not feasible, in separate year groups. Each group will be visited by a member of the Crisis Response Team, who may support the teachers by answering students' questions or allaying their concerns.
- 6.2.7. Students will be informed of the College's plans for involvement in services or ceremonies.
- 6.2.8. Individual students will have the option of excusing themselves from ceremonies which may be traumatic for them.
- 6.2.9. Students will be asked to show support for their affected peers. They may be encouraged to be involved in services as deemed appropriate.
- 6.2.10. Students will be informed of the support services that will be available to them and how they may seek support for themselves or for others.
- 6.2.11. The Crisis Response Team will review facts with the students so as to ensure accuracy.

6.3. IN RELATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR RELATIVES:

- 6.3.1. The Crisis Response Team will set out a plan for informing parents/guardians or relatives in the event of a crisis involving students away from home, and will also agree on what supports can be offered to affected people. The Team may decide that, depending on the nature of the crisis, some communication may need to be in person, while in other circumstances, information may be given over the phone or to assembled groups.
- 6.3.2. Priority will be given to those most directly affected by the crisis.
- 6.3.3. The same prepared statement will be used by all members who are informing parents/guardians.
- 6.3.4. In so far as is possible, all parents/guardians will be informed at around the same time.
- 6.3.5. Information will be given in a sensitive manner.
- 6.3.6. Team members will ascertain whether a parent/guardian is alone or in a vulnerable state, and will propose an appropriate support for him/her.
- 6.3.7. In instances where a child has not yet come home, team members will try to help parents/guardians in dealing appropriately with their child when she gets home.
- 6.3.8. Parents/guardians will be informed of the support that will be available to them and their children.
- 6.3.9. Parents will be offered practical support such as transport, help lines, phone numbers.
- 6.3.10. Parents/guardians will be given the names and numbers of two members of staff, (possibly a member of the Crisis Response Team and a teacher with whom they are acquainted) who will be available to receive their calls and to hear their concerns in relation to the crisis.
- 6.3.11. Team members will review facts with the person(s) receiving the news in order to ensure accuracy.

6.4 IN RELATION TO DEALING WITH THE MEDIA:

- 6.4.1 The Team will agree on who will be the College's contact person or persons for the media. The Principal and/or his/her designate will normally assume this role. He/she may enlist the help of another team member in order to ensure that the media are treated in a courteous manner, and that the College's interests are not infringed by the involvement of the media.
- 6.4.2 It is understood that members of the media are professionals who provide a service. Every effort will be made to ensure that their involvement in the reporting of a crisis will not add to the trauma of bereaved or traumatised members of the College Community.
- 6.4.3 Information will be given to the media in a sensitive manner. Names, addresses or contact numbers will not be released without the permission of those concerned.
- 6.4.4 In the event of several members of the media wishing to come to the College, the College will set up a time for a meeting with the media, and will provide one meeting room or area for them. They will not be allowed free access to the whole College.
- 6.4.5 Statements of fact will be prepared in advance for presentation to the media.
- 6.4.6 In order to safeguard the accuracy of information and to respect the privacy of those involved, parents and students are encouraged not to communicate with the media, or engage with social media.
- 6.4.7 Speculation or hearsay will not be presented in reports to the media.

6.5 POST CRISIS MONITORING AND SUPPORT

6.5.1 The Crisis Response Team will meet in the aftermath of a crisis:

6.5.1.1 to monitor the reactions of students and staff,

6.5.1.2 to review the procedures used in dealing with the crisis.

6.5.2 Special attention will be paid to the bereaved, their friends and classmates.

6.5.3 Students and staff will be offered support as appropriate.

6.5.4 It may be appropriate to arrange for members of the Crisis Response Team to visit some homes in the months following a trauma.

7. REVIEW OF THE POLICY ON CRISIS RESPONSE:

The Board of Management of Saint Aloysius' College, in consultation with the relevant partners, will review this policy from time to time as appropriate, but will normally do so at the commencement of each new Board of Management. In the process of such review any section of this policy statement may be amended.

Approved and ratified by the Board of Management on _____.

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management, Saint Aloysius' College, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork.

Date: _____

Appendix 1:

Letter Parents / Guardians (Sudden Death / Accident)

Dear Parents / Guardians

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

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 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 encourage her to express her feelings. All students are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for students to have difficulty concentrating or 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 coming days, please keep an eye on your daughter and allow her to express her feelings without criticism.

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

An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further 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.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people in the college.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Appendix 2:

Letter: Parents / Guardians

Date: _____

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great sadness that we convey to you the news of the death of one of our _____ year students, _____ . We, as her school community for the past _____ years, mourn her passing and extend our deepest sympathy to her grieving family.

As a mark of respect to _____, an Area of Remembrance has been set up in the school where parents, students and staff may pray and reflect. A Book of Condolence has been placed in this area, which is situated in the Prayer Room and will remain open until 12.00 p.m. on _____, _____.

The funeral arrangements for _____ are as follows:

_____ will be reposing at her home on _____ evening. The removal is from her home on _____ to the Church of _____ in _____ for the Funeral Mass at _____ a.m. followed by burial in _____ Cemetery.

Classes will be suspended on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

We feel it is important for the girls to pay tribute to the passing of their fellow student and as an expression of solidarity we encourage you the parents where possible to facilitate your daughters' attendance for Guard of Honour in full uniform, representing _____ school community

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

APPENDIX 3:

Letter: Re College Closure

Date: _____

Post-Primary Administration

Department of Education and Science

Cornamaddy

Athlone

Co. Westmeath

For Attention: _____

SCHOOL ROLL NO. _____

Dear _____

Further to a telephone conversation with your department yesterday and on advise given, I wish to inform you that due to the death of a ___ year student, I will be closing the school on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Appendix 4:

Letter: Parents / Guardians Re: Support

Date: _____

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy) we have arranged professional support for students in the school who need particular help. _____ is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to the students, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your daughter may benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your daughter to receive this support please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by _____.

It is possible that your daughter may have some feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help your daughter by taking time to listen and encourage her to express her feelings. It is important to give her truthful information that is appropriate to her age.

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please contact the college or indicate this on the attached slip.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

I/We consent to having our daughter met by a psychologist.

I/We understand that our daughter may meet the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements, which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class & Year: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter, _____ to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Name of Parents/Guardians: _____

Signature of Parents/Guardians: _____

Contact number: _____

Appendix 5:

Statement to the Media:

My name is: _____ and I am the principal of St Aloysius College Carrigtwohill.

We learned this morning of the passing of one of our students.

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 the family and friends at this sad time.

We have been in contact with the family 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 has 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.

Contact Numbers

St Aloysius College, Carrigwohill: Tel: 021 4883341 E-Mail: info@stalscarrig.com

Outside Agency	Contact Numbers
Alcoholics Anonymous	087 8470880
Ambulance	999
Aware	1890 303 302
Barnardos Bereavement Counselling Services	021 4357879
Bodywhys	1800 902406
Childline	1800 66 66 66
Citizens Information Board	076 1079641
Console Suicide Helpline	1800 247 247
Cork University Hospital	021 4922000
Mercy Hospital	021 4271971
South Infirmary Hospital	021 4926100
Dept. Education & Skills	090 648 3600
Dr Doran	021 4883176
Barryscourt Medical Centre	021 883895
Dr P. Kennedy	021 4883162
South Doc	1850 335 999
Fire Brigade	999
Gardaí Carrigwohill	021 4883222
Gardaí Cobh	021 4908530
ISPCC	021 4509588
LGBT Helpline	1890 929539
Narcotics Anonymous	087 1386120
National Educational Psychological Services	076 1 108450
Parent-line	1890 927277
Parish Office	021 4533806
Canon Anthony O'Brien PP	087 6834193
Fr. James Greene CC	085 8471249
Samaritans	116123
Sexual Violence Centre Cork	1800496 496
Teachers Union ASTI	01 6040160 / 1850 418400
Teen-line	1800 8338348
Tusla / Social Services HSE	021 4927000
Youth Health Services	076 1084150