

Critical Incident Pack (Additional Resources)

1. Sample script for the Manager in event of a road traffic accident.

Some students from our school have been involved in a road traffic accident. Some deaths have occurred and some are injured. Those who have died are _____. The injured are _____. The injured are being treated in _____. There are _____ who are very seriously injured, and others are ok, but are being checked out by medical staff.

We are getting information on an ongoing basis and will let you know if there is anything important you need to know. Please be careful to stick to the facts and not to engage in rumour about injuries or further deaths. This could be very distressing for others, especially if not accurate.

2. Sample script for the Manager in event of the death of a learner(after an incident)

_____ was killed on _____ / night. It seems that s/he was walking home with two of his /her friends around _____pm / midnight and was attacked. Someone living on the street/ in the area called the Gardaí. _____ was brought to hospital, where he died at 3 a.m. The Gardaí are investigating the details of what happened. The full facts will not be known for some time and there is no point in putting stories about which may not be true and which can be hurtful and upsetting, or may even give rise to further problems. We will let you know of any facts that we have as the situation becomes clear.

3. Sample script for a Manager when talking to other learners about the death of a learner

Yesterday was a difficult day for you, as well as for many of your fellow learners. You did really well in keeping the routine going as much as possible despite everything. Yesterday there was a sense of numbness and quietness in the CTC.. Today people may begin to feel the reality and pain of the loss. It may be a difficult day for everyone but I'd like to just remind you again to give everyone an opportunity to talk about (name of the deceased) and about what has happened. Update on any new information and outline schedule for the day. Give an opportunity for questions.

4. Sample script for a Manager when talking to learners about a car accident

You may have already heard that two of our students were involved in a car accident last night (give details of where). (Name of students) who were driving together, both died as a result of their injuries. As more information becomes available, including funeral arrangements, I will speak to you again. This is a terrible tragedy for the CTC and community and our thoughts are with the families. It is important to make every effort to maintain regular classroom routines in accordance with the timetable. I understand that this may be a very difficult time for you also and we need to be here for each other. The psychologist is now going to talk to you about how we can support each other and the students in the coming days and weeks. Thank you.

(The following is optional).

I can see that a number of people are very upset and would like to give you a few moments to say a few words or to ask questions if you would like to.

REMEMBER

Students need to be with people they know and trust so, if at all possible, it is better that Tutors and other CTC staff provide support for the learners. The external “expert” should be primarily used to advise and support school staff.

5. Dealing with the media

Some events draw a great deal of media attention. Media interest can add to the complexity of the situation and it is therefore very important to agree a procedure for dealing with the media at an early stage in the intervention.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CTC

- The Manager should either elect to be the media spokesperson or delegate the task to another staff member.
- If the CTC has a CIMP this person will have previously been identified.
- The primary concern at this time is to look after the CTC community and to protect the privacy of the people most affected. Provision of interviews or material for the media should not distract the CTC from these tasks.
- It is important to remember that the media can assist in dispelling rumour, providing information and giving the message to parents and children that the CTC is coping well with events. On the other hand, it can also add to the pain by sensationalising the story.
- A press statement should be prepared. It should be brief and carefully considered. It is especially important that information reported be accurate. Sweeping statements or generalisations should be avoided. The privacy of the persons/family concerned should be respected.
- Information can be read out, or given out to the media by fax, email or telephone.
- Interviews may also be requested, especially if it is a high profile incident. If CTC staff do not wish to be interviewed they should make this decision and request the media to respect this choice.
- The CTC may reduce pressure from the press by agreeing to give interviews and by doing so at designated times and in a specific “press” room. This will help to avoid having to deal with a constant stream of requests, a distraction from the CTC’s role of supporting Learners.
- The CTC may have access to a member of the Board of Management with specific experience or training in this field and should use this resource if available. Advice may also be available from such bodies as IACTO, Department of education and Science etc.
- Preparation is very important as this is not part of the normal work of managers.
- Statements should be written out but, ideally, not read to the camera. Some questions might be agreed in advance so that responses can be prepared and, if there is time, even



rehearsed. At a time of distress, it may be difficult to find the right words so it is generally better to err on the side of brevity and caution.

- Parents should be advised not to allow their children to be interviewed as they do not have the maturity or judgement needed to handle it. It can sometimes lead to regret at a later stage or may increase distress for various parties.

REMEMBER

The publication 'Media Guidelines for the Portrayal of Suicide' (Irish Association of Suicidology & the Samaritans, 2006) offers a specific guide to reporting suicide in the media. The guidelines suggest that the media can help prevent copy-cat suicides by - not mentioning specific details of the suicide e.g. location and method used;

- not using colourful phrases to romanticise it;
- not citing causes of suicide and thereby indirectly suggesting suicide as an option.

These guidelines should be adhered to by the CTC in any communication with the media.

DO'S AND DON'TS IN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

- Do write a press statement
- Do consider contacting IACTO or any other relevant body for advice and guidance
- Do use careful and sensitive language.
- Do keep it short
- Do regard everything as recorded and quotable (generally the media will)
- Do ask whether there will be the possibility of editing the interview
- Do ask in advance for an outline of the questions that you will be asked
- Do avoid sweeping statements and generalisations
- Do avoid being drawn into speculation
- Don't go into personal details of those involved
- Don't read the statement to the camera
- Don't engage in rambling discussions afterwards
- Don't use "No Comment"
- Don't respond to "quotes" from others
- Don't answer questions you don't know the answer to
- Don't make 'off-the-record' comments

1. Sample letter to parents / guardians after an incident has occurred.

Dear Mr / Mrs (name of Parents/Guardians)

The CTC has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our learners /staff. We are deeply saddened by this death/injury (*Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost*). 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 that they may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen to them and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age. If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at the CTC (*Details*)

Yours sincerely

CTC Manager.

2. Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy/ death of x) we have arranged specialist support for learners in the CTC who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to learners either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate

Your child has been identified as one of the learners who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your child to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the CTC by

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

I/We consent to having our child meet with I understand that my child may meet (X) in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Learner: _____

Date of Birth of Learner: _____

Signed: _____(Parents /Guardians)