

Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedures

RSY-MGT-PY-v2.1-Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedures

Document History

Version	Date of Review	Date of Implementation	Change(s)
1.0	-	Oct 2007	-
1.1	Feb 2014	Feb 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformatted based on RCDC standard Policy Template • Added Content Page • Section 7.1 Updated roles of CIMT based on current RCDC organisational structure • All references to "DIAC" are replaced with "DIBP" • All references to "OHS" are replaced with "WHS"
2.0	Apr 2015 and May 2016	June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated for position changes • Replaced "Risk management team" with Senior management team" under Section 8.3 • Updated CMIT contacts in Attachment 6.3 • Added in flowchart for Critical Incident Management in Appendix A
2.1	Mar 2018	May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated for position changes and staff • Replaced DIBP with Department of Home Affairs • Other minor changes

Approved by: Council on 24 June 2016

Distribution List

To: All RCDC Staff
All RCDC Students
Associate Colleges, College Directors

Cc: Chair, Academic Board
Chair, Senior Management Committee

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1 Purpose

The Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedures have been developed to assist Raffles College of Design and Commerce manage serious student or staff incidents, including any situation meeting the definition of “critical incident” under the provisions of Standard 6.8 and 6.9 of the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (the National Code 2018) and Standards 2.3.5 and 6.2.1.j of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Raffles College of Design and Commerce (RCDC) staff and students in Australia, whether on or off campus.

The policy owner is the Principal.

3 Definition of Terms

A critical incident is defined in the National Code as ‘a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury’.

Critical incidents are not limited to, but could include:

- death, serious injury or serious threats of these
- attempted suicide
- missing student
- assault, including sexual assault, domestic violence, severe verbal or psychological aggression
- a natural or other major disaster in the community
- the destruction of part, or the whole of the College
- major vandalism
- acts of terrorism
- student arrested or detained
- extremely damaging media attention
- enforced school closure
- drug or alcohol abuse
- other serious events

4 Policy Statement

Critical incident management constitutes part of the College’s approach to Risk Management. Procedures forming part of this policy document will enable key management staff to deal with both the immediate and longer-term consequences of critical incidents that impact on the College. Raffles recognises the duty of care owed to its students and that planning for the management of a critical incident is essential. In all cases, the response needs to be timely and professional. Incidents may vary in terms of scale, the level of response required and the level of media interest. The response of the college officers should be adapted within this procedure to meet the needs of each incident.

5 Risk Management

Risk Management within the College is managed according to the Risk Management Framework.

6 Critical Incident Planning

In the event of a critical incident, the College recognises that appropriate infrastructure must be in place to ensure the provision of all necessary support services. This document outlines Raffles policy, support mechanisms and procedures for managing a critical incident. This policy will ensure:

- 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.

7 Structure

7.1 Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The CIMT consists of staff holding the following positions: Principal, Manager, Quality and Compliance, Dean, Student Services Manager, Marketing Manager and the Work Health & Safety (WHS) Officer. The CIMT's role is to manage any critical incident, and is responsible for:

- 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 homestays, carers or foreign embassies, and
- counselling and managing students and staff not directly involved in the incident.

Additional persons can be co-opted to the CIMT on an incident-specific basis, as circumstances require, in line with the set of procedures developed under the auspices of the CIMT and set out in this policy document. This should include those with appropriate expertise as well as others who have personal qualities appropriate to crisis management. The Principal will, where appropriate, nominate a Recovery Director to the incident.

7.2 Specialist Support

Specialist support to assist the CIMT will, in the event of a critical or major incident, provide expertise relating to the key areas identified as providing the major foreseeable risks to the College's business continuity - human, physical, IT and related systems and media relations.

7.3 Sundry Support

Other areas within the College may also be called upon to provide advice and guidance. These areas include:

- Finance and Business Services
- Legal Services (externally sourced by the College)
- Faculty and Academic representatives

8 Action Plan

The Critical Incident Management Team will set in motion a critical incident action plan to manage various aspects arising from the incident, including communication strategies. This will include creating and disseminating a plan and its procedures a review of the plan staff development and training.

A flowchart for Critical Incident Management will be held by each member of the CIMT and a copy will be held, readily accessible, at reception (see [Appendix 8](#)).

8.1 Media Management

A media management process will be included in the management plan to ensure the most positive and supportive response from the media. Media Management is directed solely by the Marketing Manager, who will in most circumstances direct the College's publicity consultant to take charge of any media materials. Under no circumstances are other staff members to engage with members of the media.

8.2 Reporting, Recording of Incident and Action Taken - International Students

The college is required to notify the Department of Home Affairs as soon as practical after the incident and in the case of an international 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). All aspects of the incident and its management will be recorded on the student files. Any action taken in regard to a critical incident will be recorded to include outcomes or evidence if the incident is referred to another person or agency.

8.3 Follow-up and Evaluation

Raffles staff will be made aware of the critical incident policy and procedures and be given appropriate training to ensure the duty of care for local, regional or interstate and international students is uppermost

in their minds. A review and evaluation of the response to the critical incident will be conducted and the procedures reviewed by the Senior Management Committee and reported to the Council.

9 Privacy

Raffles critical incident policy and procedures are cognizant of information privacy principles as referred to at <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/privacy-act/>.

10 Critical Incident Management Procedures

10.1 Reporting

10.1.1 On-campus incidents

If the incident is on campus, the first action will be to contact the emergency services - fire, ambulance or police – as would be the case with other WHS matters. The Chair of Council must also be contacted immediately when the incident involves death, serious injury or a threat to life or property.

10.1.2 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 Principal who will communicate with other staff as appropriate.

10.3 Key details to be reported

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). The staff member receiving the advice will immediately convey this to the Principal. The Principal urgently deals with an emergency situation and ensures that the Head of the relevant department or, if unavailable, another member of the CIMT is contacted. The CIMT will immediately convene and take action in accordance with the policy.

11 The Critical Incident Management Team

At the initial meeting, the task of the team is to:

- Create for themselves a clear understanding of the known facts.
- Plan an immediate response.
- Plan ongoing strategies.
- Allocate individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks.
- Involve other key stakeholders where necessary (e.g. Admissions Officer, Student Services Personnel, Building Manager etc)

Note: One member of the team should scribe for all meetings to keep records of content and decisions.

12 Decision Points / Decisive Events Checklist

The following is a checklist of key decision points/decisive events that the CMIT is to be cognizant of when managing a response to a critical incident:

12.1 Immediate response

- If appropriate, ensure that emergency services have been notified.
- In consultation with the Principal, determine which, if not all members, of the Critical Incident Management Team are required and nominate a Command Centre.
- Ascertain the facts:
 - Casualties – Are there any? How critical are they?
 - Damage to property and equipment (both College and private)
 - Impact on academic services
 - IT systems – Are they available?

- Telephones – Do they work?
- Media – Are external media on site or seeking a response?
- Secure area affected - minimise safety exposures and preserve where possible anything which may provide information for later use by emergency services or in follow-up
- Contain the incident
- Formulate response strategies
- Contact with next of kin/significant others - consider the most appropriate manner of contact?
- Arrangements for informing staff and students.
- Guidelines to staff about what information to give students.
- Briefing staff and delegating a staff member to deal with telephone/counter inquiries.
- Managing media/publicity
- Formulate recovery strategies and position the College to return to normal operations
- Advise Principal of progress
- Confirm access to emergency funds if necessary.
- Consider regular CIMT debriefings throughout the management of the incident
- Once the incident is contained, evaluate the management process for the purpose of continuous improvement

12.2 Ongoing and follow up response

- a) When **any** student is involved in a critical incident, the College may be required to assist the student's family. This may include:

- Arrangements for visits to/from family
- Liaison with police, doctors, hospital staff
- Death notices
- Making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation
- Obtaining a death certificate
- Assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues, Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) coverage, ambulance cover
- Fees issue to be resolved if student cannot continue with their studies
- Legal issues: helping students get access to legal assistance if required.
- Arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required
- Follow up condolence or other letters to family
- Financial assistance for families of affected person(s) if residing in Australia

When an **international** student is involved in a critical incident, the College may be required to further assist the student's family. This may include:

- Hiring interpreters
- Refund of student's fees to pay repatriation or associated expenses
- Assisting with visa issues
- Liaison with the Department of Home Affairs if studies will be interrupted

In addition the following need to be notified

- Homestay or accommodation provider

- b) **Student File Essentials**
Records of the critical incidents relating to students should be kept in the file note section of the student management system. .
- c) Identification of those students and staff members most closely involved and therefore most at risk.
Those directly involved:
- Personal friends/family of those involved
 - Others who have experienced a similar past trauma
 - Other students, staff, supervisors etc.
- d) Arrange a time and place for an initial group/individual debriefing session with counsellor/s.
- e) Formal stress management interventions required for students and/or staff (suspension of studies for a defined period, rescheduled assessment or exams).

- f) Liaison with Academic Staff.
- g) Notification of and liaison with Sponsor/Agent if applicable.
- h) Organising students/staff for hospital visits.

13 Critical Incident Staff Training

It is important for all Raffles staff to be aware of the policy and procedures and how to respond in the events of critical incidents. This would include:

- Debriefing as soon as possible after the event on an individual or group basis
- Further debriefing - one or more days after the incident (group basis)
- Follow up 2 to 6 weeks later - (individual or group basis)
- Ongoing refresher training as required
- Recovery time for staff involved and the CIM Team members.

14 Critical Incident Recovery Timeline

In order to successfully manage a critical incident, the College will always take appropriate action and provide support during and after a critical incident.

The recovery timeline following a critical incident will vary depending on the circumstances.

14.1 Immediately (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/family informed.

14.2 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/family informed.

14.3 Within the first month

- Arrange a memorial service, if appropriate;
- Encourage parents/family 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.

14.4 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;
- Provide support if needed;

14.5 In the long term

- Plan for and be sensitive to anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings
- Access specialist support if needed.

15 Appendices

- Appendix 1 Raffles College of Design and Commerce Critical Incident Report
- Appendix 2 Checklist for follow up, review and evaluation
- Appendix 3 Emergency numbers and contact details
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- Appendix 6 Police involvement
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- Appendix 8 Critical Incident Flow Chart

Appendix 1 Raffles College of Design and Commerce Critical Incident Report

To be completed after all critical incidents.

Date:

Action Officer:

Position:

Brief summary of incident: include where, when, who, and why as appropriate.
Further information/documentation may be attached.

Immediate action taken:

Further action required:

Persons or staff notified and time & date:

Signature:

Date:

Follow up:

Original to Critical Incident Record File (WHS Officer)
Copy to student files (Student Services)
Copy to relevant staff file (HR Manager)

Appendix 2 Checklist for follow up, review and evaluation

How well were the following actions undertaken by the Critical Incident Team?

1 = poorly; 5 = very well, most appropriately. Please add comments to clarify your choice.

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Decision maker clear					
Follow up clear					
Arrangements for visits to/from family					
Liaison with Police, Doctors, Hospital Staff					
Death Notices					
Refund of student's fees to pay repatriation or associated expenses					
Hiring Interpreters					
Making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation					
Obtaining a death certificate					
Assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues, OSHC coverage, ambulance cover					
Assisting with visa issues					
Liaison with the Department of Home Affairs if studies will be interrupted					
Fees issue to be resolved if student cannot continue with their studies					
Legal Issues: helping students get access to legal assistance if required.					
Arrangements for further debriefing sessions for groups/individuals as required					
Follow up condolence or other letters to family					
Financial Assistance for families of affected person(s) if residing in Australia					
Initial group/individual debriefing session with Counsellor/s.					
Formal Stress Management interventions required for students and/or staff					
Liaison with Academic Staff					
Notification of and liaison with Sponsor/Agent if applicable					
Organising students/staff for hospital visits					

Appendix 3 Emergency Numbers and Contact Details

POLICE 000
AMBULANCE 000
FIRE 000

Dial 000 and request the service you need
Remember to remain as calm as you can
Speak clearly and give the details as requested

Raffles Contact List (CIMT)

Position
Principal
Dean
Manager, Quality and Compliance
Student Services Manager
Marketing Manager
Work Health Safety Officer

The following details are for additional emergency services, national and/or State-based

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION

24 Hour Telephone Service
Information and Referral (02) 9361 8000
Outside Sydney Metro Area 1800 422 599
<http://yourroom.com.au/faq/>

AUSTRALIAN FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

1300 888 188 www.afda.org.au

AUSTRALIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE

Australian Maritime Safety Authority (02) 8918 1300
Aviation Rescue 1800 815 257 Maritime Rescue 1800 641 792

CHILD PROTECTION

DOCS Helpline 132 111

CENTRELINK

Youth and student services 132 490
For information in languages other than English 131 202

CONSULATES IN AUSTRALIA

For a full index of consulates in Australia <http://protocol.dfat.gov.au/Consulate/list.rails>

CORONER'S COURT

44 – 46 Parramatta Rd, Glebe (NSW State Coroners Court) (02) 8584 7777
<http://www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au/>

EPILEPSY SPECIALIST COUNSELLING SERVICES

45 Hunter St Parramatta 2150 (02) 9893 7799

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE

1800 675 888

FAMILY COUNSELLING

Domestic Violence Service (24 hours)
FREECALL 1800 656 463

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

(CreditLine) 53 Regent St Sydney 2000 (02) 9951 5544

GRIEF COUNSELLING

Australian Counselling Association 1300 784 333

HOMICIDE VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP NSW

Lvl 15/ 189 Kent St Sydney 2000 (02) 8274 8900

INTERPRETING SERVICES

Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW
24 Hour Interpreting Service 1300 651 500

LEGAL SERVICES

Legal Aid Commission of NSW (NSW Government) (02) 9219 5000
Under 18's Hotline FREECALL 1800 101 810

LIFELINE 24 HOURS

24 hr Counselling 131 114

LIFELINE Harbour to Hawkesbury Counselling 131 114

Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling line for urgent and immediate needs and also has

suicide crisis line.

MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICE
(02) 9745 4277

POISONS INFORMATION CENTRE
131 126

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL & COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES
General Enquiries (02) 9926 7111
Sexual Assault Help Centre (02) 9926 7580
Drug & Alcohol Service 1300 889 788
Chatswood Mental Health Centre 38 Hercules St Chatswood 2060 (02) 9448 3250
Cremorne Mental Health Centre 231 Military Rd Cremorne 2090 (02) 9904 1700

SALVO CARE LINE CRISIS CENTRE
(24 hrs) Salvo Care Line (02) 9331 6000
Salvo Suicide Prevention/Crisis Line (02) 9331 2000
Salvo Youth Line (02) 9360 3000

SEXUAL ASSAULT 24 HOUR CRISIS CENTRE
Rape Crisis Centre 24 Hours Counselling Line
FREECALL 1800 424 017
info@nswrapecrisis.com.au
www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

ST VINCENT'S PUBLIC HOSPITAL
Victoria St Darlinghurst 2010 (02) 8382 1111
Alcohol & Other Drug Information (02) 9361 8010
Mental Health Service (02) 8382 1800 Anxiety Disorders Clinic (02) 8382 1730

SYDNEY HOSPITAL
Macquarie St Sydney 2000 (02) 9382 7111
Sexual Health Centre (02) 9382 7440

SUICIDE HELPLINE
Kidsnet-Helpline – Westmead Children's Hospital (02) 9845 2432
Lifeforce Suicide Prevention Program -
Educational Program FREECALL 1800 100 024 www.wesleylifeforce.org

TRAUMA AND CRISIS COUNSELLING
Relationships Australia 1300 364 277
5 Sera Street, Lane Cove (02) 9418 8800

VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE LEAGUE NSW (VOCAL)
2nd Floor/ 3 -166 Market St (Above Sanity) Newcastle 2300 (02) 4926 5826

VICTIM SUPPORT LINE
(24 hour) Sydney 2000 (02) 9374 3000 FREECALL 1800 633 063

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES
Sue Nelson Quick Thinking Communications Ph 61 2 9907 8241 / 0403 343 275
<http://www.qtcommunications.com/index.html>

Appendix 4 Sample letters

a) Letter to parents

Dear Parents,

The College 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)

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 he/she may like to discuss with you.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings.

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

Principal

Yours sincerely,

b) Letter to parents (Under 18 Student)

(Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professional/s)

Dear Parents,

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

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by_____.

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

Yours sincerely,

Staff...

Title...

Raffles College of Design and Commerce

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

I/We understand that my daughter/son 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:

Date of Birth:

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

Signed _____(Parent/Guardian)

Name (Please Print) _____

Date:

Appendix 5 Media Hints

In many cases, the College would prefer not to issue a press release upon the death of an international or local student. However, in anticipation of some requests for comment from the media, it is advisable to have a press release drafted by Media/Marketing staff.

a) Managing the media

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.

b) Taking the media calls

The Marketing Manager or nominated person should handle the initial media calls. Be sure to return media calls as soon as possible. It is important that the department has an input in media coverage so 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 of the sensitive nature of the issue or 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.

c) Helpful media hints:

A good press release should answer the following questions: What? How? When? Where? Why? Avoid responding to the media with a "No Comment".

Add a joint statement from the CEO and the Student Counsellor (or from staff representatives with a student support focus) which 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.

A comment should be included explaining Raffles 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.

A telephone contact for further information is always left at the bottom of a press release. The CIMT 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.

b) Sample media release:

A sponsored male student from Botswana, 31, has died at, in metropolitan Queensland.

The Director,, said the incident had saddened the 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 staged at the college 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 been revealed, because of the young age of the deceased.

Should media investigate further, it is suggested that the Director 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."

e) Response time is important

Officers likely to be contacted by the media need to be alerted immediately and kept informed as more details come to light. Inform reception as soon as possible that the incident has occurred, even if the details are unclear. Media liaison officers will need to be informed of the incident. They will be able to assist by handling media inquiries. The media liaison officer will liaise with the Director regarding the situation.

f) Channel all media inquiries through one person

The Marketing Manager will liaise directly with the media as more details are known.

g) Determine what the official response will be

The Marketing Department 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. For example: when and where it occurred, how many people were involved or hurt, how much damage has been done, etc.
- 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 which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications.

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

h) 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 co-operation. In a major disaster, the media is an essential means of communicating information, e.g. 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 school or the department and one which shows our caring role and our ability to respond effectively in a crisis. Emphasis should be placed in media comment on the support available to students and staff.

Appendix 6 Police involvement

While critical incidents are not only cases of sudden unexpected death, the police and others must be contacted. The police are required to investigate all cases of sudden unexpected death.

a) 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 - for example, interviewing witnesses and others who may have been involved, collecting clothing and other items for use in evidence, delivering specimens for analysis.

b) 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.

c) 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.

d) 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 7 Preparing for funerals

This information is taken from materials published by the Australian Funeral Directors Association. A variety of reading material is available. Inquiries may be directed to:

Australian Funeral Directors Association

1300 888 188 www.afda.org.au

a) 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 which need to be considered.

Decisions to make may 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

b) 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.

c) 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.

d) 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.

e) 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 (e.g. 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.

f) 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 re-adjustment.

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 which 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.

Appendix 8 Critical Incident Management Flowchart

