

Crisis Management Plan
(Last updated 17/11/2006)
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

To be used in conjunction with the Critical Incident Protocol

Level One Incidents

Actions to be taken:

Major Fire:

In the case of a major fire, activate the fire alarm and report location to College Main Reception. The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) will undertake to evacuate the building according to the standard procedures, along with contacting the Fire Services. Fire Wardens will be on duty at various locations in the building to ensure safe evacuation of building. Fire Wardens will ensure the safe evacuation of persons with a disability.

Those outside the building should not re-enter until the situation has been deemed safe and they are told that it is safe to re-enter the building.

Violent Incidents/Threats of violence:

Violence in the workplace can be characterized as any threatening behaviour, assault or physical attack. Physical gestures, spoken words and written remarks that communicate a direct or indirect risk of physical harm can all be considered forms of workplace violence (www.faa.gov/ahr/super/violence/violence.cfm)

If a violent incident or a threat of violence occurs on campus, College security and the College Main Reception should immediately be contacted. The CIRT should then be contacted. Medical help and/or counselling should be sought for the victim if necessary. The CIRT will decide whether or not to involve the Gardaí and other outside services.

(cf. Appendix 1 for a list of warning signs relating to violent behaviour).

Hostage/Siege situations:

In the event of a hostage/siege situation, the CIRT will immediately contact the Gardaí. The situation will only be addressed under the professional help of the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and a trained mediator. Under no circumstances should any person unskilled in such a situation attempt to intervene.

Discharge of Firearms

If firearms are discharged the fire alarm should be immediately activated and the college evacuated if it is safe to do so. The Gardaí and emergency services should be called immediately and again the situation will only be addressed under the professional help of the ERU and a trained mediator.

Serious Vehicle Accidents

In the event of a serious vehicle accident the CIRT should contact the Gardaí and the emergency services. College medical staff should endeavour to assist the injured. Also students/staff members trained in First Aid should be called to the scene.

Acts of Self-Harm/Suicide

In the event of an act of self-harm, the procedures outlined above will also apply here. In the event of a threatened act of self-harm/risk of suicide, immediate intervention is required so that such an act can be averted (cf. Appendix 2 for a list of possible signs/symptoms of a person at risk). Whereupon such a risk is identified, college security and/or main reception will be should be contacted. They will, in turn, contact CIRT members with Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). Assistance from the counselling service may also be sought in this instance.

A list of personnel with First Aid and ASIST training will be available at main reception and also on the college website.

Industrial accidents involving serious injury or fatality

In the event of a spillage/laboratory emergency involving injury, immediate first aid should be administered. The extent of the injury will be assessed by the college nurse/doctor and the involvement of external emergency services will then be sought if necessary.

In the event of a spillage that may be an environmental threat, the clean-up operation should be undertaken in conjunction with advice from the local Environmental Health Officer.

In the event of abnormal odours occurring, e.g. chemical or gas odours, the building should be immediately evacuated and the assistance of the Fire Service and the Environmental Health Officer should be sought.

Threats of serious and/or wide spread infection/contamination

In this instance, the advice of Public Health doctors will be sought and preventive medication will be provided to the most at risk members of the community.

Natural Disaster Affecting the Campus

In the event of severe weather affecting the campus, the college management will decide upon whether or not to close the college. This information will be communicated to students and staff by phone, public announcements through the media and the college website.

In the event of a sudden severe weather event, e.g. electrical storm, tornado, the CIRT will decide upon the best course of action to take e.g. to accommodate all college personnel within the building until the emergency passes or to facilitate their safe departure from the college.

In the event of the college being closed for a lengthy period of time due to a natural disaster, college management will provide alternative temporary accommodation to students and staff.

In the aftermath of such an event, essential personnel will be expected to report for duty to assist in the clean-up operation. Essential personnel include the maintenance department, security and also the Health and Safety Officer.

Major Demonstration/Protest:

Where a demonstration does not interrupt the normal running of the college, it should be allowed to proceed without interference. Security personnel should be on hand to pre-empt any potential problems. Gardaí should be notified of the demonstration and asked to assist with dealing with any traffic problems. The organisers of the demonstration should meet with College Management in advance to discuss the format, duration and location of the demonstration.

Any demonstration which prevents access to offices and buildings or which carries threats of physical harm, violence or actions damaging college facilities should be strictly prohibited and if such a demonstration occurs, Gardaí should be immediately contacted with a view to putting a stop to the event.

Unexpected Death of a student or staff member on campus

Please refer to Appendix 3 (Bereavement Protocol).

Level Two Incidents

Actions to be taken

Minor Fire:

In the case of a minor fire, e.g. in a wastepaper basket, the nearest fire extinguisher should be used to extinguish it. If the fire cannot be extinguished immediately, the fire alarm should be activated and Main Reception should be contacted by dialling **0**. The CIRT will then undertake to evacuate the building.

Unexpected Death of a student or staff member off campus

Please refer to Appendix 3 (Bereavement Protocol).

Threats of violence to staff/students

Threats and threatening behaviour should be reported to College security in the first instance either directly or through the staff on duty in the main college reception. The security officer on duty will then decide whether or not the Gardaí should be involved and whether or not to contact other college officials. Although a threat of violence may be less serious than actual violence, the measures to address the threat are identical to those taken to address the act of violence (cf. Level One Incidents above) in order to ensure the present and future safety of all staff and students. Threats of violence should always be taken seriously.

Major Theft or Vandalism

If a major theft or vandalism occurs on the College Campus, this should be immediately reported to college security. They will then contact the Gardaí and appropriate college officials. All incidents of this type should be reported to the Gardaí.

All students/staff should be alerted to the potential for theft and vandalism and encouraged to keep their valuables safe, to lock offices when not in use and to report any suspicious behaviour to college security. Strangers to the college should always check in at reception.

Any attempted robberies or threats to property should be reported to security.

APPENDIX ONE

Violence/Threats of Violence in the Workplace

It is possible at some time that a student or staff member may be involved in a violent incident. There are warning signs that can be associated with likely perpetrators of violence. Some of these signs include:

- A history of violence
- Poor self-esteem or self-esteem is connected solely with success at work/study
- Few interests outside of the workplace
- Withdrawn and isolated
- Little tolerance of others
- A history of complaints or grievances
- Displays destructive behaviour e.g. smashing equipment
- Blames others for failures or disappointments
- A history of alcohol or drug abuse
- A history of mental health problems
- Unhealthy interest in violence and/or weapons

www.faa.gov/ahr/super/violence/violence.cfm

Duties of College Management/Students Union in relation to violent incidents/threats of violence

- Encourage all staff and students to report and log all violent incidents and threats of violence
- Investigate all violent incidents and threats of violence
- Provide prompt medical evaluation and treatment after the incident
- Report all violent incidents to the Gardaí without delay
- Inform victims of their legal right to prosecute perpetrators
- Discuss the circumstances of the incidents with staff/students. Encourage them to share information/ideas about ways to avoid similar situations in the future
- Offer stress debriefing sessions and post-traumatic counselling services

(Adapted from U.S dept. of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2002).

APPENDIX TWO

Indicators of Risk of Self-Harm/Suicide

The following is a list of signs/symptoms that an individual may display if they are at risk of self-harm/suicide.

Actions: Giving away possessions
Withdrawal (family, friends, school, work)
Loss of interest in hobbies
Abuse of alcohol, drugs
Reckless behaviour
Extreme behaviour changes
Impulsivity
Self-mutilation

Thoughts: "I won't be needing these things anymore"
"I can't do anything right"
"I just can't keep my thoughts straight anymore"
"I just can't take it anymore"
"I wish I were dead"
"Everyone will be better off without me"
"All of my problems will end soon"
"No one can do anything to help me now"
"Now I know what they were going through"

Feelings:

Desperate
Angry
Guilty
Worthless
Lonely
Sad
Hopeless
Helpless

Physical Indicators:

Lack of interest in appearance
Change/loss in sexual interest
Disturbed sleep
Change/loss of appetite, weight
Physical health complaints

(from ASIST workbook, 2004)

For further details please contact:

The Suicide Prevention Office, Health Services Executive, Mid-West Area,
St. Joseph's Hospital, Mulgrave Street, Limerick.

(061) 461454.

APPENDIX THREE

Bereavement Protocol Mary Immaculate College

Introduction:

This document aims at outlining the response that Mary Immaculate College can make to the experience of bereavement. Grief can trigger a variety of reactions, both emotional and physical, and it is important to acknowledge that for each individual, grief is an intensely personal experience, which can manifest itself in many different ways. Hence, it should be noted that this document, while, purporting to present an appropriate response, may not always address the intricacies of particular situations. Nevertheless, it provides a template from which to work so that the best possible response can be made to the needs of an individual or group at an extremely sensitive time. The level of support offered by the college will align with the wishes of the bereaved and will not in any way intrude on their privacy.

This document will focus on three types of event:

- a) The death of a student/staff member on campus
- b) The death of a student/staff member off campus
- c) The death of a relative of a student/staff member.

a) The death of a student/staff member on campus:

In the event of a death occurring on campus the Critical Incident Protocol will be activated. The Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) will contact the emergency services and the Gardaí.

In this instance the issue of communication becomes the responsibility of the Gardaí who will contact the family of the bereaved. Only after this has been done will the college undertake to make a formal announcement to the college community. This communication will come from the President's Office and will be made to the relevant departments.

A death occurring on campus may generate media interest. College Management will deal with all queries both internal and external through the President's Office. Students or staff members should not comment on the situation.

It may well be that the death is witnessed by students/ staff members. Hence the support required may be of an intensive nature and may be necessary for a large number of people. This support will be co-ordinated by the President's Office.

The family of the bereaved will be contacted to indicate the availability of support if required. Representatives of College Management may visit the family if this is deemed appropriate and in line with the wishes of the family.

The college may need to cancel/rearrange schedules in order to allow for attendance at the funeral. Transport arrangements may be needed also.

Ongoing support will be provided by the College Management, the Chaplaincy team and the counselling service.

A memorial service for the deceased will be organised within the college if deemed appropriate. The family of the deceased will be invited to attend this event.

b) The death of a student/staff member off campus:

Should the death of a student/staff member occur off campus, the college will be less directly involved in the process. However, it is imperative that any member of the college community who hears of the death of a student/staff member informs the college as soon as possible. In cases where there is uncertainty about the facts, the college chaplain should be contacted first for verification purposes. The chaplain will then communicate the facts to the President's Office. The information will then be disseminated to the relevant departments as before.

Counselling, if required, will be provided to individuals and groups.

Again, the college will liaise with the family of the deceased in line with their wishes.

In the case of funeral arrangements, again, timetables and schedules may need to be rearranged to coincide with the time of the funeral and transport may be required.

Again, ongoing support will be provided by College Management, the Chaplaincy team and the counselling service.

A memorial service for the deceased will be organised within the college if deemed appropriate.

Please note:

As can be observed from the above statements, some of the procedures in the case of a) and b) are similar. It should be noted also that in the case of a) and b) the following issues need to be addressed by the college:

- Registration of the death in the student/staff records system as soon as possible in order to block the generation of any standard letters about the student/staff member.

- In the case of the academic performance of other students being affected by the death, i.e. should the death have occurred immediately before or during an examination, procedures will need to be in place to address this issue (refer to Registrar and Examinations Committee).
- Provision will be required for the safe management of the belongings of the deceased.

c) The death of a relative of student/staff member:

In the event of the death of an immediate relative of a student or staff member, i.e. spouse, child, parent/guardian, parent-in-law, or sibling, the information will be communicated to the President's Office as soon as possible so that the information may be disseminated according to the wishes of the bereaved.

Attendance at the funeral will be encouraged, however in this instance, lectures and schedules will not be formally reorganised.

Ongoing support will be available from the College Management, the Chaplaincy team and the counselling service.

In the case of submission of assignments, deadlines may need to be renegotiated with the relevant lecturers.

In the case of a student who experiences the death of an immediate relative, a form will be provided to them to qualify them automatically for an 'I' grade unless the student decides otherwise.

Please note:

In the case of all three events detailed above, the communication process in the college will follow the procedure as outlined, unless otherwise requested. The use of e-mail is considered the standard procedure for the dissemination of information in relation to bereavement. However, it may be that those bereaved may not wish the information to be communicated in this manner. Their wishes, in this regard, will be sought and respected.

In the case of b) and c) above, should the death occur at a weekend, staff at reception will be informed of the event. They will undertake to contact the chaplain and representatives of the relevant departments. Representatives of these departments will then undertake to contact the members of the college community.

In so far as this is possible, all funerals will be attended by the college chaplain and other college representatives unless otherwise requested.