CRITICAL INCIDENT
Policy & Plan

Ratification Date:	Next Review:	Availability:	Actions:
Full suite of governance documents updated and considered by RNS Board in FH 2018. Last reviewed by RNS Principal Oct 2021.	3-yearly. Next due in 2022 or following a Critical Incident, if that occurs.	**Web** **Office** **On Request**	

PHILOSOPHY & SCENE SETTING STATEMENT

The River Nile School's mission is to provide educational opportunity to young refugee and asylum seeker women. It therefore has a student demographic that is among the most disadvantaged in our community. Many students are isolated with little or no family support; many are damaged physically or emotionally by the experiences that caused them to seek refuge or asylum; many are at-risk to victimization and family violence. This means they are vulnerable in the event of Critical Incidents and that Critical Incidents may raise issues from past student experience.

At RNS we believe in bringing positive, sustainable change to our students' lives through education and learning for life. We seek to provide a School environment which gives them a strong sense of belonging and provide a curriculum which supports them in strengthening their wellbeing, resilience and life skills. We value every voice within our School and School community and recognise that our students' and their families are the foundation on which our School resides.

POLICY STATEMENT

RNS aims to provide and promote a safe environment in which our students may study and learn free from harm. In the event of a Critical Incident, the students' and our educators will be well practiced in the required procedure to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of each person present.

PURPOSE RATIONALE

The RNS is committed to exercising the utmost duty of care for all students and staff at the School. At RNS we recognise the need to have procedures and practices in place in order to adequately manage and cope in the event of a crisis situation, critical incident or traumatic event.

This Policy and Procedures should be read in conjunction with the School's Emergency Management Plan.

DEFINITIONS

A **Critical Incident** may be defined as a traumatic event, or the threat of such, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury. It may cause disruption to an organization, create significant danger or risks, or create situations where staff, students and their families feel unsafe, vulnerable and under stress.

This may include but is not limited to:
1. Serious illness, injury or death, including suicide, of a member of the school community
2. Students or staff lost or injured on an excursion
3. A missing student
4. A report of child abuse including sexual abuse
5. Severe verbal or psychological aggression
6. Physical assault of a member of the school community
7. Student(s) or staff witnessing a serious accident or incident of violence
8. Significant vandalism or destruction of part of the school property whether by fire, bomb threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard, or serious weather disturbance.

9. Extreme social issues e.g. social media problem, drug use, sexual assault.

STRATEGIES/PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A. **INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM**

A Critical Incident as described above will trigger the **Emergency Management Plan** which incorporates an **Incident Response Team** whose task is to deal specifically with the emergency or incident itself and then to deal specifically with its aftermath. The Incident Response Team is made up of the Principal, Welfare Director and senior staff. This team is responsible for management of critical incidents at the School, or off campus in the case of excursions etc.

Refer to Attachment 1 for a summary of key inclusions in the **Emergency Management Plan** which may be relevant.

The responsibilities of the **Incident Response Team** include:
- Risk assessment of all hazards and any aspect of the situation which may require emergency action;
- Establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services, e.g. police, fire brigade, ambulance, hospital, Poisons Information Centre, community health services etc;
- 24-hour access to contact details for all students and their families;
- 24-hour access to contact details for all relevant staff members needed in the event of a critical incident, e.g. welfare director, building security.
- Immediate development of a Critical Incident Plan for each critical incident identified;
- Communication of planned procedures;
- Assisting with implementation of the Critical Incident Plan;
- Arranging appropriate staff development to assist at critical incidents;
- Annual review of critical incident policy and plan;
- Budget allocation for possible emergencies

B. **CRITICAL INCIDENT PLANS**

All critical incident plans need to:

First 24 hours –
- Be made immediately, be appropriate to the nature of the critical incident and specify actions to be taken, assign relevant staff responsibilities and outline timelines for the actions.
- Assign duties and resources to specific school staff.
- Identify where help is needed from any emergency services / hospital / medical services.
- Communicate information to staff, parents / family members and appropriate agencies.
- Start to complete a Critical Incident Checklist (see Attachment 2) and start recording information.
- Prepare a media response, if required;
- Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved;

Within 48 – 72 hours
- Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved (ongoing);
- Provide staff and students with factual information, as appropriate
- Aim to get back to the 'normal routine', without a set timeframe

After 72 hours –
- Identify any other people who may be affected by the critical incident and access support services for affected community members.
- Provide accurate information to staff and students where appropriate
- Evaluate critical incident management, including for lessons learnt
- Investigate and plan for any possible longer term disturbances e.g. inquests, legal proceedings, anniversaries

C. **COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS**

The Principal informs (or may allocate to the Welfare Director to inform):
- All staff
- The Chair of the Board
- Consultants (e.g. community counsellors) as necessary
- The student(s) and parent(s) of those involved, being mindful or legal and privacy constraints
- Any siblings and close friends of the victims individually or contacts their parents to ask whether they would prefer to speak to their children;
- The rest of the school if appropriate.

ALL students/parents are informed of counselling and assistance available. It is important to inform ALL students of this assistance, as we cannot be certain of social links that exist.

D. RESOURCES

The nature of critical incidents is that resources cannot always be provided in anticipation of events. The critical incident team uses its discretion to provide adequate resources – both physical and personal – to meet the needs of specific situations.

NB: Teachers need to be conscious of not taking on roles which are not appropriate. Staff are generally not trained counsellors, there are organized referral systems and structures in place to protect the integrity of individual staff members and students.

E. RECORDING AND REPORTING

The accurate recording of critical incidents at or involving the School is essential to organizational learning surrounding critical incidents. Organisation learning provides direction for the future and may assist in preventing or reducing the impacts of future critical incidents. Documentation of critical incidents is required at the identification of the critical incident, during the critical incident and when the matter has been finalized. Documentation is best done as soon as possible after an incident has occurred.

Recording

It is important to accurately record all relevant facts and actions taken. The Critical Checklist must be completed. Relevant facts may include:

- Student details
- Date and time of incident
- Other parties involved
- People notified (see Attachment 2 – Critical Incident checklists)
- Stakeholders notified or involved
- Decisions made
- Follow up action
- Members of the Crisis Response Team
- Chronological documentation of events

Reporting

When the critical incident has been finalized the school's Critical Incident Register must be updated. A formal report on all critical incidents must be made to the Board.

F. MANAGING THE MEDIA

All facts should be checked before speaking to the media.

- The Principal will manage access of the media to the scene, to staff, students and relatives and will have all media enquiries directed through them.
- The Principal and Board will determine what the official School response will be and in the first instance, the Principal will be the appointed spokesperson in a crisis.
- Later, depending on the nature of the crisis, the Chair of the Board may be required to speak to the media
- If accurate information is unavailable, or the issue is of a sensitive nature, the Principal will explain that questions cannot be answered at this time.
- Avoid implying blame or fault for any part of the incident as this can have significant legal implications later on.
- Further details available in the School's Media Crisis Policy.

EVALUATION

This policy will be formally reviewed by River Nile School every three (3) years and after every critical incident, a meeting of the critical incident team will be held to evaluate the critical incident report and the effectiveness of the management plan and to make modifications if required. If appropriate, this process will incorporate feedback from all staff, students and local community representatives.

OTHER KEY POLICIES:

- RNS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN – KEY PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES DETAILED IN PLAN

- Flow chart describing the Incident Response Team
- Emergency Kit Checklist
- Emergency Contacts Priority Risks Schedule
- Lockdown Procedures and Actions
- Bomb Threat Guide
- Site Plans and Area Maps
- Pandemic Action Plan
- Recovery Room Suggestions
- Short / Long Term Support Guide

ATTACHMENT

1. Critical Incident Checklist

ATTACHMENT 1: CRITICAL INCIDENT CHECKLIST

NOTIFY AUTHORITIES & KEY PERSONNEL – as necessary / appropriate	
Notify Emergency Services (Ambulance / Fire / Police)	
Mobilise any emergency personnel e.g. Chief Warden / Fire Wardens / First Aid etc.	
Notify School Leadership Group Members	
Notify Class Teacher	
Notify Parent or Guardian as appropriate	
Notify Chairman of School Board	
VERIFY INCIDENT & RESPOND	
Identify all those involved/affected	
Determine outline of incident	
Prepare any necessary statements	
Develop phone and email contact list specific to the incident	
Commence record of events	
Inform insurance company	
COORDINATE PLANNING WITH FAMILY	
Identify a family spokesperson	
Inform family contacts	
Liaise with family and insurance company over dealing with students medical costs	
IN THE EVENT OF DEATH	
Identify appropriate counselling/support personnel for students and teachers	
Liaise as necessary with Policy and family members	
Consider the planning of a memorial service	
INFORM/INVOLVE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY (as appropriate)	
Facts of the event	
Safety issues	
Availability of counselling	
The families wishes	
Planning for any memorial services	
EMERGENCY CONTACTS EXTERNAL	
Emergency Services Fore / Police / Ambulance 000 (or 112 from mobiles)	
Police	
Fire Brigade	
Ambulance Bookings	
Hospital	
State Emergency Services	
Poisons Information Centre	
Doctor	
Bereavement Care Centre	
Counselling / Grief Support	
Helplines	
KEY PERSONNEL IN THE CASE OF A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CRITICAL INCIDENT	