

# ISANA NZ CRITICAL INCIDENT FRAMEWORK

**TASK:** View the excerpt from the *Critical Incident Framework* below (pp.1-3). See the questions on p.3 and prepare responses to the case studies on p.4

## RATIONALE

This policy framework is offered as an adjunct to education providers' generic Critical Incident policies to support tailored practice for international students. It is also a dynamic document responsive to Code of Practice updates, practitioner experience and research findings.

## DEFINITION

A critical incident is defined as a tragic or traumatic event or situation affecting a student/s and/or staff member/s which has the potential to cause unusually strong emotional reactions in the international student community at (institution name).

## PROCEDURE

When a critical incident has been identified:

1. The staff member receiving the news immediately contacts the international student programme leader and the senior management team
2. The head of the coordinating response team calls an immediate meeting with the following staff to make decisions as to how to proceed:
  - Head of the international programme
  - Member of counselling or student health service
  - Dean or head of faculty/department the affected student is enrolled with and/or
  - Representative of the senior management team

### **This group becomes the Coordinating Team**

## THE COORDINATING TEAM

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

- To create for themselves a clear understanding of the known facts.
- To plan an immediate response.
- To plan ongoing strategies.
- To allocate individual roles/responsibilities for ongoing tasks.

## IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Issues to be considered:

1. Contact with next of kin/significant others - what is the most appropriate manner of contact?

2. Arrangements for contacting relevant student health teams/professionals and informing staff and students.
3. Guidelines to staff about what information to give students.
4. A written bulletin to staff if the matter is complex.
5. Briefing international student office staff (or equivalent) and delegating a staff member to deal with telephone/counter inquiries.
6. Managing media/publicity
7. 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.
8. Arrange a time and place for an initial group/individual debriefing session using counsellors. In this session, an opportunity is given to share the impact of the event, discuss various interpretations of the event in cultural terms, the resulting sense of vulnerability, the experience of painful emotions and the normalisation of reactions.
9. Organise a tasks timetable for the next hour/s, day/s etc.
10. Plan ongoing feedback and regular meetings so that the coordinating team is continually in touch and working together.
11. (In the case of death) Contact the school/academic registrar's office to put a stop on the student's record.
12. Confirm access to emergency funds if necessary.

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

## ONGOING and FOLLOW UP RESPONSE

These issues may need to be discussed at subsequent meetings.

- WHO is the DECISION MAKER?
- WHO will FOLLOW UP?
- Check access to key players' cell contacts
- Notification of and liaison with sponsor/agent if applicable
- Arrangements for visits to/from family
- Liaison with police, doctors, hospital staff
- Hiring independent interpreters
- Death notices in the case of death
- Funeral/Memorial service arrangements
- Refund of student's fees to pay repatriation or associated expenses
- Obtaining a copy of the Death Certificate in the case of death
- Consideration of personal items and affairs (household and academic)
- Insurance Matters, ACC Coverage, Ambulance Cover

- Formal stress management interventions required for students and/or staff (release from classes, leave, rescheduled assessments or exams)
- Liaison with teachers, academic staff or supervisors
- Arrangements for further debriefs for groups/individuals as required
- Liaison with Immigration if studies will be interrupted
- Checking Consulate involvement
- Fees issue to be resolved if student cannot continue with their studies
- Legal Issues: helping students get access to legal assistance.
- Follow up condolence letters to Family
- Financial assistance for families of victim if residing in New Zealand
- Roster of students for hospital visits

## STRESS MANAGEMENT COMPONENTS

(Often undertaken with the support of counsellors)

1. Debriefing as soon as possible after the event on an individual or group basis
2. Further debriefing - one or more days after the incident
3. Follow up 2 - 6 weeks later - individual or group basis
4. Ongoing counselling as required
5. Recovery time for (*your position*) and the Coordinating Team members.

## CASE STUDIES

Referring to the framework above and drawing on professional experience critique one of the following cases (p.4) and consider the questions below:

1. Discuss four immediate actions that need to be taken (as a starting point):

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2. Discuss three ongoing actions that need to be taken (among others)

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3. What is needed to support staff immediately affected by the critical incident?

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## **Critical incident cases involving international students**

### **Case one**

A 17-year old student from Singapore has been one of the college's most promising students. Her progress at college over eighteen months since she arrived has greatly pleased her teachers and family. During the school holidays she spent time with a university friend at their flat with her homestay parents' knowledge and permission, although her parents had not been informed of this agreement.

The school has been contacted by the local hospital's A&E to say that the student is in a critical condition and is fighting for her life. She is semi-conscious after being found in her friend's flat having taken an overdose. Your business card was found in the student's wallet. Her friend has yet to be located and is not answering her mobile phone. The hospital supervisor tells you the police suspect a suicide attempt. Tomorrow is the first day of the new term when students return after two weeks break.

### **Case two**

A group of four male international students who have been studying for a year at your organisation have become friends and decided to venture on a driving holiday. They hire a camper van and the five students were travelling on state highway one from Hamilton to Taupo when their camper van struck an oncoming vehicle. The students were all taken to Taupo Hospital. One Chinese student and New Zealand student had minor injuries and were recovering in Taupo Hospital. The Korean and Swedish students had significant injuries and were airlifted to Hamilton hospital.

### **Case three**

An eighteen year old Chinese female student on a Foundation Studies programme was infrequently attending classes for four weeks. She had offered limited explanations to the concerned student advisor and programme director. Foundation Studies staff were then contacted by police to say the student was arrested and charged for involvement in an illegal gambling operation. The detective inspector responsible for shutting down the operation expresses concern about the student's immediate welfare because of the activities she's engaging in and the people she is associating with. It also transpires that she was earlier charged with careless driving and so has two court appearances pending. Once the student is advised her parents will be informed because she is believed to be at imminent risk, she mentally unravels and threatens suicide. She is then taken by to psychiatric emergency services.

### **Case four**

A year-13 north Asian international student's mother contacted the international office alarmed that her son was expressing suicidal intent via the phone. When the office checked with his homestay family they learned he had gone out for the evening for basketball practice and hadn't arrived home at the agreed time. The student didn't respond to calls or texts. Police were contacted to undertake a welfare check. He was found later in the evening at his girlfriend's flat. She is a first year university student. The attending Police officers chose to take him with his girlfriend for an acute psychiatric assessment at the hospital, and he was assessed as not being at risk. Once alerted the accommodation manager came to the hospital to support the student and arranged for the homestay father to take him home. The school provided follow-up support the next day, but sadly the following evening after quietly slipping away from the homestay property he took his life.