

AP 166 – CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM)

Background

A critical incident is any event that has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events, which are outside of the range of ordinary human experiences. Because they are so sudden and unusual, they can have a strong emotional effect even on well trained, experienced people. Critical events can include a sudden death, suicide attempt / completion, accidents (bus, car, truck, etc.), acts of, or perceived threats of violence, disasters – natural/otherwise, or experiencing or witnessing of actual harm to self or others.

Trauma such as the death of a student, staff member or a family member of these people has a significant impact on individuals and the educational community as a whole. Death is a significant stress/loss experience that impacts on not only individuals, but also the whole educational process.

Death causes confusion and disorganisation which decreases efficiency and productivity. This may turn into a cycle of reduced learning and increased stress. Grief impacts on people biologically, emotionally, behavioural, intellectually, and spiritually (in terms of attitudes, values, will to live and choose life, etc.). Schools traditionally have been thought to be a safe place but it is becoming more common for students/staff to be exposed to death, sometimes very violently. The circumstances surrounding the death have a tremendous impact on those directly involved. Such circumstances may include:

- ♦ Anticipated vs. sudden death
- ♦ The age of the person who died
- ♦ The stigma surrounding the death (suicide, homicide)
- ♦ How emotionally close one is to the person who has died.

The Division has implemented a CISM team, comprised of personnel who are trained in the Critical Incident Stress Management process. The CISM team will be available for incidents within the Division and, at the Director's discretion, to serve as a support for Lloydminster and area.

Procedures:

1. The Superintendent of Student Services shall ensure:
 - 1.1 That the CISM team has full representation at the beginning of each school year, which includes representation from each school.
 - 1.2 Adequate training sessions are provided for all CISM team members, funded through Central Office Professional Development funds.

2. The Division's CISM team shall:
 - 2.1 Annually review the CISM protocol and ensure that all members are well versed in the roles of the CISM team.
 - 2.2 Practice skills as a team working through mock situations throughout the school year.
 - 2.3 Upon activation, follow the Division CISM Protocol.
3. Each CISM team member shall:
 - 3.1 Assume a specific role that he/she will undertake once the CISM team has been activated (refer to Administrative Procedure 166 – Appendix).
 - 3.2 Ensure he/she has his/her own CISM binder, and ensure his/her Principal has an administrator's copy.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 108, 109 Education Act