TITLE: *CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY*

Effective Date	8 April 2020	Version	3
			Policy revised to include: alignment with CCSP Policy on Policies; defined procedures / guidelines; and updated roles and responsibilities.
Approved By	Management Board	Date Approved	8 April 2020
		Review Date	8 April 2023 or as required
Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)		Owner	
2 – *Critical Incident Policy* (20 April 2016)		Office of the President and Director of Operations	
Policy significantly revised to provide: aims / objectives; definitions; clear roles and responsibilities for College personnel; clear communication channels and clear emergency protocols.			
1 – *Quality Assurance Handbook*, pp. 225 – 229) (13 January 2011)			
Initial Issue			

1. Purpose of Policy

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) aims to protect the well-being of its learners and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. At Carlow College there is a genuine attempt on the part of all to create a college community of care. The College has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the College. The College has formulated a policy and procedure to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological well-being of both the staff and learners in the event of a Critical Incident.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy, a critical incident is defined as 'any incident or sequence of events which impacts on the normal coping mechanisms of the college and disrupts the running of the college'. Critical incidents may involve learners, staff, the College or the local community.

Examples of a critical incident might include (this list is not exhaustive):

- the sudden death of a member of the College community, through accident, suicide or illness;

- a serious accident, illness or tragedy in the college community;

- serious damage to the College through fire, flooding, vandalism etc.;

- the disappearance of a member of the college community;

- a physical attack on a member of staff or learner;

- intrusion into the College;

- Compromised College IT systems; and / or

- Reputational damage.

3. Scope of Policy

The *Critical Incident Policy* is to be adhered to by all staff of Carlow College, irrespective of grade or function; by all learners of Carlow College; and by all persons invited to provide a service to Carlow College, of whatever nature.

4. Policy Statement

The aim of the *Critical Incident Policy* is to help the College management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that the appropriate support is offered to learners and staff. This will be achieved by the following measures:

- establishing a Critical Incident Team;

- defining roles and responsibilities for each member of the Critical Incident Team;

- setting up lines of communication within the College as well as with outside agencies;

- planning of the debriefing process; and

- the provision of post-incident support for the Critical Incident Team.

4.1 Initiation of Critical Incident

All possible critical incidents should be reported to one of the following staff members: - College President, Director of Operations, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, Head of Student Services.

On notification of a Critical Incident the President, Director of Operations, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar and the Head of Student Services will convene to ascertain the facts and to establish the Critical Incident Team. The President will appoint an appropriate

person to make contact with the student or staff member's emergency contact if required. The objectives of the Critical Incident Team are to:

- inform each member of the team of their assigned role (see Section 5.1);

- inform the relevant Programme Director (if appropriate);

- inform relevant staff (if appropriate);

- agree on a generic statement of facts for staff, learners and the media and inform these parties as appropriate; and

- communicate with staff and learners who may be affected by the incident.

4.2 Response Process to Critical Incident

The response process itself can be broken down into six distinct phases:

1. Critical Incident Activation

   a. Verification – The President, Director of Operations, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar and Head of Student Services verify the facts pertinent to the incident, determine whether a Critical Incident Team should be convened. If the incident warrants a Critical Incident declaration, they will name a Critical Incident Coordinator and assign responsibilities to the Critical Incident Team (see Section 5.1).

2. Critical Incident Implementation

   a. Critical Incident Coordinator convenes a meeting of the Critical Incident Team to agree actions.

      The Critical Incident Team:

   b. establishes lines of communication within the College as well as with outside agencies (as appropriate);

   c. Identifies support requirements to learners and staff. This includes a three-pronged approach: a) immediate response – day of incident; b) medium – following days; c) long-term support.

   d. Meets at the start of each day to outline plan of day and at the end of each day to evaluate day's actions;

3. Critical Incident Follow-Up

   a. Critical Incident Team reviews the Critical Incident Process and identifies long-term support requirements (i.e. debriefing for staff / learners) and identify learning points and complete Critical Incident Follow-Up Section of *Critical Incident Checklist* (Appendix 3).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Critical Incident Team

The Critical Incident Team is assigned by the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, Head of Student Services and Director of Operations. Members of the Critical

Incident Team are selected in terms of the appropriateness of their practical, professional and personal skills as they relate to the critical incident. The roles within the Critical Incident Team are as follows:

Critical Incident Coordinator
Role
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaise with legal / insurance providers (if required)
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Allocates preparation and issuing of letters, emails and texts
- Ensures record management of the Critical Incident Team, and processes adopted

Staff Liaison
Role
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of learners who may be affected by the incident
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to staff members who may be affected by the incident and makes contact with them individually (if appropriate)
- Advises them of the availability of the EAP and gives them the contact number.
- Provides resources (i.e. quite room, support services, etc.)

Learner Liaison
Role
- Is alert to learners who may be affected by the incident and makes contact with them (if appropriate)
- Alerts other staff to learners who may be affected by the incident (if appropriate)
- Provide resources (i.e. quite room, support services, etc.)

Community / Agency Liaison
Role
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers
    - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with the Gardaí
    - Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Family Liaison
Role
- Coordinates communication with family members (as appropriate)

- Maintains a record of communications with family members
- Provides appropriate materials for family members (if appropriate)

Media Liaison
Role
- In the event of an incident, will liaise (where necessary) with internal and external stakeholders;
- Will coordinate press statements, media briefings and interviews (as agreed by College President

Each member of the Team has a dedicated Critical Incident folder, which contains a copy of the Policy and relevant material. Each member of the Team has been assigned a key role in line with best practice. In the event of an incident each member of the Critical Incident Team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, and material used (see Appendix 2*: Critical Incident Communication Register*).

5.2 Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

Management and staff of Carlow College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of College staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that learners do so also.

6. Associated Documentation

- Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Process

- Appendix 2: Critical Incident Communication Register

- Appendix 3: Critical Incident Checklist

- Appendix 4: Critical Incident Review

7. Referenced Policies

- *Data Protection Policy*

- *Fitness to Continue in Study Policy*

- *Health and Safety Policy*

- *IT Policy*

- *Quality Assurance Policy*

- *Risk Management Policy*

8. Monitoring and Review

The Office of the President and the Director of Operations are the Policy Owners for the *Critical Incident Policy*. This Policy is to be monitored and reviewed annually by the Policy Owners in consultation with the Critical Incident Coordinator(s).

Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Process

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PROCESS

- Initiation / Notification
- Activation
- Verify the Facts
- Determine whether a CIT should be convened
- Name CIT
- Implementation
- Convene Meeting of CIT
- Establish Lines of Communciation
- Identify Support Requirements
- Hold Regular Meetings
- Follow-Up
- Identify Learning Points
- Complete CIT Review

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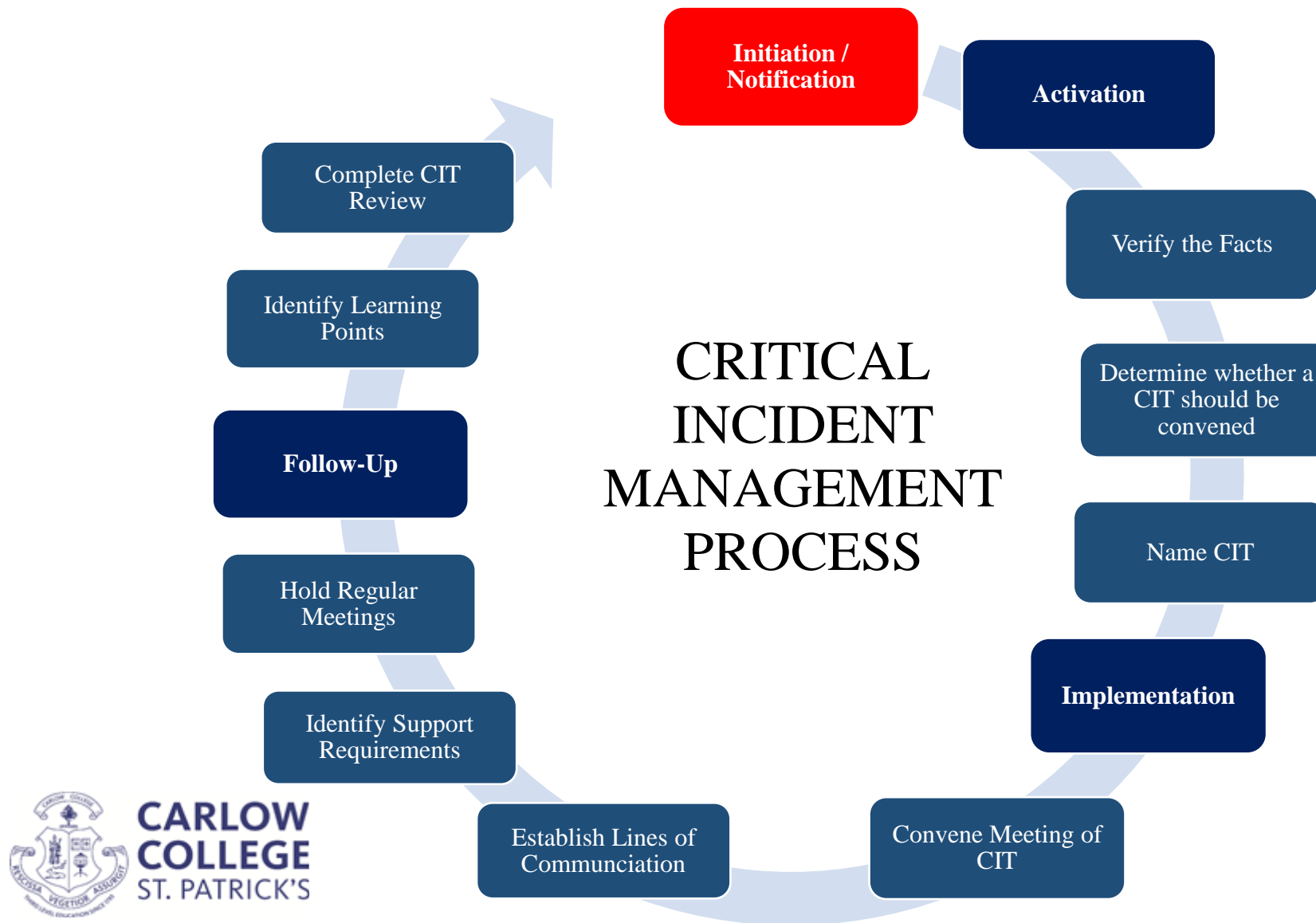
Appendix 2: Critical Incident Communication Register

Critical Incident Communication Register

Date	CIT Role	Method of Communication	Person / Agency Communicated With	Notes from Communication

Appendix 3: Critical Incident Checklist

Critical Incident Checklist

Title:			Date:	
Brief description of incident:				

Tasks	Done	N/A	Completed Date	Comments
Critical Incident Activation				
Verification				
Log incident				
Establish facts				
Activation				
Perform initial risk assessment				
Agree CIT Coordinator				
Agree CIT				
Critical Incident Implementation				
Convene CIT Meeting(s)				
Establish Communication Channels				
Identify Support Requirements				
Develop Action Plan				
Ongoing Management				
Liaise with staff				
Liaise with learners				
Liaise with community / agencies				
Liaise with family (if relevant)				
Liaise with media				
Critical Incident Follow-Up				
Update Records				
Offer Incident Debriefing				
Arrange Review Meeting				
Finalise Documentation				

Appendix 4: Critical Incident Review

Critical Incident Review

The following are suggestions which the College may wish to consider in managing the long-term effects of a Critical Incident:

- Monitor learners for signs of continuing distress, staff may refer learners to College Counsellor / Chaplain or Nurse as appropriate. Symptoms to be watchful for may include uncharacteristic behaviour, deterioration in academic performance, physical symptoms (i.e. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, and restlessness), inappropriate emotional reactions, increased absenteeism. The *Fitness to Continue in Study Policy* may be consulted.

- The Critical Incident Team will continue to liaise with family members (where appropriate).

- The Office of the Registrar will liaise with College Administrative Offices (where appropriate).

- The Chaplain's Office may wish to plan a special day of reflection / memorial service.

- The Critical Incident Team should evaluate the response and amend the *Critical Incident Policy* appropriately:

    o What went well?

    o Where were the gaps?

    o What was most/least helpful?

    o Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?

    o Is there any unfinished