

Critical incident response plan - death of a learner

This policy is adapted from the NZQA template.

Critical incident response plan - death of a learner

This document provides operational protocols to be followed when responding to a critical or unexpected situation involving the death of a learner.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident involving a learner is an unplanned or unforeseen traumatic event affecting a learner or learners which has an impact on the institution the learner attends; its staff, its learners and/or the wider community.

Providers have a responsibility to be prepared for and to respond quickly, effectively and sensitively to any critical incident involving a learner.

Impact of critical incidents involving a learner

Critical incidents may have a negative impact on several people, either through the immediate effects of being involved, by witnessing an event, or because the emotional impact of past experiences has resurfaced.

Where there are negative effects there is a need to be aware not only of the effect on people not directly affected, but also of the unpredictability of spread and impact of this effect.

Effects can impact:

- secondary victims, such as learners, staff and family members
- an institution through negative media or public response
- the wider community

The need for a critical incident involving a learner plan

Providers have a duty of care to staff and learners to ensure staff dealing with the situation are thinking clearly, acting efficiently, communicating responsibly and working as a team to:

- save the life of anyone at risk
- inform those with the need and right to know
- protect others from the effects of the event
- minimise any long-term impact on the provider / industry reputation

- restore normality
- mitigate the potential for a reoccurrence or resulting events where possible

The critical incident response team

In the event of an emergency, a response team may need to be established/activated to provide the necessary support for people immediately affected by the incident and to plan for active monitoring and longer term care of those concerned. Key staff members involved in the pastoral care of learners (Manager Pastoral Care) should be part of this team. Especially when critical decisions are to be made. If the critical incident involves an international learner, the organisation's International Director/Manager Pastoral Care needs to be part of this team.

Role of the Learner Critical Incident Response team

As soon as notification is made of a learner critical incident:

- providers should verify that the learner(s) is from their institution
- Critical Incident Response Team to meet
- ensure a clear understanding of the facts
- select a person from the team to lead and manage the response
- select someone to manage media if required
- plan and approve the immediate response
- plan and approve ongoing strategies
- response manager to be point of contact for feedback and questions
- response manager to maintain group communications, records and documentation
- response manager to allocate individuals roles / responsibilities for ongoing tasks
- deal with any other issues as they arise
- ensure appropriate support for staff/learners during a critical incident
- address legal requirements
- address media requirements

Acknowledgments:

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Learner Critical Incident Response Team – contact list

Role	Name	Mobile	Email
GM	Steve Hutchison	*****	steve@chivalrytraining.co.nz
Manager	Gerry Apiti	*****	gerry@thechivalrygroup.com
Director	Doug McCaulay	021532100	doug@thechivalrygroup.com

External agencies to contact:

Agency	Contact Name	Phone	Web address	Email
NZ Police				
NZQA Code staff				
Worksafe				
Lawyer				

Death of a learner

Learner details:	
First name:	Surname:
Date of birth:	Date of death:
Learner ID:	Programme/course:

Immediate checklist: within 24 hours		
Requirement	Date/time	Notes
1. Communicate effectively and efficiently about the deceased learner		
a) Before notifying anyone confirm who has died, their full name and identifying details, and details surrounding the death		

b) Do not give unnecessary details about how the learner died unless they are asked for and the NZ Police have given clearance to communicate this information		
c) Determine if the death is due to work activity or institution led activity under the control of the institution – if so, notify the Health and Safety Manager		
d) Identify any religious or cultural considerations		
2. Establish a Learner Critical Incident Response Team		
a) Meet team within 24 hours to explain roles and responsibilities. Thereafter, it is not necessary for the whole team to meet (only as required)		
b) Manager to report regularly to relevant senior management personnel within institution		
c) Deal with NZ Police – identify and get details of appropriate contact		
3. Notifying the family * These are additional requirements and concerns for international learners		
a) Establish that the family has been notified		
b) Facilitate visas for family where required (via MFAT/NZ Police)*		
4. Dealing with learner friends/flatmates etc		

a) Decide on the appropriate way to notify learners of the death, when this should occur and when the death should be formally announced. (Due to social media learners are often the first to know)		
b) Gather affected learners together with staff counsellor. Start a condolence book		
c) Ensure Critical Incident Response Team has the counsellor's contact details		
d) Identify which friends may be badly affected/at risk and need support – refer to counsellor/s		
e) Contact counsellor/s and inform them of potential learners-at-risk.		
f) Give learners contact details for the appropriate members of the Learner Critical Incident Response Team (Chaplains, counsellor/s, learner advisor/s). It may be appropriate for a counsellor to approach learners/friends/staff as a group in a large meeting place such as a lecture theatre or hall of residence		
5. Media		
a) Media communications spokesperson identified and briefed		
b) Media response developed and agreed		
6. Security of the deceased learner's room		

a) Ensure security of the deceased learner's room and belongings if it is not part of a NZ Police investigation		
b) If the deceased learner is flatting privately, arrange with the landlord to have the room locked until an approved person can do inventory		

Medium term checklist: Within 15 days

Requirement	Date/time	Notes
1. Learner information		
a) Ensure that all information about the learner is removed from institution web pages. Note that this may also need to include protecting the anonymity of other learners impacted by the death		
2. Family matters		
* These are additional requirements and concerns for international learners		
a) Establish what the family wants to do with the body (repatriate or funeral)*		
b) Liaise with the insurance company to facilitate and expedite approvals*		
c) Liaise with the funeral director*		
d) Organise a tapu lifting/religious ceremony for the site if appropriate		
e) If family are coming to New Zealand, arrange airport pick ups. Keep in mind that some families expect to see staff from the embassy or consulate at the airport*		

f) Arrange accommodation for family members*		
g) Maintain contact with and support for family and friends of the deceased		
h) Keep parents informed		
i) Respond appropriately to any cultural issues relating to the death of the learner. Involve cultural advisors if needed		
j) Facilitate and accompany family to visit the site of the incident		
k) Establish whether it is appropriate to have a memorial service for the deceased		
l) Communicate funeral/memorial details to classmates and staff		
m) Organise letter of condolence to the family from the institution		
3. Attend of the deceased's belongings		
a) Check with the family to make sure that it is acceptable to make an inventory of the deceased's belongings. Some cultural practices require family members to do this		
b) If the family wish to visit the accommodation check to make sure that it is in a reasonably tidy condition		
c) Arrange to have the deceased learner's accommodation unlocked		

d) Make an inventory of belongings. Have more than one person present for verification. Disturb belongings as little as possible		
e) Money should be counted, kept in a safe place and returned to the next of kin		
f) Take note of bank account details and close the account. If there is more than \$10,000 in the account a court order is needed to move funds		
g) Take note of vehicles owned by the deceased		
4. Academic services		
a) Obtain a death certificate or coroner's report for the Graduation office to change the status of the deceased learner's file		
b) Verify if any refund is due and organise for transfer of funds		
c) Verify programme completion – posthumous award if applicable		
5. Media releases		
a) Media spokesperson briefed as events unfold and facts are confirmed		
b) Decide on appropriate media releases		
c) All media communications should be logged		
6. Information sharing		

a) Manager should report regularly to other staff to keep them informed		
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**Long term checklist:
15 days plus**

Requirement	Date/time	Notes
1. Follow up		
a) Ensure learners and staff still have the contact details of appropriate staff members		
b) Ensure help remains available for learners who could experience grief during/after an inquest or memorial service		
c) Ensure staff receive support		
d) Ensure the institution website does not have inappropriate references to the learner		
e) Ensure thanks and acknowledgements go to people who have helped and offered assistance		
2. Evaluate plans, procedures and practice		
a) Meet with all staff on the Learner Critical Incident Response Team to evaluate within two to three weeks of the incident		
b) Identify and follow up outstanding tasks and address concerns		

c) Include recommendations to improve procedures (eg. upskilling staff)		
d) Write a report on the review and file for future access		