



### 32. CRITICAL INCIDENT AND EVACUATION PLAN

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**This policy has been communicated to parents/guardians.**

**Relevant staff know the requirements and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy.**

**Relevant staff have received training on this policy.**

**Statement of Intent:** The Service will endeavour to ensure that the children are protected and cared for at all times and in the event that the building needs to be evacuated staff will follow this plan safely and children will be supervised during any period spent outside the premises.

**Definition of Critical Incident:** A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the Service.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Emergency preparedness is the preparation and planning necessary to effectively handle a critical incident. It involves individuals assessing the likelihood of specific critical incidents occurring and developing an emergency plan that identifies the services they require, and the resources they need to have on

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hand in case such an incident occurs. The goal of these preparedness activities is to make sure that a Service is ready and able to respond quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident.

**Responsibilities and Roles in Emergency Planning and Response:**

**Management will:** Ensure that the facility remains in compliance with Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 in regard to:

- o First Aid
- o Medical Assistance
- o Management and staffing
- o Registering of children
- o Records
- o Information for Parents/guardians
- o Fire safety measures
- o Premises and Facilities
- Develop and review Emergency Preparedness Plan(s); emergency situations identified during risk assessment as being high risk to the Service will have a specific plan developed.
- Ensure that staff are trained in the provisions of Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).
- Ensure that children are prepared for the provisions of Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).
- Conduct evacuation and lockdown drills, keep records and plan revisions based on drill evaluations.
- Assign emergency responsibilities to staff as required, with regard to individual capabilities and normal responsibilities.
- Keep parents/guardians and staff informed of the Emergency Preparedness Plan revisions.
- Carry out regular safety checks of equipment and toys and records kept.

**Management will complete a Critical Incident Form  
for every possible critical incident.**

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**Staff will:**

- Participate in developing the facility's Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).
- Participate in emergency preparedness training and drills.
- Help children develop confidence in their ability to care for themselves.
- Provide leadership during a period of emergency.

**Management will:**

- Participate in developing the facility's Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).
- Conduct periodic safety inspections of the facility.
- Identify shut-off valves and switches for gas, oil, water and electricity
- Provide for emergency shut-off of the ventilating system (as applicable).
- Instruct all staff members on how to use fire extinguishers.

**Parents/guardians:**

Management will:

- Encourage parents/guardians to become familiar with the Emergency Preparedness Plan(s) and procedures they are to follow.
- Advise parents/guardians of the Service procedures for collecting their children if an emergency causes us to relocate to another site.
- Ensure that the information the Service has on the children and parents/guardians is current and correct.

**We have addressed emergency situations through our policies and procedures.**

**Records:**

**To prepare for an emergency we have the following:**

- A current list of staff members' names addresses and contact details for staff and next of kin.
- A current list of children including additional needs requirements.
- An attendance logbook.

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- A current list of parents/guardians, second named guardian and nominated person including contact details.
- Adequate first aid resources and a current list of staff with first aid training.
- A quick reference guide with contact details for the Critical Incident Team and essential services.
- A clearly defined evacuation procedure which identifies pre-designated assembly areas and if required, a relocation shelter site.

**Critical Incident Procedures:** When an incident occurs, staff will immediately alert management or other designated person. It is the responsibility of the person in charge to determine whether the incident is deemed to be critical. The person in charge or designated person will lead the emergency response and be guided by the Critical Incident Action Guide.

#### **Immediate Response [within 24 hours]**

- a) Identify the nature of the critical incident.
- b) Implement the appropriate emergency preparedness plan.
- c) Contact emergency services.
- d) Delegate immediate first aid to trained staff.
- e) If applicable, secure the area.
- f) Ensure safety and welfare of children and staff.
- g) Notify the critical incident team leader if not on site.
- h) Liaise with emergency services, hospital and medical services.
- i) Contact and inform parents/guardians and family members.
- j) Identify children and staff members most closely involved and at risk.
- k) Manage media and publicity.
- l) Maintain Emergency Operational Procedure and Time Log.

**Lockdown Procedure:** If there is a dangerous person inside or immediately outside the Service, the best procedure may be to lock all interior doors and protect staff and children in rooms.

- The service has agreed a code word or signal during the emergency planning process and all staff are trained to recognise this signal which warns them that there is a danger and that all rooms should be locked.
- Children will be kept inside the rooms, away from doors or windows where they can be seen.

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- The person in charge will summon Garda Síochána. Efforts to get the dangerous person(s) to leave the premises should **only** be taken if it is safe to do so.

**Step Down:** Staff should only unlock the doors to their rooms if they hear the previously agreed safe code word or signal. Or if no code word is in use when they are instructed to do so by the Manager.

**Shelter in the Facility:** If it is unsafe for the staff and children of the Service to go outside, provisions have been made to provide “protected spaces” inside. Depending on time available to move the children, it may be necessary to try to shelter in a “close” part of the building, rather than the most protected space.

**A safe area is:**

- ✓ In the interior of the building away from glass that may shatter.
- ✓ Not in a room with large ceiling spans (like gymnasiums or auditoriums) that may fall if subjected to strong winds.
- ✓ In a room where furniture and wall-hangings are secured so that they will not fall onto children or staff.

**The protected space is:** This location was identified during the planning process and is made known to all staff. All air intakes and openings should be closed to protect the atmosphere inside in the event that we are being kept inside because of smoke or toxic chemicals outside.

**Emergency Evacuation after a Session has started:**

- The alarm bell will be sounded by the Manager, or other nominated person, or the code word will be conveyed to staff.
- In the event of an emergency evacuation after the session has started, parents/guardians may be informed by telephone that they are required to collect their child as soon as possible from the Emergency Assembly Point.
- The children will be safely evacuated according to the current Fire Drill procedures to the Emergency Assembly point.
- Contact information for all the children will be taken out of the building along with the daily register.

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- Once the building is evacuated, the emergency services will be called.
- Children will only be escorted back into the building under the advice of the emergency services or the person in charge once all threats to safety have been cleared.

**Procedures for Dealing with a Trespasser:**

**If a trespasser is found on the premises the person in charge or other nominated person will:**

- a) Establish their name and why they are on the premises.
- b) Inform another member of staff that they are dealing with a trespasser and activate the lock down or evacuation procedure if required. (Use the code word to alert other staff members).
- c) Offer help to the person or to call someone for them in the event that the trespasser is distressed or it is suspected that they are under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants.
- d) Request that the person leaves quietly.
- e) If the person refuses to leave the Gardaí will be called.

Under no circumstances must staff put themselves in danger if the trespasser is aggressive or violent. The evacuation procedures should be followed and the Gardaí called.

**Post Assault/Post Trauma: Procedures and Guidelines:** In the event of any incident the Service Management should offer as much support as is reasonably possible to those involved.

**Note:** It is considered essential that the Service Manager and all staff are aware of the effects of assaults/serious incidents.

- The following areas need to be addressed for the staff:
  - o Debriefing immediately following, or as soon as practical after an assault/incident.
  - o Completion of report on the incident.
  - o Follow up to check how the staff member is doing.
  - o Outside/independent support for the staff member if appropriate.
  - o Get immediate medical help if necessary.
  - o Consult own GP and if advised take sick leave.

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- o If appropriate avail of counselling service provided by an outside agency. The service will meet this cost within a specified limit.
- Contact the union for advice, if applicable.
- Complete an Incident Report Form.
- Report assaults/incidents and serious threats to the Gardaí, but it is acknowledged that it is up to the individual staff member to make a decision on pressing charges.
- The Manager or other designated person should accompany the staff member when making a report to the Gardaí and also to Court if charges are brought and the staff member is required as a witness.

**Note:** *Address of staff member making a statement to the Gardaí should be the Service and not their personal address.*

**Secondary Response [24–72 hours]:**

- a) Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved.
- b) Provide staff, parents/guardians and wider community with factual information as appropriate.
- c) Arrange debriefing for all parents/guardians, children and staff most closely involved and at risk.
- d) Restore the facility to regular routine, program delivery, and community life as soon as practicable.
- e) Complete critical incident report.

**On-going Follow-up Response:**

- a) Identify any other persons who may be affected by the critical incident and provide access to support services for community members.
- b) Provide accurate information to parents/guardians and staff.
- c) Arrange a memorial service and occasional worship (as appropriate).
- d) Maintain contact with any injured and affected parties to provide support and to monitor progress.
- e) Monitor staff and children for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder; providing specialised treatment as necessary.
- f) Evaluate Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plan.
- g) Be sensitive to anniversaries.
- h) Manage any possible longer term disturbances e.g. inquests, legal proceedings.

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### **Evaluation and Review of Management Plan:**

- After a critical incident, a meeting of the critical incident team will be held to evaluate the critical incident report, the effectiveness of the management plan and to make modifications as required.
- After any evacuation or security breach a full and comprehensive review will take place by Management and will include:
  - Completing an incident report form with a full report of how the situation was dealt with.
  - A report of any children or staff that have been distressed or upset during the incident or subsequent evacuation.
  - Evacuation procedures.
  - Security arrangements to avoid trespassers accessing the building.
- The evaluation process will incorporate feedback gathered from staff, parents/guardians and local community representatives.
- An evaluation report will be made available to the Management team.

### **Information/Training**

- These procedures should be known to all staff and reviewed on a regular basis and incorporated into the induction programme.
- Management and staff should agree an emergency code or signal.
- Under no circumstances must staff be made feel incompetent or apologetic for activating the emergency procedures.

**Dealing with the Media:** In the event of a crisis, emergency or controversial situation, the person in charge will handle all contacts with the media and will coordinate the information flow from the Service to the public. In such situations, all staff should refer calls from the media to the Manager or other designated person. No staff may talk to the media unless designated to do so. A breach of this may invoke the Disciplinary Policy procedures.

See Appendix O: Dealing with the Media

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**WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE, EMPOWERING, CARING, RESPONSIBLE**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:**

**Person responsible for approving the Policy**

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YMCA Dublin is a registered charity (Charity Number 2366). A list of our members of Board of Management is available on request.



## **APPENDIX O: DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

Some events draw a great deal of media attention and this can add complexity and stress to what is already a difficult situation. The media can be used to dispel rumour and give a clear factual message. On the other hand, the media can sensationalise the story. The primary concern at any time of crisis is to protect the privacy of those affected by the incident and to ensure any media attention is handled sensitively. It is most important that all those involved understand how the media will be handled at times of crisis

### **Press Statement:**

- Prepare a press statement that is factual and accurate.
- It should be brief and carefully considered.
- Avoid sweeping statements or generalisations.
- Consider privacy of families concerned.

### **Interviews**

- Decide if the Service wished to partake.
- Use designated times and in a specific press room (this keeps you in control).
- Preparation is key.
- Parents/guardians should be advised not to let children be interviewed.
- Delegate a spokesperson.
- Management should inform everyone concerned that only the nominated spokesperson will deal with the media.

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**Media Do's and Don'ts:**

Do's	√	Don'ts	X
Do write a press release and rehearse		Don't go into personal details of those involved	
Do consider getting professional help or help from your membership organisation		Don't read the statement to the camera	
Do use careful and sensitive language		Don't engage in rambling discussions afterwards Don't use "no comment"	
Do keep it short		Don't respond to quotes from others	
Do regard anything you write down as quotable		Don't answer questions that you don't know the answer to	
Do ask can you have sight of any press coverage		Don't make "off the record" comments	
Do ask for outline of questions in advance		Let anyone, other than spokesperson speak with the media	
Do avoid being drawn into speculation		Don't make sweeping statements	

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