# Critical Incident Response - Collaboration between MidCentral Health and Ministry of Education regarding responding to traumatic incidents

The Critical Incident Protocol between MidCentral Health and Ministry of Education has been in place since 2002. As both health and education services are frequently involved in supporting schools and early childcare centres following a traumatic event, it has been very effective to jointly respond to these incidents in a planed and coordinated way.

## The role of MDHB Child and Adolescent and Family Mental Health Service Critical Incident Response team (CIRT) may include the following support and interventions:

* To provide mental health expertise in assessment and management of any risk issues that may be related to the traumatic incident and support the school/early childcare centre regarding developing appropriate risk plans.
* As part of the trauma response team, provide immediate support and advice and to staff managing the incident (i.e., Guidance Counsellors, Pastoral care staff, Senior management staff, Board of Trustees).
* To provide information on risk factors and typical responses to trauma for parents and staff.
* Assist the school to develop “At Risk” registers (Acute/ those needing monitoring only) of students who may be at risk of suicide/self harm, or due to other vulnerabilities, are at risk for being further traumatised.
* The CIRT team can provide mental health assessments to children and young people with their caregivers either in the school setting or in the CAF Service if there are concerns about a student’s risk.
* Both Oranga Hinengaro Maori Mental Health CAFS and mainstream CAFS services are represented on the trauma Response team depending on the needs related to the traumatic incident.
* To provide ongoing support to Guidance Counsellors, senior management staff, students, and families traumatised by the incident. As students respond in different ways to trauma and the effects of trauma are not always immediately recognised, it has been helpful for schools/early childcare centres to have identified mental health people that they can contact regarding any ongoing concerns.
* As part of the trauma response team we are able to hold psycho education meetings at the school with students, caregivers and staff on the effects of trauma and strategies that are helpful following trauma.

## MDHB Public Heath role may include:

* To provide information resources and advocacy for students, families, and staff
* Having strong links with Victim Support (Bereavement Services).
* Public Health Nurses working in schools are often able to have an ongoing role monitoring and supporting students and staff.
* Supporting training for the MidCentral region on Suicide Prevention.

## Manawatu Suicide Prevention/Postvention Response Team

MDHB Public Health coordinate the Manawatu Suicide Prevention/Postvention team which is made up of central and local government agencies and community based health and social service agencies within the MidCentral region. This team was established to increase coordination and capacity of suicide prevention management and is part of the MidCentral DHB Suicide Prevention/Postvention Action Plan 2015-2017. The purpose of this group is to coordinate a response to suicide in the community and to prevent further suicidal behavior. Assisting those bereaved by suicide to access supports, proactively identifying those individuals who may be at risk of suicide and facilitating crisis intervention for those identified as being at risk are part of the functions of the team. This group has a fixed membership but is able to invite other agencies to participate in any meetings as appropriate. Regarding postvention activities following a suicide, not all members may be required and some may become involved at a later date.

### As part of a response to community concerns the team has supported a number of suicide prevention initiatives:

* Public Health have developed posters on building resiliency and reducing suicide for the community outlining resources and websites available to assist people thinking of suicide or supporting others affected by suicide.
* Representatives from Ministry of Education and MidCentral CAFS have gone into schools and provided training to Guidance Counsellors and senior management staff on developing policies and processes for managing traumatic incidents and also to discuss the management of students who present with risk behaviours. For example, this intervention has been implemented in response to a number of suicides that occurred in a close period of time in a secondary school.
* Support and training has also been made available to tertiary institutions needing assistance with managing student’s risk or the effects of suicide.
* In the MidCentral region in the past 5 years there has been a number of trainings held each year related to suicide prevention. Detection and Management of Suicide and other Risk seminars have been held in rural settings and in Palmerston North. These seminars have been well attended with very positive feedback given. In particular, information on risk factors, formulation of risk and developing safety plans with people identified to be at risk has been reported to be very helpful. These seminars have also provided for an opportunity for the community to come together to raise concerns and to network regarding the issue of suicide.

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