An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Critical Incident Policy

For IPAS Accommodation Centre Staff and IPAS Staff Members

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Quick Reference Guide

Immediate actions – person at the scene (staff member)

- Keep yourself and others safe, including evacuation of the centre if needed
- Summon assistance, including colleagues, centre manager, emergency services as required

The Centre Manager or person in charge should then:

- Have regard for the impact on residents and staff
- Assemble residents in the designated assembly area if necessary
- Contact family/friends/next of kin if they reside in the centre
- Contact IPAS
- The Centre Manager is the contact point for the emergency services' health service providers and local Gardaí.

IPAS must:

- Support the centre management and staff
- Ensure the welfare of residents
- Fully brief all relevant parties
- Review and follow up incident
- Where a death of a resident occurs, follow up with Coroner where appropriate.

A Critical Incident is defined as an event out of the range of normal experience. Critical incidents are challenging events that have the potential to create significant distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms.

Some examples of a critical incident may be:

- Serious injury or death
- Harm to self or others
- Significant damage to property

Other non-critical incidents should continue to be reported in the normal manner.

1 Purpose

This policy and practice document is aimed at providing staff, who work in IPAS or accommodation centres with information, support and guidelines to follow when a critical incident of a resident has occurred. Incidents causing death or serious injury within centres are very rare, however, when they do occur IPAS understands how traumatising it can be for staff, family members and friends of the resident.

2 Guidelines for Centre Management/Staff

In the event of a critical incident the person in charge at the scene will usually be a centre staff member or manager. He/she is the contact point for emergency services, Gardaí, IPAS and local health services.

1. Assess the situation to determine if there is any further danger to self or others.
2. Remove yourself and/or others from the situation if necessary including the evacuation of the centre if needed.
3. Summon help as required (work colleagues, first aid assistance, emergency services, GP/health services).
4. Once the person's needs are being addressed, check to see if other residents or staff members need assistance, assemble all residents in the designated assembly point if necessary.
5. Notify IPAS Operations staff (AP/HEO) responsible for the centre as soon as possible. If the incident occurs outside of office hours contact should be made through the out of hours emergency phone number.
6. Provide emergency services with a copy of the register, family/friends/ next of kin contact details of the resident(s)/staff member concerned.
7. The Centre manager is the contact point for the emergency services; health service providers and local Gardaí.
8. The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is responsible for all media queries and the centre manager should refer these to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Press Office.

3 Debrief and Further Support Available

It is important that all centre staff and residents are debriefed following a critical incident. Support should be made available to those if requested. If further support is necessary the centre manager should contact IPAS.

4 Incident Report

A completed incident report should be forwarded to IPAS Operations by the Centre Manager as soon as practicable, but no later than 24 hours after the incident.

5 Guidelines for IPAS Staff

If the incident occurs in your presence, or is taking place through a phone call, follow the steps outlined above at '**Guidelines for Centre Management/Staff.'**

1. If you are contacted by phone by a staff member from a centre:
    - A brief outline of the incident and any actions taken
    - This should then be forwarded via email and/or phone call without delay to your Assistant Principal or Principal Officer
    - Based on an assessment of the incident the AP/PO should then inform the A/Sec/Press Office and Minister's Office.

The briefing should include where possible, the person's name, accommodation centre, details of incident and who has been contacted (i.e. Gardaí/next of kin).

2. The lead IPAS staff member should liaise with the HSE as appropriate and follow up with centre management as soon as possible to check whether residents and staff in the centre are receiving appropriate after care and that they are made aware of all resources available to them.
3. A Critical Incident review meeting should be convened within 7 days to consider the policy, operational, training and general learning from the incident. Relevant staff including a staff member from IPAS, An Garda Siochana and the HSE (when appropriate) should be in attendance.

6 Death of a Resident

In the case of a death, the Centre Manager or Manager on Duty should:

- Ensure the body is not moved and that the scene is secured
- If the body is in a communal room, the room should be cleared and the door locked.

- Notify the Emergency Services immediately. Information should be provided to emergency services as requested, including details of the person's next of kin.

When there is no next of kin identifiable, the lead IPAS staff member should:

- Communicate with the Coroner's office and Gardai in writing confirming that the persons who is deceased was living in an IPAS accommodation centre, and that IPAS wish to be kept informed of all matters pertaining to the person concerned.
- All contact with the centre management/staff and other organisations such as the Gardaí and Coroner must be recorded.

7 Record Keeping

IPAS will maintain a record of all critical incidents occurring in centres. The record will include the details of the person(s) involved, the location, nature of incident, the response to the incident (immediate and post incident) and details of the Critical Incident Review meeting.

The record of incidents will be reviewed by the Principal Officer, International Protection Accommodation Services on at least a quarterly basis.

Appendix 1

Supports available to residents and Accommodation Centre staff.

Depending on the type of incident you may receive support from the HSE to support residents after a traumatic incident in a centre.

Centre managers should devise a list of available services in their area, Gardai, Fire, Ambulance, HSE etc and to make contingency plans for the management of a critical incident.

IPAS can assist with identifying a point of contact for each centre should this be required.

Appendix 2

Support available for critical incidents involving school going children

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides assistance to all schools that experience critical incidents, including those that may not have an assigned NEPS psychologist.

A critical incident is a situation that overwhelms the normal coping capacity of the school. The types of critical incidents experienced by schools range from the death of a member of the school community through illness, suicide or accidental death to physical assaults or serious damage to school property.

In the event of a critical incident, the primary role of the NEPS psychologist is to advise and support the school communities to assess the significance and impact of the event, to draw up a plan of action, to mobilise the schools resources, and when necessary to access other support systems.

NEPS psychologists advise and support the teachers and other adults within the school community who work daily with students and who know them well. Best practice indicates that students need to be with people they know and trust. Therefore, psychologists are available for consultation to school staff as they support their students, providing information and advice to management and staff to support them in challenging situations. NEPS psychologists also work with teachers to identify students who are most in need of support, and developing procedures for reviewing their needs and supporting onward referral, if necessary.

NEPS does not provide counselling for students, but rather immediate, short term support, information and advice to staff. This approach is based on best practice which indicates that students need to be with people they know and trust in time of trauma or crisis. It is, therefore, more protecting for students when school staff provide them with support as established

relationships enable staff to monitor their students over the days and weeks following an incident.

NEPS Critical Incident Guidelines to schools are available on the DES website at this link https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Critical-Incidents.html

Appendix 3

Assistance with funerals

Under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection can make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure, which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. An ENP is a means tested payment made at the discretion of the Community Welfare Service officer taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case.

An application can be made under the ENP scheme for assistance with funeral and burial expenses. The assistance is toward the costs of the necessary basic requirements for a dignified funeral where there is an inability to pay the costs, in part or in full, by the family of the deceased person without causing hardship. In determining an entitlement to an ENP for funeral expenses the officer will take into account the circumstances of the individual applicant and that of the deceased person including any savings, property, insurance policies etc. that would render the applicant or anybody else liable and/or in a position to pay for the funeral costs. If a bereavement grant is available from any other source including former employer, credit union, trade union etc., this will also be taken into account.

A SWA 5 form should be completed in respect of all applications for ENP towards funeral expenses, in conjunction with a SWA1 form. These forms are available on www.welfare.ie or from the Department's Community Welfare Service.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the Community Welfare Service can provide for the burial of a person who has died and in respect of whose burial suitable arrangements are not otherwise being made. This is known as an arranged burial. Where the Department incurs expenses in relation to the burial of a deceased person, it may obtain repayment of those expenses from the estate of the deceased person or from any person who was liable to maintain the deceased person immediately before his or her death. Generally, an arranged burial would not be undertaken in cases where a next of kin exists.

Assistance can only be provided for funerals taking place in Ireland. Requests for costs associated with the repatriation of an individual to their country of origin (outside Ireland) cannot be considered either via a funeral expenses application or an arranged burial

Details of local Community Welfare Service contacts are available at accommodation centres, or on www.welfare.ie.