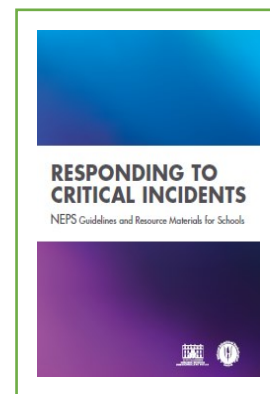


Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines & Resource Materials for Schools (2016)

National Educational Psychological Service



The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has been involved since its establishment in supporting school communities when critical incidents occur. This service is available to all schools.

The primary role of NEPS is to advise and support the teachers and other adults who work daily with students and who know them well. Best practice indicates that in the aftermath of a critical incident, students need to be with people they know and trust. NEPS provides immediate, short term support, information and advice to staffs, it does not provide counselling.

NEPS new publication, *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines & Resource Materials for Schools (2016)* 3rd edition has updated and combined the 2007 *Guidelines for Schools* and *Resources Materials for Schools* into one single publication. The publication is based on up to date research and the wealth of experience of NEPS psychologists and schools who have been involved in responding to critical incidents. It is available on the Department of Education and Skills website at www.education.ie under NEPS.

The revised Guidelines:

- Outline how schools can be proactive in developing policies and procedures that **promote mental health**.
- Offers templates, advice and information on how schools can prepare for critical incidents by identifying a **Critical Incident Management Team** and having a **Critical Incident Management Plan**.
- Gives a practical **step by step guide** to schools in how to respond effectively when an incident occurs in order to minimise the potential traumatic effect on the school community. This includes a new aid to guide teachers when meeting with students in the aftermath of an incident.

Currently youth suicide rates in Ireland are the fourth highest in the European Union (WHO 2013). Concerns about youth suicide have led to increasing demands for schools to assume a role and responsibility in the prevention and management of suicidal behaviour among young people. The revised publication has an extended section on Suicide/Suspected suicide including information on suicide contagion.

Social Media is now part of everyday communication and information sharing. Most students are avid and competent users. It can play a significant part in the aftermath of a critical incident. The revised Guidelines offers guidance to school on the use of social media in the aftermath of a critical incident. It also has an up to date list of useful websites and helplines.

NEPS extends its sympathy and admiration to all the schools and families who have shown wonderful strength, compassion and resilience at times of tragedy.