Critical Incident Policy  
(Responding to Student Safety)

Rationale:
Cranbourne East Secondary College is committed to providing safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Students can reach their full educational potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and when there is a positive school culture to engage and support them in their learning. Our school acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are inextricably linked.

To ensure this, we liaise with Government agencies, including the Department of Education and Training, Victoria Police, Early in Life Mental Health Service (ELMHS), and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to ensure student wellbeing and safety.

It is fundamental to acknowledge that each teacher is a vital source of support and a determinant in the success of their students. The teachers at CESC work collectively to ensure that students feel valued and cared for, have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school and can effectively engage with their learning. This school recognises the need to be engaging and inclusive, to respond to the diverse needs of our students, to accommodate different learning profiles and rates of learning, and to intervene early to identify and respond to individual student needs.

Our school strives to be a learning community where students and teachers relate well to each other, and where different ideas and viewpoints are valued and respected.

Refer: The Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines

Aim:
- To promote a healthy, supportive and secure environment for students, with targeted support for students at risk;
- To provide guidance to school staff on handling a reported critical incident.

Principles:
- Student welfare is a shared responsibility between school, home and the community.
- School, home and community share an equal commitment to ensuring the school environment should be a positive one for all students.
- All students shall have access to school welfare and support services.
- Clearly defined and appropriately shared communication processes and protocols are critical to the effectiveness of student welfare support.

NB: To ensure the safety of all students and staff; students exhibiting signs of psychological distress/stress/imbalance/anxiety/refusal to comply with instructions/dangerous behaviour to self or others may not be permitted to attend excursions/camps at the discretion of the principal or his/her representative.

To ensure the safety of all students and staff, in the event that the student has been admitted to a treatment facility for issues associated with mental health, the school will require the treating physician/s to provide a current, effective Safety Plan prior to the student’s return to school.
Implementation: 
**Responding to allegations of sexual assault**

Cranbourne East Secondary College liaises with the Student Critical Incident and Advisory Unit to ensure appropriate supports are in place to maximise the health and wellbeing of all students involved in sexually related incidents. Accordingly, the procedures for responding to allegations of sexual assault are followed as per:


**Responding to Student Safety around Critical Incidents** - Response to a reported incident or threat of:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation
- Attempted suicide
- Notification to school of reported real time incident or threat to student safety by self.

**Emergency Response Team**

1. **Emergency Response Team - Leader:** Principal: Mandee Strickland; Assistant Principal 1: Chris Gurr; Assistant Principal 2: Melanie French; Assistant Principal 3: John Melki-Wegner

   In the event that no Principal is on site, a member of the Wellbeing Team (on site) will be deputised to the role.

   Oversee the direct management of the school’s response including informing staff of the suicide or attempted suicide, chairing staff meetings and ensuring that critical incident reviews occur. The team leader should be made aware of all activities occurring in relation to the response to ensure co-ordination and efficiency.

2. **Liaison with family, police and management of social media**

   A member of the Wellbeing Team (depending on the existing relationship with the family,) and if appropriate, will liaise with family and police and undertake the management of social media.

   Following a suicide or attempted suicide, the family may be involved with social media and may need support from the school in managing this. Similarly, liaison with police during a reported critical incident or following a suicide (or attempt) is a matter which needs to be handled with the utmost sensitivity.

3. **Liaison with mental health services and identification of vulnerable staff/students:**

   A member of the Wellbeing Team (depending on the existing relationship with the family,) and if appropriate, will liaise with PCOs, Leading Teachers and other relevant staff.

4. **Liaison with Department of Education/relevant school body and mainstream media contact:**

   **Principal:** This role must be carried out by one person who already has a connection to the relevant education body.

5. **Preparation of written information for students, staff, parents and/or community:** Principal or their delegate. This person may also be the primary contact point for parents and community members who have questions or concerns following the suicide or attempted suicide.

**Self-Harm (actual or threatened)**

**Response:**

- Staff member who becomes aware of student self-harm must immediately speak with a member of the Wellbeing Team.
- In the event that a team member is unavailable, one of the PCOs must immediately be notified.
- The PCOs will liaise with the Wellbeing Team.
- The parent(s) will be notified as soon as is reasonably practicable by either the PCO or the Wellbeing Team member, depending upon the consultation between them.
Psychiatric triage may be called for advice, depending on the severity and or frequency of the self-harm as well as a Wellbeing Team member and, where possible, the parent(s).

A Safety Plan will be developed for the student in consultation with the Wellbeing Team member, student and PCO as required.

Physical injury (evidence of self-harm) must be covered at all times during school.

Any staff involved in a self-harm incident can seek counselling via the Department’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP service is provided by Converge International and staff can call directly on 1800 337 068 to make a free counselling session appointment.

Suicidal Ideation
Response:
- Staff member who becomes aware of the suicidal ideation must immediately speak to a member of the Wellbeing Team on site either face to face or by phone - not by email.
- If a Wellbeing Team member is unavailable, the staff member must inform a PCO.
- The PCO will liaise with the Wellbeing Team.
- The level of risk of the student will be assessed by a STORM/ASIST trained member of the Wellbeing Team using the College Assessment of Risk Document – see Appendix B in conjunction with tool “Signposting for Level of Risk in Casey Cardinia Region” – see Appendix C.
- When a student presents as a “medium” to “high” risk - having frequent or fixed thoughts; or with a plan, a method and access means with the intent to harm whilst at school, the student is deemed at too high risk to remain at school. Parent/carer is to be contacted to arrange for them to be picked up from school to have an assessment by a mental health clinician in line with DET “Guidelines to assist in responding to attempted suicide or suicide by a student”. Refer to: www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/suicideguidelines.pdf
- The parent(s) will be notified as soon as is reasonably practicable by either the PCO or the Wellbeing Team member, depending upon the consultation between them
- Psychiatric triage may be called for advice depending on the perceived severity of the ideation (e.g the student has a suicide plan)
- A Safety Plan will be developed by the treating physician and the student in consultation with the Wellbeing Team member
- Students affected are NOT able to attend school without a current safety plan
- Any staff involved in an incident of suicidal ideation can seek counselling via the Department’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP service is provided by Converge International and staff can call directly on 1800 337 068 to make a counselling session appointment.
- Students exhibiting signs of psychological distress/stress/imbalance/anxiety/refusal to comply with instructions/dangerous behaviour to self or others may not be permitted to attend excursions/camps. The inclusion of the student in these activities is at the discretion of the Principal.
- In the event that a student is at an excursion/camp and exhibits any signs of the above, the parent will be required to collect the student from the excursion or camp.
- Where there is a care plan for an at-risk student, developed with the care team and stakeholders and the plan is not followed by the student (e.g. student absconds from school) and they act in a way that poses a danger to themselves, staff or other students then standard Student Engagement Guidelines will apply.

Attempted suicide (notification to school of real time critical incident)
Immediate response to report of student attempted suicide on site:
- A PCO or relevant member/s of the Wellbeing Team should take all reasonable steps to ascertain the whereabouts of the student
- 000 must be called immediately, not the local police station
- Principal to be immediately notified
- The area will be cordoned off from staff and student access in line with OH&S guidelines
Parents/guardians notified as soon as is practicable by a member of the Wellbeing or the Principal team
Principal team member to inform other relevant staff members
Members of the Wellbeing Team to liaise with Principal Team member and seek direction as required
Principal Class notifies DET Critical Incidents (Security Services Unit on 9589 6266)
Principal Class to notify SARRP

**Immediate response to report of student attempted suicide off site:**
- The PCO and Wellbeing Team should take all reasonable steps to ascertain the whereabouts of the student (such as contacting family, seeking information from person who notified of incident)
- 000 must be called immediately, not the local police station
- Principal or representative to be immediately notified
- Parents/guardians notified as soon as is practicable by a member of the Wellbeing or Principal Team
- Principal Class notifies DET critical incidents (Security Services Unit on 9589 6266)
- Principal Class to notify SARRP

**Once the immediate threat of harm to the student has passed:**
- Inform police as required of the incident and the school’s involvement (Principal or nominee)
- Inform DET Critical Incidents that the situation has been contained (Principal)
- Debrief with appropriate staff
- Seek counselling through EAP if required on 1800 337 068
- Liaise with parents as required (Principal and Wellbeing Team Members)

**Prior to the student’s return to school:**
- A school care team will be identified for the student. It will comprise of the parent/guardian, Wellbeing Team member, Assistant Principal, House Leader.
- The support team will liaise with a representative from the supporting agency/medical facility involved with the student, subject to having received the student’s or parent’s consent to doing so.
- A safety plan will be formulated and put in place by the treating physician prior to the student’s return to school.
- Students are NOT able to attend school without a current or revised safety plan.
- Students exhibiting signs of psychological distress/stress/imbalance/anxiety/refusal to comply with instructions/dangerous behaviour to self or others will not be permitted to attend excursions/camps at the discretion of the Principal.
- In the event that a student is at an excursion/camp and exhibits any signs of the above, the parent will be required to collect the student from the excursion or camp and will incur any such cost associated with such.

For further information see the DEECD Guidelines to assist in responding to attempted suicide or suicide by a student:

**Attempted Suicide (outside of school hours)**
**Response:**
- When the school becomes aware that a student has attempted suicide outside of school hours, it must promptly convene a meeting with an identified support group (Assistant Principal, parent, Wellbeing Team member, sub school leader, parent, student and agency representative as required) to develop a safety plan for that student.
- The student must not return to school until an appropriate safety plan has been developed and received by the school and the student and/or parents have been provided with a copy.
The Principal reserves the right to refuse the return to school if it is deemed unsafe for the student to return (including consideration of any safety plan and any feedback from the student/ their parent’s/ their treating mental health care professional).

Any staff involved in, or affected by, an attempted suicide can seek counselling via the Department’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP service is provided by Converge International and staff can call directly on 1800 337 068 to make a counselling session appointment.

For further information see the DEECD Guidelines to assist in responding to attempted suicide or suicide by a student:

Suicide
In the event that a student suicides, the principal will follow the DEECD Guidelines for managing the school’s response. Contact Security Services Unit on 9589 6266.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DET Security Services Unit</td>
<td>9589 6266</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAYYS Emergency Housing</td>
<td>97915692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranbourne Police</td>
<td>5991 0600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Youth Resource Officer</td>
<td>5991 0612</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headspace - Dandenong</td>
<td>1800 367 968</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELHMS Triage (Students)</td>
<td>1300 369 012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child First</td>
<td>9705 3939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS Child Protection Dandenong</td>
<td>8765 5444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Protection After Hours Emergency</td>
<td>131278</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASA</td>
<td>1800 806 292 or 9349 1766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Suicide Helpline</td>
<td>1300 651 251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lifeline</td>
<td>13 11 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poisons Information Service</td>
<td>13 11 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disposal of needles and syringes</td>
<td>1300 365 482</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent line</td>
<td>13 2289</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grief line</td>
<td>9596 7799</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids Help Line</td>
<td>1800 551 800</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET Media</td>
<td>9637 2871</td>
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<tr>
<td>DET EAP</td>
<td>1800 337 068</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAT (Crisis Assessment Team)</td>
<td>9767 8222 or 9554 1800 or 9554 1000 (after hours)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix B: College Assessment Of Risk Document**

**Student Name:**

**Copies to:**
- SWC
- School File
- Parent

**Assessment of Risk**

*Explore hopelessness. Listen with empathy and compassion. Build hopefulness.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Intent</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think about harming yourself?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you harmed yourself before?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes when people are distressed/down they contemplate suicide. Is this something that you have been thinking about?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Degree of Seriousness</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Can you rate your level of pain from 1 -10?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you thought about suicide today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you last think about suicide?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When you’re thinking this way are the thoughts hard to get rid of? Do they hang around?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you got a plan? <em>How detailed is the plan? When? Where? How?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have the things that you need with you?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think would happen if you went through with your plan?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if this method wasn’t available to you? What would you do then?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has stopped you from acting on these thoughts so far? – Preventative/Protective Factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Risk Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Self harm coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ direct (immediate tissue damage)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ indirect (cumulative effect) alcohol, drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Gender/sexuality issues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Problems at home/school</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Bullying</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Loss</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Protective Factors
- Afraid of death or injury
- Impact on others
- Problem solving skills
- Positive relationships
- Religious beliefs
- Hopefulness
- Sense of belonging
- Education
- Employment

### 5. Background
- Events leading up to the crisis – problems/triggers
- Previous self-harm/suicide
- In 48/72hr crisis period
- Expectation
- Current perception
- Non-verbal cues

### 6. Hopelessness

*How strong are you that you are still coming to school even though you feel this way.*

*That must be really awful*

Are there times when this feeling of hopelessness is louder/worse than others?

*Be prepared to sit in silence*
# Signposting for Risk Level in Casey/Cardinia Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Staff Member:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name:</td>
<td>Copies to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Level:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## High Risk
*(Fixed Thoughts, A Plan and Access to Methods)*

- Psych Triage (1300 369 012)
- ED’s: Casey Hospital, Dandenong Hospital, Monash Clayton Police, Ambulance, Metro (if they are high risk & missing)
- If already linked with ELMHS, contact ELMHS Clinician
- Implement School Safety Plan

## Medium Risk
*(Frequent or Fixed Suicidal Thoughts, No Plan or Immediate Intention but may have considered methods)*

- Service referrals required immediately (if they are not linked in with someone already)
- headspace Dandenong, headspace Frankston, headspace Narre Warren
- Casey Super Clinic, Windermere, Connections, City of Casey Youth Services Team, GP - Youth Friendly GP in My Place, Cardinia & headspace Dandenong, Mental Health Referral & Assessment Service (MHARS) - SEMML (03 8792 1911)
- Implement School Safety Plan

## Low Risk
*(Fleeting Thoughts/No Plan)*

- Parents/carers, GP, headspace, community support, Implement School Safety Plan

## Very Low Risk
*(Fleeting thoughts which are soon dismissed/No Plan)*

- Parents/carers, GP, headspace, community support, Implement School Safety Plan