



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

Critical Incident Management Protocol

Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Division of Student Affairs
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Director of Student Affairs
Date	March 2023
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	n/a
Last Reviewed	n/a





Critical Incident Management Protocol

The death of an individual in the University community is a traumatic event and one in which we need to respond to in a caring and supportive manner. The development of this protocol comes from a belief that Rhodes University is a community of people who care for one another. A critical incident refers to any traumatic event that involves the sudden death of a student on campus. This includes the death of a student owing to natural causes or caused by any form of an accident. The University will endeavour to provide all the necessary support in the event of a critical incident.

Communication lines

- In circumstances when a student dies on campus or in the surrounding community, the Campus Protection Unit (CPU) must be the first office to be contacted immediately.
- The Director of Student Affairs plays a critical role in the event of a student's death and will act as the Co-ordinator for the University.
- Notification should therefore be directed to the Director of Student Affairs immediately.
- Upon receiving notice of a student's death, the Director of Students Affairs is responsible for notifying the Senior Management, the Family, Departments and offices throughout the University
- Confidentiality should be upheld by all staff and students.

The Role of the House Wardens, Sub-wardens and Hall Warden

- The House Warden must contact ER24 immediately, followed by CPU and the Hall Warden.
- The Hall Warden will contact the Director of Student Affairs with the details of the student involved.
- The Warden is responsible for ensuring that the area is cordoned off.
- The Warden should ensure that sub-wardens wear labels to be identifiable to Counselling staff
- The Warden and sub wardens should identify students that are at high risk for mental distress and inform the Head of Counselling or senior psychologist.
- The Warden must ensure that students are reminded to not divulge any information regarding the incident on social media.

The Role of the Counselling Centre

- The Counselling Centre will endeavour to treat any form of death or emergency as an emergency.
- The Head of Counselling will organise a team of psychologists to respond to the incident and despatch them to the site or affected residence with immediate effect
- In the event of the Head of Counselling not being available, a senior psychologist will be assigned to lead the team/s.

Guidelines for the Debriefing

- The team leader should verify Information surrounding the death and what is acceptable to be disclosed, and share such information with the team before the debriefing or intervention process begins.
- He/ she/them should clarify roles and proceedings for the debriefing
- CPU or the police should be visible to maintain safety throughout the day or as the incident requires.
- The team should identify students that are at high risk for mental distress e.g. students who were directly exposed, or friends of the deceased and ensure that they are counselled separately from the rest of the group to prevent further trauma and provide adequate psychological support.
- It is highly recommended to intervene with students who were directly exposed to the critical incident together. This intervention is ideal to develop group cohesion and effective debriefing.
- The team should ensure that participation in the debriefing is voluntary.
- Information that the Counselling Centre is based at Steve Biko Building, 2nd floor should be communicated for individual sessions and follow-up.
- A psychologist should be available on-site for the whole day
- Students with physical symptoms should be referred to the Health Care Centre
- A follow-up session should be offered in the following week to provide a further opportunity for psychoeducation and containment.

Memorial and Funeral Service Arrangements

- The Director of Student Affairs will seek permission from the family for a memorial service to be held.
- After permission has been granted by the family, the DSA will work closely with the SRC, the Warden, the house committee and Faculty to arrange for a memorial service.

Funeral attendance

- Before any university representatives travel to the funeral, they must assess the risk as to what are the views of the family regarding the death of the student(safety at the funeral).
- Where possible the DSA Director or a nominee and the warden of the student will attend the funeral to represent the University.
- For students to attend the funeral, the SRC, Warden, and House Committee will meet to discuss the logistics.

Media Enquiries

All media enquiries should be directed to the University Communications and Advancement office - contact details are as follows –

Director Communications and Advancement: 046 603 8514

Communications Manager: 046 603 8773

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