

SD – Critical Incidents

Headway Gippsland has a duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of all staff, and will provide an effective and coordinated response to critical incidents affecting staff and/or volunteers.

Definitions

Critical incident: is any event or series of events that is sudden, traumatic, overwhelming, threatening or protracted. It may cause extreme stress, fear or injury.

Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- serious injury, illness, or death
- severe verbal or psychological aggression
- physical assault
- staff witnessing a serious accident or incidence of violence
- natural disaster e.g. earthquake, flood, windstorm, hailstorm, or extremes of temperature
- fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard
- social issues e.g. sexual assault, drug use, alcohol abuse, domestic or family violence

Procedures

Although every effort is taken by Headway Gippsland to prevent and manage business and service-related risks, it may not be possible to prevent all incidents from occurring, including critical incidents.

For this reason, it is important that staff are aware of what to do in the event of a critical incident occurring in the workplace, or in the event of conducting business-related activities and service provision.

Designated officer

- A designated officer will be the senior Manager of each office.

Assessing the situation

- Where the designated officer considers a critical incident to be apparent or likely, he/she must alert the Chief Executive Officer or General Manager.
- The designated officer will assess the situation and consider any apparent risks to their own safety.

Immediate steps

- Ensure the safety of staff members, including activation of evacuation procedures if required
- Help remove others and rescue property, if it is safe to do so
- Ensure the provision of first aid if required
- Contact security/emergency services if necessary and if not already done.
- Alert the Chief Executive Officer or General Manager by phone if the incident occurs in the community
- Provided there is no threat to personal safety in doing so, the designated officer is to take steps to minimise further damage or injury on Headway Gippsland premises. This may involve organising willing bystanders to provide support.

Reporting

- As soon as practical the designated officer is to prepare a Critical Incident Initial Report outlining the following details:
 - the type of incident
 - the exact location and details of any person or persons who might be injured, in distress, or at risk.
 - the details of the actions taken to manage the incident
- The designated officer will review the situation, set priorities, allocate tasks/responsibilities and coordinate an immediate response including communications to relevant individuals.
- The designated officer will ensure that those identified in the critical incident receive appropriate and immediate ongoing support.
- The designated officer will update the Continuous Improvement Register with details of the response, responsibilities, time frames and the outcome.
- The designated officer will evaluate response procedures and make recommendations for handling future critical incidents.

De-brief and follow up

- The designated officer will organise ongoing response/follow up (including staff briefing, counselling, review and reporting).
 - Debriefing by trained staff or external professionals should be conducted within three to seven days of the critical incident.
 - The designated officer will organise counselling and critical incident stress management on a one-off or continuing basis as necessary for affected staff members.

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- The designated officer will prepare advice for the organisation’s Chief Executive Officer and General Manager outlining steps required to prevent future related critical incidents.

Headway Gippsland will organise debriefing meetings to determine issues and responsibilities related to:

- Assessing risks and response actions;
- Liaison with emergency and other services;
- Stakeholders and media communications;
- Implementing additional risk controls and prevention strategies;
- Access to Our EAP Program for Headway Gippsland personnel

Review:

The designated officer will conduct a review of the actions arising from the debriefing meetings within two weeks to ensure that:

- Follow-up, such as counselling and prevention strategies, has been completed;
- Relevant people have been informed of all outcomes from the incident;
- A recommendation regarding the response to the critical incident is documented; and
- Any further required follow-up actions are documented and responsibilities are allocated.