

# WORK-RELATED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS POST-INCIDENT CHECKLIST

## WHAT KINDS OF INCIDENTS IS THIS CHECKLIST FOR?

Following any incident that impacts on the health, safety and wellbeing of student or staff, school staff should follow the School Incident Management System Policy and Guidelines. For incidents involving student challenging behaviours, school staff should also follow the [Behaviour - Students Policy and guidance on behaviour incidents and emergencies](#).

If an incident involves behaviour that is aggressive, violent or otherwise poses a safety risk, this checklist supports schools to manage the health, safety and wellbeing impacts of the incident on staff and students.

For further information on preventing and responding to behaviours that pose a safety risk in schools, see

[Work-Related Violence in Schools policy and procedure](#).

In schools, there are a wide range of potential scenarios involving behaviours that are violent, aggressive or otherwise pose a safety risk. The reasons for the behaviours can be complex, and they may not be intended to cause harm. Examples include:

- students are physically fighting, and a member of school staff is injured when attempting to intervene
- a student displays challenging behaviours that may, in certain situations, escalate to hitting or punching staff. This behaviour may not be intended to harm, but can still result in physical and/or psychological injury
- a student pinches or hits a teacher because they have not yet learnt how to communicate their needs in a prosocial way. This behaviour may not be intended to harm, but can still result in physical and/or psychological injury
- a parent or carer is upset about an incident involving their child and makes abusive or threatening calls and emails to school staff members
- members of the public intruding onto school grounds and behaving in an aggressive or violent manner, or calling a school and making threats
- parents making threatening statements about or towards a teacher on social media or email
- a school or Department employee is aggressive or violent towards a colleague in a school setting.

## WHO SHOULD USE THIS CHECKLIST?

Schools, supported by the Department, work hard to prevent incidents involving behaviours that are violent, aggressive, or otherwise pose a safety risk from occurring in schools, and to effectively address the health, safety and wellbeing impacts of these incidents on staff and students.

This checklist is designed to support school staff, including principals, assistant principals, teachers, education support staff and others, when they are responding to an incident involving behaviours that are violent, aggressive or otherwise pose a safety risk.

All schools are different – what works for one school, student or staff member in response to one incident or an ongoing pattern of behaviour, may not work for others.

## WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The Department's 'Work-Related Violence and in Schools' policy and procedure provides detailed guidance on preventing and responding to these types of incidents.

*The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) ('the Act')* requires that the Department, as employer, 'must, as far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, including risks to psychological health' and 'must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons other than employees of the employer are not exposed to risk to their health or safety arising from the conduct of the undertaking of the employer.'

The Department's duty to maintain a safe working environment in schools is owed to all employees, including principals.

Principals also have responsibilities under the Act as the Department's representative and site manager of their school. Principals are responsible for identifying and managing risks, with expert assistance and support from the Department central and regional offices as required.

For all incidents – follow incident and emergency management procedures (see [A Guide to Managing Incidents In Your School and Emergency and Critical Incident Management Planning](#)).

For incidents involving behaviours that are violent, aggressive or otherwise pose a safety risk, schools may find this checklist is a useful quick reference for actions required at each stage of incident management.



## 1. Identify and respond

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure safety of everyone involved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If there is an emergency or ongoing threat, enact Emergency Management Plan and call 000.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact the parents or guardians of affected students as soon as practicable (if required).</li> </ul>	<p>Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is first aid required?</li> <li>• Do police need to be contacted? Some incidents involving violence or aggression will be a police matter: physical assault, robbery, sexual assault and threats to harm someone should be referred to the police, even if the immediate threat has passed. Refer to <a href="#">Police-Department Protocol on Reporting Criminal Activity Policy</a>.</li> <li>• Is it appropriate to verbally de-escalate the situation or is it necessary to separate the people involved in the incident?</li> <li>• What immediate supports are required for those involved in the incident or witnesses?</li> <li>• Do parents/carers need to be contacted?</li> </ul>
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## 2. Report for support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact Incident Support Operations Centre (ISOC) if appropriate on <b>1800 126 126</b>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Notify the Health and Safety Representative.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report injuries in eduSafe (staff) and CASES21 (students) as required.</li> </ul>	<p>Most incidents involving behaviour that is aggressive, violent, or otherwise poses a risk to safety – including where there is a significant impact on the safety, health or wellbeing on staff – should be reported to ISOC. ISOC will assist you in assessing the severity of the incident and engaging SSS and other regional and central supports as required.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Notify the Victorian WorkCover Authority in the case of serious workplace incidents.</li> </ul>	<p>The Workplace Manager or Management OHS Nominee are to contact WorkSafe on <b>132 360</b> to report notifiable incidents immediately after becoming aware that an incident has occurred and to provide WorkSafe with a written report within 48 hours.</p> <p>Refer to the <a href="#">Notifiable Incidents to WorkSafe Flowchart</a> for guidance around reportable incidents.</p>



## 3. Ongoing support and recovery

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify those most at risk and triage for support.</li> </ul>	<p>Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has been affected directly (e.g. been harmed or witnessed an incident) or indirectly (e.g. normal school routines are impacted by an incident) and what support do they need now and into the future?</li> <li>• Can I/we handle the incident or do we need assistance from our colleagues, school leadership, the region or central office?</li> <li>• Responses to incidents vary between individuals – those affected may not show clear signs of distress.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with staff, students and the school community as appropriate – in the immediate aftermath and on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul>	<p>Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the school need a plan for immediate and ongoing communication with staff, students and the school community?</li> <li>• What information is appropriate to share with each audience?</li> <li>• What immediate supports are required for those involved in the incident or witnesses?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If police or legal proceedings follow an incident, or legal advice is otherwise required, principals should contact the Legal Division.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Contact</b></p> <p>Principals may contact <b>Legal Division – 9637 3146</b>.</p>

## Key actions to support staff

- Identify whether staff are unable to immediately return to duties following an incident.
- Support staff in arranging professional and/ or personal support.
- Ensure any incident involving staff injury is reported in Edusafe.
- For complex, ongoing issues impacting on employee safety and wellbeing, contact the Employee Wellbeing Response Team.

The first few weeks after an incident is critical in ensuring appropriate support is in place. Staff will react differently to work-related violence depending on various individual, environmental, and organisational factors.

Consider

- If a staff member (including principal) is temporarily unable to perform their duties, is there another member of school staff that can take over? Consider the duration support will be needed, and if supporting staff have capacity. Are there other ways to structure the class or timetable?
- Is there a spare classroom, office or other space that we can make available for affected staff to contact family or friends, make contact with their union or other support services, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?
- Do affected staff members need support to make their report in eduSafe, or someone to do it on their behalf? Can time be allocated to support the completion of the report? Hazards, incidents and near misses should be reported on eduSafe as soon as practicable.
- Do affected staff members need support to get home safely?
- When will we contact the region for support?

### Contact

- EAP - 1300 361 008
- Employee Wellbeing Response Team – 7022 1044

## Key actions to support students

- Identify whether students need a safe space following an incident.
- Engage Student Support Service Officer (SSSO) for support.
- Ensure any incident involving a student injury is reported in CASES21.

This is also important when students have been a witness to a significant incident.

If the incident involved student behaviour, does the student have a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) that may require review?



## 4. Investigate

- Assess the incident and review existing supports, controls and risk management protocols in consultation with your HSR and as far as is reasonably practicable, in consultation with staff who have been/ will be directly or indirectly impacted.

Consider:

- Will the incident require external investigation? What support might the school need to access from the Department if this occurs?
- If the incident involved a student with a BSP or other support plan, do staff need additional training in the student's BSP? Is the BSP up to date and implemented properly? Does the BSP need a review?

### WorkSafe notifiable incidents – investigations

The **Workplace Manager** and/or **Management OHS Nominee** are to conduct a formal incident investigation within 24 hours of the notifiable incident, where possible, using the **Hazard and Incident Investigation Template**.

This investigation should seek to identify the causes and any potential hazards, and provide recommended control and preventative measures.

Contact the Department's OHS Advisory Service for support during or after the investigation process on **1300 074 715**.



## 5. Review and close

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| <input type="checkbox"/> For significant incidents, conduct a review and identify lessons to inform any updates to emergency, incident management, Behaviour Support or other plans in consultation with your HSR and as far as is reasonably practicable, in consultation with staff who have been/ will be directly or indirectly impacted. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do staff need additional training in preventing and responding to these types of incidents?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a risk management or safety plan that requires review?<br><input type="checkbox"/> What additional prevention and risk management strategies need to be considered and implemented? See the <b>Work-Related Violence in Schools policy and procedure</b> for further guidance. |
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## PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM YOUR COLLEAGUES

These are reflections and advice from school leaders and Department staff experienced in dealing with incidents involving behaviour that is violent, aggressive or otherwise poses a risk to safety.

### SUPPORTING STAFF

*"We have found it useful to provide a safe and quiet space to contact professional and personal support, such as their union representative, a GP or counsellor, and family. Accessing a neighbouring teacher to temporarily cover the class can help facilitate this."*

*"You (the principal) may not be the best person to provide initial support to staff, particularly if you have been directly affected by the incident. Consider others in your leadership team who may be better positioned to support staff, or refer people to EAP."*

*"I find that giving staff the opportunity for one on one counselling through EAP, particularly when they have been directly impacted, can be really helpful."*

*"If a staff member takes time off, develop a return to work plan with them to support their recovery and transition back into the school environment."* (Refer to **Return to Work**)

### COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

*"Depending on the nature of the incident, you may be limited in the amount of information you can share with staff and the school community. Wherever possible though, it is helpful to maintain transparent communication with staff regarding any changes occurring in response to an incident. This provides staff with visibility of how the issue is being managed, and helps to clarify uncertainty and reduce anxiety amongst staff."*

## REPORTING

*"Staff may not be ready to report immediately after an incident – so it's helpful to give them some time and space, before ensuring they report. Where physical or psychological issues are present you may need to assist them with these duties. Facilitating a strong reporting culture is important, as reporting can serve as an effective protective mechanism against future events."*

### SUPPORT FOR PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Coordinating support for staff following an incident, in addition to completing required operational duties, increases workload and can cause significant psychological stress. Strategies to promote and protect wellbeing of the principal and leadership team include:

- as part of Emergency and Critical Incident Management Planning, including leadership contingency planning in the event that the principal is injured or otherwise unable to perform duties following an incident
- being connected to a trusted network of principals who have firsthand experience of the issues the school is facing can be very beneficial
- reaching out to your Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) for further support
- accessing the Principal Health and Wellbeing pages on the Department's website to find out about supports available
- discussing with any relevant health and safety representatives, including OHS advisory service and regional support officers.