

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE DSK

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1. Executive Summary

This document deals with crisis management.

Separate safety and emergency plans relating to each possible crisis are either already in place at the DSK or will have to be drawn up by the crisis management team.

At the moment the DSK manages crises on a continuous basis by meetings organized by the Schulleitung (SL). Attending the meetings are representatives of the School Board, the Estate Manager and Bursar, the Teachers' Representative Body, the Parent Body and the TLC Manager, Wolfgang Buchner.

This document concentrates and collects all efforts and ensures that every possible aspect of a crisis is covered by a special crisis management team, which is a newly proposed working squad to support the Head Master.

An overall structure needs to be put in place to enable the crisis management team to have the necessary resources to achieve their goals.

Experts divide crisis management into **four distinct phases**:

- I. **Prevention and Mitigation** of crises attempts to eliminate the risk of a crisis occurring or to lessen the possibility of occurrence.
- II. **Preparedness** describes the phase in which planning takes place.
- III. **Response** depicts the action steps to take in a crisis.
- IV. **Recovery** ensures that healing takes place and the situation is returned to normal. It also reviews the situation after a crisis has occurred in order to prevent it from re-occurring and to suggest possible improvements.

The Crisis Management Team meets at least biennially on 1 February and 1 August to update phases I and II, but also more often by demand.

In the event of a crisis, the Head Master will respond quickly and with authority, communicating times and [virtual] places for meetings as planned for, and he will be the spokesperson for staff, parents, learners and the media.

2. Introduction

Crisis planning prepares the school community in the event of an emergency

- to anticipate and prevent everyday and possible future risks
- to minimize damage to property and to the environment
- to ensure the health and safety of all stakeholders involved
- to provide essential communications guidelines
- to prevent rumours
- to maintain or enhance the image of the school
- to provide for the process of healing in order to get back to learning

What is a crisis?

A crisis is an incident or event that requires a response beyond the normal everyday reaction.

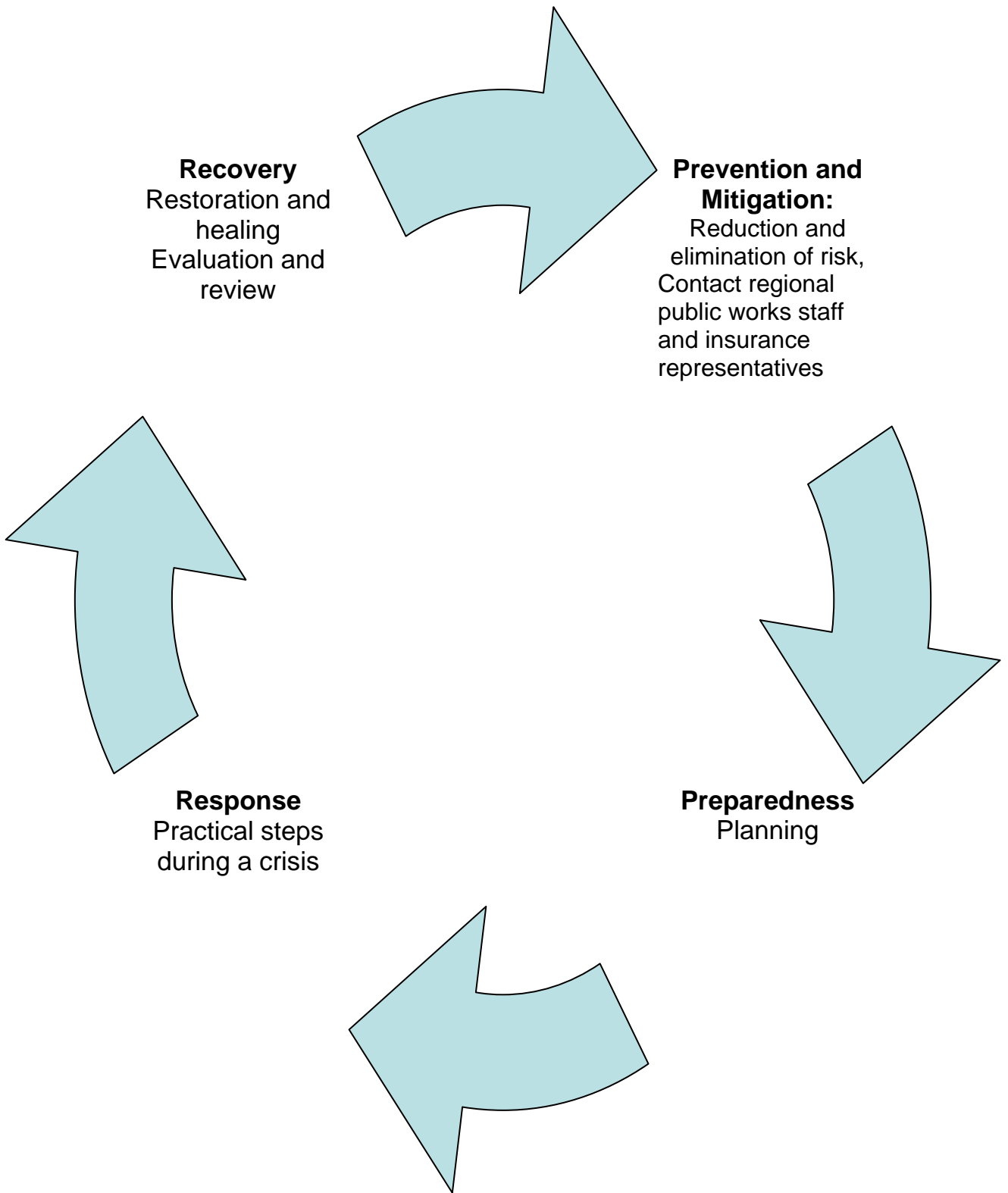
Crises impact on the well-being of the school community on a physical and emotional level, disrupt daily school procedures, cause damage to school property and the environment of the school and threaten the financial standing and public image of the school.

Examples of crises are:

- Fire / Smoke - In the surrounding renosterveld or in the school building itself
- Explosions - In the laboratories caused by experiments or outside caused by gas cylinders or criminal activity
- Criminal activities - Robbery, shooting, stabbing, hold ups, hostage situations, kidnapping, rape, bombs
- Traffic accidents - School bus or pedestrian
- Epidemic outbreaks - Bird flu
- Electricity cuts - IT, telephones, security
- Severe Weather - Rain, flooding
- Medical emergencies - Serious injury, sudden illness, death
- Terrorism - Safety of learners and educators

Crisis management planning is an iterative process illustrated by the diagram below.

Diagram 2.1



Members of the Crisis Management Team:

1. Head Master / Deputy Principal
2. Chairman of the School Board / Board Member of the Finance Portfolio
3. Bursar
4. Public Relations Officer
5. Safety Officer of the School
6. School Councillor
7. Estate Manager
8. Chairperson of the Lehrerbeirat
9. Chairperson of the Elternrat

Tasks of members of the crisis management team:

Head Master / Deputy Principal

Chairs the meetings

Sets policy agenda

Selects team members

Brings the necessary people together to coordinate planning

Organizes documentation of processes and procedures

Responds quickly in a crisis

Implements the crisis plan

Leads with confidence and authority while open to suggestions

Speaks to the media and the community on behalf of the DSK in a crisis

Chairman of the School Board / Board Member of the Finance Portfolio

Ensures that the crisis plans meet the strategy of the DSK

and is in harmony with its values

Secures commitment to crisis planning

Bursar

Informs on availability of resources

Ensures that the DSK adheres to standards of safety from a legal aspect to prevent law suits

Public Relations Officer

Builds relationships with the local police force, fire brigade, health officials and superintendents of hospitals and the local media

Safety Officer of the School

Organises training and practice for implementation of emergency plans

Ensures that the crises plans are up to date, reviewed and evaluated

Documents proceedings at meetings and actions taken during a crisis for evaluation

Keeps detailed lists of all learners and employees

School Councillor

Assembles a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)

Ensures that healing takes place during the recovery phase

Facilitates collaboration among school staff

Estate Manager

Provides detailed maps of the school building, including water and electricity supply, fire extinguishers

Provides aerial photographs of buildings and surrounding area, maps of surrounding area,

Suggests evacuation sites, alternative locations and evacuation routes

Makes lists available of surrounding neighbours, their names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and places of work

Maps and photos should be made available in electronic form

Chairperson of the Lehrerbeirat

Identifies and knows available staff resources, e.g. knowledge in First Aid

Informs educators of crises plans

Chairperson of the Elternrat

Identifies and knows of parents with specialized expertise, proficiency, competence and technology

Informs parents of crisis plans

3. Prevention and Mitigation

The goal of mitigation is to actually decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capabilities.¹

Threat assessment should be conducted on three levels:

- Facilities [buildings, windows etc]
- Security [locks, controlled access to school]
- Culture and climate of the DSK [friendly, open demeanor, good manners, no bullying]

✓ A safety audit of the school grounds and buildings is documented in detail. Potential dangers are assessed and their impact lessened. The safety laws of the country are applied to avoid law suits.

Check :

- fencing
- entry / exit gates
- driveway
- parking lot
- playground
- swimming pool
- outside structures including fauna and flora
- staircases
- glass windows
- furniture in the classrooms
- laboratories including equipment

✓ An assessment of possible hazards is undertaken by the team.

¹ FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency

- ✓ Identify what type of incidents is common in the school.
- ✓ Implement violence prevention programmes by considering and implementing the school disciplinary code, life skills programmes and anti-bullying policies to continuously uphold the culture and climate in the school.
- ✓ Involve all stakeholders to offer input. [school evaluation]
- ✓ Establish clear lines of communication.
- ✓ Develop methods of communication with the staff, learners, parents and the media. Use simple universal language to avoid confusion.
- ✓ Create working relationships with city emergency responders.
- ✓ Participate in local emergency planning. It is important to know what the City of Cape Town plans in certain emergencies. [for the 2010 Soccer World Cup]

4. Preparedness

Good planning insures preparedness.

Prepare policies, the people, the plans and the platform²

- ✓ List which crises plans need to be addressed from information collected during mitigation.
- ✓ Prepare policies and make them available to the whole school community. This builds credibility and trust and enhances communication and transparency with all critical audiences.
- ✓ Set up a structured system to allocate responsibilities. Each member of the crisis team should have one responsibility only during crisis response and a back up in case of absence or illness.
- ✓ Existing policies and previous assessments are considered.
- ✓ Ensure that the necessary equipment is available to staff to respond:
 - Keys
 - cell phones with important up dated numbers entered
 - first aid supplies
 - up dated lists of emergency contact numbers for each child etc
- ✓ Determine how to convey information in a safe way under different circumstances, e.g. electronic devices can trigger bombs.
- ✓ Plan how to communicate with family members, community members and the media. The media can be helpful if they understand the school's situation.

² The 4 P's of Crisis Preparation by Gerald R. Baron

- ✓ Develop a system of accountability for all learners, employees and visitors on the school grounds during a crisis.
- ✓ Inform families of learner release procedures. Children may not be released during a crisis to unauthorized individuals or without proper notification.
- ✓ Practise emergency drills and discuss the drill afterwards in order to make possible improvements. Educators might need training to manage learners during panic situations.
- ✓ Evacuation plans for each individual crisis with possible transportation options must be considered.
- ✓ Reverse evacuation needs to be considered when a crisis occurs outside the school and everybody needs to shelter inside.
- ✓ Lock down is used in case of an inside crisis when movement within the school will put learners at risk.
- ✓ Create site maps about classrooms, hallways, stairs, toilets, emergency exit doors, electricity boards, electricity sockets, fire extinguishers, fresh water taps, sewage
- ✓ Designate locations for
 - Medical staff to treat the injured
 - Head Master to brief the media
 - Learners to be reunited with their families

5. Response

This is the time to *follow the crisis plan*.

- ✓ The School community must be kept informed about the line of authority: The Head master is informed immediately of a critical situation and if he is unavailable the Deputy must be informed. Thereafter the Bursar and senior staff members must be notified.
- ✓ The Head Master will determine whether and what kind of a crisis is occurring. He will respond swiftly and appropriately.
- ✓ Communicating information at this stage to staff, learners, families, the community and the media is monitored and maintained. A single appointed spokesperson deals with information release in order to minimize chaos and to control rumours.
- ✓ The school community needs to trust leadership, the internal crisis management team and external responders to deal with the situation.
- ✓ Every action taken during a crisis must be documented in order to provide a record to track financial expenses and record damage for insurance purposes. Keep original notes and records as legal documents.

6. Recovery

Recovery is an important phase to close the loop by evaluating the crisis and using practical experience gained to improve or adjust existing plans. The crisis management team will meet in order to implement this phase.

- ✓ School staff may need training to assess the emotional needs of learners and colleagues – this training needs to be done during the preparedness phase.
- ✓ Arrange for appropriate intervention by the school counselor, social worker, school psychologist or other intervention service provider.
- ✓ Return learners to their class rooms as quickly as possible.
- ✓ During class time allow students to talk about what they felt and experienced during the traumatic event. Younger children may draw or paint the event in order to express their feelings. Group discussions may benefit adolescents. Deal with feelings of guilt.
- ✓ Repair buildings if needs be and conduct safety audits.
- ✓ Take time to recover by holding appropriate memorial services or remembering anniversaries during assemblies.

7. References

U.S. Department of Education, Office of safe and drug free schools, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, Washington, D.C. 2003

National Association of Independent Schools, Sample Source: Crisis Management Plans – Part I and Part II

Bernstein, Jonathan, The Internet Newsletter about Crisis Management