

Responding to a Critical Incident



CASTLEBAR MITCHELS

GAA CLUB





Castlebar Mitchels GAA Critical Incident Response Plan



Critical Incident Response Plan Team – Castlebar Mitchels

Lead Liaison Person:			
Health & Wellbeing Officer	Alternative Liaison:	Club Secretary	
Name: Martin McDonagh	Name:	Martin Moran	
Contact No: 086-1638544	Contact No:	087-9291595	
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E-Mail Address: martinringeraun@gmail.com	E-Mail Address:	secretary.castlebarmitchels.mayo@gaa.ie	
Support Team:			
Name: John O'Donnell	Contact No:	087-2469331	
Name:	Contact No:		
Name:	Contact No:		
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Media Liaison Person:			
Name: Nigel Quinn	Contact No:	087-2364609	
Family Liaison Person:			
Name: Valerie Mulroy	Contact No:	087-6459349	
Community/Support Contact Person:			
Name: Martin Moran	Contact No:	087-9291595	
Key Contact for County Mayo Board:			
Name: Seamus Touhy (County Health & Wellbeing Chairman)	Contact No:	086 1716252	
Key Contacts for GAA HQ:			
Name: Colin O'Regan (Croke Park Health & Wellbeing Manager)	Contact No:	087 294 5705	



Key roles & duties for short-term response (first 24-48 hours):

Lead Liaison Person and alternative lead persons :

- Once alerted of the incident assess the situation and level of response required (if any)
- Activate the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) within the first 12hrs of incident at agreed time and location
- Gather and establish facts and agree actions with CIRT
- Initiate CIRP to respond effectively
- Make sure to consult with those directly affected to see what level of support is required (if any)
- If required, prepare a statement and/or support letter for members using the generic template provided(see resource R-3 in CIRP guide)
- Allow a period of 'watchful waiting' before assessing if any intervention is required

Media Liaison Person : Nigel Quinn

- With the CIRT, prepare a statement using the template provided in CIRP resource as a guide (R-6)
- Designate mobile number(s) for key point of contact
- DO NOT discuss details of incident with media/3rd parties until agreed statement has been made
- If required, organise a designated area/space to address media
- Be mindful of social media and ensure that all information put on social media is accurate and approved
- Ensure all media communications are logged
- Refer to media guidelines before speaking to any media

Family Liaison Person : Valerie Mulroy

- Co-ordinate immediate contact with family with those directly affected
- **ALWAYS** consult with the family to see what level of support they want
- Liaise with family of bereaved regarding plans for attendance at funerals etc
- Organise letter of condolence with CIRT to the family
- Keep family informed when returning to club activities

Community Liaison Person : Martin Moran

- Provide relevant support agencies and community groups details when required
- Provide the GAA's information leaflets on personal crisis & managing stress (if required)
- If required be main point of contact with any other community groups



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USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS IN YOUR AREA:

Contact	Contact Person	Contact Details
Accident & Emergency	Castlebar Hospital	999 or 112 (094) 90 21733
Gardai		999 or 112 or (094) 9038200
GP/Club Doctor	Dr Joseph Loftus	094-9024827
Local GP or WestDOC Out of Hours GP Service		1850 365000
Castlebar Parish Contact	Priest on Call	(094) 9021844
Castlebar Church of Ireland	Rev. Val Rogers	(098) 25127
Fire Brigade		999 or 112 or (094) 9021211
Bereavement Support Services	HSE	1850 241850
Samaritans	Freephone: 116 123 Text: 087-2 60 90 90	Email: jo@samaritans.ie
24/7 Suicide Helpline	Pieta House	Helpline: 1800 247 247 Text: 'HELP' to 51444



Introduction

A critical incident is any event that is outside the range of usual human experience. It is an event that causes an unusually intense stress reaction which has the emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope. It may impede people's coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. (GPA/GAA guidelines, 2014)

Sometimes a critical incident – one that overwhelms one's natural capacity to respond – will arise leaving individuals or communities struggling to cope.

This document has been developed by Castlebar Mitchels Club GAA in order for our GAA Club and Community to be best placed to respond to a critical incident should it arise within Castlebar Mitchels GAA Club structures. Mayo Health and Well Being Committee will continue to be a support should such incidents occur within its constituent clubs; and in such circumstances will take the lead from the relevant unit's own Critical Incidence Response Plan. Castlebar Mitchels GAA Club have implemented the recommended 'five step plan' and has developed key roles and duties for identified individuals; named in page 2.

Examples of critical incidents may include:

- Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
- Exposure to the aftermath of a road traffic accident e.g. the accident scene, the victim(s)
- Personal loss or injury, real or threatened to a child or adult
- Being violently threatened; or a close encounter with death.
- Suicide of a member (this tragic situation can cause extreme distress and confusion for everyone involved. *Guidelines developed by professional services highlighting the most appropriate responses following a death by suicide by sporting organisations are available. Some of this information has been included in a special section on suicide in the Appendix section of this resource.*)
- A situation with excessive media interest; a natural disaster; or an act of God.
- Other incidents not covered above but which are associated with unusually strong emotional reactions.

What GAA Clubs Can Do

Figure 1: Recommended avenues for communicating a critical incident within Ulster GAA



Our role in responding to critical incidents

It's important to remember that the GAA will usually be just one entity playing a part in any response to a critical incident. Figure 2 outlines some of the other entities that may be involved in a response. It also highlights the importance of having the affected family or families at the centre of any plan while being consulted on all actions. Other at risk persons will be to the forefront of considerations too.

It is important try to follow these **5 Key Principles** during any crisis situation or critical incident.

Key point – Always consult with those affected to see what level of support they want/need.

1. Promote a sense of safety
2. Promote a sense of calm
3. Promote a sense of self-efficacy (i.e. the capacity to deal with the situation)
4. Promote connectedness
5. Promote hope

Figure 2: Some potential participants involved in a community based response to a critical incident.



Who requires support?

In addition to the individuals directly affected, other ‘at risk’ persons are amongst those most likely to suffer distress as a consequence of an incident. Evidence would suggest that these may include those who:

- directly witnessed death/injury/violence as part of the incident
- are uninjured, but were at greatest risk
- are siblings of those immediately affected
- may blame themselves and/or those who may be blamed by others
- are experiencing instability at home
- have learning difficulties
- have pre-existing emotional and behavioural/mental health difficulties
- are vulnerable due to cultural and/or language difficulties
- have previously suffered bereavement or loss (*GAA/GPA Critical Incident Response Information and Guidelines, 2014*)

It is important that these individuals should be considered in relation to specific needs.

Where to find support.

During a critical incident it is important to source help and support as quickly as possible for yourself or for anyone there might be concerns about. In an emergency situation, please contact 999/112 or GP services.

Other resources of help include:

- www.yourmentalhealth.ie
- <http://www.mayobewell.ie/services-directory/>
- **HSE Directory of Services,**
- **Samaritans: Telephone: 116 123**



Samaritans (Official mental health partner & support helpline of the GAA) **Free helpline:** Samaritans is a free helpline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone struggling to cope. Telephone: **116 123**

Local Contacts within your local community are also available on

<http://www.mayobewell.ie/services-directory/>

We as a Club have a primary role to act as a sign-posting service to the supports that are available. Boundaries should be appreciated and getting the balance between what a voluntary entity can offer as opposed to what professionals can is very important.

Appendix 1.

Good practice guidelines following the death by suicide of a member

The death by suicide of a member can have a deep impact on other members, in particular on colleagues and close associates. How best to respond to a death by suicide depends on a number of factors including:

- How well known the person who died was to members;
- How Mayo GAA has dealt with past tragedies;
- The leadership shown by key Mayo personnel; and
- Media coverage of the event.

What to do after a suicide:

Do's

Acknowledge the death

Acknowledge that a GAA member has died. Respect that some families may choose not to describe the death as a suicide.

Acknowledge a wide range of feelings

Acknowledge that individuals will experience a wide range of feelings and emotions as a result of the death.

- Be gentle with each other – we all grieve in different ways
- The grieving process takes months and years not days and weeks
- Don't blame yourself or anyone else for the death

Try to get the balance right

Try to get the balance right between continuing to do normal activities (for example, following the funeral, go ahead with scheduled matches), but also make allowances that motivation and morale may be low among members.

Try not to underestimate young people's natural ability to cope with difficult situations.

Keep an eye out for vulnerable people

Watch out for those who are not doing well or may be at greatest risk, for example:

- Brother and sisters of the deceased person who are also GAA members;
- Close friends;
- Teammates / colleagues; and others who may be experiencing difficult life situations at the time.



Anyone who may be particularly vulnerable at this particular time may need extra support. Having access to local support services contact details is important. You can usually call on these organisations for advice.

For more information on local support available contact the local Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSP).

Anticipate sensitive dates on the calendar

Anticipate birthdays, holidays, anniversary dates and other celebratory events where the person's absence from the organisation will be most felt. Accept there will be times, such as these, when members of the organisation may benefit from extra support.

Don'ts

Don't focus only on the positive

Do not remember the person who died by only talking about the positive things about them. While it is important to celebrate their sporting achievements and other personal qualities, it is also crucial to talk about the loss. Openly acknowledge and discuss the pain, and heartache, as well as any difficulties the person might have been experiencing, for example mental health issues, but with any discussions also encourage individuals to seek help if they feel the need to talk to someone.

Be careful how you pay respects

Do not do things in memory of the person like:

- Commemorative matches;
- Number on shirts; or
- Naming a trophy.

A Guard of Honour may be organised for other deaths. However, remember that a death by suicide differs from other deaths. Avoid any activities that glamorise or glorify suicide. The challenge is to grieve, remember and honour the deceased without unintentionally glorifying their death.

Do not over-indulge

Around the time of the funeral and immediately afterwards it is important to ask members and friends to try not to overindulge in alcohol, caffeine or other substances. They may make people more vulnerable at this time.

Helpful short and medium to long-term responses

After a death by suicide, GAA units have found the following short-term and medium to long-term responses helpful:

Short-term

- Right after a suicide those affected often look for the following:
 - **Information**
 - GAA units have found it helpful to identify what supports are available locally to provide advice, support and care at this time. As a result, many communities have developed local support cards outlining services available in the area. Visit <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/supports-services/types-of-services/access-directly/>
 - **Support**
 - The first gathering of the team/group after the funeral, for example, the first night back at training, may be a difficult time for everyone. It may be helpful to break the team/group into smaller groups and allow some time to talk about their deceased member.
 - Leaders may wish to prepare for this by thinking through the types of issues that they think will be raised and how best to create a safe place to discuss these matters. Leaders should seek the help of local support services if they feel necessary. Not all leaders may feel comfortable in preparing for such a gathering. The following topics are usually addressed:
 - How to support people who are grieving at this time;
 - Looking after yourself during this traumatic time; and
 - What to look out for, say, and do if you are worried about someone else.



Medium to long-term

- In the medium to long-term the following actions are encouraged:
 - **Policies**
 - GAA units should develop policies and procedures on suicide prevention as well as other broader areas such as drug and alcohol use. For example, the GAA has developed an Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ASAP) programme which aims to prevent alcohol and drug problems taking hold in clubs.
 - **Training**
 - GAA units find it helpful to offer training and skills development to personnel. It is maybe useful to initially look at some form of resilience programmes/training that will help members. There is also the opportunity to look at putting in place suicide awareness training in the longer term.

Service Directory

<http://www.mayobewell.ie/services-directory/>

Services that can be accessed within this Directory

- 24 Hour Services : MGH, A&E, Samaritans , Confidential Gardai line
- Alcohol : Alan on , AA , Hope House,
- Debt : MABS,
- Doctors (GPs)
- Drugs: Help lines,
- Families : Resource Centres ,
- Gambling : Help lines,
- HSE Services
- Mental Health: Young People : Mind space, Mental Health Association.
- Mental Health: General

Taking care of your body is a powerful first step towards mental and emotional health. The mind and the body are linked.

When you improve your physical health, you'll automatically experience greater mental and emotional well-being.

For example, exercise not only strengthens our heart and lungs, but also releases endorphins, powerful chemicals that energize us and lift our mood.

The activities you engage in and the daily choices you make affect the way you feel physically and emotionally.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING

The benefits of being active for physical and mental health are huge. Being active helps release chemicals in your brain (endorphins), which have a positive effect on your mood, not to mention the benefits to your heart, lungs, muscles and bones. Getting out and being active is also a great way to manage stress.

Regular physical activity can help you reduce the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer. For children and young people being active helps reduce their risk of developing these diseases in later life too. Increased levels of physical activity will help reduce body fat and maintain a healthy weight.

Being active is fun for all the family. Research shows that children whose parents are active are more than 5 times as likely to be active than those whose parents are not. Getting active does not have to be expensive and most of the ideas on this site are low cost or completely free. You can find out more about physical activity on the [getirelandactive website](#).

MENTAL WELLBEING

Mental health is something we all have. It can be good and at times it can be poor. We should try to look after it in the same way we look after our physical health.

For further information on our mental health and minding your mental health please check out www.yourmentalhealth.ie