

Debrief Guide for Significant and Severe Impact of Incidents

Purpose

The purpose of this *Debrief Guide* is to assist school administrators when using the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* and making decisions regarding the debrief of impactful incidents. As noted in the Guide (p 9):

“Significant Impact: This incident caused a disruption of class or school operations or serious harm and may impact multiple individuals **(debrief should be considered)**. “

“Severe Impact: This incident caused a disruption or cancellation for the whole school or serious harm to student(s) or staff and/or required outside interventions **(debrief is required)**.”

This document is a tool that can help guide the structure and considerations when debriefing on school-based incidents that can be managed within the school community. For incidents that need to be elevated to Emergency Management planning that involve regional teams, consult your regions/board for additional support.

Rationale

For schools to be safe working and learning environments, it is important to understand and meet the needs of the school community members. Understanding and addressing needs is at the heart of the debrief process. Those harmed by an incident, those who caused the harm and those witnessing or experiencing an incident will all need to be considered within this process depending on the nature of the situation.

Key Considerations:

- Normalize debrief as a routine part of school culture to reduce defensiveness.
- Keep the tone supportive and non-punitive.
- Ensure confidentiality and psychological safety during discussions.
- Tailor the approach depending on the audience (teachers, students, staff).
- Use clear, consistent language aligned with the school’s values and the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*

Stages of a Debrief:

- The Descriptive Stage
- The Interpretive Stage
- The Action Planning Stage
- Wrap up and Reflections

The following table and key questions can be used when engaging in a Debrief:

Descriptive Stage
Identify the specific incident, focus only on the facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the incident that led to this debrief?• Who was directly impacted and involved?• What was the date, time, and location of the incident?• Why did it happen?• In describing this, it is helpful to identify additional contributing factors that were connected to this incident.
The Interpretive Stage
Analyze the significance of the incident and its impact on students and staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What directly motivated this incident?• What patterns, recurring behaviors, or other underlying factors may have contributed to this incident? (e.g., changes in home life, peer conflict, etc.)?• In terms of their learning and social-emotional well-being, how might the incident have impacted individual(s) who:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– caused the harm– directly experienced harm– indirectly experienced harm• What will those impacted need in the short and long term to feel safe and secure in the school environment?• How did this event shape the overall classroom or school environment? Did it lead to tension, disruption, or impact the overall school culture or sense of safety?• Could this incident reflect a broader issue within the school environment, such as bullying, racist, or discriminatory behaviors?

The Action Planning Stage

**Create an action plan or response to address the incident, repair harm and prevent its recurrence.
Consider use of external helping agencies.**

- What needs have to be addressed? For who?
- What steps should be taken to:
 - repair harm caused by the incident
 - address the cultural impact on the school community
 - Support the student in maintaining a safe and inclusive school environment through understanding school and classroom expectations
 - Ensure guidelines and expectations are clear
- What changes are needed in the classroom environment?
- What elements of school culture need to be addressed or repaired to ensure a safe and inclusive school culture for everyone?
- What should be done (e.g. consult with other staff, document information, speak to parents/guardians) before taking further action?
- What preventative measures can be done by those involved to prevent an incident like this from happening again?

Actions in this stage will vary. Examples of possible steps may include: Equity training, developing a school culture or vision plan, ongoing positive reinforcement, classroom rule revisions or updates, maintaining ongoing communication with student/family, etc.

Reflection and Wrap-up

**Summarize and review the information exchanged during the debrief
and agree on actions moving forward.**

- What other items are there to add before concluding the debrief?
- What has been decided in terms of action steps and follow-ups?
- Who is responsible for implementing the action steps?
- How will information about the debrief be communicated?