

Responding to Online Incidents



Although online incidents may occur outside of school hours and off-premises, it remains the responsibility of schools to report and manage negative online experiences that impact student wellbeing.

The following tool provides an 'IDEAL' model for attending to the distinct dynamics of online incidents. It should act as an addendum to a school's usual disciplinary and behavioural management practices.

The IDEAL Model

I

Investigate the incident

Determine any immediate risks to safety and wellbeing. Gather information, including key facts, severity of conduct, student involvement, and impact.

D

Develop a plan

Follow acceptable behaviour policies, legislation, and online safety best practice to formulate appropriate action points.

E

Execute the response

Engage in action points. Provide support to all involved parties. Undertake ongoing monitoring and communications.

A

Analyse impact and feedback

Set a date to review the impact and outcomes of the school's interventions. Include reviews of incident management, record keeping, and communication strategies.

L

Learn from the incident

Use findings to improve incident response and management, and to create tailored learning and prevention programs.



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Investigate the Incident

Ensure the immediate safety of the individuals involved, then investigate the online incident to determine its precise nature, impact, and severity.

Important considerations

Record interventions using an incident log; however, do not retain any material that may be illegal to view, possess, or share. Contact the relevant authorities to obtain advice regarding this material.

Maintain student confidentiality and consent in line with school policy.

Hot tip!

Do not access the personal accounts or search the personal devices of those involved in the incident.

- Find out who is directly and indirectly involved. Ensure their safety and any need for wellbeing support.

- Talk to the students and staff directly or indirectly involved to discern contextual factors surrounding the incident.

- Create a timeline of events to illustrate when and where the incident occurred and any actions taken so far.

- Determine if there is any potentially unlawful conduct. Seek advice from the authorities as necessary.

- Ascertain if there was intent for the content or behaviour to harm or offend by discerning whether the online conduct was intentional and targeted or incidental, for example, sharing content as a bystander to alert friends.

Develop a Plan

Take time to plan an appropriate response to the incident. Cross-check the proposed plan against school policies, regulations, and student/parent agreements to ensure compliance.

Hot tip!

Consider empowering affected students to be part of the solution, for instance, asking them how they would like to deal with the matter.

Seek advice from wellbeing staff regarding the most appropriate student welfare interventions.

Engage relevant personnel to provide support. Clearly identify “lead” staff for reporting and communications.

Determine whether objectionable content can be reported, removed, or deleted, providing it does not obstruct any investigation by authorities.

Create a communications strategy that includes staff, parents, students, and any key stakeholders as necessary.

Execute the Response

Move forward individually or as part of an incident management team to provide support.

Important considerations

Remember that **all involved personnel** should engage in detailed and appropriate record-keeping. This includes:

- Records of the plan to resolve the incident and responsible personnel
- Accounts of conversations, including screenshots or emails
- Interview notes
- Attempts to remove content
- Accounts of any mediations between involved parties
- Dated descriptions of any observable or measurable impact or behavioural change

Engage in parent/guardian meetings as appropriate and with due regard to student confidentiality and consent policies.

Implement support and wellbeing measures with the assistance of appropriate personnel. This may include behavioural support plans, ongoing monitoring, or targeted classroom strategies.

Refer to external supports as necessary.

Undertake broader school-wide education programs as necessary concerning the incident.

Carry out a communications strategy. Ensure all staff are aware of school policy regarding information sharing and confidentiality.

Analyse Impact and Feedback

Set a time to review the observable and measurable impact of the interventions. Discuss the action points undertaken with the staff and personnel involved in the incident management process.

Important considerations

Feedback can be requested via a range of formats, including verbal, written, or survey from the following groups:

- All involved parties
- Parent and guardian committees
- Student council or cohorts
- Staff and support personnel

Discuss whether the frequency and severity of negative behaviours have diminished or if the issue has been resolved.

Provide an opportunity for the staff, students, parents/guardians, and wider community, as appropriate, to express their feedback and concerns.

Ascertain whether support measures have been effective or whether further interventions, such as referrals to external agencies, should be undertaken.

Learn

Use data and feedback regarding online incident management, the frequency and severity of incidents, and the type of negative online behaviours to propose education initiatives and procedural change.

Identify trends in behavioural changes and online incidents over time.

Feed online incident trends into learning opportunities for both staff and students.

Determine whether areas of policy and procedure can be streamlined or made more effective.