
Incident Support Unit – FAQ

Health and Safety Directorate



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REPORTING INCIDENTS

Why do I report to Incident Support Unit (ISU)?

- The Incident Support Unit was set up to facilitate cooperation between the NSW Police Force and NSW Schools in responding to incidents
- It is a requirement under the [Incident Reporting Policy](#) for schools to report incidents involving violence, weapons, illegal drugs, threats and intimidation and other criminal activity. The Department has developed [procedures](#) to assist schools with this requirement.
- The ISU will provide advice and support in managing a serious incident.

What is the Incident Report and Support Hotline used for?

- The Incident Support hotline number is 1800 811 523 (select Option 1) and is your one stop shop for advice in managing incidents involving violence, weapons, illegal drugs, threats and intimidation and other criminal activity.
- It is the conduit through which schools report relevant incidents and assists the ISU in analysing trends, providing assistance to schools, targeting both policing responses and training to assist schools in the future management of issues that arise.
- The timely reporting of incidents through the appropriate channels to enable early intervention, effective management and provision of support where required, and ensure that legislative reporting requirements are met.

What incidents should I report to ISU?

- Assaults resulting in injury requiring medical attention or where police are involved
- Serious threats or intimidation
- Weapons (including ammunition and implements used as weapons)
- Illegal drugs (NOT incidents where students are in possession or have consumed alcohol or tobacco)
- Other criminal activity (e.g. attempted abductions, sexting, etc.)

Further information:

For further information you can view Reporting Incidents Involving Assaults, Threats, Intimidation or Harassment Memorandum to Principals [Memo DN/10/00225](#)

How do I know that an incident should be reported?

- You should be aware of your responsibilities under the [Incident Reporting Policy](#) and the requirement to report matters involving violence, weapons, illegal drugs, threats and intimidation and other criminal activity.
- If in doubt you should call the hotline number (1800 811 523 – select Option 1) and talk to our friendly staff.

What incidents should I report directly to police and the ISU?

- The following factors should be considered when deciding whether an incident involving assault, threats, harassment or intimidation is serious enough to warrant reporting to police.
- Where one of the factors is at a significant level or more than one of the factors applies to the incident, the principal should seriously consider making a report. This is not a checklist or an exhaustive list. Principals are encouraged to seek further advice from the Incident Support Unit (1800 811 523 – select Option 1) if they are still uncertain about whether to report the incident to police.
 - Did the assault or incident result in a visible injury such as bruised face, split lip, or swelling?
 - Did the incident result in a participant complaining of pain or discomfort?
 - Was the incident premeditated or planned?
 - Was the incident recorded on a mobile phone or camera and then posted on a social networking site or broadcast to others?
 - Was external assistance (e.g. an ambulance) required to attend to one of the participants?
 - Did the incident occur in the context of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, stalking or intimidation?

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- Will the incident have a sustained impact on the school or its community e.g. school will need to access outside support services such as EAPS to recover from the incident?
- Did the incident significantly affect school routines or operations for a period?
- Is there a history of aggression by one or more of the participants, or is there a history of this conflict in the community?
- Has a staff member, parent or carer requested that you notify police regardless of your intention?
- Were weapons involved? (If so, there is no discretion and the incident must be reported).

The following incidents commonly result in a call to the local police:

- Assaults where medical attention is required (e.g. ambulance, hospital, medical centre)
- Weapons related incidents
- Having a knife or other implement (e.g. screwdriver, hammer, etc.) without reasonable cause
- Serious threats to staff, students or the school
- Incidents involving illegal drugs or distribution of restricted medications
- Other criminal activity (e.g. bomb threats, attempted abduction, etc.)

What if I don't get the response I think is correct from police? What if I'm not happy with the police response?

- Call the local police station and ask to speak with the supervisor or duty officer
- Call the ISU on 1800 811 523 (select Option 1) for assistance

Should I be reporting incidents that occur outside of school hours or off the school site?

- Yes, if the incident occurred while students were travelling to or from school or there is a direct relationship with the school

What happens when I report incidents to ISU?

- Advice is provided on how to manage the incident
- An incident report is generated
- Senior officers verify and categorise the report
- The report is dispatched to relevant DoE and police officers



WEAPONS DRUGS AND SEARCHES

What should I do if a student is allegedly carrying a knife?

- **If the student is agitated or there is a threat to the safety of students or staff, call police on 000.**
- No knives are allowed at school under any circumstances.
- Call the ISU for advice 1800 811 523 (select Option 1)
- Request permission to see the contents of his or her bag and pockets
- If a student has a knife at school the principal may call the police and the student may be expelled or suspended immediately.
- Possessing a knife includes the student simply having one in their bag or locker. Having a knife for self- protection is also illegal.
- If a parent is concerned about their child's wellbeing or safety they should contact the principal.
- Tough penalties apply for children convicted of knife offences, including jail sentences of up to 25 years if someone is injured with a knife during an assault.
- No knives at school fact sheets for parents and students (below).

Further information

You can get further information concerning bag search procedures in the following:

- [Legal Issues Bulletin 6: Power to search students](#)
- [Legal Issues Bulletin 22: Possession of knives](#)
- [No Knives at School - Parent information](#)
- [No Knives at School - Student information](#)

What should I do if a child is allegedly carrying drugs?

You can get further information concerning bag search procedures in the following:

- The possession and use of illegal drugs in schools is a serious matter. A drug related incident involves a student or staff member in possession of a suspected illegal drug; passing a substance off as an illegal drug; in possession of drug paraphernalia, such as bongs or pipes; or selling or supplying a restricted substance.
- Police and the Incident Support Unit must be notified when there is an incident involving illegal drugs, either at school, or at a school related activity. Principals and school executive should ensure that they are familiar with the [Drugs in Schools Policy](#) and the [Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures](#).

Where a student is involved in a drug related activity the following should occur:

- Request permission to see the contents of his or her bag and pockets
- The substance must be confiscated and secured in a safe place such as a school safe.
- The handling of the substance should be limited.
- The safety and welfare of student(s) should be checked.
- Parents/carers should be contacted.
- Police must be notified and requested to attend to take possession of the substance.
- Assistance should be provided to allow Police to investigate.

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- The involved student(s) must be suspended.
- Report the incident to the ISU Hotline (**1800 811 523** – select Option 1).

The [Drugs in schools: Managing drug related incidents procedures](#) provides more detail.

Priority analysis of substances suspected of being illegal

Principals may have a situation where a substance, suspected of being illegal, is found in the possession of a student(s) who denies it is an illegal substance. If the nature of the substance is in doubt, and disciplinary action depends solely on the status of the substance, the principal may request a priority analysis of the substance.

Principals may defer a final decision on suspension or other disciplinary action until the results of the analysis are available. Results of a priority analysis will generally be available within 48 hours. Police will keep the substance pending any legal action.

The cost of priority analysis of a suspected illegal substance is met by Health and Safety Directorate. The Director of Health and Safety approves requests for priority analysis. Procedures for the request of a priority analysis are:

1. The principal should inform the police officer in charge of the investigation that they wish to request a priority analysis of the substance.
2. The principal completes Section A of the [request form](#) found at the back of the Drugs in Schools Policy and faxes it to their School Education Director.
3. The SED will confirm that a priority analysis is required and forward the endorsed request to Health and Safety Directorate for approval.
4. Once Section C is approved, Health and Safety Directorate will forward the forms to the investigating police officer for appropriate action.
5. The principal should continue to liaise with the investigating police officer who will provide the results of the analysis to the principal.
6. The principal can then take disciplinary action based on the results.

Alcohol, tobacco, over-the-counter and prescribed medications

Incidents involving the use or possession of alcohol or tobacco are managed according to the Department's the [Drugs in Schools Policy](#) and the school's student welfare and discipline procedures. Such incidents do not need to be reported to the ISU unless they also involve criminal behaviour.

The supply of restricted substances such as prescribed medications (without a prescription) is a criminal offence and these types of incidents must be reported to police and the ISU hotline.

Drug testing in schools

Drug testing, including breath testing for alcohol is not permitted at school or at any school activity, including socials and farewells (see [the Drugs in Schools Policy](#) 1.8.1).

For further information

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- [Drugs in Schools Policy \(PD2002/0040/V04\)](#)
- [Procedures for managing drug related incidents](#)
- [Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures \(PD/2006/0316\)](#)
- Memorandum to Principals ([DN 10 00188](#)): *Revised Drugs in Schools Policy and Implementation Documentation* - In Principal (Week 9, Term 2, 2010)

You can get further information concerning bag search procedures in

- [Legal Issues Bulletin 6: Power to search students](#)

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- [Legal Issues Bulletin 22: Possession of knives](#)

Am I allowed to search a student's bag?

Yes. There are some procedural steps that you need to follow, but you are allowed to search a student's bag





BANS

What should I do if an aggressive parent threatens to assault a student or staff member?

- If there is a serious threat to staff or student safety calls police on 000.
- Consider issuing an Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 warning or ban on the parent.
- Principals can use the provisions of the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 to deal with people who enter, or remain on, school sites without authority.
- Because these powers are wide and can significantly impact on people who have regular contact with the school, they need to be exercised in appropriate circumstances and after full consideration of the seriousness of the matter
- As the site manager, the principal may restrict access to the school (being Inclosed Lands)
- See [Legal Issues Bulletin 54: Unauthorised entry onto departmental premises](#)
- Call the ISU on 1800 511 523 to report the incident and for advice.

What can I do if a parent refuses to leave the school following a confrontation?

- Call police
- Principals can use the provisions of the *Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901* to deal with people who enter, or remain on, school sites without authority.
- Because these powers are wide and can significantly impact on people who have regular contact with the school, they need to be exercised in appropriate circumstances and after full consideration of the seriousness of the matter
- The site manager may restrict access to the school (being Inclosed Lands)
- See [Legal Issues Bulletin 54: Unauthorised entry onto departmental premises](#)

What powers do I have to exclude parents from the school site?

- Principals can use the provisions of the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 to deal with people who enter, or remain on, school sites without authority.
- Because these powers are wide and can significantly impact on people who have regular contact with the school, they need to be exercised in appropriate circumstances and after full consideration of the seriousness of the matter
- The site manager may restrict access to the school (being Inclosed Lands)
- See [Legal Issues Bulletin 54: Unauthorised entry onto departmental premises](#) and Memo DN 10 00006

What steps do I take to use the Inclosed Lands Protection Act provisions?

- Read Legal Issues Bulletin 54 (below).
- Principals can use the provisions of the *Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901* to deal with people who enter, or remain on, school sites without authority.
- Where the behaviour of a person is so serious that a principal is considering banning a person from entering the school, the matter should be reported to police and to the Incident Support Unit (1800 811 523).
- Principals can also access advice and support from Legal Services Directorate on 02 9561 8538.
- Wherever possible, a warning should be given before restricting a person's access under the Act. Warnings should be given in writing. A copy of the warning letter should be retained by the principal. A sample letter can be found in [Legal Issues Bulletin 54: Unauthorised entry onto departmental premises](#).

OTHER

Who do I need to contact following a serious incident at the school? What about the media Unit?

- Emergency services (000) should be your first call if there is an urgent need for an Ambulance, Police or Fire & Rescue
- Call ISU on 1800 811 523 (select Option 1) for advice and to report the incident
- Local police may need to be informed, depending on the seriousness of the incident
- Parents or carers of any victim or student offender
- ISU can inform the SED and media unit (where necessary)
- EPAC is to be contacted if the incident involves an allegation of misconduct by a staff member
- Child Wellbeing Unit or Family and Community Services where child abuse or neglect is involved
- Incident Support and Report Hotline to report an injury to a staff member, visitor or student

What is sexting and what should I do if I find that one of my students is involved?

- Sexting involves sending sexually explicit or inappropriate personal photographs or video to someone else. In many cases the student may take images of his or her self and forward them to a boyfriend/girlfriend or close friend. However, images sent by mobile phone or shared on the internet can easily end up in the wrong hands. They can be uploaded to internet sites and once on the internet there is no way of controlling where the images end up.
- This can have detrimental consequences for the victim. It can damage reputations, relationships and future career prospects. Inappropriate images of a student may result in humiliation, cyber bullying, blackmail and even sexual assault.
- When a principal becomes aware of a sexting incident at the school, the principal should confiscate the mobile phone or other piece of equipment that contains the images and contact police. The phone should be provided to police.
- The principal should be careful NOT to download the images to another phone or computer and not to share them with other staff by Bluetooth or any other means as doing so may constitute an offence (transmitting child pornography).
- It is also important to ensure that appropriate support is provided for any victims.
- The principal should take disciplinary action in accordance with the school's policy and procedures and report the matter to the Incident Report and Support hotline.
- As you can see, managing a sexting incident depends on a range of factors including the age of students, the relationship of those involved, whether photos have been forwarded or posted on Facebook and so on.
- If in doubt you should call the hotline number (1800 811 523) and talk to our friendly staff.

Further information

The cyber related crime fact sheet should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- [Legal Issues Bulletin No.35: The use of mobile phones, portable computer games, recording devices and cameras in schools](#)
- [Internet and Email Services: Acceptable Usage in Schools](#)
- [Employer Communication Devices – Staff Use Policy](#)
- [Legal Issues Bulletin 34: Defamation](#)
- [Legal Issues Bulletin 42: Legal issues arising for staff subject to cyber bullying and related behaviour](#)
- [Legal Issues Bulletin 45: Sexual procurement and grooming of children – Changes to the criminal law](#)
- [Cybercrime Act 2001](#)
- [Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner](#)



When should I put the school into lockout?

- Each school develops its own procedures for implementing lockdown or lockout.
 - Lockout is a procedure which prevents unauthorised entry to the school and is commonly used when there is a general threat or an incident is occurring off school property.
 - This procedure allows school activities to continue as normal during the external disruption. Lockout generally occurs when there is a risk of intruders coming onto the school premises or a police operation is in progress in the vicinity.
- If in doubt you should call the ISU hotline number (**1800 811 523** – select Option 1) and talk to our friendly staff.

Further information

- You can get further information concerning lockout and lockdown procedures from the [how to be a safe school](#) publication

Amber alert

A lockdown of a school should only occur when there is an imminent and serious threat to the safety of students and staff. Schools occasionally go into lockdown simply to keep students and staff inside buildings.

Where the principal feels students and staff should remain in classrooms, an amber alert signal can be given. This informs staff to keep all students inside the buildings until further notice. If possible, recess or lunch bells should be turned off during the time of the incident.

Lessons can continue as normal and there is no need to secure doors and windows and have students seated below window level.

During an amber alert, classes on playing fields or other outside areas should go immediately to their classroom.

Examples of where an amber alert could be used instead of lockdown include:

1. severe storm approaching
2. aggressive person in admin area
3. pack of dogs in the school grounds.

When should I put the school into lockdown?

- Each school develops its own procedures for implementing lockdown or lockout.
- Lockdown should only occur at a school when there is an imminent and serious threat to the safety of students, staff and visitors.
- Other less intrusive strategies should be considered first. There is information for schools about an Amber Alert process that is a useful consideration
- If in doubt you should call the ISU hotline number (**1800 811 523** – select Option 1) and talk to our friendly staff.

How many lockdown drills should I do each year? Who can assist me with lockdown drills?

- Principals should regularly conduct lockdown/lockout drills if those procedures are in place at the school.
- It is recommended that schools conduct lockdown drills at least once each year.
- Let staff know it is a drill.
- Local police should also be notified prior to conducting a lockdown drill as there may be overreaction by members of the community who contact police to find out why the school is in lockdown.
- Local specialist police such as the youth liaison officer (YLO), school liaison officer (SLP) or crime prevention officer are often able to assist and provide advice to improve lockdown procedures.
- If in doubt you should call the hotline number (**1800 811 523** – select Option 1) and talk to our friendly staff.

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What are Plato / Apollo and IMEX exercises? How can I get serious incident management training for my executive?

Plato/Apollo is a simulation exercise which has been developed in conjunction with the NSW Police Force for secondary principals and senior school executive. The purpose of the exercise is to enhance our staff capability to manage incidents involving violence, weapons, illegal drugs and other criminal activity in schools.

During the exercise small groups of principals and deputy principals will work with local police in managing an incident as it unfolds in a fictitious school. This exercise requires a full day commitment.

Plato/Apollo exercises are scheduled by NSW Police. Principals are invited to attend on a rotational basis. They cannot be arranged on request outside of this schedule.

Managing Incidents (also known as IMEX is highly recommended professional learning for school principals and executive staff. It is designed to support school leaders in learning to manage incidents involving violence, weapons, illegal drugs and other criminal activity in schools

The simulation exercise is based on a video scenario of an unfolding incident in a school. Participants work in small groups to manage the situation.

- Maximum of 20 participants.
- Completed within 3 hours.
- Facilitated by personnel from the Incident Support Unit
- The ISU provides all necessary computers and audio visual equipment.
- Local School Liaison Police officer or Youth Liaison Officer will be invited to attend.

Schools that wish to host the exercise need a room the size of an average classroom with a number of power outlets. Furniture requirements are six tables and chairs for participants and facilitators.

Both primary and secondary IMEX exercises are available and participants can be drawn from more than one school.

This training is Ideal for Staff Development Days, School Executive Conferences and Networks. For more information or bookings, email Health.SafetyPrograms@det.nsw.edu.au.

Do I report accidents or incidents of self-harm to the ISU hotline?

You should report the following incidents to the ISU Hotline

- Assaults resulting in injury requiring medical attention or where police are involved
- Serious threats or intimidation
- Weapons (including ammunition and implements used as weapons)
- Illegal drugs (NOT incidents where students are in possession or have consumed alcohol or tobacco)
- Other criminal activity (e.g. attempted abductions, sexting, etc.)

Accidents that result in an injury should be reported to the **Incident Report and Support Hotline** on **1800 811 523** (select Option 1).

The issue of self-harm is complicated.

There are times when a student may threaten self-harm and/ or threaten to harm others during an incident at a school. The general incident should be reported to the ISU hotline as a threat, however, there are often more serious concerns arising from these threats.

Self-harm is an indicator under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and, as a mandatory reporter, if you have concerns that the child or young person is at risk of serious harm you should report the matter immediately to the **FACS Helpline 133 627**. More general concerns should be reported to the **Child Wellbeing Unit on (02) 9269 9400**.

You can also consult the online [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#).

How can I involve police in delivering presentations to staff or students?

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Your local Police Youth Liaison Officer (Primary Schools) and School Liaison Police Officer (High Schools) will visit schools and conduct presentations and talks to students on such subjects as Stranger Danger, Cybersafety and road safety. Contact them through your local police station.

School Response Officers are experienced police and teachers who work in the Health and Safety Directorate. They can provide professional development to staff, including Exercise Satchel on incident management.

Contact the ISU on 1800 811 523 (select Option 1) for details.

Additionally they are able to assist schools by:

- Providing high level support to schools in managing and recovering from serious incidents related to criminal activity, particularly involving violence, weapons and illegal drugs.
- Enhancing communication and relationships with Local Area Commands of Police.
- Assisting in assessing threats and potential serious incidents.
- Streamlining procedures for effective information collection and dissemination concerning serious incidents involving violence, weapons and drugs.
- Identifying trends and patterns of criminal activity to help protect students, staff and school property.
- Assisting schools to return to the core business of teaching and learning following a serious incident.

Schools should contact the Police Local Area Command or telephone **000** for immediate assistance in the event of a serious incident.

What are Crime Prevention Workshops?

The Crime Prevention Workshop program has been developed for primary and secondary schools. The workshops aim to bring together young people, Police and teachers to:

- Raise the awareness of young people about the consequences of involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour for both perpetrators and victims
- Enable young people to develop strategies to avoid involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Establish constructive relationships between young people and Police.

When are Crime Prevention Workshops implemented at a school?

Crime Prevention Workshops can be conducted in response to particular incidents in a school, e.g. concern about a rise in assaults at a school or as part of a long term plan to cover a number of topics in crime prevention.

How are Crime Prevention Workshops implemented?

Schools or Police can initiate workshops. Student welfare consultants can help liaise between schools and Police and provide support for the implementation of Crime Prevention Workshops.

The workshops are jointly delivered by teachers and Police.

What is in the Crime Prevention Workshop packages?

The Crime Prevention Workshop program includes teaching modules and video support material. It is modular in form, to allow flexibility of delivery. All modules can stand alone. The modules are regularly updated to address issues identified as being most relevant to young people's involvement in crime and anti- social behaviour.

There are modules for secondary students in Years 7 and 8 and also for primary students in Years 5 and 6. Some modules are suitable for other years.

Your student welfare consultant can advise on the modules currently available.

How can I get a security fence?

The **School Security Unit** is the Department of Education's security management advisory service. The unit provides advice and training to all government schools on a broad range of security and asset protection issues.

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A major emphasis of the unit is prevention and risk management. By evaluating the needs of individual schools, the unit's specialist staff are able to assist principals to prepare asset protection plans and integrate risk security management into day-to-day school operations.

A comprehensive range of security related services are available. These include:

- security needs analysis and alarm system design
- incident follow-up and reporting
- security training and awareness programs
- promoting community involvement in security issues
- liaising with emergency services, government agencies and other security stakeholders
- providing advice to schools on all aspects of school security including;
 1. surveillance systems
 2. guard services
 3. equipment registers
 4. emergency evacuations
 5. storing dangerous goods
 6. managing school keys

The unit should be contacted for advice about the reporting of security breaches, alarm systems, guard services, asset protection planning and any other security issues.

On the request of the principal, a visit can be scheduled to discuss specific security concerns. This can be arranged by telephoning 1300 880 021.

