Responding to Critical Incidents of Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions

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#IHaveTheCourageToAct

Land Acknowledgement

This work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonization that is still used today to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters. We must centre this truth in our work to address gender-based violence on campuses and in our communities. We commit to continuing to learn and take an anti-colonial inclusive approach in all our work. One way we are honouring this responsibility is by actively incorporating the Calls for Justice within Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. ›

About Possibility Seeds

Courage to Act, is a national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is led by Possibility Seeds, a social change consultancy dedicated to gender justice, equity, and inclusion. We believe safe, equitable workplaces, organizations and institutions are possible. Learn more about our work at www.possibilityseeds.ca.

We hope this document will be a valuable resource to those seeking to address and prevent campus gender-based violence. As this is an evolving document, it may not capture the full complexity of the subject matter. The information provided does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be prescriptive. It should be considered a supplement to existing expertise, experience, and credentials; not a replacement for them.

We encourage readers to seek out training, education, and professional development opportunities in relevant areas to enhance their knowledge and sustained engagement with this work.

Authors:

Farrah Khan, Deb Eerkes, Amal Elmi, Sarah Scanlon, and Dawn McDermott.

Reviewers:

Dr. Janet Morrison, Dee Dooley, Jan Klotz, Megan Viens, and Sacha Aldrich.

Copy Editor:

Jiaqing Wilson-Yang.

Graphic Design:

Kitty Rodé with design elements from Michelle Campos Castillo.

Phase 3 Courage to Act Project Team:

Farrah Khan (Executive Director), Anoodth Naushan (Project Director), Maya Kotlarenko (Operations Manager), Emily Allan (Communications Manager), Laura Murray (Project Coordinator), Aubrianna Snow (Stakeholder Relations Specialist), Kitty Rodé (Graphic Designer), Leon K (Web Designer), Noémie Veilleux (Francophone Project Coordinator), Jennifer Flood (Education Lead), Amal Elmi (Response and Support Co-Lead), Britney De Costa (Experiential Learning Project Lead & RIA Co-Lead), Andréanne St-Gelais (Experiential Learning Project Coordinator) and Deb Eerkes (RIA Co-Lead).

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Introduction

A TikTok about a string of sexual assaults during orientation goes viral; a faculty member is sexually assaulted in the school library; and an alumni posts on Instagram calling out a varsity sports team for sharing nudes of ex-partners amongst team members. Is your institution prepared to act? Do you have a rapid response plan in place? How do you ensure all campus partners are prepared to respond in a coordinated way?

Unfortunately, until rape culture and all forms of oppression are abolished, sexual violence will continue on campus; it is not a matter of if it will happen but when. Therefore, all campus partners must be prepared and ready to work together. Sexual violence affects the person harmed and the surrounding community. It can have significant institutional risks, including increased distrust among students and employees in the institution's ability to maintain safety and manage financial and reputational risks.

Responding to the needs and insights compiled in Phase I of *Courage to Act* (Khan, Bidgood & Rowe, 2019), this workbook introduces a model for responding to critical incidents of sexual violence (RCI). The RCI model provides an example of a team of specialized trauma-informed PSI personnel empowered to collaboratively make decisions, take action and offer support to the campus community. This model demonstrates how to address harm, reduce risk, and work toward positive outcomes for people affected by sexual violence and the campus community.

With carefully coordinated planning, a PSI can be ready to respond to critical incidents and significantly reduce the harm and further risk to the campus community. This workbook will assist you, and your PSI to create a well-planned response to critical incidents and details the steps to respond before, during and after a critical incident. We envision key campus stakeholders coming together to use our reflection questions to create their unique plans to address critical incidents of sexual violence. We recognize every post-secondary community is unique, with different resources and systems of care.

Throughout this guide we reference police and criminal investigations. The police and the criminal legal system are options for some survivors, but institutions must know how and when to work with them. Many communities are currently, or historically have been,

harmed by the police and criminal legal system. These systems do not meet the needs of every person, and it's essential to take that into account when doing any intervention or planning. Possibility Seeds believes in the primacy of consent, including a survivor's right to choose what justice looks like for them, and recognizes that there are inadequate options for survivors to find justice at this time.

A note on the creation of this guide

When the foundational *Courage to Act* report was released in 2019, there were repeated requests for a guide that laid out a framework for collaboration across campuses to address critical incidents of sexual violence. Our team met with campus leaders, student researchers, survivors, faculty and administrators to learn their current practices and key concerns and convened an expert panel to create this guide. We held many dynamic conversations and asked questions about what would work, what would be helpful, and what would create more barriers.

After the initial draft was created, Possibility Seeds held a Critical Incident Design Jam in November 2022 to learn from student leaders, front-line workers, first responders, communications experts and administrators. Through that collaborative process with key stakeholders, we expanded the guide. Thank you to all those community members who shared their time and expertise. We see this guide as a work in progress and cannot wait to hear feedback from the community to build on this important work. Over the next year, we welcome feedback, edits and questions. We would love to hear about your promising practices to address sexual violence on your campuses.

This workbook:

- Provides critical considerations required to form an RCI team with key campus stakeholders;
- Guides the creation of a critical incident response plan to determine RCI team membership;
- Creates clarity around roles and responsibilities;
- Establishes communications pathways;
- Speaks to potential complex problems or gaps in the response;
- Details debriefing and evaluative processes;
- Maps out incident response considerations at various points in the response, including before and after a critical incident occurrence;
- Is a resource designed to guide individual and institutional responses.

Key Elements for Success

To be successful, an RCI team must have the following key elements in place:

1. **Designated funds to implement the RCI:** PSIs must ensure that RCI teams receive core funding before the plan is activated so that support can be put in place quickly. If more resources are deemed necessary, funding for the RCI team must be reassessed.
2. **Championed by senior leadership with a strong commitment to collaboration between units:** Once an RCI team is assembled, the work involved will necessitate cross-disciplinary and departmental collaboration to ensure the fulfillment of critical actions in the plan. This work cannot be done solely by a Sexual Violence Office; it must include a range of partners and perspectives from across campus, as detailed in this workbook.

Systemic change is essential to end sexual violence on campus

The work of the RCI team to address sexual violence does not happen in a vacuum. In order for the RCI team to be effective, the PSI must work with community stakeholders as well as with all levels of government (municipal, provincial and territorial, and federal) to address the roots causes of sexual violence and ensure that support and prevention work is significantly and sustainably resourced. Possibility Seeds' Courage to Act Project has a number of resources for stakeholders to use to address sexual and gender-based violence on campus; these are freely available to download on the Courage to Act Knowledge Centre.

Role of the RCI team

Both in creating the plan and executing it, the function of the RCI team is to Convene, Collaborate, Coordinate, Communicate, and Care. When an incident meets your PSI's criteria to activate the RCI, there will be critical actions that require timely and organized responses. Creating an activation plan and clearly defining the role of the RCI team before a critical incident will decrease uncertainty and increase your institution's ability to manage

the incident. This planning will allow the organization to reduce and control the harmful impacts of a critical incident in an organized and systematic fashion.

When successfully assembled, an RCI will:

- Reduce re-traumatization and extraneous labour of survivors,
- Reduce or interrupt the potential cascade of negative impacts,
- Increase safety for other campus and community members,
- Increase speed and efficiency of institutional responses,
- Reduce confusion, tension, and replication of labour while encouraging collaboration; and
- Mitigate the risk of further harm and repeated Sexual Violence policy violations.

There may be many rapidly changing scenarios and situations and multiple responders involved in a critical incident. The key to an effective response is ensuring that all involved have a clear understanding of the role of the PSI, especially when the critical incident involves a crime. The PSI must take a support-first approach, focusing on those harmed in a critical incident and the community's safety. The PSI should always affirm that it is the survivors' choice whether they want to make a report to the police. The PSI should inform the person harmed of the duty to report incidents to external bodies such as children's services when incidents involve the abuse of a minor. The PSI should make explicit that local law enforcement will collect evidence when a critical incident involves a criminal investigation. The PSI must remain focused on its obligation to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Any discussion of initiating an investigation under PSI policy should occur only after assessing and attending to the needs of the survivor(s). Clear policies and processes detailing when an institution must trigger its investigation without a survivor-initiated complaint should be well documented and communicated.

Guiding principles for creating an RCI

Accessible: The RCI plan will commit to removing barriers and ensuring access to communication, services and support for those affected by the critical incident. Those

affected will be allowed to heal, participate in the campus community and achieve academic/workplace success in a way that works for them (Khan et al., 2019, p. 38).

Collaboration: The RCI plan will commit to ensuring key campus stakeholders respect one another's expertise and communicate with one another to address critical incidents as a team.

Culturally Safe Approaches: The RCI plan will recognize and challenge unequal power relations between service providers and survivors by building equitable, two-way relationships characterized by respect, shared responsibility, and cultural exchange. Specifically, those affected must have their culture, values, and preferences considered when providing services (Government of Canada, 2021, C para. 5).

Harm Reduction: The RCI plan will recognize processes designed to address sexual violence in post-secondary institutions can cause harm. Wherever possible, it will seek to limit and reduce the negative consequences of gender-based violence and gender-based violence complaint processes on the involved parties.

Inclusive and Intersectional: The RCI plan will recognize how intersecting identities and experiences impact someone's access to support; whether they are believed; how they are treated in their community; and how they are treated by institutions such as medical and legal or educational systems (Khan et al., 2019, p. 38).

Informed Consent: The RCI plan will have a confidential administrative process and ensure that those affected by the critical incident know how and when their information is being shared within and beyond the institution.

Trauma-Informed: The RCI plan will recognize the impacts of trauma (intergenerational, historical, complex, acute, vicarious, chronic, and community-based) and integrate this into institutional responses to critical incidents of sexual violence on campus (Khan et al., 2019, p. 38). It will recognize that the trauma impacts of a critical incident go beyond the survivor to include first responders, community members and administrative staff.

Transparent: The RCI plan will ensure that the campus community has access to trauma-informed communications about the incident that respects the confidentiality of all parties involved and includes information on how to access support.

Risk management

Critical incidents of sexual violence are common and pose a significant risk to PSI communities. When PSIs fail to respond or engage in an inadequate or inappropriate response, the potential harm to individuals and institutions can be far-reaching and long-lasting. A lack of information, misinformation and/or mixed messaging can actively undermine feelings of safety on campus. Given these risks, it is recommended that a critical incident response related to sexual violence be embedded in the main emergency response plan for the PSI. Doing so lends authority and credibility to the RCI plan, ensures that the issue receives the same attention as other serious risks and that the RCI plan is included in an institutionally supported and annually reviewed document.

Where the RCI plan is a standalone document, the PSI emergency response plan should refer to it directly.

Threshold: what constitutes a critical incident?

Knowing in advance what is and is not a critical incident is paramount. Consider different response levels for different incidents to keep responses proportionate and consistent. For example, consider when the PSI might offer support through the Sexual Violence Office and when the RCI team should be convened:

- Individual incident - single disclosure, single Person who Caused Harm (PCH)
- Multiple related incidents - multiple disclosures about one PCH
- Multiple potentially unrelated incidents - multiple disclosures, multiple or unknown PCH
- Social media or other third-party information, the scope of the incident(s) unknown

Not all incidents will be identical. There may be factors to consider when triggering an RCI response. For example:

- Did emergency medical services attend?
- Is there evidence of drugging to induce incapacitation?

- What was the specific nature of the incident(s) related to risk and impact? You may respond differently, for example, to online harassment vs. sexual assault.

When an RCI is needed

Reviewing past incidents or using scenarios are excellent tools to identify the steps your institution would take in response to specific situations. Using the examples below or your own scenarios before an incident triggers your RCI is an excellent way to familiarize yourself with the information in this document and prepare your RCI team for institution-specific incidents.

Scenario 1

A community member in an empty classroom sexually and physically assaults a student. Campus security was the first on-scene after the assault and was impacted by what they witnessed. The survivor reaches out to the local police services. Due to the nature of the assault, the incident quickly became public knowledge on campus.

Scenario 2

The day after a party in residence, multiple anonymous messages appeared on a social media platform disclosing that multiple students were drugged and raped at the party. The PSI is tagged in these posts, but the names of those harmed and the responsible parties are not shared. The media has called the PSI requesting a response to the posts.

Reflection Questions

1. What constitutes a critical sexual violence incident that needs immediate attention at your PSI?
2. What are past examples where an RCI would have benefited your PSI?

To-do List

- [ ] Create a Terms of Reference (TOR) for your RCI team, including draft guiding principles.
- [ ] Clearly define or give examples of what might constitute a conflict of interest.

- [ ] Clearly define what constitutes a critical incident.
- [ ] Set criteria or thresholds for convening your RCI team.

Before a Critical Incident

Convene

An RCI plan will need to allow for flexibility depending on the nature of the incident and the risk to the institution. Establishing a plan in advance will alleviate the need to create one during a crisis and provide procedures and protocols to draw and build from when a situation requires a quick and agile response. A wide range of expertise and perspectives is necessary to ensure that the plan is comprehensive, practical, trauma-informed, and current. Remember always to refer back to your guiding principles as you start to put together your RCI plan.

One of the first decisions you will have to make is determining who will have the authority to activate the RCI to respond to a critical incident. The PSI office is responsible for preventing and addressing sexual violence and may be best positioned and informed to activate the RCI. However, these offices typically consist of front-line staff who will support and assist students involved in a critical incident and may need help to convene the group. Depending on the PSI structure and where the incident is first disclosed or discovered, the individual with authority to convene the RCI team and activate the plan might be from the sexual violence office, a senior student affairs officer, campus safety, or other departments. Knowing who has the authority and responsibility to activate the team will alleviate some of the administrative pressures front-line staff face as they respond. Having several people with the authority to activate the team supports the likelihood of a timely response, as all RCI leaders may not be available at all times.

The RCI plan should include detailed information on where and how the RCI team will come together. In-person, on-campus meetings may be an effective way to achieve the 5 Cs and how they are to be used; details about meeting schedules and locations and procedures for emergency meetings should be included in the plan.

The plan should create a holistic, person-centred, trauma-informed response that requires the RCI team to consider how a negative cascade impact can be interrupted or mitigated. To do this, the RCI team should include a wide range of expertise and perspectives, with representation from those with the following functions:

- Human Rights Services
- Student Conduct
- Sexual Violence Support Office
- Communications
- Media Relations
- Legal Counsel
- Campus Security

Other campus experts can be called upon as necessary, including

- Human Resources
- Unions
- Student Financial Aid
- Health and Safety
- Counselling
- Academic Advising
- Provost's or President's Office

Some of these roles will be required and have specific roles in the critical incident, while others may be needed in the longer-term response. This broad representation of perspectives will ensure a robust plan that accounts for the evolving and complicated needs that a critical incident might create. Additionally, in a unionized environment, it benefits everyone to consult with the unions in the planning stage and ensure that their feedback is sufficiently considered and incorporated into the RCI plan.

As the focus and goal of the RCI plan are to support people affected by sexual violence, once the RCI team has been activated, the planning and direction of the team should come from the RCI team member(s) that holds the expertise to respond in a holistic, person-centred way, and who have been identified in the plan as the person authorized to convene the team. As critical incidents evolve, it will be the responsibility of all members, through the leadership of the designated experts, to determine if other campus partners need to be invited to participate in the response based on emergent needs.

Reflection Questions

1. Which offices and staff members should be on your RCI team?
2. Who are other campus experts that you should be able to call upon when necessary?

3. Are the guiding principles in your TOR agreeable to all members?
4. What forms of training do all members need annually?
5. Who on your campus is equipped to act as a caseworker with the respondent/ individual who allegedly caused harm if they are a member of the PSI community?
    a. What is the caseworker's training in trauma-informed approaches, intersectionality, sexual violence-specific risk assessment, crisis and suicidality support, balancing accountability and humanity, and navigating relevant policies?
    b. How do you ensure that the individuals supporting the complainant/ survivor and the respondent are different staff members?

To-do List

- ☐ Make amendments to the RCI TOR based on member feedback, including but not limited to guiding principles.
- ☐ Create a member list for your RCI team.
- ☐ Identify required training for the RCI team.
- ☐ List campus experts you may need in a critical incident and their contact information.

Collaborate

The planning group should identify RCI team members based on their expertise in a particular area of the campus community and assign specific roles accordingly. All RCI team members should have an equal voice in discussions regardless of position or title and be equally responsible for identifying risks and co-creating a comprehensive, supportive response. The RCI team should be a highly collaborative group of professionals with a shared responsibility to address sexual violence at their PSI.

Collaboration requires time, effort and commitment. As meaningful collaboration requires trust and relationship-building, creating an environment conducive to collaboration must occur outside crisis. Accordingly, the RCI team should create opportunities to meet and

learn before an incident to give thoughtful consideration to potential administrative, ethical, and logistical issues that may arise. This helps foster the supportive environment necessary to generate a decision-making model that team members trust during a critical incident. RCI team members will be more invested in and able to use a decision-making model they have built together efficiently.

Well-functioning teams will understand the scope of the RCI plan and have a collective understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Below are several discussion questions that RCI team members can explore together. These questions offer the opportunity to begin sharing perspectives, exploring vulnerabilities, and identifying the group and individual strengths.

Reflection Questions for Each RCI member

1. What role does your office bring to the RCI team?
2. What strengths do you, as an individual, bring to the RCI team? e.g. safety planning training, crisis communications, resource allocation.
3. What challenges do you anticipate arising from your participation? e.g. burnout, lack of resources, limited knowledge of the impacts of sexual violence.
4. How can the PSI support RCI members' well-being?
5. How will your RCI plan address the 5 Cs?

To-do List

- ☐ Have each RCI member answer the above questions and discuss how the team will function.
- ☐ Identify any gaps and recruit new RCI team members who can fill them.
- ☐ Have the PSI create and implement a trauma-informed well-being plan for RCI members to attend to the impact of vicarious trauma.

Collaboration agreements with external community organizations, e.g. sexual assault/domestic violence care centres, sexual assault centres, and mobile crisis units and distress centres, are necessary to respond to a critical incident appropriately. External

organizations can be caught off guard when an incident occurs on campus, and they are suddenly flooded with requests to support survivors, communities and people who have caused harm. PSIs and external organizations will benefit from a communications protocol and clear parameters around the scope of work. Below are some reflection questions to assist you in developing and/or strengthening collaboration agreements with external organizations.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your current relationship with key external stakeholders that support survivors, communities that have witnessed harm, and people who have caused harm?
2. What is communication like with these external organizations? Are the expectations clear for both sides if your institution has a collaboration agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) with external organizations?
3. What is the distinction between the role of your PSI and external organizations in the event of a critical incident?

To-do List

- [ ] Make a list of external stakeholders that support survivors, communities that have witnessed harm and people who have caused harm.
- [ ] Meet with external stakeholders to make an MOU and/or communication plan in the case of a critical incident. In the same meeting, clarify the roles and responsibilities of the PSI and external organizations.

Coordinate

Coordinating roles and responsibilities

Coordination is at the heart of a critical incident plan. A strong plan ensures that each person on the RCI team knows what to expect from their team members and what their team members expect from them. The RCI plan needs to include who will be called in the

case of an incident, what form their participation will take, and whom they need to connect with and inform along the way.

Reflection Questions

1. Who can convene the RCI team and activate the critical incident response plan?
2. Who will be on call for the incident?
    a. Not all members of the RCI team will be required during the critical incident; some may be needed in the days and weeks following the incident.
3. What circumstances might place an RCI team member in a conflict of interest?
    a. Consider a "3-deep structure" wherever possible. If a member is unavailable or must recuse themself due to a conflict of interest, ensure that one or two backup individuals are trained and ready to step in.
4. Where and how does the RCI meet?
    a. When a plan uses in-person meetings, it should include a designated meeting space and consider the following:
        i. Privacy
        ii. Accessibility
        iii. Easy access to parking
        iv. Communications capability, such as a strong wi-fi signal
    b. When meetings are held online, the critical incident response plan must include processes to maintain confidentiality, particularly when meetings occur outside of regular office hours in the private homes of staff members.
    c. Who will be the designated liaison with first responders, such as the police?

To-do List

- [ ] Create a contact list of the RCI team and distribute it to each RCI team member.
- [ ] The contact list should include the contact information and role of each on-call person, such as name, title, unit, and role in the critical response.
- [ ] Assign an in-person or virtual meeting space.
- [ ] Designate team members for the following roles:
  - Activating the RCI team
  - Identifying and managing conflicts of interest
  - Liaising with executive leadership (i.e. Provost or President)
  - Liaising with law enforcement

Coordinating risk assessments

Critical incidents unfold quickly. They can be confusing and distressing to the campus community. Those responding to the incident, witnesses, or family members and loved ones of those involved will all be impacted. Community members who learn about the incident from second or third-hand sources may also be impacted. The PSI can reduce harm by providing role clarity by adopting the "support-first approach," primarily when first responders, such as police, fire, and paramedics, are called in. A "support-first approach" meets the immediate needs of the person(s) harmed and then follows up with them to provide information about their options after the incident. A risk assessment should be considered an immediate need. The RCI team needs a clear risk assessment process before an incident. The RCI team can look to Courage to Act's forthcoming risk assessment tool to assess cases of gender-based violence at PSIs. This accessible and evidence-supported tool is intended for all support providers on campus and will be freely available for download in September 2023.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your institution's risk assessment process? Is it appropriate for sexual violence cases? Why or why not? Do you have the institutional expertise to engage

this assessment model appropriately in cases of sexual violence? Is there ongoing training as new information emerges and assessment tools are developed?

2. Do you have a template or model for safety planning? Who holds responsibility for safety planning? Are there funds available to respond to some risk spots that come up through a safety planning process?
3. Do members of your team have training in the complexities of assessing risk in sexual violence cases - in particular when an incident involves intimate partner violence, strangulation, forced marriage, stalking, sex trafficking, and their intersections with a mental health crisis? What is clinical support available for them? Is that support equipped to provide support based on the assessment?
4. If you do not have internal institutional expertise, who can you call on that is equipped to assess and respond to red flags such as potential lethality?
5. Who is responsible for documenting the risk assessment process? What are they required to document? The following is critical in risk documentation: a) What is the risk, and how was it assessed? b) What steps were taken to enhance safety? and c) What referrals were provided? d) What follow-up is needed, and who will do it?

To-do List

- [ ] Create or identify your PSI's risk assessment protocol. Ensure it can be activated on short notice.
- [ ] Designate an RCI team member to lead the risk assessment when needed.
- [ ] Create a list of the names and contact information of any external experts you may need to call upon during a critical incident.

Coordination when police are involved

When coordinating with the police, be clear on the role of the PSI and the role of the police, and consider working with local law enforcement to create an MOU if there is not one in place. In cases where both campus and criminal processes might be pursued, the PSI

should ensure that survivors know what to expect and how they will be supported. Considerations when working with police include but are not limited to

- Roles of PSI and law enforcement
- Order of investigations: If an incident requires both campus and criminal legal responses, will they happen simultaneously, or will one investigation take precedence over another? Sometimes they happen simultaneously.
- Evidence sharing, such as statements, photos, videos, screenshots, etc.
- Clarity on institutional goals, accountabilities, and the nature of investigation processes.

It is typical at many PSIs for law enforcement to be involved during or after a critical incident. Therefore, carefully planning around any collaboration - and separation of duties - with law enforcement is crucial. The RCI plan should be explicit on two points:

1. The PSI is separate and distinct from the criminal legal system, including law enforcement. It is not responsible for any work done by the police or the courts. The PSI should not adopt a carceral or punitive stance when responding to a critical incident.
2. The criminal legal system has its own aims and goals that are not built on principles of being trauma-informed or survivor-centred. As a result, the criminal legal system, including police involvement, can cause harm to survivors, service providers and other members of the PSI community. A person's social location (including but not limited to racialization, ability, gender, sexuality, and employment status) shapes how people are targeted for sexual violence; how they are treated when they report, access support, and go through legal processes; and their own trust in the criminal legal system. Black and Indigenous communities, in particular, have been historically and currently targeted by the criminal legal system. As a result, Black and Indigenous survivors may be subjected to trauma unrelated to the critical incident.

   The RCI needs to note that marginalized individuals are subjected to disproportionate scrutiny by the criminal legal system, whether they are interviewed as a person of interest, the subject of an investigation, or a complainant or witness.

Where it is necessary for police to be involved in a critical incident, the PSI should take steps to reduce the resulting harm. Response staff are positioned to inform survivors of their rights in providing statements to the police. Survivors often feel pressured into reporting, and response staff should provide survivors with information on the process and notify them about their choice to speak to the police. If possible, we recommend response staff be present and supporting students, particularly marginalized students, in any reporting or interview process with the police. We also encourage that the response plan includes a debrief, with options for support moving forward, for those who navigated police involvement.

The PSI's role is to ensure a safe and supportive learning and working environment for staff and students. It is not the role of the PSI to persuade those subjected to sexual violence to make a police report or pressure them to make a complaint under campus policy.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your institution's position on sharing information or reaching out to police services without the consent of the survivor(s)? Is this documented and agreed on? Was an intersectional, feminist and anti-oppressive framework used in the decision-making process?
2. What is communication like with the police services? For example, will they share the nature of criminal charges or conditions for your students?
3. Do local police services communicate with campus safety/special constables when entering campus/residence to interview students for an investigation?
4. If your institution has an MOU with your police services, are the expectations clear for both sides? When are you required to share information with police services? How does an MOU impact a campus investigation? Are there mandatory reporting requirements in the MOU?
5. What is your institution's RCI team's capacity to act when no formal complaint was received? What is the threshold if there is a broader campus risk? Who is gathering the information? What is their training? How has this been communicated in policy?

6. If your institution has an MOU with police services, are there any barriers or issues that may come up about this case?
7. If a police investigation is initiated, does this impact a campus investigation?
    a. How will your institution ensure a risk assessment process is engaged regardless of the police investigation?
    b. What is the scope of your quick response/interim measures?
4. What is the distinction between the role of your PSI and law enforcement during a critical incident? The chart below provides some suggestions for roles and coordination when a critical incident involves criminal behaviour. See Appendix A to create your version for your PSI.

Sample distinction between roles of PSI and law enforcement (police, RCMP etc.)

	PSI	**Law Enforcement**
Role	Support for affected individuals (individuals harmed and PCH, if known)	Investigate crime(s) • Collect evidence of a possible crime • Identify the person(s) responsible • Identify possible witnesses
Physical Evidence	N/A	• Collect and preserve all physical evidence • Erect barriers to prevent contamination of crime scene
Documentary Evidence	Issue call to students and staff to provide any photos, videos, social media or other information related to the incident.	Coordinate with PSI to receive documentary evidence, if available.
Building Access	Coordinate with law enforcement, as appropriate.	Coordinate with PSI

Safety Measures (immediate)	Examples: • Safety plan with individuals harmed • Check for medical distress • Provide an advocate or advisor to support person(s) harmed and provide PSI updates	Example: • Lockdown or shelter in place order
Safety Measures (longer term)	Examples: • Bystander intervention training • Sexual violence prevention education • Increase supervision/ patrols • Improved lighting/sightlines • Alcohol-free events	N/A

To-do List

- ☐ Where one does not already exist, work with your local law enforcement agency on an MOU that articulates roles in the case of a critical incident, such as the above chart.
- ☐ Specify areas where the PSI will and will not work collaboratively with law enforcement officials; for example:
  - [PSI] will provide a trauma-informed interview room for police to interview affected parties on campus,
  - [PSI] will not send communications on behalf of the police.
- ☐ Include an information-sharing agreement as part of the MOU, with a trauma-informed, harm-reduction, and intersectional lens.

Communicate

As a critical incident unfolds, communication will be a primary function of the RCI team. Specifically, the RCI team must ensure that all stakeholders receive accurate and timely

information. Most importantly, it is the job of the RCI team to communicate the needs of the front-line staff to the executive leadership team at the PSI. Therefore, the RCI plan must include a communication strategy with a clear pathway for sharing and receiving information. The response plan should include plans for communicating within the RCI, providing updates to the executive leadership, as well as providing notices and information to the PSI community, the families of those affected, and the media. Messaging must be consistent and updated regardless of who is tasked with communications.

Communication within the RCI and to leadership

Clear channels for internal communication, identified in advance, will ensure that the RCI plan is effectively activated.

Reflection Questions

1. How will the information be disseminated within the RCI team (group DM/email/etc.)?
2. How will you ensure that communications are built on your guiding principles?
3. What information is needed, and where is it coming from? Information will likely rapidly come in through multiple channels
    a. Who will collect it?
    b. Who will compile it?
    c. Who in executive leadership (Provost, President etc.) needs to be informed?
4. If you are on a large campus or have multiple campuses, who within the various areas of the PSI will have or need information, for example, residence staff, the SV office, students' unions, etc.?
5. Who will compile the information received from the liaisons and provide updates to the executive leadership?
    a. Will there be daily briefings to leadership?
    b. If so, when, how and by whom?

c. Who is the designated institutional leadership representative tasked with liaising with the RCI team?

6. How are you ensuring you are engaging in best practices when communicating about sexual violence and gender-based violence? Are you incorporating anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices into your communications?
7. How will the RCI team connect with and provide key communication to the campus offices, e.g. sexual violence office, student conduct and counselling, so that they are prepared for the increase in support requests?

To-do list

- ☐ Create a template to capture internal and external inquiries about the critical incident.
- ☐ Review Possibility Seeds' forthcoming Use the Right Words guide to understanding best practices for communication about sexual violence.
- ☐ Create a list of key stakeholders and identify which methods they will use to communicate.
- ☐ Create a communication list of who on senior leadership can respond after-hours.

Communication within the PSI community

Messaging to the campus community can provide and request information. Messages to the community should reassure them that the PSI is prepared with a plan and that their safety is paramount. Messaging should also acknowledge that responding to critical incidents takes time. The messaging also creates an opportunity for RCIs to educate members on trauma responses and the available support and services and to invite community members to share information that may be helpful. Messages should include

- Assurance that a plan is in place and has/will be activated;
- Instructions about what to do (how to support affected community members, to shelter in place, go to their rooms, gather in a specific area, etc.);

- Name and contact information of a person or service that students and staff can access if they have emergent needs or require help;
- Name and contact information of a person or service that students and staff should contact if they have information about the incident(s) as the incident unfolds.
- Name and contact information of a person or service that students and staff should contact if they have photos, videos, or screenshots of social media relevant to the incident.

The plan should specifically identify the individual responsible for communicating with the community (e.g. any safety alerts, etc.). It should include ready-to-use templates for senior leaders, faculty and staff with key messaging to share with the broader campus community.

When a critical incident occurs within the campus community, many people are affected, which can bring up many feelings. There are many trauma survivors on campus, from students to faculty to staff; ensuring that your communication includes vital information on attending to the impacts of vicarious trauma is imperative.

To-do List

- ☐ Have a distribution list of key stakeholders to disseminate information about the critical incident and the support available.
- ☐ Create a handout on the impacts of trauma and ways to attend to them for the campus community.
- ☐ Review Possibility Seeds' forthcoming Use the Right Words guide to understand best practices for communication about sexual violence.

Communication with campus community members directly connected to the survivor

A support-first approach includes specialized services and information-sharing strategies for the families, co-workers, friends and loved ones of a survivor. For those most impacted, a single-point support person is recommended if possible. Without a well-communicated and coordinated plan, front-line workers may be overwhelmed with requests and inquiries

from parents, caregivers, and partners. Messaging that can help alleviate or manage their concerns might include

- Acknowledgement of the potential impact of trauma on those affected.
- Information about the response plan in place.
- Referrals to PSI and external support services.
- Information on how to support a person affected by the incidents, e.g. information about trauma responses, understanding sexual violence myths and facts, and further reading materials. A great podcast episode to share is Healing Comes in Waves Supporting a Survivor as a Parent with Glen Canning.

Communication with the media

When a disclosure comes to light through social media, it is essential to plan for media attention. A clear and informative media communication plan is reassuring and calming for those affected by a critical incident. Information disseminated in the media creates an additional opportunity for PSIs to educate the public about the role of the PSI during a critical incident and the support available for those affected. Ensure the communication plan includes a designated individual responsible for liaising with the media in partnership with communications experts at your PSI. This person should be the only one authorized to answer questions from the media. Messages should be reassuring and high-level. Key media messages might include assurances that:

- A response plan has been activated.
- The institution is working with the relevant first responders to ensure safety and medical treatment.
- Support people/services have been mobilized.
- No personal information will be released.

RCI team members should be cautioned about the potential for media to directly reach out to them in other areas of the PSI community. Include a holding statement in the plan, directing all inquiries to the institutional spokesperson.

Finally, it is essential to note that these communications generate written records, which will be subject to provincial freedom of information legislation. The plan should include the location (electronic or physical) where records will be kept, a record retention schedule, and any training or meeting materials related to confidentiality. Questions to be answered in the plan include:

- How and to what extent will confidentiality be maintained?
- When and how will information be shared?
- What needs to be documented and communicated in writing?
- Where will records be housed, and who is responsible for them?
- How will the PSI ensure that members understand their obligations to confidentiality?
- What are ongoing communication channels for student and employee support on campus? How are those being leveraged?

To-do List

- [ ] Create an internal channel (group chat, email list, other) for the RCI team to share crucial information as the incident unfolds.
- [ ] Identify the contact from executive leadership who will be updated, including name, title, and contact information.
- [ ] Assign communications roles, as required by the critical incident:
  - Media spokesperson,
  - Community liaison,
  - Internal communications liaison
  - Family liaison.
- [ ] Create templates for communication and safety alerts within the campus community.
- [ ] Create templates for messaging to parents/families of the survivor, including a handout on vicarious trauma, supporting survivors and resources for external support.

- [ ] Identify communications channels to be used to notify, inform, and update the campus community as needed.
- [ ] Assign one RCI team member to check in and collect information from key areas of the PSI, e.g. residences, and libraries, and compile the information into up-to-date digestible summaries.
- [ ] Identify who or which office will be the official office of record for information and privacy purposes.
- [ ] Create a record retention schedule in alignment with your PSI's practices and policies.

In addition to having communications templates ready, it is helpful to have a single document to coordinate all of the communications tasks. See Appendix B for an example communications chart to be filled in when an incident has occurred.

Confidentiality and communication

No one is affected more by how information is collected, used and disclosed than the survivor(s) and those alleged to have caused harm. Therefore, special attention in the planning process must be given to training the individuals assigned to support those harmed and those alleged to have caused harm during and after a critical incident.

Confidentiality is not the same as secrecy. Provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) laws outline appropriate collection, use and disclosure of personal information for public programs such as PSIs. Decisions about the disclosure of personal information are typically made on a case-by-case basis. Decisions about information collection and disclosure should use the PSI mission, values and principles, and any other institutional guiding documents to build a clear framework for what may, must, or must not be disclosed.

Privacy laws are quasi-constitutional and trump other laws when there is a conflict (Eerkes, De Costa & Jafry, 2020, p. 306). Sexual violence is a form of gender discrimination, and as such, these critical incidents invoke human rights laws, which are also quasi-constitutional. Both privacy and human rights laws must be considered when contemplating how the

information will be used and disclosed. For example, it is important to consider how withholding information from a survivor might create a condition where they do not feel safe on campus and therefore act as a barrier to full participation. This can present a difficult balance, particularly during a critical incident, and should be thought through in the RCI planning stage to save significant time, energy and confusion when a critical incident occurs.

Reflection Questions

1. How much information are those supporting the affected individuals permitted to share?
2. How does your communication plan put your RCI guiding principles into practice?
3. In what ways will the caseworkers for the PCH and survivor share information when authorized to do so, either under FOIPP laws or with the consent of the individuals, and with whom?
4. Does your application of FOIPP laws create any barriers to accessing PSI activities for survivors that might give rise to an allegation of a discriminatory practice?

To-do List

- ☐ Develop a clear, plain language privacy and confidentiality statement for the survivor and PCH for use when a critical incident occurs that references provincial laws.
- ☐ Work through potential points of tension between your provincial human rights and privacy laws and seek to articulate a balance between the two.
- ☐ Develop a consent form to disclose additional information to be used as needed and on a case-by-case basis.

Care

Support-first is the foundation of response work. The PSI's initial concern must be for the community's safety and support for affected individuals. The primary concern of law enforcement is determining who is responsible for the harm and ensuring those

individuals(s) are held accountable in a court of law. This necessitates a focus on the person(s) responsible. On the other hand, the PSI's primary concern is to ensure that those subjected to sexual violence have the support they need and do not face barriers to continued participation in their learning environment. This is a survivor-centred approach. Whenever possible, any consideration of investigation and discipline within the PSI should be secondary and driven by the survivors' desire to make a complaint. When the safety of the learning environment is an issue, there are several options for the PSI, which may or may not include an investigation into the individual(s) responsible.

A solid RCI plan is the key to a smooth and caring response. In a unionized environment, it is important to recognize that grievances are not trauma-informed and can be very difficult for those affected by the incident. Careful consultation with the unions on the plan and taking their feedback seriously is an effective harm-reduction measure in that it can significantly reduce the potential for grievances.

Reflection Questions

1. How are you providing care for all people on campuses affected by the critical incident, including the survivor, first responders, family, faculty, community members, and students, i.e. providing information on trauma responses, opening up spaces in counselling?
2. What key supports must be in place for first responders?
3. What key support must be provided for witnesses?
4. What key supports must be in place for survivors?
5. Who will be on call to support those who disclose having been subjected to sexual violence?
    a. Whose role is it to help those affected understand what is happening, make contact with their families, connect them with medical attention, etc.?
6. How does your care plan put into practice your guiding principles?
7. Who will be on call to work with and support the PCH if their identity is known?

a. Whose role is it to help them understand what is happening, contact their families, etc.?

8. What measures can be put in place without a complaint or disciplinary process? What is within the scope of your policy?
9. What steps will you take when the survivor(s)do not want a disciplinary process to occur?
    a. Does the nature of the incident require you to call a supervisory body such as a professional college or children's services?
    b. What can you do instead to meet your obligation to provide an environment free from SV?
    c. What opportunities exist to investigate the conditions and context that allowed the incident to occur when the PCH is unknown, or the survivor does not want to participate in a disciplinary process?
    d. How might changes to the social and physical environment prevent future incidents?
    e. How does support for the person accused of causing harm decrease the risk of the complainant being subjected to further harm?
    f. Will calling the police prevent or cause further harm to the survivor? For instance, third-party reporting could result in police attending the PCH's residence, being unable to make an arrest, and ultimately putting the survivor at risk of retaliatory violence.

To-do List

- [ ] Identify resources to mobilize in support of offices such as the sexual violence support offices, offices, counselling offices, or workplace wellness, which may experience an influx of students, staff, and parents seeking information and support.
- [ ] Ensure student/employee emergency contact lists are up to date.

- [ ] Inform external community resources about the critical incident so that they can prepare for the potential increase in service demand.

Keep the plan current

Update the plan regularly, using the 5Cs, to ensure that the right people are named and ready to mobilize when needed.

Reflection Questions

1. Are your RCI team membership and contact lists up to date?
2. Can the RCI team members serve on the RCI team for the duration of the response, barring any unforeseen circumstances?
3. Who is in place to take over each role should an RCI team member be in a conflict or unable to participate?

Ensure that the RCI team member list and contact information are easily accessible in a shared file. Ensure RCI team contact list details and any information needed to activate the plan is included as a standing agenda item to be reviewed at all RCI team meetings.

To-do List

- [ ] Assign a person to check that the list of team members and contacts is up to date regularly, at a minimum, annually.
- [ ] Meet regularly to ensure the RCI plan is current, aligned with new and emerging best practices, and well understood.

During a Critical Incident

The following section will explore what the RCI team can do when called together to respond to a critical incident of sexual violence.

Convene

It is essential that sexual violence on campus is handled with care and compassion and that the response is well coordinated. The RCI team should convene as soon as they are informed of an incident. The team will need to gather relevant information, inform and maintain ongoing contact with senior leadership, and, most importantly, take action in accordance with their agreed-upon roles and responsibilities on the RCI team.

Once the RCI team convenes, members should be asked to declare any conflicts of interest. Members should also be asked if there are any barriers, professionally or personally, that may impact the member's ability to participate in the response. Ideally, once the RCI team convenes to respond to any incident, members should remain active in the response until completion. Switching members or roles midway through a response may compromise response times and require a transfer of knowledge in a crisis. If an RCI team member must step down from the team for any reason, a designate should be assigned and be given decision-making authority for the area the departing member represents at the table.

To-do List

- [ ] Identify any additional campus stakeholders that should be invited to the RCI team based on the nature of the incident. For instance, if the incident appears to target a certain group of students, is there an office that should be involved in the response such as the Equity Office, Residences, Indigenous Student Centre, or Academic Advising office?
- [ ] Schedule key meetings with the RCI team to ensure communication sharing and planning

Collaborate

Collaboration between team members during a critical incident response is vital. Be sure that each team member has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as an RCI team member before an incident arises. At least one individual on the RCI team must be equipped to assess the ongoing risk of the incident. This should be done in collaboration with all team members who hold access to information critical to the incident.

The RCI team can receive any critical information that staff are aware of that could inform the risk assessment. Staff assigned to act as a caseworker or support for the survivor(s) and PCH should be at the centre of this assessment. Include staff who have information about the incident as first responders, or staff who may be aware of patterns of behaviour such as Residence staff or Student Conduct staff. Be sure to ask about potential supports the survivor(s) or PCH may have that could be called upon for support. Sexual violence risk assessments require specific and collective understandings of many intersecting factors. Some are listed below:

- Recent, historical, or intergenerational trauma
- Patterns of intimate-partner violence such as the frequency and severity of incidents
- Potential for lethality or escalating violence – consider access to weapons, history of animal abuse, proficiency with computers etc.
- Where the survivor(s) and PCH live
- Current or historical stalking
- History of suicide attempts or ideation
- Mental health disorders
- Substance use
- Human trafficking

Currently, most institutions do not include a gender-based violence lens in their risk mitigation models. As such, Courage to Act has developed a national standardized risk assessment tool to assess cases of gender-based violence at PSIs which will be made publicly available in September 2023.

To-do List

- [ ] Initiate a risk assessment, where applicable.
- [ ] Ensure that the survivor and PCH (if applicable) understand what personal information must be disclosed, to whom, and how it will be used.
- [ ] Have the survivor sign consent to disclose forms, as necessary and/or available, to assist the RCI team in meeting their commitment to a survivor-centred response.
- [ ] Create a list of priorities for an immediate and short-term response, and assign a team member to be accountable for each one. Document any strategies for intermediate and long-term responses that will be attended to in the weeks that follow.

Coordinate

It is essential to take a coordinated approach to institutional processes such as interim or immediate measures, and information gathering for future potential investigations. Most investigations are initiated in response to a formal complaint via a complainant, typically an individual subjected to sexual violence after a critical incident.

However, institutions may be required to initiate information gathering or investigate when an incident is complex or high. The situations when a PSI will activate an investigation without a formal complaint from a survivor should be well documented in policy and widely communicated. Some institutional policies may indicate that a PSI-initiated complaint will occur, regardless of individual needs and wants when a broader campus safety issue is identified. Any information collected during a critical incident should be carefully documented for use in potential future investigations.

Some PSIs have formal agreements with police to provide information depending on the nature of the incident with permission from individuals impacted. With each critical incident, a risk assessment should be done to gauge the risk to individuals and the broader campus community. PSIs should have clearly established steps that can be taken to mitigate harm in the absence of a complaint or with limited information. Finally, it is critical that the institution takes responsibility for the safety of the PSI environment without

placing the burden on survivors to make a complaint about the PCH. PSIs should find ways to create safe environments without forcing survivors into investigations.

To-do List

- ☐ What are the most time-sensitive or priority needs? Does the RCI team need to amend responsibilities and expected timelines based on the incident?
- ☐ Activate campus community, law enforcement, and executive leadership to inform of the incident and carefully document any information collected.

Communicate

During a critical incident, clear consistent and trauma-informed communication is one of the most important aspects of your response. At this point, relevant information should have been gathered and messaging should be released to the PSI community. A designated spokesperson from the RCI team should be identified to communicate internally to senior (or central) leadership. A separate spokesperson should be communicating externally with the media and other external stakeholders.

Providing up-to-date information is critical. Communicating with those affected and the PSI community as a whole may be required if the RCI team has been made aware of new information that is critical to share e.g. the PCH has been arrested. Sharing information promptly and consistently is one way to decrease risk and further harm, mitigate trauma responses and build trust in the PSI's ability to manage a critical incident. Additionally, to avoid further re-traumatization or secondary trauma, maintain confidentiality and be trauma-informed if releasing information. Utilize the Use the Rights Words Guide to engage best practices for creating communications around sexual violence.

To-do list

- ☐ Check in with front-line staff to ensure they have the resources they need to meet demand and communicate any deficits to executive leadership.
- ☐ Review your communications before sending them to ensure they align with the principles in the “Communicate” section of your plan.

Care

It is imperative that supporting the survivor must be the PSI's first priority. Providing ongoing trauma-informed and wrap-around care is critical e.g. academic considerations and workplace accommodations. The RCI team should assign a point person to communicate with the survivor(s) to minimize further harm and confusion.

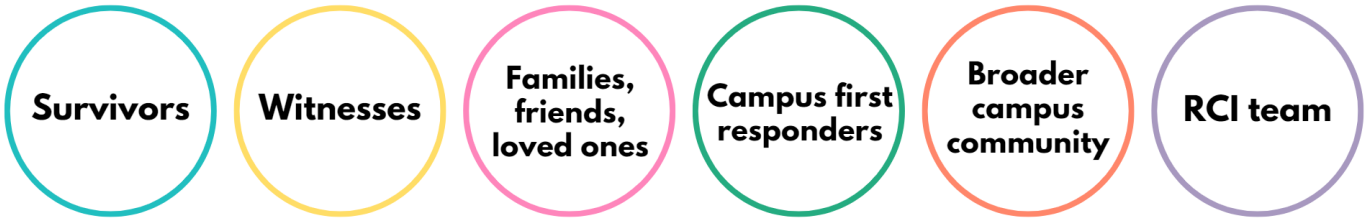
It is also imperative that the PCH is connected to support. Very often, hurt people hurt others. The PCH, if a campus community member, should be assigned a support person either from student services or HR.

The second group the RCI team must provide support to is witnesses, families, co-workers, friends and loved ones. They should have assigned a caseworker that can support them to access support both on and off campus.

The third group is campus first responders who attend to critical incidents. There must be support plans in place to help mitigate the impacts of vicarious trauma on their well-being. (See more below)

The fourth group is the broader campus community. Learning that harm has occurred on your campus can bring up lots of feelings including fear. Creating handouts, social media posts and in-person programming to attend to the impacts of trauma will help mitigate these impacts.

Individuals Affected by a Critical Incident



A note on Secondary Trauma

As responders to critical incidents of sexual violence, we hear about experiences of harm that have the potential to create a toll on our wellness. Secondary Trauma refers to the cumulative physiological and psychological impact that can occur when we are exposed to the trauma of others. There is a toll in the exposure to traumatic experiences in our roles responding to incidents of sexual violence, especially when we add it to the day-to-day stressful realities of our jobs and lives.

It is important to reflect on when we feel activated by stories we hear or how cases are being navigated. Using a trauma-informed approach means we need to acknowledge that at times our survival response (fight/flight/freeze/fawn) may be set in motion without us being fully conscious of it. It is our responsibility to reflect on the ways dysregulation shows up for us, and strategies to manage it, to ensure that our own trauma responses and activation do not impact how we respond to cases. Below are some questions to consider as a member of the RCI team.

Reflection Questions

1. What are your hot buttons or the GBV-related issues that you feel activated by?
2. How can you tell internally that you are activated (racing heart/ disassociating/ nausea/ tightness in the chest)?
3. What are your external 'go to' activated responses (urgency/ lashing out/withdrawing or shutting down/ crying)?
4. When you get activated, what are your best strategies for regulating yourself in the moment?
5. How do you know when you need to pause the conversation to either check in with yourself or someone else?
6. What are some strategies you can implement, after the fact, to take care of your wellness?

("Trauma-Informed Approaches to Working with those Impacted by Gender-Based Violence," S. Scanlon, personal communication via online training, April 2022).

We would strongly recommend anyone engaging in gender-based violence critical incident response to access collective or individual therapeutic support. Secondary Trauma can create significant impacts on our lives as responders and it is critical for response staff to have access to trauma-informed counselling support.

To-do List

- [ ] Assign a case manager/care coordinator to each person directly affected by the critical incident.
- [ ] Assign a case manager/care coordinator to the PCH, if their identity is known and that person is a member of the PSI community.
- [ ] Contact nearby hospitals for referrals if anyone requires medical attention or has sustained an injury.
- [ ] Identify any workplace injuries that need immediate attention; alert the health and safety unit or human resources.
- [ ] Check-in with case workers (survivor and PCH, if applicable) often to debrief and consult.
- [ ] Advise individuals impacted by the harm of support services and accommodations available to them.
- [ ] Connect with community supports such as your local sexual assault centre so they can prepare for potential increased demand in service.

After a Critical Incident

A critical incident can have immediate and long-lasting effects. Critical incident responses need to happen quickly and do not often leave time for reflecting and learning from your actions. This section explores how to take care of your RCI team and improve the response for the next critical incident.

Convene

Create a space on campus for the RCI team to debrief with an external counsellor as a group. Focused not on what happens next but on how the incident impacted the team. It is critical to address vicarious trauma to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue. RCI team members must be able to acknowledge the impact of bearing witness to violence and its impacts as well as being responsible for resolving complex traumatic situations. There must be a separate session for campus first responders such as security and sexual violence support workers, to debrief the impact of witnessing harm. They must be provided space to grieve, heal and debrief with their peers.

Once the RCI team has had time to decompress and attend to vicarious trauma, it is important to bring them together to review what did and did not work in the critical incident response. Bring a trauma-informed external facilitator to lead this debrief. Offer multiple ways for RCI members to provide feedback, as these incidents can be highly traumatic. No response to a critical incident can ever be perfect, and there is much to learn from everyone.

Reflection Questions

1. How did the response meet the guiding principles set out in the TOR? How did it not?
2. What practices would you stop, start, and continue?
3. Were there specific challenges you encountered?
4. What have you heard from the community regarding the PSI's response?
5. How did you ensure a support-first model?

6. What would you do differently in the future?
7. Is the composition of the RCI team sufficient, or should others be involved in the planning and the response?
8. What steps need to be taken now to update the plan?
9. What steps need to be taken now to prevent similar critical incidents in the future?
10. What, if any, are the current needs of the first responders that need to be addressed immediately? In the longer term?

To-do List

- [ ] Create a list of trauma therapists that could lead group discussions with the RCI group and one with campus first responders.
- [ ] Schedule a healing space for first responders and RCI members within 5 days of the critical incident.
- [ ] Schedule an RCI team to debrief within 30 days of the incident.

Collaborate

The critical incident response likely involved a number of units and individuals across campus. Check in with the offices and individuals involved in the response as part of your follow-up. It would be helpful to have an external consultant support this process.

Reflection Questions

1. How did they feel about how they were included (or excluded)?
2. Did they feel that the critical incident response was effective?
3. Did the collaboration execution of the RCI plan align with the guiding principles?
4. Did they feel overwhelmed, or properly prepared to deal with the incident?
5. What would they do differently?
6. What would they ask the RCI team to do to improve the response for next time?

7. Were there areas where they were underutilized and could have offered more or different kinds of support?

To-do List

- [ ] Follow up with all units involved in the response within 30 days of the critical incident
- [ ] Ensure your PSI conducts annual safety audits with relevant campus and community partners

Coordinate

Coordinate PSI internal investigations

It's important to note that a PSI, under some circumstances, can conduct their own internal policy and/or workplace health and safety investigations, both of which are independent of any police investigation.

Once an incident is over and the community has been given access to appropriate support, the PSI can turn its attention to whether a policy breach occurred. A policy breach happens when:

1. The person who caused harm was a member of the PSI community and subject to PSI policy;
2. The conduct in question was prohibited in the policy, and
3. The PSI has jurisdiction to act, for example, the incident happened on campus or had a real and substantial link to the learning and/or working environment.

Policy investigations are often initiated by a complaint by a survivor or other individual with knowledge about the incident to the PSI. However, as a trauma-informed measure, the PSI should not make assumptions about a survivor's willingness or readiness to make a complaint. Shortly after the incident, it is important to advise a survivor of the options open to them and provide information about those options. Critically, it is important to allow the survivor to choose their own path and not pressure them to make a complaint. If they do choose to do so, ensure that the process is procedurally fair, trauma-informed, and take

steps to reduce any inevitable harm arising from the sexual violence and the process. Refer to A Comprehensive Guide to Campus Gender-Based Violence Complaints for specific strategies.

Where a survivor opts not to make a complaint, the incident may be serious enough for the PSI to initiate a policy investigation itself. Again, the process must be trauma-informed, procedurally fair and reduce harm wherever possible. Where a survivor and/or witness have decided not to engage, they should not be pressured to participate. In some cases, where there is little physical or documentary evidence, it may not be possible to find that an individual has violated policy. However, an investigation can also identify the conditions and context that might have allowed the incident to occur and highlight opportunities for future prevention.

A second type of PSI investigation may also be required under occupational health and safety legislation where the incident took place in the context of a workplace and where at least one of the parties involved was a worker. While a policy investigation focuses on an individual under allegation, with discipline for that person as a possible outcome, a workplace health and safety investigation regards sexual violence as a workplace hazard to be managed, mitigated and prevented in the future through corrective actions by the employer. In other words, a policy investigation looks at the actions of a single individual and a workplace investigation examines the environment in which those actions were allowed to occur.

The two PSI investigations can happen concurrently but should be separate, with their respective purposes carefully articulated and with little to no overlap; however, there are opportunities for coordination between the two.

For example, where the workplace safety investigator identifies that a specific person has been the cause of the hazard, that information can be provided back and investigated under the sexual violence policy. Likewise, where a policy investigator uncovers conditions conducive to future sexual violence, such as a lack of training about the policy or a high tolerance for sexist comments, that information could be shared with the health and safety unit for corrective action. Additionally, in a case in which discipline was imposed after a

policy investigation, that information (without any names or identifying details) can be included in an OHS report as part of the corrective action taken.

Debrief coordination efforts

Finally, it is important for a PSI to review the effectiveness of its coordination with external agencies involved in a critical incident, such as law enforcement, fire and ambulance response, healthcare, and community organizations. Such a review should be done in debrief with those agencies wherever possible, both to strengthen relationships between the PSI and the agency and to improve practice for future critical incidents.

Reflection Questions

1. Did your MOUs with external agencies cover everything you needed them to?
2. Did your response align with your guiding principles?
3. Do you need to revisit any MOUs to account for unforeseen circumstances?
4. Were there any areas of overlap or gaps that caused confusion?

To-do List

- [ ] Review your MOUs and coordination documents to identify any updates needed.

Communicate

Because communications feature so prominently in how survivors, staff, and the public react to a critical incident, a full review is important. Transparency and timely communication build trust in the institution and its ability to respond appropriately to critical incidents. Consider how the RCI team communicated internally, the effects of the messages on the community, and the clarity of the messages to the individuals directly affected by the incident and their families.

Reflection Questions

1. Was the plan well understood and communicated?
2. Did the team come together with a consistent message?

3. Did campus communications align with the RCI guiding principles?
4. Were there any conflicting messages that arose?
5. How were the communications to the community received?
6. Were there any unanticipated (positive or negative) effects of the communications?
7. Did the media coverage help or hinder the critical incident response?
8. What messages were well received and beneficial? What could have been communicated better?
9. Are there any other documents or resources that could be prepared ahead of time to facilitate more timely communications?

To-do List

- [ ] Release follow-up information or updates as necessary to reassure the community that they are safe.
- [ ] Update templates and other communications tools to reflect lessons learned.

Care

While sexual violence incidents can deeply affect those directly involved in the incident, those who participate in the institutional response may also have unmet needs as a result of their involvement. Additional harm caused by factors such as criminal investigations requires both follow-ups with those affected. Ongoing support for those involved with criminal investigations should be provided in accordance with PSI policy as needed.

Reflection Questions

1. Did the survivor and PCH (if known and a campus community member) receive referrals to the supports they needed, whether or not they chose to use them?
2. Besides those directly involved, who on your campus may have been affected by the incident? What kind of support or debriefing do they need?
3. Are there designated staff who can facilitate group counselling and debriefing sessions?

a. If not, is there a community-based organization that can lead the facilitation?

4. Does your plan ensure that long-term access to group counselling is possible?
5. What further support, collaboration and communication do external community supports, such as sexual assault centres, need from your campus in order to meet the demand for service that the critical incident created?

To-do List

- ☐ Arrange trauma-informed individual counselling, identity-based or trauma-specific group counselling and debriefing sessions for survivors, witnesses, friends, and front-line staff.
- ☐ Hold town hall sessions where community members can come together and ask questions about responses, impacts and support.
- ☐ Ensure you are providing ongoing workplace accommodations and academic considerations.
- ☐ Ensure long-term support is available for staff and faculty in addition to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).
- ☐ Host a meeting with external community support services to learn about the impact the critical incident and response had on their work.

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Appendix A: Chart Template - Sample distinction between roles of PSI and law enforcement (police, RCMP, etc.)

	PSI	Law enforcement
Role		
Physical evidence		
Documentary evidence		
Building access		

Safety measures (immediate)		
Safety measures (longer term)		

Appendix B: Communications Chart Template

[Incident/ date]	RCI team Liaison	Contact Name(s)	Frequency	Channel	Template(s)
RCI Team internal communications	All	List team member names	As needed	Group Chat (link)	
Executive Leadership	[RCI designated team member]	Dr. Jeremiah Shaw (Vice Provost-Students)	Hourly at first, move to daily as needed	Email to viceprovoststudents@PSI.ca	
Key Areas, as applicable in the critical incident	[RCI designated team member]	[name], Residence Life [name], Libraries [name], cafeteria [name], etc.	As new information becomes available	[add email addresses]	Critical incident Current state document (link)
Directly affected & families	[RCI designated team member]			[add email addresses]	Consent to disclose specific information to specific individuals (link)
Campus Community	[RCI designated team member]	[name], Community Relations	As needed	Campus alert system	Critical incident information update (link), Critical incident safety alert

					(link), Critical incident update (link)
Parents	[RCI designated team member]	[add names]		[add email addresses]	Critical incident plan info and available supports (link)
Media	[RCI designated team member]	[name], Media Relations	As needed	Media outlet	Key messages (link), Press release (link)