

After the Crisis

- Develop a re-entry plan for staff and consumers at the affected site.
- Provide consumer and employee counseling, if appropriate.
- Provide follow-up information to media.
- Recognize good reporting. Send a note complimenting accurate reporting.
- Review the crisis and evaluate the effectiveness of the communications plan. Write a report for future reference.



Crisis Communication Plan

Interview Tips

There is a “window of vulnerability,” a period of time between the occurrence of an emergency and the time it takes to get organized to not only manage the crisis itself, but also to be in a position to effectively communicate about it. There is a time in which families, employees, politicians, regulators, consumers and the media are going to want answers. Don’t be surprised by how many demands there are for information from many different sources, how fast the demands for information hit and how long it takes to respond.

Often media attention itself can be the crisis. A serious incident may be picked up by the press and sensationalized, damaging and threatening to destroy the public trust in Imagine!. There is also a risk of violating HIPPA and other legal obligations regarding confidentiality. By effectively working with the media, we can keep serious incidents from getting worse, and can actually enhance public relations and communications.

This is not an operational crisis management manual. It is a “Crisis Communications Plan” designed to facilitate responsible people in taking appropriate and timely actions. How well we do operationally in managing the crisis is of paramount importance, but how well we communicate about the crisis is extremely important, too. In a crisis situation, the vast majority of people will judge Imagine! on reports from the news media.

An interview is an opportunity to quickly distribute vital information to a great number of people—the general public, families and advocates, employees and government regulators. The need to respond quickly and from the location of the emergency may precede by hours the ability of administration or a public relations staff to prepare a statement. Therefore, those on the spot must be prepared to act quickly.

If we don’t appear to be in control, the media will take over the story and show our organization as unprepared to respond to an incident that they will portray as avoidable regardless of whether it was or not. The following interview tips may be helpful:

- Be yourself. Be calm, confident and courteous.
- Know the reporter’s name and use it. Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- In general, the tougher the question, the shorter your answer and calmer your demeanor should be.
- Repeat key messages.
- If a question is not clear, ask for it to be restated.
- If you do not have information, explain why and when you will have the information. Don’t pretend or hedge around questions for which you do not have an answer.
- Stay away from negative phrasing such as “I did not do it.” It just reinforces the negative and sounds like you are hiding something.
- Be prepared to back up what you say with documentation.
- Make sure your response reflects your concern and your professionalism.
- Consider your body language.
- Who is your audience? Parents, community members, consumers? Prepare your statement for them, not for the reporter.
- Provide information the audience needs.

Communication Crisis Dos and Don'ts

Dos:

- Announce bad news yourself so you can have control.
- Consider public meetings.
- Designate a spokesperson and, whenever possible, refer inquires to that person.
- Tell the truth—never make up an answer.
- Be yourself.
- Anticipate questions and develop your answers.
- Release only confirmed facts.
- Be concise.
- Show concern—be especially sensitive to those directly involved.
- Defuse negatives.
- Remain calm.
- Return all calls from the media as soon as possible.
- Determine reporter deadlines and work with them.
- Provide updates to media, families and employees.

Don'ts

- Don't speculate.
- Don't overstate or understate.
- Don't talk "off the record" - assume everything you say will be printed or broadcast.
- Don't be thrown by hostile questions.
- Don't give an exclusive to one journalist.
- Don't reveal proprietary information.
- Don't place blame.
- Don't be defensive.
- **Don't ever use the words "no comment."**

Communications Crisis Checklist

- 1. Secure the site and stabilize the situation**
 - Determine the extent of the crisis and determine the necessary actions to ensure the safety of persons and property.
 - Call proper authorities including fire, police or ambulance.
- 2. Notify your supervisor**
 - Your supervisor will determine if it appropriate to contact the Executive Director.
 - If necessary, the Executive Director will designate a spokesperson. The spokesperson should be knowledgeable, believable, articulate and **available**. Refer all media to the designated spokesperson.
- 3. Assess the situation**
 - Confirm the facts.
 - Investigate rumors.
 - Identify and locate witnesses.
 - Analyze information.
- 4. Prepare a written statement** (see page 5 for tips)
 - Release confirmed facts.
 - Provide background information.
 - Communicate positive actions and concerns.
- 5. Inform families, next of kin**
 - Be sure to notify families before names are released to the media.
- 6. Respond to media and coordinate coverage**
 - Alert front desk and appropriate employees.
 - Refer all calls to designated spokesperson.
 - Adapt communications plan to actual events.
 - Practice **Dos** and **Don'ts** (see page 6).
- 7. Inform employees**
 - Changes in operations, schedules and hours.
 - Duration of the disruption.
 - Extent of the problem.
 - Refer all outside calls to the designated spokesperson.

Emergency Line of Command

In the event of a communications emergency, spokespersons for Imagine! during the implementation of the Imagine! Crisis Communications Plan include the following:

	Work #	Cell #
Rebecca Novinger	720) 399-4190	(571) 314-2384
Fred Hobbs	(720) 274-2249	(720) 982-8652

Incident Report Form

The communications crisis checklist on page three recommends preparing a written statement. This form can help you gather and organize information that can be used as an internal document to prepare that statement and provide further information and confirmed facts as the crisis unfolds.

Type of Event: (for example, vehicular, natural disaster, death of client, etc) _____

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident: _____

Initial Report of Incident Received From: _____

Location of Incident (be specific): _____

Description of Initial Event and How it Happened:

Identify Each Person Injured:

List Witnesses:

Notifications Made:

Comments/Other Information:
