
Administrative Procedure 159 - Crisis Communication Plan

Background

It is essential that the Crisis Communication Plan outline which individuals or departments will play a role in devising and presenting the communication response to a crisis in the Division and which groups are to be the recipients of that information.

Definition

Crisis: A situation or event that threatens the integrity, primary role, safety or reputation of the Division and its students and staff. These situations could be any kind of legal dispute, major accident, fire, theft, man made disaster or similar event that directly impacts the organization, and its public perception. It is important to recognize that this definition is not all encompassing but rather is designed to outline the general framework that will trigger the communication plan.

Procedures

1. The Crisis Communication Team

- 1.1 There is to be only one spokesperson for the Division during the handling of the crisis situation. In most cases this role would be taken by the Superintendent but in their absence this role is to fall to the acting Superintendent or another agreed upon individual. For example, this role could fall to the Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or the Secretary-Treasurer of the Division.
 - 1.1.1 In conjunction with this role, the Division is to be aware that the media may want to interview or speak to other members of the Division who have been impacted by the crisis. This practice will be discouraged by this Administrative Procedure to ensure that consistent, accurate and up-to-date information is presented to the various receiving audiences around the crisis situation.
- 1.2 The spokesperson will request information from appropriate levels of the Division and provide them with specific tasks in relation to the crisis situations. For example, in the event of a bus accident the Superintendent would stay in constant communication with the Director of Transportation Services and request that they be updated at periodic intervals or as new information becomes available.
 - 1.2.1 The spokesperson will, in certain situations, garner advice and/or commentary from legal or specialized services to aid in the communication process.
- 1.3 The primary recipients of the information would be the media at the outset of the crisis situation but the communication structure would also keep the trustees, staff and

parents updated on the developing events as well as the appropriate authorities overseeing the operations of the Division (Alberta Education would be an example).

2. The Guiding Principles for the Crisis Communication Format

Any type of crisis is to be handled in a consistent manner, not only to ensure the reputation of the Division is maintained but also to provide information in a highly organized and efficient manner. In accord with that premise the following procedures will be utilized:

- 2.1 Our information relative to the crisis situation is to be presented in an honest and forthright manner, keeping in mind that certain information may need to be held in abeyance for a certain period of time. For example, there may be information around specific individuals that will need some form of approval before its release, or information from policing agencies that cannot be shared with the general public. In the majority of cases the spokesperson will note this to the inquiring audience and simply state that this information is not currently available for disclosure.
- 2.2 All media inquiries will be honored in the most adaptable time frame possible. In certain situations the demands of the media outlets will be such that an immediate response to each inquiry is not possible but every attempt will be made to follow up as quickly as events allow.
- 2.3 When media interactions include a request to visit or tour the site of a crisis situation there will need to be recognition that these may not always be open to accommodation. In certain circumstances, for example a fire in a building, there may be other agencies that have primary control of the site and as such it would be inappropriate for the spokesperson to suggest to the media that they can tour a building or be in an inappropriate place relative to the crisis situation.
- 2.4 In most circumstances a prepared statement will not be available at the outset of the crisis situation. However, in an appropriate time frame, and in the context of the need for such a statement, the Division will prepare a statement outlining the events that comprised the crisis and distribute to the requesting audiences.
- 2.5 All communication will be based on the two core principles underlying the operation of the Division; those being a foundational commitment to the safety of all students and staff as well as a commitment to the highest levels of integrity and trustworthiness of the Division.

Reference: Education Act Section 33, 52, 53, 55, 67, 68, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225, 256
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

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