

Crisis Communications Strategies:

Effective methods for
communicating during a crisis

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What is “Crisis Communications”?

- Managing the internal and external communication of a crisis situation
- Examples of a crisis requiring communication:
 - ✦ Employee actions leading to negative results
 - ✦ Responding to publically known high profile and confidential cases
- Everyone in the CAC industry is susceptible to a crisis communications situation
- Preparation and anticipation are key to effective crisis communications

What is “Issues Management”?

- The ongoing management of potential issues to avoid crises from developing
- Anticipating potential problems before they erupt
- Being prepared with a Crisis Communications Plan:
 - ✦ A step-by-step plan for communicating a crisis upon “eruption”
 - ✦ Template messaging that can be applied to anticipated situations
 - ✦ A prepared, knowledgeable, and available spokesperson

The Value of Proactive Public Relations

- The establishment of “reputational capital”
- Developing positive and mutually beneficial relationships with the media
- Establishing credibility as subject matter experts in the field of child abuse intervention and prevention
- Supporting NCA’s ongoing media outreach and national initiatives

Strategic Principles of Crisis Communications

1. The Principle of Existing Relationships

- + During a “crisis situation,” communicate with all affected stakeholders and constituent groups
- + Leverage positive relationships and rely on reputational capital

2. The Principle of Media as an Ally

- + Utilize the media through open communication to serve as an outlet for reaching target audiences
- + Ongoing, proactive, positive media relations can help set the stage for a positive working relationship in times of crises

3. The Principle of Quick Response

- + Have your messaging ready quickly by observing the “One Hour Rule”

Strategic Principles of Crisis Communications (continued)

4. The Principle of Full Disclosure

- ✦ Be as transparent as possible, while always respecting confidentiality restraints
- ✦ Have messaging ready in regards to confidentiality, available information, and next steps

5. The Principle of “One Voice”

- ✦ Contain and train your spokesperson
- ✦ If multiple spokespersons are required, be sure to establish an open line of communication between the spokespersons and the internal trainer
- ✦ Coordinate the message

Suggested Elements of the NCA Member Crisis Communications Plan

1. File a Critical Incident Report with NCA
2. Evaluate the situation by answering key questions
3. Alert Barefoot PR if media attention is anticipated
4. Develop targeted messaging for each affected/
potentially interested audience
5. Train your spokesperson(s) with key talking points

The Response Process

Step 1: File a Critical Incident Report with NCA

What is a critical incident?

- Serious violations of law or regulations
- Significant changes in operation resulting in non-compliance with NCA standards for accredited members
- External impact that may result in negative media attention, negative legislative or regulatory attention, or other attention that may negatively impact the CAC/NCA brand

The Response Process

Step 1: File a Critical Incident Report with NCA (*continued*)

The filing process:

- CAC Director/Board Chair/or other senior personnel must file the report within 24 hours of learning of the incident
 - ✦ First – notify NCA’s Director of Member Relations and Grants (primary point of contact between reporting CAC and NCA)
 - ✦ Second – Submit the Critical Incident Report form to Irina Hein (ihein@nca-online.org)
- CAC must make follow-up reports at a minimum of every 3 months (or more frequently if requested by NCA) until the matter has been resolved
- Upon resolution, a final report must be filed

The Response Process

Step 2:

Evaluate the situation by answering key questions

- Who are the key players involved?
- Of your various audiences, who will be affected and who will require communication?
- Is there a chance for media interest?

The Response Process

Step 3:

Alert Barefoot PR if media attention is anticipated

- We are here to support your communication with the media
- Utilize our experience with these types of situations and ask for advice on how to respond to media requests
- The earlier we know what's going on, the better we can help

The Response Process

Step 4:

Develop targeted messaging for each affected/ potentially interested audience

- All messaging during times of a crisis should be:
 - ✦ **Clear**
 - ✦ **Consistent**
 - ✦ **Concise**
- Be as transparent as possible while communicating confidentiality restrictions
- Remain positive and open – and NEVER just say “no comment”
- Always share next steps

The Response Process

Step 5:

Train your spokesperson(s) with key talking points

- Know who your spokesperson(s) is and ensure he/she/they are always available until the crisis has reached a resolution
- Prepare **clear, consistent, and concise** talking points for your spokesperson(s)
- Establish open lines of communication between your spokesperson(s), your internal “trainer,” and all affected parties
- Ensure your spokesperson is comfortable and prepared to speak with the media

NCA's Crisis Communications Resources Page for Members

[http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/
CrisisCommunicationsMemberResources](http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/CrisisCommunicationsMemberResources)

- Located in the Members Only Section of NCA's website
- Includes:
 - ✦ NCA's Policy on Critical Incident Reporting
 - ✦ NCA's Critical Incident Report (downloadable Word Doc)
 - ✦ Slides and recording of the Crisis Communications Webinar
 - ✦ NCA's Media Training Guide
 - ✦ Sample of a "Critical Incident Preparation and Response Plan" (*produced by the Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center*)

Media Training Tips

Cardinal Rules for Media Interviews:

1. Know what you want to communicate – no more than 3 main points
2. Know how to phrase these points in a **clear**, **consistent**, and **concise** manner
3. Try to express these points in the first **3 minutes** of the interview

Any Questions?

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