

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Practical Documents

A. University Crisis Response: A Practical Checklist

The following checklist was developed to facilitate an effective crisis response *during*, and in the aftermath of, a university-based crisis. This list will require modification to address the nature of the crisis situation and should not take the place of competent professional services. By reaching our college families early, we can potentially prevent the *acute* stress reactions of today from becoming the *chronic* stress disorders of tomorrow.

I. Fact Gathering

- Notify the Director of Student Affairs or Student Services (or the equivalent)
- Clarify facts surrounding the crisis
- Contact college administration
- Contact parents/guardians (of individuals involved/affected)
 - Obtain consent for release of information
- Contact Director of Public Safety, police and/or fire department
- Contact Director of Physical Plant and/or Building and Grounds
- Director of Student Affairs or Student Services consults with Director of Public Safety/Campus

Police and/or Director of Counseling Center and Psychological Services to determine the appropriateness of assembling the Crisis Response Team

II. The Call to Action

- Assemble the Crisis Response Team
- Share facts with team members and assess the impact of the crisis
 - When did the event occur (e.g., during an intersession, over the summer)?
 - Where did the event occur (e.g., on campus)?
 - How did it happen (e.g., accidental, intentional, expected)?
 - How many students and staff are affected by the event?
 - Which students and staff are affected?
 - How are the students and staff affected?
 - How are the university personnel responding?
 - Should classes be suspended temporarily or assignments altered?
 - Should students be released from the university?
 - How are students indirectly being affected (e.g., siblings/friends at other buildings in the university, etc.)?
- Determine if additional support services are needed (e.g., psychologists/social workers/counselors from the community)
 - Weigh efficacy of “unknown” professionals
 - Provide identification badges for these outside professionals
- Director of Student Affairs to consider the provision of alternative/replacement faculty
- Consult with department directors or chairpersons
- Update university administration

III. Notification Procedures

- Consider:
 - an announcement to students and faculty,
 - an assembly or gathering in a lecture hall,
 - a mailbox or e-mailed memorandum to faculty and staff,
 - posting on university or college website
 - announcement on college radio or television station,
 - an emergency faculty meeting (first thing in the morning for those on-campus), and
 - notification to students in select locations by the Crisis Response Team.

IV. Crisis Response Team in Motion

- Administrators and security circulate through the campus.
 - “Pockets” of grieving students should be directed to location of support personnel
- All staff can utilize the *Acute Traumatic Stress Management* model.
 - “Connect, Ground, Support, Normalize and Prepare”
- Team members should visit selected dormitories and lecture facilities to provide opportunity for discussion.
- Professors and Instructors should allow opportunity for students to ventilate.
- Counseling with individuals and small groups by psychologists, social workers and/or counselors.
 - Attempt to cultivate a “helping relationship” characterized by empathy, warmth and genuineness.
 - Encourage people to express their feelings.
 - Be careful not to lecture and allow periods of silence.
 - Avoid cliches such as, “Be strong...” and “You’re doing so well...”
Such cliches may only serve to reinforce an individual’s feelings of aloneness.
 - Attempt to “normalize” grief reactions.
 - Remember that cultural differences exist in the overt expression of emotions.
 - Maintaining confidentiality, when possible, is crucial.
 - Provide snacks (e.g., juice, cookies, etc.) to students and support staff.
 - It is important to remember that *we* have support while helping others during this difficult time.
- Identify high risk individuals.
- Contact parents, spouses and families of high risk students.
- Provide referrals for outside support (if indicated).
- Provide hot-line numbers.
- Carefully document events.
- Schedule follow-up by support personnel for high risk individuals.
- Schedule faculty /departmental /staff meetings.
- Remain sensitive to how team members are being perceived.

V. Addressing the Media

- Director of Communications/Media Relations consults with university administration.
- Develop a response - consider confidentiality, family wishes, liability of erroneous information.
- Designate a spokesperson - “no one else talks.”
- Designate alternate spokesperson.

VI. Debriefing

- Review the events of the day.
- Revise the intervention strategies (e.g., plan for upcoming days).
- Monitor reactions of crisis team members - “compassion fatigue.”

VII. Funeral

- Consider the wishes of the students’ family.
- Consider the wishes of the victim(s) family regarding attendance.
- Consider the number of staff attending.
- Have support personnel available there.

VIII. Memorials

- Consider appropriateness.
- Consider a method:
 - a moment of silence
 - a plaque
 - planting a tree
 - a dedication
 - mural
 - flying university flags at half-mast