



United Way of Marion County

Crisis Communication Plan

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United Way of Marion County's Crisis Communication Plan Overview

I. Purpose

A crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communication within the organization, and externally between the United Way and its donors, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or controversial issue.

A crisis is defined as a significant disturbance in the organization's activities which result in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny and which has the potential to cause long-term public relations damage.

This plan not only addresses media relations and communication issues, but also includes procedures for the rapid identification of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to the situations quickly and effectively.

It is the goal of this crisis communication plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that staff is familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the normal decision making hierarchy of the organization and does not supplant that decision-making process.

The crisis communication plan that has been developed will serve as a step-by-step guide to manage communications in response to a crisis situation. As stewards of our brand, our employees are best suited to tell our story. Key staff members will be trained in the coming months, and annually thereafter, to work with reporters and to effectively represent our organization in a crisis situation.

II. Possible Crisis

The possible crises that the United Way of Marion County, its staff, its volunteers and its donors could encounter fall into general categories. These categories and examples are cited here in attempt to anticipate the kinds of crises that are possible or likely, helping to remove the element of surprise and to provide more complete preparation. The examples are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the types of crises that could be encountered.

A. Natural Disasters (Refer to coordination with ESF 15)

Examples: flooding, tornadoes, wildfires

B. Criminal or legal action

Examples: staff or volunteer charged with a crime, sexual harassment lawsuit or wrongful termination action brought against United Way of Marion County

C. Violent acts, demonstrations, death or violent injuries

Examples: hostage situation, demonstrations against United Way, staff injured or killed while traveling

D. Personnel crises

Examples: resignation or firing of staff member, staff member hospitalized, staff member accused of sexual misconduct

E. Perceived crises

Examples: misunderstanding of a United Way position or action

F. Financial crises

Examples: embezzlement by a staff member or volunteer, failure of a bank that holds United Way funds, United Way funding dropping sharply

III Objectives of the Plan

- A. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
- B. To assemble a Staff Crisis Team that will make recommendations on appropriate responses.
- C. To implement immediate actions to:
 - Identify audiences that should be informed about the situation
 - Communicate facts about the crisis
 - Minimize rumors
 - Restore order and debrief necessary audiences

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives:

In the first few hours of a crisis, it is especially important to establish our United Way as a source for accurate information and to demonstrate that we have taken decisive action to address the issue at hand. We will cooperate with all media contacts and the authorities as always, ensuring that our Board members, contributors, partner agencies and staff know the facts and what is being done to address the issue.

Hour 1:

- Alert president about the incident/situation. (Staff Listing, appendix ____)
- Alert vice president of public relations and marketing about the incident/situation. (Staff listing, appendix ____)
- Obtain confirmed details about the incident/situation. (Worksheet, appendix ____)
- Alert Executive Committee members, informing them about incident/situation. (List, appendix ____)
- Activate Communications Committee, alerting them about incident/situation. (List to be added to appendices once committee is developed)
- Alert staff crisis team members, informing them about the incident/situation. (Direct reports form, appendix ____)
- Prepare to communicate about the incident/situation.
- Appoint a spokesperson.
Order of responsibility:
 1. President
 2. Board chair
 3. Vice President, public relations and marketing
 4. Key direct report (dependent on issue at hand)
- Alert communications assistant/receptionist where to direct reporters or telephone calls.
- Prepare key message statement. (Worksheet, appendix ____)
- Obtain key message statement approvals.
- Distribute key message statement as appropriate.
- Update & copy Facility Fact Sheet and have it ready for the media. (See appendix ____)
- Appoint a staff member to prepare the Media Briefing Room. (Conference Room B)
- Appoint a staff member to monitor and collect local media reports about the incident. (Worksheet, appendix ____)

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives

Hour 2:

- ❑ Alert employees, informing them about the incident/situation. (Staff listing, appendix ____)

Keep in mind that the media is likely to obtain copies of any communications you have with employees. It is important to be certain that any details you share with staff about the crisis are the same as those you share with the media.

- ❑ Alert remaining Board members, informing them about the incident. (See List, appendix ____)
- ❑ Gather information and feedback about the situation from external sources.
- ❑ Appoint staff to escort media representatives and/or photographers.
- ❑ Keep a record of all media inquiries. (See form, appendix ____)
- ❑ Update key messages as new information/actions develop. (See worksheet, appendix ____)
- ❑ Develop list of “Frequently Asked Questions” – and answers – develop a type-written list of the Q&A and make it available to all crisis communication team members. Post the list to the website for referral.
- ❑ Determine if a news release is required or if the key message statement is sufficient.
- ❑ Prepare news release (if necessary) from key message statement.
- ❑ Distribute news release.
- ❑ Post news release or key message statement on website.
- ❑ Assign staff to support reporters with faxing and calls.
- ❑ Distribute Facility Fact Sheet and packet of pertinent information to each reporter.
- ❑ The vice president of public relations and marketing or assigned staff should review and evaluate all local media coverage of the incident, making sure to log what is in the reports – noting presence of key messages and tone of the report. Identify emerging issues. Ask media to correct any significant inaccuracies in reporting. (Publicity Placement form, appendix ____ – develop a binder for coverage).
- ❑ Monitor the internet for developing issues and proper coverage.
- ❑ Include all media and internet monitoring in the Publicity Placement binder.
- ❑ Assess personnel and equipment needs.

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives

Hour 3:

- ❑ Continue to update the key message statement.
- ❑ Update employee communications as needed.
- ❑ Management team meets to review progress, developments and emerging issues.
- ❑ Assess the need for assistance from a local public relations firm or other outside counsel.

Suggested contacts:

(Fill in contact information in advance.)

- ❑ Schedule media briefing if appropriate. (Appendix ____)
- ❑ Issue a media advisory regarding media briefing. (Appendix ____)
- ❑ Prepare press kits for media briefing.
- ❑ If appropriate – research any similar incidents involving other organizational members or other agencies and how they were handled. Prepare a background briefing for management team.
- ❑ Suggest president meet with local officials as appropriate.

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives

Hour 4:

- ❑ Continue to revise information.
- ❑ Rotate spokesperson.

Typically the first three to four hours of a crisis are the most stressful in terms of media contacts and media relations. It is a prudent move to rotate spokespersons at this time. The director of public relations and marketing should continuously monitor fatigue issues of those representing United Way of Marion County.

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives

Hour 5

- ❑ Update management team on media coverage and developing issues.
- ❑ Update and redistribute key message statement with new developments and actions.
- ❑ Assess the food and lodging needs for the management team if extended office hours are needed.
- ❑ Establish contact with on site manager and distribute a packet that will include key messages statement, news releases (if any) as well as any support materials necessary to brief them.
- ❑ Assign spokesperson for Day 2.
- ❑ Establish time for a situation update with the management team in the morning of Day 2.
- ❑ Assign an overnight communications contact and distribute that individual's contact information (including cellular telephone and fax).
- ❑ Forward all media calls to overnight contact.

Undertake Day One Review

- ❑ Review initial response and resolve and unresolved issues.
- ❑ Review media and Internet coverage for any developing issues that have yet to be resolved.
- ❑ Work with management team to address any unresolved issues that appear.
- ❑ Update and redistribute key message statement to reflect any of actions addressing the unresolved issues.

Crisis Communication Plan Objectives

Day Two until Issue Closure:

- ❑ Maintain pro-active, open communications with the media.

Ensure that the level of communication continues to meet the needs of the situation. Ask yourself if you are over-communicating or under-communicating to a given audience and make any necessary corrections. Begin to shift communications from reactive to proactive.

- ❑ Identify and resolve any emerging issues.
- ❑ Continue to update and distribute key message statement as needed.
- ❑ Evaluate overnight media and Internet coverage for tone and emerging issues.
- ❑ Review and update employee communications.
- ❑ Review and update website information.
- ❑ Establish work rotation with management team members and spokesperson if needed.
- ❑ Ensure availability of food and beverages for extended work schedules.
- ❑ Management team meets to review response progress – post-crisis response evaluation (lessons learned).

Response Phase Communication Strategy

During the response phase of crisis communications, United Way of Marion County management, staff and volunteers will manage the organization's communications. Public discussions about the issues will be framed in such a way as to ensure that all audiences are informed in a timely fashion about the facts of the situation and what decisive actions United Way of Marion County is taking to control/correct the situation. Communications during this time must be updated frequently, especially in light of recent developments and emerging issues.

I. Situation Analysis

- What are the issues surrounding the event, both present and, when applicable, historical that United Way must address in formulating the communications response?
- What is the communications environment?
 - Review media interest and tone of coverage
 - Is government involved?
 - What is the public's reaction?
 - Compile frequently asked questions based upon issue

2. Identify Audiences

Although there may be several audiences who need information about the incident, addressing the needs and concerns of three (3) specific audiences impacted directly by the events will satisfy most other audiences. This is especially true during the first hours of a crisis.

- Primary audience
 - Who is impacted most directly by the situation? Be as specific as possible.
 - What are their concerns and feelings about what has happened?
- Secondary audiences
 - Those groups of people who are impacted by the situation but not as directly as the primary audience. Be as specific as possible.
 - What are their concerns and feelings about what has happened?
- Other audiences
 - Identify those groups that are farther away from the center of the crisis but who are nonetheless important to United Way of Marion County

3. Communication Objectives

- What specific results or behaviors are desired for United Way of Marion County communications?
- State the objectives in one or two declarative statements

4. Develop key messages

- Formulate no more than three (3) key messages, prefaced by United Way of Marion County's concern about the situation.
- Messages must address the concerns and feelings of the primary and secondary audiences

5. Identify Spokespersons

- Who will speak for the organization?
- Typically, the most senior executive on staff should be utilized in this capacity.
- Assign others as back up and for rotations if response continues for more than one day.
- Assess whether or not outside public relations counsel is needed. If so, make the contact and begin briefings.

6. Communicating the message

- How will the messages be delivered – Internally? Externally?
- Are media briefings planned?
- Are news releases planned?
- Are spokespersons being placed in media opportunities?
- Is the web being updated hourly?
- Which government officials need to be briefed about the situation? (These may be included in the audiences identified)
- Who will conduct the briefings?
- What is the plan to inform employees?
(These may be included in the audiences identified)
- Is there a need for special communications to Leadership Givers, Top 50 CEOs and Employee Campaign Managers, Agency partners?
(These may be included in the audiences identified)
- Are special community relations activities needed? If so, what will they consist of?
- Is there a need for special advertising? If so, what is recommended?
- How will communication effectiveness be measured? How will public opinion be measured?

Recovery Phase Communication Strategy

Recovery phase communications are designed to restore confidence in United Way of Marion County. It supports the organization as it resumes operations and addresses any damage to United Way's reputation as a result of the incident. Recovery phase communications are developed as the organization moves from responding to the crisis to resuming normal operations.

I. Situation Analysis

- Develop a recovery plan - What are United Way of Marion County's objectives and plan to resume normal business operations (including timeline).
- What communications activities and support are needed?

2. Identify audiences

- Primary
 - What key audience does United Way need to reach with its messages in order to implement its recovery plan?
 - What are this audience's concerns and feelings about the incident and United Way of Marion County?
- Secondary
 - Identify two or three other audiences who must be reached to implement the recovery plan.
 - What concerns or feelings do these audiences have about the incident and United Way of Marion County?
- Residual public opinion issues
 - What issues or sources of conflict between United Way of Marion County and the audiences identified must be resolved or taken into consideration when planning the recovery communications?

3. Messages

- What are the three key messages that United Way of Marion County must communicate to its audiences?
- Messages must address the concerns and feelings of the target audiences.
- Who will deliver these messages?
- How will the messages be delivered – Internally? Externally?
- What media opportunities will be utilized? Advertising?
- What is the timeline for recovery communications?
- Are community relations' activities appropriate? If so, what are they and how will they be coordinated? What is the timeline?
- If utilized, will outside public relations counsel be retained?
- How will the success of the recovery communications be measured?
- What are the milestones against which progress can be measured?

Crisis Response Center Staffing

This staffing guide is a recommended map designed to help manage the individuals needed to respond to the crisis at hand. It is a great method of ensuring that key positions are filled with primary and backup staffing. Depending on the specific circumstances surrounding the incident, each position may not need to be staffed. However, the staffing guide should be used in making those decisions to ensure that resources that may be needed now or later are not overlooked as the incident develops.

Position

Crisis Communication Team – will consist of the following staff and volunteers

- Senior executive/president
- Management/direct reports
- Executive committee members

Communications Leader – coordinates response, counsels senior management, assists with the development of and approves all materials for internal and external releases and assists with the development of all response and recovery communication strategies.

Staff assigned – Vice President, public relations and marketing

Senior Executive – participates as lead in the Crisis Communication Team, conducts media briefings and serves as key spokesperson for the organization.

Staff assigned – President

Spokespersons – represents United Way of Marion County in all aspects of the crisis

Order of responsibility:

1. President
2. Vice President, public relations and marketing
3. Key direct reports (dependent on issue at hand)

Technical spokesperson – provides technical information about the issue (programs, grants, financial, etc.) depending upon the issue at hand.

Staff assigned – based upon issue it might be the following:

- Vice President, finance and administration
- Vice President, resource development
- Vice President, community initiatives
- Director, community solutions

Community relations representative – coordinates with the vice president of public relations and marketing appropriate community relations activities if needed during response or recovery phases.

Staff assigned:

- Vice President, resource development

Communications developer – working with the vice president of public relations and marketing, this staff person compiles key message statements, prepares press releases for approval, develops opening statements for media briefings and employee communications about the incident.

Staff assigned:

- Primary – Senior executive/president
- Secondary – Volunteer Vice Chair of PR/Marketing Division

Communications assistant/receptionist - monitors media calls, media placement and internet coverage as well as other sources for news slant and developing issues. Maintains call log. Provides reports to senior executive and vice president of communications for response.

Staff assigned: Administrative Assistant I

Crisis Response Center Preparation – sets up the media-briefing center, arranges for media access, stocks room (see Crisis Response Center Needs List, appendix ____), arranges for food service and hotel accommodations as needed.

Staff assigned:

- Primary – Campaign Coordinator
- Secondary – Administrative Assistant I

Web master – updates website as needed

Staff assigned: Vice President, public relations and marketing

Crisis Response Center Needs List

As an information center can become a popular gathering place during a crisis, access to the Crisis Response Center must be restricted to those employees/volunteers having direct business with the center or are part of the crisis communication team. Excess people and conversations are extremely distracting and must be kept to a minimum.

Recommended supplies include:

- Twenty (20) copies of this plan
- Television pre-wired for cable TV reception
- VCR player
- Flip chart on easel
- Marker pens
- White board
- White board marker pens
- White board eraser
- Multi-line telephone with teleconference capabilities
- Note pads (legal and note pads necessary)
- Pens & pencils
- Masking tape
- Snacks & Beverages
- Table outside the room to distribute copies of news releases, key message statements, etc.

These materials should be secured in a cabinet in the room when not needed. A television and VCR should be kept in the Crisis Response Center at all times.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
United Way of Marion County
Organizational Fact Sheet

Address:

Facility Phone:

Facility Fax:

President/CEO:

Chairman of the Board:

Vice President, Finance/Admin:

Vice President, Community Initiatives:

Vice President, Resource Development:

Vice President, PR & Marketing

Number of employees:

Board Members:

See appendix ____

Business Hours:

8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Incorporated in:

Years serving Marion:

Partner Agencies:

25 (see List, appendix ____)

Mission Statement:

Partner Agencies and Funded Programs (FY:_____)

(List each partner agency by name, primary phone number, and specific programs funded)

I.

Appendix B Incident Report

Information taken by: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Information Source: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

What Happened? _____

Where did it happen? _____

Incident date: _____

Incident Time: _____

Were there any deaths or injuries? _____

What is the current situation? _____

Other confirmed information: _____

Next update date/time: _____ / _____

Appendix C Media Query Log

Please use this form to record every phone call from the media!

Information taken by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Call Received from: _____

News organization: _____

Location (specific coverage area): _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Deadline: _____

Nature of questions (angle): _____

Notes/Response: _____

Follow up required? YES _____ NO _____

Call returned by: _____

Date call returned: _____ Time call returned: _____

Appendix E Media Advisory & Briefing

Media Advisory

A media advisory should be prepared during "Hour 1" to alert reporters to the phone number of United Way of Marion County's spokespeople using the following format:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:

Marion County – United Way of Marion County has spokespeople available to provide details of the _____ (describe incident) which occurred today at _____ (time of incident).

You may contact our spokespeople at (names and phone number/s) _____

United Way of Marion County will provide updates to you about the incident once they are confirmed. Our website is www.uwmc.org and contains the latest information about the incident as well as background information on our organization.

Media Briefing

Use this advisory format to notify reporters about a media briefing or press conference should one be scheduled.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:

Contact:

Marion County – United Way of Marion County will hold a news briefing for members of the media regarding _____ (description of incident) _____ on (date/time) _____ at (location) _____

(Name and title of briefer) will provide confirmed information and details.

(Provide directions to the briefing site) _____

(Provide information on where to report for admission, parking arrangements, etc.) _____

For more information, please contact (vice president of public relations and marketing) _____

Appendix F Briefing Agenda (includes briefings of crisis communication team and the media)

Guidelines for determining if a media briefing is necessary:

Media briefings are an effective and efficient method to give one set of answers to numerous questions and many reporters simultaneously. A briefing can also demonstrate United Way of Marion County's transparency and accountability. The spokesperson must be willing to have patience with reporters and their questions and never let frustration or impatience show on his or her face or in any actions. Taking questions or issues personally and becoming defensive or combative will make the spokesperson less than effective and may actually make the situation worse. In other words, an excitable spokesperson can be a liability in this situation.

In general, a media briefing should only be held when:

- There's been a loss of life, serious injury or significant property damage
- There are damaging accusations or questions about United Way's integrity, workplace practices or corporate citizenship
- The situation demands an in-person response

You may conduct a media briefing in person, by telephone conference call or on the Internet.

When hosting an in-person media briefing, the briefing area should be stocked with the following equipment:

- A podium or lectern
- Television lighting (most TV station reps will bring their own)
- Tables and chairs arranged in classroom style
- Electrical outlets or extra extension cords for cameras and computers
- A neutral background behind the podium/lectern
- Snacks and beverages at the back of the room
- A media sign in table with media kits
- The room should be located so that TV crews can run cable to their vans and trucks in the parking lot if possible

The spokesperson should be able to exit the room without walking among the reporters. If there is only one door, place the podium/lectern at that end of the room.

With bad news, it is advisable NOT to use a company logo or name on either the background curtain or on the front of the podium/lectern. Remove signs or posters in the area referring to company values or other promotional items.

Media Briefings:

- I. The director, public relations and marketing, should open the briefing by:
 - Bringing the room to order
 - Providing the spokesperson's name, spelling and title

- Establishing the ground rules (length of briefing, time for Q&A, etc.)
 - Give media reps time to prepare (ask if everyone is ready and wait for response)
 - Introduce the spokesperson
 - Supervise the briefing and bring it to a close
2. The spokesperson should begin by reading a prepared statement of no longer than two (2) minutes containing new information about the incident or situation and key messages.
 - Take questions
 - Rely upon the vice president, communications, to re-direct in order to maintain a continuous flow of Q&A and to bring the session to a close.
 3. The director, public relations and marketing will take the floor, bringing the session to a close
 - Thank everyone for their time and patience
 - Promise contact with them once updated information is available

Use the following agendas to ensure an effective exchange of information and that action is taken on issues. Each person briefing the crisis communication team or the media should use the following formats.

Crisis Communication Team briefings

1. Introduction
 - Identify yourself and explain your role
 - Define the coverage of your briefing in terms of time and specific topics
2. Current Status
 - Provide a summary of the situation and key issues impacting United Way of Marion County's response to the incident or situation
 - Provide a status on action items/decisions from your area of responsibility
 - Provide status on your areas of responsibility to crisis communication team (i.e.: number of media inquiries, website, news releases issues, status on supplies, etc.)
 - Identify issues needing crisis communication team resolution.
3. Future Status
 - Identify any significant activities or issues you envision for your area of responsibility over the next 12 hours
4. Closing Remarks
 - Solicit questions from the group about the information presented or issues related to your area of responsibility.
 - Concluding statement on issue
 - Schedule media briefing if necessary

Appendix G Key Message Statement Worksheet

Use only confirmed information in this statement. Early on in the crisis it is unlikely that you will have all the facts. However, it is crucial that you communicate United Way of Marion County's primary concerns and what the organization is doing to respond as soon as possible. Remember to put people's concerns first in all communications!

Date: _____

Time: _____

Paragraph 1

United Way of Marion County can confirm that at (date/time) _____ (describe incident) _____

Paragraph 2

Full details are not yet available, however, our primary concern is (describe primary concern, i.e. employee safety....donor confidence....transparency....accountability)

Paragraph 3

We are responding to the incident by (Describe what United Way of Marion County is doing to address the issue) _____

Paragraph 4

Add any additional information and confirmed details here _____

Paragraph 5

At this time we have provided you with all of the confirmed information we currently have. We will prepare and distribute updates as more details become available. You may call us at _____ for updates or check out our website at www.uwmc.org for the most current information.

Call Lists

Attach rosters containing all contact information for

1. Current officers and executive committee members
2. Entire board of directors
3. Complete staff roster
4. and a Direct Report Call List showing the order of importance for first calls during an emergency