

BACK TO [CRISIS] SCHOOL

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 Nicole Donovan, Bricker and Eckler • Hinda Mitchell, Inspire PR Group

IT ALL STARTS WITH A STRONG MESSAGE

- What we say
- What’s important to us is the same as what’s important to them
- Reinforcing our priorities
- Reminding them that we care
- Committing to do what is right and what is needed

SPEAKING FROM VALUES

- Values are what’s most important to you and what you’re passionate about
- Values drive every action and should drive your conversations – whether in person or online

USING VALUES MESSAGING

- The thoughts you most want the audience to remember
- Lead with your conclusion, followed by supporting facts
 - “Providing a safe and secure school environment for our students and staff is our firm responsibility and our commitment.”
 - A) Training for our faculty and staff
 - B) Close monitoring of visitors
 - C) Educating students in sheltering protocols

VALUES AND ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT LIABILITY



- Understanding “No Comment” *is no longer viable*
- Understanding the risks with what is said
 - Using FACTUAL information
 - Defamation
 - Admissions
 - Student Confidentiality

KEY STEPS IN PREPAREDNESS



What's In Your Crisis Plan?

- An assigned a crisis team
- District spokesperson(s)
- But any employee may be the first on the front lines
- List of key contacts and numbers – **both internal and external**
- Anticipated scenarios and sample responses
- Does your building staff know what to do?

Review the plan regularly and update as necessary

REACHING YOUR STAKEHOLDERS



Who do you need to engage at the time of a crisis?

- Students
- Parents
- Administration
- Board
- Legal team
- Public safety and law enforcement officials
- Community / residents
- Others?

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE LEGAL COUNSEL



- “Privileged” communications
- Identifying:
 - Mandatory legal and policy obligations
 - Legal issues
 - Potential employment and/or student disciplinary issues
 - Policy-based procedures
- Managing records requests

SOCIAL MEDIA IN A CRISIS: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



- Take stock of what has occurred
- **Be prepared to monitor – 24/7**
- Evaluate the reach and scale of the crisis
- “Listen” to the issues – not the rhetoric
- Identify who is influencing the conversation
- Engage with your stakeholders
- Develop and disseminate a well-balanced, measured, responsive message
- Get back to “regularly scheduled programming” at the right time

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE LAW



- “Comments” and First Amendment considerations
- Record retention obligations
- Acceptable Use and Social Media Policies

MEDIA IN A CRISIS



Things that happen, happen in predictable ways

- Media will:
 - Seek to get close to the action
 - Talk to anyone
 - Villain, victim, superhero
 - Research past incidents
 - Seek out third-party experts
 - Seek to establish cause/blame
 - Identify with the victims
 - Have a short attention span



INVESTIGATIONS AND THE MEDIA



Media inquiries

- Triage of requests
- On-site access
- Choosing a spokesperson

Aggressive media

- Transparent does not mean full access
- Boundaries can be established
- Does your staff know what to do?

LANGUAGE TO KEEP



“I am sorry; I’m not an authorized spokesperson for the DISTRICT. I can put you in touch with someone who is. May I have your name, number and email?”

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE RESPONDING



- What happened?
- Anyone hurt or in danger?
- Are there legal implications?
- Law enforcement or safety officials?
- Media inquiries or media onsite?
- What about social media?
- **What do I still need to confirm?**

RESPONDING IN CRISIS



As it Happens

- Notify the district office
- Notify authorities/ law enforcement as needed
- Begin to formulate your message
- Identify communications needed – internal and external
- Engage additional building security if needed
- Respond – be timely, responsive and transparent

THE GOLDEN HOUR



- In crisis, **perceptions are formed quickly**
- Individuals will immediately look for new information to understand what is going on
- **There is one chance to shape the perception of your stakeholders and the public**

YOUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES



- Reporting
 - Abuse and neglect
 - Felonies
 - Misconduct
- Managing Liability
- Confidentiality
- Due Process

WHEN THE MEDIA IS ONSITE AT YOUR BUILDING



- Be polite, but firm
- Establish initial boundaries
- Let them know you'll work with them
- Contact the district office for support
- Just because they ask doesn't mean you're obligated
- Maintain a calm, steady demeanor
- Control the environment (especially important for video)

WHEN RESPONDING TO BAD NEWS



- Don't share more than is appropriate
- Being early to the conversation matters; perceptions are formed quickly
- Individuals will immediately look for new information to understand what is going on
- Responding in real-time on social media is essential

*The bottom line: Who will define you?
If you don't, someone else will!*

TIPS FOR MANAGING BAD NEWS



- Strategic decision-making
- Proportional response
 - Does our response match the size of the issue being raised?
- Values-based messaging
- Use emotion judiciously, if at all
- Consider the effect of responding on key stakeholders
 - Does our response impact credibility?
 - Does our response reassure our stakeholders?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Let's connect

		Hinda Mitchell  Nicole Donovsky
		@hindamitchell  @ndonovsky
		InspirePRGroup.com  Bricker.com

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