

Crisis Communications Management

STEP #1 – Define “crisis” - What is a “crisis”?

Some examples of crises in which SOPA must be notified include:

- serious injury or death at an event (athlete, volunteer or special event participant)
- delegation of athletes traveling to competition or practice is involved in an accident
- damage to facilities where an event is taking place (i.e., gym roof collapses)
- weather-related hazards (i.e., lightning hits field where athletes practice)
- allegations of wrong doing / negligence / fault
- protests/demonstrations
- criminal activity or abuse

ASK YOURSELF, DOES THIS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DAMAGE SOPAs REPUTATION?

STEP #2 - Plan

Prepare in advance of our event (sports or otherwise) with the following information. Fill in the blanks per event with the following details;

- Emergency Medical Plan: Designated Roles
- Emergency Medical Plan: Required Information
- Emergency Medical Plan: Procedures for Calling 911
- Emergency Plan Telephone List

STEP #3 - On-Site Management

The first response to a crisis is the most crucial time period. If you have prepared well, you will be able to quickly and calmly manage even the most serious crises.

Survey the Situation

STOP! Assess the situation before you take any actions. If a roof has collapsed, don't go running into the building until you look to see if it is safe -- you aren't doing anyone any good if you get hurt as well. Another important note:

Analyze the situation and don't create an unnecessary crisis if one does not exist!

Bring the Situation under Control

Now it is time to act. Be sure that you delegate tasks to people. One of the most common incidents at a Special Olympics event is that an athlete is seriously hurt. Everyone runs to the athlete. So you should assign people to (1) Gather the other athletes and take them to safety, (2) call 911, and (3) control the crowd.

Protect People First and Property Second

This sounds as simple as it is. If in doubt, take care of the athletes and volunteers!

Contact the Appropriate Individuals

Assign someone to contact the families of the athletes, spouses of the coaches, local manager, liaison at facility, and other key personnel.

Institute Internal Rumor Controls

When a crisis occurs, everyone wants to talk about it. Don't let them. Maintain confidentiality, don't give out names of victims or parties involved, and don't speculate to anyone.

STEP #4 - Crisis Communications

In the event a crisis does occur, you will need help in communicating about the crisis. As soon as any type of **Level 2 or 3 Emergency** occurs, you must immediately call Special Olympics Pennsylvania and they handle all communications. Call **(800) 235-9058** during business hours or our emergency number at **(855)701-9030**. To help the state office, you should:

- Establish one contact who knows what happened.
- Have phone numbers of any experts who were there (fire chief, police, etc.).
- Don't speculate. Please provide facts.

Conclusion

When faced with a crisis situation, preparation will be the key, followed by calmly following the above steps to ensure everyone's safety and well being. In the moment of crisis, try to slow your thoughts down, think about the big picture, and proceed calmly one step at a time. It must be stressed again that if the situation has the potential to damage SOPAs reputation, you must contact the state office of Special Olympics Pennsylvania as soon as possible.

EMERGENCY PLAN TELEPHONE LIST



Emergency Number (After Business
Hours)
1.855.701.9030

**EMERGENCY PLAN TELEPHONE LIST
(COMPLETE PRIOR TO ACTIVITY/EVENT)**

PART 1: Emergency Relief Organizations

General Emergency _____

Police Department _____

Fire Department _____

Poison Control _____

Department of Health _____

Closest Hospital _____

PART 2: Special Olympics Numbers

Local Manager _____

Field Director: _____

Special Olympics Pennsylvania
Main Office: (800) 235-9058 or (610) 630-9450

Special Olympics Inc.
Emergency Claims: (855)701-9030

NOTE: Provided the situation is under control and all physical emergencies are fully addressed and if the issue is not relating to the reputation and image of SOPA, and/or all local programs, information will be disseminated in the following line of communication: *local county committee member to local Manager to assigned Field Director*. If the assigned Field Director cannot issue a directive or needs further direction, he/she will contact the Vice President of Field Services and Outreach. If the issue can potentially affect SOPA, and/or its local program, the Vice President of Field Services and Outreach will contact the Director of Communications. If issues commence at the state level, all information will be disseminated in the reverse line of communication: *Director of Communications to Vice President of Field Services and Outreach to assigned Field Director to local program Manager to local program committee members*.