



CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

*EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES
FOR STAFF*

March 2020

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

On a daily basis, situations arise that have the potential to adversely affect Special Olympics Pennsylvania's (SOPA) business and reputation. When such situations develop, it is important for the staff or volunteer who first learns of the situation to immediately inform his/her supervisor. It is also important that volunteers are aware of what is considered to be a potential crisis situation.

It is recommended that all staff and key volunteers receive and review a copy of this plan so they are familiar with basic definitions and procedures.

CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS AND ROLES

The SOPA Senior Leadership Team (President and CEO and his/her direct reports) has overall responsibility for responding to and managing all crisis situations.

In addition, a Crisis Communications Team (CCT) shall be responsible specifically for communication policy. The CCT determines and enacts the communications strategies best suited to resolve a specific crisis situation. The members of the SOPA Senior Leadership Team and SOPA's VP of Marketing & Communications serve as the core Crisis Communications Team (specific roles are defined below).

Core Crisis Communications Team

| <u>Name/Title</u> | <u>Role</u> |
|---|---------------|
| Nicole Jones, VP of Mkt. & Communications | Administrator |
| Matthew Aaron, President and CEO | Manager |
| Clare Walsh Miller, Chief Program Officer | CCT Member |
| Tim Kerrihard, Chief Development Officer | CCT Member |
| Susan Wyland, Chief of Financial Officer | CCT Member |

When deemed necessary due to the nature of the event or crisis situation, the core Crisis Communications Team may add additional members based on their respective expertise or area of responsibility. All members must adhere to Special Olympics policies of confidentiality. Additional CCT members may include:

- SOPA Chairman of the Board
- SOPA Board Members and/or SOPA staff
- Local Program Management Team Members
- Special Olympics Security and Safety Team Members during event crises

ROLES:

Crisis Communications Manager

The Crisis Communications Manager will be the key leader and decision maker of the Crisis Communications Team. In the event of the absence or incapacitation of the President and CEO (who normally serves as the Crisis Communications Manager) a Crisis Communications Manager will be appointed based on the nature and scope of the crisis situation. This Crisis Communications Manager will be a Crisis Communications Team member or other staff member or volunteer appointed by the Crisis Communications Team and will chair the Team and coordinate crisis response.

Crisis Communications Administrator

The Crisis Communications Administrator will serve as the organizer of the Crisis Communications Team and primary contact when requesting the assistance of the CCT. The Administrator will also be responsible for disseminating relevant materials to the Crisis Communications Team and preparing the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Spokesperson. The Crisis Communications Administrator may also be called upon to field media calls and answer questions.

Crisis Communications Team Member

A Crisis Communications Team Member's responsibilities will include gathering information, assistance with decision making, formulating key messages and assisting in the creation of public statements, and assisting the Crisis Manager as needed.

REQUIREMENTS:

Each member of the core Crisis Communications Team must always be reachable and so he/she is required to:

- Always carry a mobile phone and
- Have an accessible copy of this SOPA Crisis Management Plan and a copy of relevant staff/volunteer contact lists (with work, mobile and home contact information).

LEVELS OF EMERGENCIES - BASIC DEFINITIONS

In the event of a crisis situation at any level, it is critical that the appropriate Special Olympics Pennsylvania Program staff or volunteers are contacted.

It is also critical that the Crisis Communications Team Administrator is also contacted in the event of most Level 2 and all Level 3 emergencies to determine how to communicate the appropriate message to key publics and Special Olympics Pennsylvania constituents.

Level One Emergency:

Level One emergency is a localized emergency, minor incident or accident which city/county personnel and/or volunteers can manage by following the procedures in their own emergency plan.

Examples include:

- Delayed event (but to be held the same day)
- Sick participant not requiring hospitalization
- Injured participant/spectator/volunteer – treated on-site or taken to the emergency room but released
- Minor venue property damage
- Severe weather watch

Level Two Emergency:

Level Two is a moderate to serious emergency, incident, accident or situation that may extend beyond the city/county program's response capability. The occurrence may require mutual aid assistance from the local fire department, emergency medical services, police, poison control, etc. Contact the Crisis Communications Team Administrator for all Level 2 emergencies except as noted below.

Examples include:

- Canceled event*
- Postponed event*
- Moved event/change of venue*
- Injured or ill participant/spectator/volunteer – requiring hospitalization*
- Food poisoning/contamination*
- Missing participant*
- Allegations of wrongdoing by or arrest of a participant
- Allegations of wrongdoing by or arrest of a spectator/volunteer/staff/guest or celebrity (if financial, see level 3)
- Illegal use of drugs/alcohol
- Major venue property damage
- Transportation accident
- Severe weather warning
- Honored Guest concerns, e.g.: crowds, protection, threats**
- Protests/Demonstrations**
- Allegations or actions against an organization that impacts Special Olympics Pennsylvania (i.e., Paralympics, INAS)**
- Attack by the media against Special Olympics Pennsylvania or constituents**
- Negative campaigning against Special Olympics Pennsylvania or Special Olympics-involved party**
- Alleged discrimination against Special Olympics Pennsylvania participant within or outside of Special Olympics**

Notes:

* Contact the Crisis Communications Administrator if the situation has the potential to attract any media interest or if assistance is needed to coordinate and communicate information to the media (such as a change of venue information).

** In these situations, the Crisis Communications Administrator or Manager will also contact the Special Olympics North America regional office. They will then contact Special Olympics headquarters, as appropriate.

Level Three Emergency:

Level Three is a critical incident or situation affecting the immediate area and beyond, where extensive aid assistance is required, recovery time is prolonged, and the response time from major supportive agencies can be seriously delayed and/or impaired. Any incident where media interest outside Pennsylvania is anticipated shall be considered a Level 3 emergency.

The Crisis Communications Administrator or Manager will contact the Special Olympics North America regional office. They will then contact Special Olympics headquarters, as appropriate.

Examples include:

- National/State or Provincial declared emergency (e.g., natural disaster, power outage, terrorist attack).
- Actual impact of severe weather (e.g., hurricane, tornado)
- Flood (if it shuts down office operations)
- Bomb threat
- Contagious health threat or outbreak
- Missing participant or volunteer under suspicious circumstances
- Death of a participant
- Death of spectator or volunteer
- Fire
- Criminal activity
- Financial fraud or fundraising scandal
- Sexual abuse

GENERAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The following sections provide general guidance for responding to crisis situations. These guidelines are applicable to both staff and volunteers and have been written from the perspective of crises that may occur at Special Olympics events.

GENERAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If there is an imminent threat to a person or facility:

- Contact appropriate agencies/first responders (911) if there are health or security issues.
- Specify whether you need Police, Fire or Ambulance
- Have the following information available:
 - Hotel/Dorm/Facility Name
 - Hotel/Dorm/Facility Address
 - Room Number
- Collect critical information (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- At a venue, flag down or shout for Special Olympics Security (SOS) or the Event Director, and immediately evacuate the area.
- SOS/Event Director will contact the SOPA staff event liaison.
- SOPA staff liaison will contact SOPA SVP of Programming and share critical information collected above.
- SOS/Event Director or SOPA staff will contact Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones, if Level 2 or 3 crisis and share pertinent information. Administrator will coordinate with Crisis Communications Team to determine the appropriate response.

If the emergency involves an unconscious/injured person:

- Ensure there is no danger to you or victim
- Do not move victim unless their life is endangered (fire, collapse of building)
- Remain on the phone with the 911 operator
- Remain with victim until help arrives
- When help arrives call the SOPA Medical Staff
- If at a venue, flag down or send someone to get SOS/Event Director or a Medical Staff Member
- SOS/Event Director will contact the SOPA staff event liaison.
- SOPA staff liaison will contact SVP of Programming and share critical information about the situation.
- SOS or SOPA staff will contact Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones, and share pertinent information. Administrator will coordinate with Crisis Communications Team to determine the appropriate response.

If situation poses no immediate danger, call or flag down SOS.

For non-emergency first aid or medical conditions contact the SOPA Medical Staff or SOS Operations Center. The Medical Staff is trained to provide guidance as to how serious the situation is and if emergency response team is needed. Medical Staff personnel are trained in first aid and have first aid kits for minor problems.

OVERALL EVENT SAFETY AND SECURITY

All staff and key volunteers should be familiar with the following safety and security points. The health, safety, and security of all Special Olympics participants is of the utmost priority.

1. Call Special Olympics Security Operations Center with general problems (call 911 for emergencies).
2. Be sure all athletes and coaches wear their credentials.
3. Seek out a SOPA security volunteer, staff member, or hotel staff if anything seems suspicious.
4. Have available all athlete medicals and coach volunteer forms.
5. Carry emergency phone numbers with you at all times.
6. Meet and get to know any "day off" volunteers who are assigned to your group.
7. Be sure athletes know not to go off alone with unknown persons or to carry anything for anyone.
8. Carry a cell phone if you have one and write down/carry cell phone numbers of other coaches in your delegation.
9. Remember that there is a zero tolerance policy in effect for any pranks concerning safety issues by athletes, coaches, or volunteers. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to leave the event with potential for further action.
10. Set up a phone chain with parents and families back home so that they can be notified of an early arrival or a change/cancellation in the schedule which may happen before, during, or at the end of the event.
11. Carry a flashlight in your backpack.

EXTRA PRECAUTIONS AT HOTELS/DORMS

1. Write down the names and hotel/dorm room numbers of all athletes. Make sure that the Games Committee has the most updated list of all delegates' room numbers.
2. Write down the coaches' room numbers for the athletes so they can call if they need assistance.
3. Give each coach a specific set of rooms (and keys) to notify and account for athletes in the event of an emergency.
4. Confer with all coaches to confirm meeting point for your hotel in case of emergency.
5. Write down the room number of the medical/security room in your hotel/dorm.
6. Do a final room check before going to bed to ensure all athletes are in rooms.
7. Have athletes leave their shoes and coats in a place near the door so they can quickly put these on before leaving the hotel/dorm in the event of a fire.
8. Keep a backpack or bag with the following items in it near the door so that you can quickly grab it on your way out: car/van keys, cell phone, emergency numbers, athlete medicals, wallet, shoes, coat.

MEETING POINTS IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY

Once on site at any Games, you will be informed of designated emergency evacuation meeting points for the hotels/dorms and/or the venues, along with the room number for the SOPA staff person in your hotel/dorm and the room number for the medical/security room in your hotel.

If there is a fire in the hotel/dorm or at a venue and you need to leave the facility, be sure coaches have accounted for all their athletes and fellow coaches. When leaving the building, follow instructions of hotel staff/facility personnel and use nearest exit door. Stay where instructed until notified by hotel/facility/SOPA staff.

PROCEDURES FOR TOTAL EVACUATION OF AREA

If SOPA has to ask delegations to evacuate from the Games completely, the following procedures will be followed:

1. SOPA will notify each HOD by phone or through a meeting (if time permits) of need to evacuate.
2. If we are only leaving the vicinity and not the games entirely, we will provide a meeting point and directions.
3. If the games have been cancelled and we are sending delegations home, we will provide time constraints and evacuation routes to follow if appropriate.
4. Heads of Delegation will account for all coaches and athletes and their belongings.
5. HOD will secure transportation for trip out of area. If transportation is needed, contact SOPA staff or Special Olympics Security Operations Center for assistance.
6. Once everyone is accounted for, HOD will call pre-determined evacuation coordination cell phone number and either talk to or leave a message on voice mail with the following information:
 - ✓ Contact Name
 - ✓ Delegation
 - ✓ Time of Departure
 - ✓ Final Destination
 - ✓ If possible, phone number where delegation can be reached (cell phone of HOD, coach, or bus company if available)
7. If an athlete is missing and delegation is ready to depart, contact a SOPA staff person at the hotel/dorm or a SOPA staff person at the venue. If time is crucial for departure, one SOPA staff person and one coach/volunteer from the delegation must stay behind to look for missing athlete and the rest of the delegation will depart. Once the athlete is found, the coach and staff person will make plans to either meet up with the delegation if nearby or staff person will arrange to take all parties back to home program.

**SPECIFIC CRISIS
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES
AND EXAMPLES**

LEVEL ONE EMERGENCIES

A Level 1 Emergency is defined as “a situation requiring internal emergency action which will not impact other venues or the function and image of Special Olympics Pennsylvania.”

Examples: Delayed Event, Injured Participant (not requiring hospitalization)

The Venue Coordinator has first response authority for all Level 1 emergencies. He/she should be made aware of all Level 1 emergencies that occur on site. Most Level 1 emergencies will involve the notification of all members of the SOS team as well as the SOPA staff event liaison.

Follow General Emergency Procedures described above.

LEVEL TWO EMERGENCIES

A Level 2 Emergency is defined as “a situation requiring internal emergency action which may involve other venues or the function and image of Special Olympics Pennsylvania”. The occurrence may also require mutual aid assistance from the local fire department, emergency medical services, police, poison control, etc.

Examples: Missing Coach/Athlete, Cancelled Event, Behavioral Crisis

The Venue Coordinator has first response authority to take action for all Level 2 emergencies. The Venue Coordinator must then notify the SOS immediately. Response to all Level 2 emergencies will involve the input of the SOS who will notify SOPA staff including the Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones.

LOST/FOUND ATHLETES

A lost or found athlete will probably be the most common emergency to be encountered. Contact SOS as soon as possible. If you have lost or found an athlete, follow the following procedures:

If you find an athlete:

- Get all the information from the athlete’s credentials.
- Stay with the athlete at the location found, someone may be looking for the athlete and may return to the area.
- Staying within the vicinity of the area, look for others that may be part of the athlete’s delegation.
- Contact SOS at the venue/ dorm or Operations Center. Make the distinction between having found an athlete and having lost one. SOS will attempt to contact delegation.
- Many athletes are afraid that they will get into trouble for being lost -- DON’T put any blame on them.

If you lost an athlete or someone has reported a lost athlete to you:

- Stay with the person who reported them missing. They are generally the best bet of finding the athlete.
- Get all the information to SOS at the venue/Operations Center:
 - ❑ Complete description (i.e., height, weight, age, hair length and color, type of clothing, etc.).
 - ❑ When and where last seen
 - ❑ Events they may have participated in
 - ❑ Level of functionality
- SOS will provide information to the SOPA staff and will have rooms checked, etc.

BEHAVIORAL CRISIS

- Notify Special Olympics Security/Event Director.
- SOS/Event Director and Medical Staff will respond and attempt to calm athlete and defuse the situation.
- The athlete will be taken to the venue Medical Station. If the athlete refuses, security should remove any bystanders.
- The Venue Coordinator should be notified if the situation persists. SOS/Event Director will contact SOPA staff event liaison. They will assess the situation and determine course of action including contacting the Crisis Communications Administrator, if appropriate.
- Venue Coordinator will submit an incident report as soon as possible.

LEVEL THREE EMERGENCIES

A Level 3 Emergency is defined as “a situation requiring both internal and external emergency action which may impact other venues or the function and image of Special Olympics Pennsylvania.” A Level 3 Emergency is a critical incident or situation affecting the immediate area and beyond, where extensive aid assistance is required, recovery time is prolonged, and the response time from major supportive agencies can be seriously delayed and/or impaired. Any incident where media interest outside Pennsylvania is anticipated shall be considered a Level 3 emergency.

Examples: Fire Bomb
 Death of an Athlete Contagious Health Threat
 Criminal Activity

The Venue Coordinator has first response responsibility for emergency action for all Level 3 emergency situations. During a Level 3 Emergency, the Venue Coordinator may be subordinate to the reigning police, fire or emergency management official in command of the emergency scene.

For all Level 3 Emergencies, the Special Olympics Security Operations Center must be notified immediately. SOS will then immediately notify the SOPA staff event liaison who in turn will contact the appropriate Special Olympics Senior Leadership Team staff person,

depending on the nature of the emergency (examples: contact SVP of Programming for event incidents, contact VP of Finance for financial incidents). The Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones, must also be contacted immediately for all Level 3 Emergencies.

FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If you discover the fire:

- Alert people in the area. Find the fire alarm and pull it.
- Evacuate the building using the nearest exit and proceed to the nearest evacuation assembly point.
- As you leave the building, contain the fire by closing doors behind you.

If you hear the fire alarm:

- Do not assume it is a false alarm!
- Evacuate the facility and proceed to the nearest assembly point. Do not use elevators.
- Place your hand on the door. If it is hot do not open it. If it is not hot, open it slowly and be prepared to close it at once if the hallway is full of smoke or fire.
- If there is no smoke or fire in the hallway, move quickly using the nearest exit stairway and follow the evacuation procedures.
- If there is smoke in the hallway, crawl on your hands and knees to the exit. If the exit is smoked-filled, go to the other exit stairway on the floor.
- If you are trapped in a room keep the door closed. If available, place something wet across the bottom of the door. If there is a window and you are on the bottom floor, exit via the window. If you are above the first floor or the jump from the first floor is too risky, DO NOT JUMP. If possible open the window and place something brightly colored in the window so the firefighters will know you are in the room. Stay calm and DO NOT JUMP.

REMEMBER: Follow the evacuation procedures and meet at the assembly point for the facility.

BOMB THREAT PROCEDURES

If you receive a bomb threat, remain calm, listen carefully to what the caller is saying and write it down.

Keep the caller talking and try to obtain the following information:

- Where is the bomb?
- What will cause it to explode?
- When will it explode?
- Did you place the bomb? Why?
- What does it look like?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What is your name?
- Where are you calling from?

Record the details such as time of call, whether caller was male or female, any distinctive voice characteristics (accent, manner, speech, etc.), whether there was background noise or references to Special Olympics or local issues.

When the caller hangs up:

- Call 911 and share details collected above - be prepared to give your name, phone number, and exact location with details of the threat.
- Contact SOPA SOS. SOPA SOS will contact the Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones.
- Do not spread word of the threat.
- Do not evacuate unless told to. The decision to evacuate will be made by proper authorities.

If evacuation notice is given, follow the evacuation procedures found in this handbook and meet at the evacuation assembly point.

- Ensure that all your athletes and members of your delegation are accounted for.
- Find the SOPA SOS representative and report the status of all members in your delegation. **This step is very important.** SOS officials will have to advise the emergency response team of anyone who may still be in the facility.

Do not re-enter the facility until told to by the Fire Department, Police Officer, or a member of the SOPA SOS Staff. Stay at the rally point until allowed to return to the building, notify SOS or SOPA if you are leaving the rally point for another location.

DEATH OF A PARTICIPANT/SERIOUS INJURY

- Immediately call 911 and Emergency Response Personnel.
- Do not leave the victim unattended.
- If trained, perform preliminary first aid/CPR.
- Do not move the victim unless an immediate situation dictates evacuation.
- If at a venue, flag down or send someone to get SOS or a Medical Staff Member. The EMT or other first responder will identify a staff person to accompany the injured or ill person to the hospital with relevant medical information.
 - ❑ SOS will contact the SOPA staff event liaison.
 - ❑ SOPA staff will contact SVP of Programming and share critical information about the situation.
 - ❑ SOS or SOPA staff will contact Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones, and share pertinent information. Administrator will coordinate with Crisis Communications Team to determine the appropriate response.
- In the event of death:
 - ❑ Crisis Communications Administrator will initiate appropriate action to determine cause of death from local law enforcement or medical response personnel.
 - ❑ The victim's next of kin will be notified prior to making any public announcements.

- ❑ Crisis Communications Team will determine the appropriate method of informing SOPA staff, volunteers and athletes, if appropriate.
- ❑ CCT will prepare a news media release, if appropriate.
- ❑ SOPA will provide for on-going mechanisms to deal with the effects of the crisis (grievance counselors, etc.).

EPIDEMIC/PANDEMIC EVENTS

The term “communicable disease” means an illness which is capable of being spread to a susceptible host through the direct or indirect transmission of an infectious agent or its toxic product by an infected person, animal or arthropod, or through the inanimate environment. A pandemic crisis is defined as an epidemic of a communicable disease that becomes extremely widespread affecting an entire region, country, or the world. In the event that a pandemic crisis has been identified by local authorities, Special Olympics Pennsylvania will follow the directives of the Pennsylvania Department of Health and/or the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Special Olympics Pennsylvania Senior Leadership Team (in conjunction with Games Committee members as appropriate) will:

1. Assess direct advice as provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health or the CDC, determine appropriate action, and prepare crisis communications.
2. Complete a health risk assessment of continuing the event as planned and develop alternatives (rescheduling, relocation, downsizing, excluding certain groups, cancelation).
3. Communicate decisions and travel restrictions/ recommendations to programs/ delegations through SOPA staff and/or Games Committee.
4. Monitor employee/ volunteer/ athlete absences and health status.
5. If necessary, distribute official statement to key constituents.

Staff/Volunteer Responsibilities:

1. Know the symptoms and transmission means of the potential health threat.
2. Stay home if sick.

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

1. Notify Special Olympics Security of an incident that could be criminal in nature.
2. SOS/Event Director will notify local law enforcement.
3. SOS and local law enforcement determine if the incident constitutes criminal activity.
4. Law enforcement takes appropriate action and SOS assists as appropriate.
5. SOS/Event Director will contact the SOPA staff event liaison who in turn will notify the appropriate Special Olympics Senior Leadership Team staff person, depending on the nature of the activity (examples: contact SVP of Programming for event incidents, contact VP of Finance for financial incidents).
6. SOS/Event Director or SOPA staff will contact Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones, and share pertinent information. Administrator will coordinate with Crisis Communications Team to determine the appropriate response.

**CRISIS
COMMUNICATIONS
PROCEDURES**

CRISIS RESPONSE FLOW

This section provides a step-by-step outline of crisis response procedures and responsibilities for those Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff and/or volunteers most likely to be involved in handling a crisis situation.

Step 1: *Identify the Crisis*

- ✓ Using the examples in the “Levels of Emergencies” section, determine the nature and level of the crisis.
- ✓ Contact the member of the Senior Leadership Team most appropriate based on the nature of the crisis (examples: contact SVP of Programming for event incidents, contact Controller for financial incidents)
- ✓ As appropriate, request assistance from the Crisis Communications Team via the Crisis Communications Administrator, Nicole Jones.

Step 2: *Assess and Review Crisis*

Once the Crisis Communications Administrator has been contacted, they will:

- ✓ Gather and record all pertinent facts on a crisis fact sheet (example in appendix);
- ✓ Assess the scope and nature of the crisis, including damage or potential damage;
- ✓ Contact the Crisis Communications Team for a meeting (via phone or in person)
- ✓ Contact additional parties as appropriate (staff, volunteers and/or external individuals) to secure their involvement; and
- ✓ Disseminate crisis fact sheets and other relevant information to relevant parties

Step 3: *Meeting of Crisis Communications Team*

The Crisis Communications Team meeting will involve:

- ✓ A crisis debriefing, including new developments/updates, by the Crisis Management Administrator or those involved in the situation; and
- ✓ If necessary, contacting the Special Olympics North America Regional Office or Special Olympics headquarters.

Step 4: *Planning Crisis Communications Response*

Once assembled, the Crisis Communications Team, under the leadership of the Crisis Manager, is immediately responsible for:

- ✓ Planning a crisis communications response and ensuring execution;
- ✓ Establishing communications strategies to address the crisis situation (e.g., selecting an appropriate spokesperson);
- ✓ Creating key messages and public statements;
- ✓ Identifying crisis situation response tactics to be implemented by others (employees/or external individuals); and
- ✓ Monitoring the media via the public relations team

APPOINTMENT OF APPROPRIATE SPOKESPERSON

In the event of a crisis situation, the appropriate Special Olympics Pennsylvania Spokesperson should be appointed. In most situations, the SOPA Sr. Director of Marketing & Communications will be the spokesperson, but depending on the situation the spokesperson could also be the SOPA President and CEO or the SOPA Board Chair. It is very important that the Crisis Administrator and Special Olympics Spokesperson communicate a consistent message to all publics, including the media.

In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to include medical or other technical personnel as spokespersons. For example, in the event an athlete is severely injured, the President and CEO may address the overall situation, but only medical personnel should ever comment on the athlete's condition.

When the appropriate Spokesperson has been selected, he/she will receive the following:

- Public Statement
- Key messages
- A prepared Question & Answer (Q&A) document

Note: An appropriate spokesperson may not be appointed until after the crisis situation has occurred. It is important to prepare all potential Special Olympics spokespersons for all levels of a crisis situation. It is also important that only the individuals tasked with speaking to the media on a particular topic actually speak to the media.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPOKESPERSON: DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Never respond with "no comment." Instead answer, "We are assessing the situation and will furnish information when it is available."
2. If asked a question to which you do not have a factual official answer, do not speculate. Tell the reporter you will get an answer and will get back to him/her as quickly as possible.
3. You have no obligation to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Be courteous, be calm and be firm. Remember, "I don't know at this time" is a perfectly acceptable answer.
4. Never tell the media anything that you are not prepared to see printed or broadcast. *There is no such thing as "off the record."*
5. Do not provide damage estimates, discuss responsibility for the incident or discuss legal liability in any way.
6. You drive the interview, not the reporter (highlight your agenda)
7. Talk about the most important things first.
8. Avoid jargon and don't be defensive.

Remember, every interview is an opportunity...

- ✓ For coverage
- ✓ For branding
- ✓ For sponsor awareness
- ✓ For consumer awareness

COMMUNICATING WITH KEY PUBLICS

Throughout the crisis, it is imperative that the Crisis Communications Team communicates with Special Olympics' key publics. For each of these key publics, separate statements will need to be created and disseminated among team members to maintain consistency of messages.

Staff and Key Volunteers

Special Olympics staff and key volunteers must be informed about a crisis situation before they hear about it in the news. The Crisis Communications Team must determine the most efficient way to communicate with employees (e.g., staff meetings, Games meeting, phone tree, e-mail). It is important to keep the "front-line" staff, key volunteers, receptionist and incoming call centers updated as to where to direct questions and incoming calls regarding the crisis situation. It is also important for these individuals to know they should not answer questions or provide information except if specifically instructed by the crisis manager.

Constituent Parties

It is important to keep these parties (e.g., athletes, Board of Directors, families, volunteers, spectators, coaches, donors) "in the loop" on crisis situations or have them play a role in them. The Crisis Communications Team must determine the method and scope of communication. For example, it may be necessary to contact telemarketing or direct mail contacts who are raising funds for the Program to alert them to the situation.

Media

Because a great deal of public perception is gained through the media, a well-planned crisis response must place heavy emphasis on proper management and communications with broadcast and print outlets. Any lack of, or perceived lack of, care or integrity can produce more harm to Special Olympics' reputation than the actual crisis situation.

The Crisis Communications Administrator, together with the public relations team, will monitor the news and provide the Crisis Manager with recommendations on media issues. It is very important that the Crisis Administrator and Special Olympics Spokesperson communicate a consistent message to all publics, including the media.

It is also important that only the individuals tasked with speaking to the media on a particular topic speak to the media. Different individuals may be identified to address specific topics. For example, in the event an athlete is severely injured, the President and CEO may address the overall situation, but only medical personnel should ever comment on the athlete's condition.

The specific crisis situation will define the type and degree of media relations response needed. Some key steps include:

1. Development of key message points,
2. Writing of public statements and press materials,
3. Distribution of press materials,
4. Appointment of the appropriate spokesperson(s) and
5. Coordination of a press conference, if necessary.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Crisis Communications Administrator is responsible for determining whether or not a Special Olympics Pennsylvania “Crisis Communications Center” will be needed. The Crisis Communications Center should be at a set location at a Special Olympics Pennsylvania Office or at the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Games or Event office where all crisis-related communications will be coordinated.

The Crisis Communications Center must:

- Be fully equipped with all necessary materials (e.g., pens, pads, etc.);
- Have, or be in close proximity to, office machinery including phones, faxes, computers and photocopiers;
- Contain files of information that may be required during a crisis situation, including Special Olympics Pennsylvania fact sheets, safety procedures, photos, executive biographies, crisis case studies, etc.;
- Have a telephone contact list (Program staff, Board members, Special Olympics headquarters, media, police, hospitals)
- Have several copies of the Crisis Communication Plan worksheets;
- Have several copies of the Special Olympics Pennsylvania’s Crisis Communications Plan on hand for easy reference; and
- Be equipped with appropriate telecommunications and video equipment such as a television, radios and DVD players.

DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

Developing Key Messages

During a crisis, the first few minutes and hours count the most. During this initial period, the media and the public will form lasting impressions of Special Olympics Pennsylvania and of how the communications are handled relating to an incident. Therefore, it is important to gather the facts, incorporate key messages and release as much appropriate information as possible as soon as possible.

When developing your key messages and statements, keep in mind the following:

- If something has occurred, acknowledge it (but refer to notes below before doing so.)
- Express sympathy/concern for victims, families and individuals involved.
- Indicate an investigation is in process and identify the individuals conducting it.
- Express confidence in those conducting the investigation and that you are fully cooperating with the investigation.
- Inform the media and audience that you will provide updates when more information becomes available. It is important that you follow through with your update(s). This maintains your credibility with the media.

Depending on the severity of the crisis situation, Special Olympics North America Regional Office and Special Olympics headquarters may work together with the Special Olympics Pennsylvania to create public statements and develop key messages. (Example: reaction to President Obama’s statement on *The Tonight Show*)

Notes:

- Depending on the crisis, contact an attorney and discuss what information you should release. While you want to be forthcoming, you don't want to inadvertently release information that could lead to adverse legal action against Special Olympics Pennsylvania.
- Make sure the facts are accurate. A misstatement is difficult to correct later and could be harmful to SOPA. It is better to acknowledge that you don't know the answer to a question or that you are still gathering information than to disseminate inaccurate information.
- In the event an internal investigation is needed, confer with legal counsel as to who should conduct it (especially if there is potential for litigation, in which case legal counsel may be used to protect information from being discussed).

SAMPLE PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND KEY MESSAGES

The following pages have examples of public statements that may be used during a crisis situation. Although individual messages for all potential crises cannot be developed in advance, the following are appropriate statements and positions that apply to possible situations. When appropriate, statements may be developed together between Special Olympics Pennsylvania, Special Olympics North America, and/or with Special Olympics headquarters.

Level 1 Crisis Situations

Delayed, Moved or Cancelled Venue for Special Olympics Games or Event

"Because of [DESCRIBE INCIDENT], the Special Olympics Pennsylvania [NAME OF VENUE OR EVENT] scheduled for [DAY, TIME] has been [CANCELED/MOVED TO _____/OR DELAYED UNTIL _____]. Spectators, athletes, volunteers and staff should [GIVE INSTRUCTIONS]. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. For more information, call [PHONE NUMBER]."

Minor Athletic Injuries: No Hospitalization Required

"A Special Olympics Pennsylvania athlete was injured [DESCRIBE INCIDENT] at [IDENTIFY THE EVENT] at the [VENUE/OTHER LOCATION] in [CITY] this [MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING], according to [TEAM OFFICIAL]. Our on-site emergency medical team responded immediately and the athlete was treated for minor [TYPE OF INJURY]. We all wish the athlete a speedy recovery."

Level 2 Crisis Situations

Serious Injury

Immediate Statement

"We have just learned that one of our [ATHLETES/VOLUNTEERS/COACHES] has been involved in a [TYPE] accident. We do not yet know if [HE/SHE] was injured. We will provide you with more information as it becomes available."

When Injuries are Confirmed

“[NUMBER] people were injured during [DESCRIBE INCIDENT] at [IDENTIFY THE EVENT] at [LOCATION] in [CITY] at [TIME]. [MAY NEED TO ADD THAT CAUSE IS UNKNOWN BUT IS BEING INVESTIGATED.]

“The health and well-being [MAY MENTION EXTENT OF INJURY IF KNOWN] of [ATHLETES/VOLUNTEERS/COACHES/ALL INVOLVED] is our primary concern. We are extremely saddened and concerned that this occurred.

“We are in the process of notifying the families and will release names of those injured once their families have been contacted.”

When Families Have Been Notified

“[NAME, TITLE] was involved in a [TYPE] accident at [IDENTIFY THE EVENT] at [LOCATION] at [TIME]. [HE/SHE] has sustained a [TYPE] injury according to [HOSPITAL OFFICIAL]. [HE/SHE] is under a physician’s care at [HOSPITAL NAME]. We wish [NAME OF INJURED] all the best for a speedy recovery.”

Missing Participant

“In cooperation with the [AUTHORITIES], Special Olympics Pennsylvania is asking for the public’s assistance in locating an athlete who has been missing since [DATE AND TIME]. [NAME OF ATHLETE] is [DESCRIBE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, CLOTHING, AGE, ETC.] and was last seen [LOCATION/OTHER DETAILS]. Anyone who has information is asked to call [AUTHORITY] at [PHONE NUMBER]. Special Olympics Pennsylvania is extremely concerned and is doing everything possible to find [NAME].”

Level 3 Crisis Situations

Death of a Participant

Never make a public statement before the family has been notified, you have learned their wishes and coordinated with authorities to ensure that information is factual and correct.

Initial Statement

“A [DESCRIBE ACCIDENT] occurred at the [IDENTIFY THE EVENT] at [LOCATION] in [CITY] at [TIME]. Emergency response organizations have been alerted and all efforts are being taken to assess the situation.”

“At this time we know there have been injuries. As soon as more information is available, we will provide it to you.” [ALSO MAY NEED TO INDICATE THAT THE CAUSE IS UNKNOWN BUT UNDER INVESTIGATION.]

When death is confirmed

“[NUMBER] people were killed during [DESCRIBE INCIDENT] at [LOCATION] in [CITY] at [TIME]. [MAY ALSO NEED TO INDICATE THAT CAUSE IS UNKNOWN AND UNDER INVESTIGATION.]

“The health and well-being of [ATHLETES/VOLUNTEERS/STAFF/ALL INVOLVED] is our primary concern. Our deepest sympathies go to the families of those who died. We are doing all we can to help [THOSE WHO WERE INJURED/FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO DIED] in this difficult time.

“We will release the names of those who died once their families have been contacted.”

When families and authorities have been contacted

You may want to consider a joint media briefing with the medical examiner’s office to discuss cause of death. Work with law enforcement officials to determine how this announcement will be made. You may also want to contact an attorney in the event there is a death.

“We join the family and friends of [NAME, TITLE] in mourning [HIS/HER] death. Our deepest sympathies go to [HIS/HER] family and to all who knew [HIS/HER]. [NAME] will be sorely missed. This tragedy is a great loss to the Special Olympics Pennsylvania family.”

Criminal Activity

It is strongly recommended that a joint briefing with a law enforcement spokesperson is held. You may also want to contact an attorney prior to issuing a statement.

“We have just learned that a Special Olympics Pennsylvania [ATHLETE/STAFF/VOLUNTEER/ALL INVOLVED] has been involved in [DESCRIBE ALLEGED INCIDENT]. We do not know the details of the situation and will not speculate on the matter.”

“Special Olympics Pennsylvania is committed to producing a safe, world-class athletic event for Special Olympics athletes. We will cooperate fully with investigating agencies, and we intend to undertake a detailed investigation of our own.”

WHAT THE MEDIA WILL WANT TO KNOW IN LEVEL 3 EMERGENCIES

The media will most likely want to know the following information during a Level 3 Emergency. In the process of collecting critical information, make sure to have answers to the following in each scenario. **Media also will ask what steps are being taken to prevent a repeat occurrence.**

Casualties

- Number killed or injured or who escaped injury (use caution with initial numbers).
- Nature of injuries received.
- Care given to the injured.
- Cause of death (Use caution and avoid assigning responsibility or blame).
- Disposition of the dead.
- Prominence of anyone who was killed, injured or who escaped.

Property Damage

- Estimated value of loss.
- Description of property.
- Importance of property.
- Other property threatened.
- Insurance protection (Do not discuss amounts of coverage).
- Previous emergencies in the area.

Causes

- Statements by participants.
- Statements by witnesses.
- Statements by key responders – the venue emergency response team, police, fire, etc.
- How emergency was discovered.
- Who sounded the alarm.
- Who summoned aid.
- Previous indication of danger.

Rescue and Relief

- The number of people engaged in rescue and relief operation.
- Any prominent person in relief crew.
- Equipment used.
- Physically disabled persons rescued.
- Care of destitute and homeless.
- How the emergency was prevented from spreading.
- How property was saved.
- Acts of heroism.

Description of the Crisis or Disaster

- Extent of crisis situation.
- Blasts and explosions.
- Crimes of violence.
- Attempts at escape or rescue.
- Duration.
- Collapse of structures.
- Extent of spill.

Accompanying Incidents

- Number of spectators and spectator attitudes.
- Unusual happenings.
- Anxiety, stress of families, survivors, etc.

Legal Actions

- Investigations, coroner's reports.
- Police follow-up.
- Insurance company actions.
- Professional negligence or inaction.
- Potential suits stemming from the incident.

GUIDELINESS FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS: WHAT TO DO WHEN THE MEDIA CALLS/ARRIVES

What should you do if you are called or approached by the media at an event?

Basically, feel free to comment about factual things related to events and SOPA activities – we want to share the good news about our athletes and the great things we do! However, if the questions should turn to other potentially image damaging issues or if they ask for your opinion about a particular incident or issue, then those questions should be referred to the SOPA spokesperson.

We do not want to avoid the press (or give them the impression that we’re trying to hide something), but we do want to ensure we speak with one clear voice about whatever matter is at hand. In such a situation, make sure you provide the contact information for our spokesperson to the media so that they can get in touch and SOPA can provide them with information on the matter they are inquiring about.

What happens if you’re conducting an interview and suddenly they “put you on the spot”?

First, do not feel pressured to respond and answer the question simply because they’ve asked it. Politely respond that you need to refer them to SOPA’s spokesperson on that matter, and then provide them with the contact info. That is always an appropriate and adequate response – don’t feel pressured to respond even if they continue to ask you the question. Remain polite, but insist that those questions need to be directed to our spokesperson.

Remember...

- ✓ *Stop and think*
- ✓ *Less is more*
- ✓ *Stay positive – if you mean no, say no*

When dealing with crises...

- ✓ *Empathize*
- ✓ *Tell the truth*
- ✓ *Promise to keep everyone informed*
- ✓ *Follow through*

APPENDIX A

CRISIS FACT SHEET

The Crisis Communications Administrator will complete this sheet and speak to the appropriate parties to find out the most complete answers possible.

From where is the person reporting the situation?

Who is the person reporting the situation (name and contact information) and how is the person involved with Special Olympics Pennsylvania?

What numbers (office extension, home, mobile phone and pager) can the person reporting the situation be reached at if more information is needed?

What happened?

Where did it happen?

When did it happen (include date and time)?

Was there any damage, injuries or fatalities? Explain in detail.

Who else was involved or present (names and contact information)?

What actions have already been taken?

Was Special Olympics headquarters or the Special Olympics North America Regional Office notified? If so, who was contacted?

Has there been any media attention? If so, what outlet(s) (e.g., television, radio, newspaper, magazine, Internet)? Cite specific media alerted.

Other comments?

APPENDIX B

CRISIS MEDIA LOG

The Crisis Communications Administrator will complete this sheet that keeps track of all media inquiries and follow-up.

Media Log Sheet

Crisis Situation _____

Date _____ Special Olympics Event _____

Message for _____

Date/time of call _____

Caller _____

Phone number(s) _____

Media outlet/Name _____

Return call by/Deadline _____

Summary of inquiry _____

Who responded to the inquiry? _____

Date/Time _____

Summary of response _____

Further action needed? _____