

Social media can be a great tool to engage your local community and spread the word about all of the amazing things that your organization is doing. However, it can also be a difficult world to navigate when it comes to negative comments and feedback. Below you will find a policy and guidelines for steps to take should a social media crisis arise.

Step No. 1 – Define “Crisis”

Some examples of a crisis in which Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) should be notified include:

- Negative comments or messages that have the potential to damage the organization’s reputation
- A hacked page
- Inappropriate posts or messages
- Threats
- Account user posting inappropriately on behalf of the organization

Step No. 2 – Plan

Once you have your account set up or take control of your local program’s pages, you should familiarize yourself with the platform and the tools that you can utilize to mitigate a crisis. Learn how to hide or delete comments, how to block individuals, and how to lock down your page (which would be necessary only in extreme cases of crisis). If you have any questions about how to utilize these tools/options or where to find them, you can contact SOPA’s Digital Communications Manager: Nick Cammarota (ncammarota@specialolympicspa.org).

Step No. 3 – Management

Survey the Situation

STOP! Assess the situation before you take any actions. Analyze the situation and don’t create an unnecessary crisis (by commenting or otherwise) if one doesn’t exist.

Attempt to Control the Situation

Before you take any major actions, be sure that there is record of what happened – take screenshots of messages, comments, etc., so they can later be used to understand context or take action. Refrain from commenting immediately or deleting anything unless it is absolutely clear and certain that the comment/post should be deleted (inappropriate imagery, extreme cursing, racist/discriminatory language, etc.)

Contact the Appropriate Individuals

In the event that a crisis occurs, SOPA must be made aware of the situation in order to provide assistance and help monitor the situation moving forward. Please reach out to SOPA's Digital Communications Manager, Nick Cammarota (ncammarota@specialolympicspa.org) and the Vice President of Marketing and Communications, Nicole Jones (njones@specialolympicspa.org).

**** If your local program has been regionalized, please also reach out to your Regional Executive Director after you have looped in the State Office. It is important that Regional Staff are also made aware of the situation. ****

Conclusion

When faced with a crisis situation, preparation and calmly following the above steps is the key. Try to slow your thoughts down, analyze the big picture, and proceed one step at a time. It must be stressed again that **if the situation has the potential to damage SOPAs reputation, you must contact Special Olympics Pennsylvania's State Office as soon as possible.**