

WNPLD Crisis Communications Plan

The library's credibility depends on being prepared, having a clear plan, and responding with transparency and compassion. By taking swift, honest action and maintaining open communication, we can resolve crises effectively, prevent misinformation, and protect the library's reputation.

A crisis is any significant event that disrupts or threatens the normal operations of the library, with the potential to harm patrons, staff, the community, our reputation, or finances. Such events can escalate rapidly, creating stress and leading to long-term negative media attention.

Purpose:

To effectively manage communication during crises that impact the library's operations, reputation, or community well-being.

Goals:

1. Ensure swift, transparent communication.
2. Minimize negative impact on the library's brand.
3. Re-establish normalcy and trust post-crisis.

Crisis Communications Team (CCT)

The Crisis Communications Team is responsible for managing the flow of information during a crisis, ensuring that incident facts are communicated accurately and swiftly. The team plays a crucial role in executing the Crisis Communications Plan, which outlines the "Who, What, and How" of communication in the face of a crisis. The team manages the flow of information, ensuring accurate and timely updates to all audiences.

Chain of Command:

- Notify the Executive Director and Marketing & PR Manager immediately upon learning of a crisis.
- Only the Executive Director, President of the Board of Trustees, and the Marketing & PR Manager are authorized to communicate with the media.

Crisis Team Contact Information

Name	Title	After Hours Contact Info
Monica Dombrowski	Executive Director	
Melissa Mitchell	Board President	
Sarah Quish	Marketing & PR Manager	
Jeremy Farrar	Social Media & Marketing Coordinator	
Nick Mall	Adult Services Manager	
Melissa Morgan	Branch Services Manager	
Laura Munoz	Digital Services Manager	
Luvia Melero	Business Manager/HR	
Mark Swenson	Information Technology Manager	
Courtney Volny	Patron Services Manager	
Anna Karwowska	Youth Services Manager	

Steps for Crisis Management Team

1. Assess the Situation:
Convene the team to determine the nature and scope of the crisis, key issues, and potential impacts. *(See Appendix A for crisis response questions)*
 2. Immediate Actions:
 - Ensure safety.
 - Notify key staff.
 - Identify key audiences (staff, patrons, media).
 3. Develop Response:
 - Craft factual and compassionate messages. *(See Appendix B for example crisis content)*
 - Team establishes clear talking points for all staff, and executive director shares in all staff email.
 - Determine public communication channels (press release, website, social media, etc.).
 4. Public Communication:
 - Contact key audiences (staff, patrons) before going public.
 - Share key messaging to key audiences
 - Monitor public communication channels and respond as needed
 5. Legal Review:
If necessary, consult with legal counsel to ensure compliance and appropriateness of responses.
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Communication Guidelines

- Consistency & Clarity:
Messages should be clear, concise, and consistent across all platforms. *(See Appendix C for Tips for responding to media inquiries)*
 - Proactive Responses:
Avoid "no comment." If unable to share details, explain the reasons (e.g., privacy laws).
 - Media Management:
Refer all media inquiries to the Marketing & PR Manager. Prepare talking points in advance and provide answers to potentially tough questions.
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Communication Tools

- Library website
 - Social Media
 - Telephone and Voicemail
 - Email blasts to staff, patrons, and press
 - News media (press releases)
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Post-Crisis Steps

1. Monitor Media:
Continuously track media and social platforms to manage misinformation and rumors.
2. Evaluate Response:
Review what worked well and what could be improved. Update the crisis plan as necessary.
3. Follow-Up Communication (as needed):
Issue post-crisis communications to restore confidence and update the public on corrective actions.

4. Ongoing Engagement:

Use the crisis as an opportunity to strengthen community relations and media partnerships.

Appendix A

Crisis Response Questions

The Crisis Communications Team will consider the following questions as they assess the situation:

- What is known and who already knows it?
- Who on staff needs to be involved?
- Is there public interest?
- What immediate steps need to be taken?
- What are people feeling - what emotions need to be considered?
- What can and CAN'T be said?
- Is legal counsel needed?
- What channels will be used to communicate a response?
- Who are the key audiences that need to be contacted, by whom and when?
- Who will be the spokesperson for the library?

Appendix B

Potential Crisis List

1. Accident or Injury on Library Property

a. Crisis Team Members Involved:

- Executive Director
- Board President (advisory)
- Facilities Manager
- Marketing & PR Manager
- Legal Counsel
- Local Emergency Services

b. Immediate Action:

Provide immediate medical assistance and ensure the safety of other patrons.

c. Recovery:

Review safety protocols and make necessary changes. If necessary, communicate improvements to the public to restore confidence in the safety of the library environment.

2. Active Shooter Situation

a. Crisis Team Members Involved: All

- Executive Director
- Board President (advisory)
- Marketing & PR Manager
- Social Media Coordinator
- Security Personnel
- Facilities Manager
- Law Enforcement
- Mental Health Support Services

b. Communication:

- During the Incident:

Communication should be led by law enforcement. Avoid making public statements or social media posts to prevent spreading misinformation or alerting the shooter.

c. Key Message:

"Law enforcement is working to contain the threat at [exact location]. We will share updates when it is safe to do so."

d. Post-Incident:

Once the situation is under control and authorities give the all-clear, issue a public statement acknowledging the incident. Provide accurate information about what occurred, emphasize safety measures taken, and express concern for those affected. Assure the public that the library is cooperating fully with law enforcement.

e. Support and Recovery:

- Crisis Counseling:

Offer immediate counseling and support services to staff, patrons, and community members affected by the incident. Partner with local mental health professionals to provide these services.

- Review and Debrief:
Conduct a thorough review of the incident with law enforcement, staff, and crisis management experts. Identify any gaps in the response and update the active shooter protocol accordingly.
 - Security Enhancements:
Consider enhancing security measures, such as installing additional surveillance cameras, panic buttons, or increasing security personnel presence.
- f. Community Engagement:
- Rebuild Trust:
Keep the community informed about the steps being taken to improve safety and prevent future incidents. Be transparent about any policy or security changes made in response to the situation.
 - Training and Preparedness:
Increase staff training on handling active shooter situations and ensure all employees are familiar with updated protocols.

3. Allegations of Misconduct (Staff or Patron)

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
- Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - HR Manager
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Legal Counsel
- b. Immediate Action:
Investigate the allegations promptly and thoroughly, involving legal counsel if necessary.
- c. Key Message:
"We take any allegations of misconduct very seriously and are conducting a thorough investigation to ensure that all individuals are treated fairly. Our commitment to a safe and respectful environment remains steadfast."
- d. Communication:
- Acknowledge the situation without compromising the investigation.
 - Emphasize the library's commitment to safety and respectful conduct for all staff and patrons.
- e. Recovery:
Implement necessary disciplinary actions or policy changes. Communicate steps taken to prevent future incidents and restore trust with the community.

4. Building Emergency (Fire, Flood, Structural Damage)

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
- Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - Facilities Manager
 - Emergency Services (Fire Department, Police)

- b. Immediate Action:
Evacuate the building safely, following emergency protocols.
- c. Key Message:
"The safety of our patrons and staff is our top priority. We are working closely with emergency services to assess the situation and ensure everyone's well-being. The library will remain closed until further notice, but we are committed to providing updates as more information becomes available."
- d. Communication:
 - Immediate public notice via social media, website, and local news outlets.
 - Update the community regularly on closure status and safety measures.
- e. Recovery:
 - Coordinate with emergency services to assess damage and develop a plan for reopening.
 - Inform the public of any temporary service adjustments, such as digital resources or alternative locations.

5. Collection Concerns (e.g., censorship accusations, book bans)

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Legal Counsel
 - Board of Trustees
- b. Immediate Action:
Address the concerns raised by community members or groups while upholding the library's policies on intellectual freedom.
- c. Key Message:
"The library is committed to providing access to a wide variety of materials that reflect diverse perspectives. We believe in intellectual freedom and the rights of individuals to access the information they choose."
- d. Communication:
 - Engage the community in forums or discussions to address concerns and explain library policies.
- e. Recovery:
Reaffirm the library's mission and, if necessary, revisit policies to align with community needs while protecting intellectual freedom.

6. Controversial Event or Speaker

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - Event Manager
 - Local Law Enforcement

- b. Immediate Action:
Assess the potential for disruption or backlash. Ensure that security measures are in place to maintain order.
- c. Key Message:
"As a public library, we are committed to providing a platform for diverse ideas and perspectives. While we understand that this event may raise concerns, we remain dedicated to upholding free speech while maintaining an inclusive and safe environment for all."
- d. Communication:
 - Address concerns raised by the community with transparency, emphasizing the library's neutrality.
- e. Recovery:
 - Host follow-up discussions or forums to engage the community and address any lasting concerns.
 - Reaffirm the library's mission to provide a space for diverse perspectives while respecting community values.

7. Data Breach or Cyberattack

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - IT Manager
 - Legal Counsel
 - Law Enforcement
- b. Immediate Action:
Secure systems, identify the extent of the breach, and notify law enforcement and IT professionals.
- c. Key Message:
"We have identified a potential security breach affecting some library systems. Our team is working diligently with law enforcement and cybersecurity experts to address the situation. We are committed to protecting your information and will provide updates as soon as more details are available."
- d. Communication:
 - Notify affected patrons and staff immediately.
 - Clearly communicate what data may have been compromised and what steps are being taken to protect their information.
 - Provide clear guidance on how individuals can safeguard their own information.
- e. Recovery:
 - Strengthen cybersecurity measures to prevent future breaches.
 - Keep stakeholders updated on steps taken to improve security.

8. Financial Mismanagement or Fraud

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)

- Business Manager
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Legal Counsel
 - External Auditors
- b. Immediate Action:
Conduct an internal audit, suspend any activities that may exacerbate the issue, and assess the extent of the problem.
- c. Key Message:
"We are aware of the situation and are working diligently to address it. We are conducting an internal audit and implementing immediate measures to ensure this issue is resolved swiftly and transparently."
- d. Communication:
 - Issue a statement outlining the steps being taken to rectify the situation.
 - Provide assurance that stronger controls are being implemented to prevent recurrence.
- e. Recovery:
Implement stronger financial controls, offer regular transparency through financial reports, and rebuild trust through community engagement.

9. Health Crisis (Pandemic, Outbreak)

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - HR Manager
 - Facilities Manager
 - Public Health Officials
- b. Immediate Action:
Implement health protocols (social distancing, mask mandates, or temporary closure) following public health guidelines.
- c. Key Message:
"Our priority is to safeguard the health and well-being of our community and staff. We are closely following public health guidelines and have implemented the necessary safety protocols to reduce risk."
- d. Communication:
 - Regular updates on health and safety measures (website, social media, email).
 - Announce any temporary closures or changes to services.
 - Provide information on how to access remote services and resources.
- e. Recovery:
Gradually restore services in line with public health guidance, keeping the public informed about new safety measures and any phased reopening.

10. Incident of Violence or Threat

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
 - Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)

- Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - Security Personnel
 - Law Enforcement
- b. Immediate Action:
Ensure the safety of patrons and staff by securing the area and contacting law enforcement immediately.
- c. Key Message:
"Our immediate priority is the safety of everyone involved. We are working closely with law enforcement to handle the situation, and we will provide updates as more information becomes available."
- d. Communication:
- Acknowledge the incident publicly and reassure the community that safety measures are in place.
 - Provide timely updates as law enforcement releases more details.
- e. Recovery:
Offer counseling services to affected individuals, review and enhance security measures, and communicate actions taken to prevent future incidents.

11. Significant Service Disruption (e.g., major technology failure)

- a. Crisis Team Members Involved:
- Executive Director
 - Board President (advisory)
 - Marketing & PR Manager
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - IT Manager
- b. Immediate Action:
Identify the cause of the disruption and work with IT to restore services as quickly as possible.
- c. Key Message:
"We are currently experiencing technical difficulties and are working to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. We apologize for the inconvenience and appreciate your patience."
- d. Communication:
- Inform patrons about the disruption, what is being done to fix it, and provide updates on the timeline for restoration.
 - Offer alternative options for services if available.
- e. Recovery:
Conduct a post-incident review, implement improvements to prevent future disruptions, and communicate these improvements to patrons.

Appendix C

Tips For Responding To Media Inquiries

Ask for:

- Reporters name
- Organization
- Phone number
- What is the deadline?
- Clarify the purpose and length of the interview
- Can I have a few minutes to gather my notes and call you right back?
- Create an interview agenda with points YOU would like to include.

Exit Strategies (when asked redundant questions)

- As I said,.....
- I answered that. Do you have any other questions?
- I'm sorry, I don't have anything more to add.