

# CRISIS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

The purpose of preparing your organization's response to critical incidents is to think about how you will manage the practical/logistical and emotional impacts that undoubtedly follow an incident. During high intensity, unplanned events, staying focused can be a challenge. Following a checklist can provide a baseline of confidence and a well-reasoned response.

Please note that not all points listed are relevant to every situation. Also, some items may be tabled for a second or third meeting rather than at the initial gathering of the team. This crisis response checklist has been categorized into three sections: "Initial Response," "Secondary Response," and "Evaluation and Follow-up."

## INITIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

The initial response is primarily focused on the immediate issues that need to be considered within the hours following a critical incident.

### GATHER INTAKE INFORMATION

- Collect all necessary information about the incident.
- Who will your organization's contact be? What happened? Who was involved? What are the impacts? What are the issues?

### CONTACT RELEVANT PARTIES

- Who needs to be informed internally? (E.g., governing bodies, managers, etc.)
- Who needs to be informed externally? (E.g., family, school, police, etc.)

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Draft statement for phone inquiries based on previously drafted templates.
- Designate who will respond to phone inquiries from media, customers/clients, friends, etc. If possible, route all phone inquiries through one person.

### STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- Which staff need to be relieved of responsibilities in order to help?

- Which staff may not be in the position to carry on with their normal duties?
- Consider extra staffing needs based on the employees involved in the crisis response team; consult with their immediate supervisor.

### CONSIDER ACCESSING OUTSIDE AGENCIES FOR MORE ASSISTANCE

- Do you need more help? Specialized help? (E.g., fire, police, mental health services, etc.)
- With what external supports have you made prior arrangements?

### ORGANIZE STAFF COMMUNICATION

- Consider if communication will be by email, phone, or in-person.
- Decide who will receive certain information regarding the incident. Different staff may receive different information depending on their roles.
- Possible agenda: immediate actions, communication plans, media policy, debriefing/counselling procedures, critical incident group debriefing plans, what to watch for in people, etc.

## CRISIS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

### MEDIA CONSIDERATIONS

- If the event will bring media attention, how will this be managed?
- Follow critical incident media protocol.
- Where available, send all communications to the organization's media contact.

### DETERMINE IF LEGAL COUNSEL IS NEEDED

- Consider if there are concerns about potential legal actions. For example, do you have questions about what you should or shouldn't say to minimize the risk of litigation?

### OTHER HELPERS

- How will you respond to familiar and unfamiliar helpers (e.g., staff from agencies, clergy, concerned citizens, etc.) who show up to "help"?

### CONTAIN TECHNOLOGY

- Should networking websites be monitored? Recognize the impact of the rumours that can be exacerbated with cell phones, text messages, social media, etc.

### SECURE LOCKER/DESK & MATERIALS OF DECEASED

- Ensure personal affects are secure so friends/coworkers don't disturb them.
- At the appropriate time, consider what the family's wishes.

### CONSIDER BUILDING CLOSURE

- Will the building be closed? If you're at a school, how will parent notification and childcare be handled?

### REVIEW WHO IS MISSING

- Why aren't they there? Who will connect with them?

### DETERMINE WHEN THE TEAM WILL MEET AGAIN

- Will you meet again throughout the day? Is that even possible?

## SECONDARY RESPONSE CHECKLIST

After the initial tasks have been discussed and addressed, the secondary response will begin to take effect. This is usually several hours or, for some responses, days after the critical incident. Secondary efforts are focused on responding to the emotional needs of people.

### CONTACT WITH FAMILY

- Will a school/community/organization representative visit or send food or flowers?
- In the case of suicide, does the family want it publicly identified as a suicide?
- What are the family's wishes regarding the funeral or memorial activities?

### WRITE STATEMENT FOR SCHOOL/COMMUNITY/ ORGANIZATION MEMBERS

- Will people simply be informed, or will the statement be followed by a debriefing? The statement should be clear and give facts, but not go into unnecessary detail.

## CRISIS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

### PREPARE AND DISTRIBUTE HELPING MATERIAL

- Handouts regarding what to expect, what might be helpful, etc.

### IDENTIFY THOSE AT HIGHER RISK

- Who is closely connected who may need immediate support?
- Who is at risk of violence, suicide, etc.?

### INDIVIDUAL DEBRIEFING

- Meet with those who have been identified as high risk.

### OFFER INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

- Trained counsellors should be available to individually meet with people who require more in-depth and long-term support.

### ORGANIZE SAFE ROOM/ GRIEF ROOM

- Who will staff the room? Where will it be located? What will be there?

### CONSIDER A LARGE GROUP (E.G., TOWN HALL) INFORMATION SESSION

- Would it be beneficial? What are the potential problems that may arise?

### CRITICAL INCIDENT GROUP DEBRIEFING (CIGD)

- Would some groups benefit from CIGD?
- Who will lead the debriefings?

### CONSIDER MEMORIAL OPTIONS

- Will a permanent or temporary memorial be formed?

### MANAGE ADDITIONAL ISSUES

- Unexpected issues may arise for the team.

### THROUGHOUT THE SECONDARY RESPONSE, REMEMBER TO THINK TRAUMA-INFORMED

- Who was closest to the incident?
- Who has experienced similar incidents in the past?
- Who is going through other issues? Will this event trigger something?
- Who are close friends and family?

## EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Once the immediate and secondary responses have occurred, typically things begin to feel more settled. However, it's important to forget to consider the following:

### EVALUATE AND DEBRIEF THE RESPONSE

- Spend time evaluating the team's response and debriefing the experience.
- Consider how you will monitor those who are at-risk. Who will monitor them and how?

- How will anniversaries be handled? Will the team need to be involved?

*Consider what additional considerations you would add to the Crisis Response Checklist that relate specifically to your context.*