

Faith  
Family  
Medical  
Clinic

December 15

2010

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“Thank you for allowing us to serve you by preparing this Crisis Management Plan report. It is our hope that Faith Family Medical Clinic (Nashville) will be blessed by the contents herein.”

-Students in BA 3703-61, Lipscomb University

Crisis  
Management  
Plan

# Executive Summary

This Crisis Management Plan was prepared for Faith Family Medical Clinic (FFMC) by students in Leanne Smith's 5:30 Management Communication class during fall semester (Term 2), 2010 with assistance and oversight by Kathy Hargis, Risk Management Director of Lipscomb University. It was commissioned by Joshua Southards, Operations Manager for FFMC, in October, 2010.

Five major sections are included in this report:

1. Definition of a Crisis
2. Eliciting Risk Indicators through Assessments
3. Risk Management Prevention Tips
4. Crisis Communication Plan
5. Special Section: Spokesperson & Press Conference Tips

This report should not be considered comprehensive or exhaustive on the topic of crisis communications or crisis management. Rather, it is meant to be a starting point for FFMC to develop an exhaustive plan that best meets its risk management needs.

It is recommended that FFMC let this report be a guide and a conversation-starter, recognizing that no crisis management plan should become stagnant or "finished." It is recommended that this plan be re-evaluated on a regular, annual basis. It is further recommended that if/when FFMC should experience a crisis on any level, to revisit and revise this plan at the earliest appropriate opportunity to better prepare FFMC for future crises.

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## Introduction

This Crisis Management Plan is a report prepared for Faith Family Medical Clinic (FFMC) by students at Lipscomb University for a class project.

Flooding in Nashville and Middle Tennessee in May 2010 led many business professionals in the area to consider the topic of crisis management. Some businesses had plans that were outdated and needed to be revised. Other businesses had no crisis management plan in place and decided they needed one. Conversations on this topic between Christin Shatzer, in Lipscomb's SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program and Leanne Smith, an instructor for business communication classes at Lipscomb, led to a student project in the fall 2010 semester partnering students in BA 3703-01 Management Communication with FFMC.

Students in this undergraduate course study how to write and format various business documents. Neither they, nor the instructor of this course, are experts on the matter of crisis management. But they were willing to gather research on the topic and to articulate the research findings in a formal report in the hope that it would prove beneficial to FFMC.

Students were divided into 4 teams with 4 persons each and challenged to research a particular topic commonly found in crisis management plans. (The 5<sup>th</sup> section was supplied by the instructor.) Information they have gathered in this report is not exhaustive, but is hoped to be a starting point for FFMC as it seeks to develop a more complete plan appropriate to the specific needs of FFMC.

Kathy Hargis, Director of Risk Management at Lipscomb, served as a valuable resource during early conversations in the planning stages of this project and as students collected research. In her words, "No crisis management plan is ever complete. The moment it appears to be, it becomes outdated. It must constantly be reviewed and revised if it is to remain practical for an organization" (2010).

Therefore, it is recommended that FFMC continually review and revise the crisis management plan that develops from this beginning report. It is recommended that the plan be re-evaluated (1) after any crisis that may occur, once the initial threat has passed and immediately after operations return to normal; and (2) that it be re-evaluated annually during a designated time period, such as a year-end review.

## Section 1: Definition of a Crisis

A crisis can be defined as “a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger.” At FFMC, every situation needs to be taken into consideration for employees to know how to react and keep themselves and their patients safe. Knowing what risks can and may occur and having a set plan of action in place is what will enable FFMC to address these situations, should they arise.

A crisis is difficult to plan for and can never fully be anticipated. Because of this, there is a strong need to understand what a crisis is and what steps to take after one occurs. Businesses have to plan for the worst. A crisis situation can happen at any time, and if there is a set plan of action, personnel will know how to act accordingly in keeping everyone safe.

All FFMC personnel should be well-versed in the different crisis risk levels and know what action is necessary to keep everyone safe within the clinic at the time of occurrence. Safety is the number one priority. This is especially important to a business, because customers want to know they will not be put in harm’s way while seeking service.

### *Types of Crises*

Through research, we have determined three main **types of crises**:

1. Behavioral
2. Environmental
3. Operational

A **behavioral crisis** is a situation where a person is engaging in behaviors that threaten the health and safety of those around him.

An **environmental crisis** is a natural phenomenon such as an earthquake, tornado, hurricane, flood, landslide, or storm.

An **operational crisis** is the day-to-day, minor crises of running an organization and serving patients.

The key to recognizing these types of crises is to remember, “Don’t let the emotional impact of a crisis event undermine morale and disrupt the productivity of your workforce” (Diana). These crisis types each have their own level of risk, reviewed below.

### *Levels of Crises*

In a crisis, the top priority is keeping everyone out of harm’s way. Knowing the plans for the possible times of crisis will highly benefit the workers and patients during a crisis. We came up with **three different levels of crises**:

1. Low
2. Medium
3. High

A **low level** crisis would be anything that is not life threatening or putting anyone in harm's way. These are instances when life and business can still proceed, but maybe a small repair needs to be made. Examples of a low level crisis are a water leak, plumbing/sewage failure, broken pipe, minor building failure, or graffiti to an outside wall. None of these are good, but things could be much worse.

A **medium level** crisis would be anything that could possibly harm someone, but is not life threatening. When something in this category happens, medical help is a high possibility, but not an emergency or always needed. Examples of medium level crises are select weather storms, protests, hate crimes, assaults, civil disturbances, or vandalism. In each of these, someone could get injured easily, but not always going to happen.

A **high level** crisis would be anything that is possibly life threatening. These are instances when emergency and medical help will be in dire need. During these times, **911** should be called and the police/fire and rescue department/ambulance should be dispatched. Examples of high-level crises are fires, floods, tornado (touched down or very near), blizzard, armed robbery, bomb threat, chemical spills, and radioactive contamination.

For each crisis, a low, medium, or high-level rating should be assigned. This allows not only the people who are at risk to understand the seriousness at hand, but it also allows the proper action to be taken place in order to control the crisis. For the Crisis Management Plan to be successful, everyone must understand it and be empowered to act appropriately.

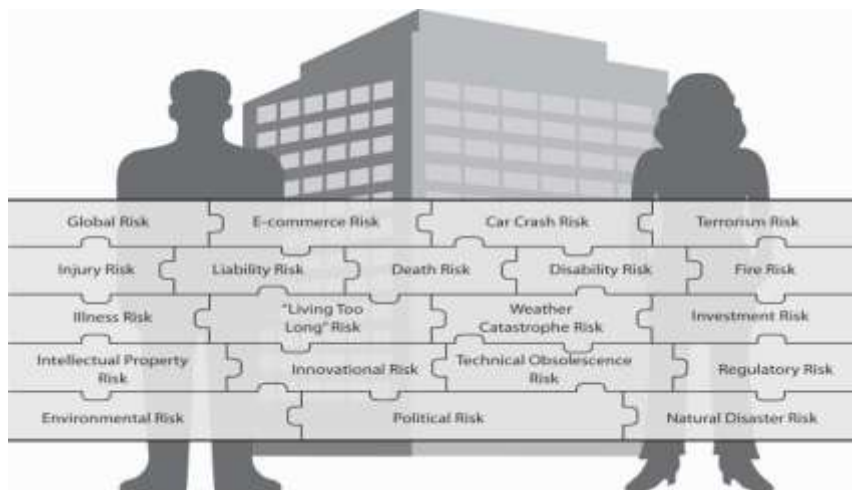
Typically, a crisis would have most of the following **components**:

- Hazard to the organization's public perception
- Unexpectedness
- Limited time to make decisions
- Urgent need for organizational restructuring

There are several different types of crises, and every one of them has a different definition. Most crises cannot be avoided, but what you do BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER a crisis can help minimize the damage.

**Types of crises**, according to Wikipedia:

- Natural disaster
- Technological crises
- Confrontation
- Malevolence
- Crisis of skewed management value
- Crisis of deception
- Crisis of management misconduct



**Figure 1:** Listing of various types of crises that threaten businesses

**Natural disasters** are unavoidable. Natural disasters can include any “act of nature” to which a specific region of the country is susceptible. In Tennessee, natural disasters are most likely to include: an earthquake, flood, tornado, snowstorm, or severe thunder/hail/wind storm. Recent examples of natural disasters in the Southern Region are the floods that impacted West and Middle Tennessee businesses in May 2010, and Hurricane Katrina that impacted Louisiana coastline businesses in 2005.

**Technological crises** also threaten businesses. A technological crisis could be a virus that shuts down a company’s whole computer system.

**Confrontation** includes situations in which a customer becomes angry and dissatisfied. Disgruntled customers can lead to employees losing their professional attitude during the confrontation. Other examples of confrontational situations would be boycotts and sit-ins.

**Malevolence** is also a type of crisis. It is when someone sets out to intentionally hurt a single person or an entire company. Terrorism is an example of a malevolence crisis.

**Skewed management value** occurs when people in management positions choose to focus on short-term economic gain rather than the company or customer’s best interest. An example of this was in 1992; Sears’ automotive department was charging their customers for work they did not need done and doing work on cars that did not need work.

**Misrepresentation of products** takes place more often than one would think. This is called crisis of deception. An example of a crisis of deception would be selling products on eBay and making them sound better than they really are. When a customer receives the product, it does not match the seller’s description.

Lastly, a crisis of **management misconduct** deals with ethical situations displayed by management. Martha Stewart's fraud case in 2004, of obstructing justice and lying to investigators about a well-timed stock sale, is a great example of this kind of crisis.

**Key points** to remember during a crisis:

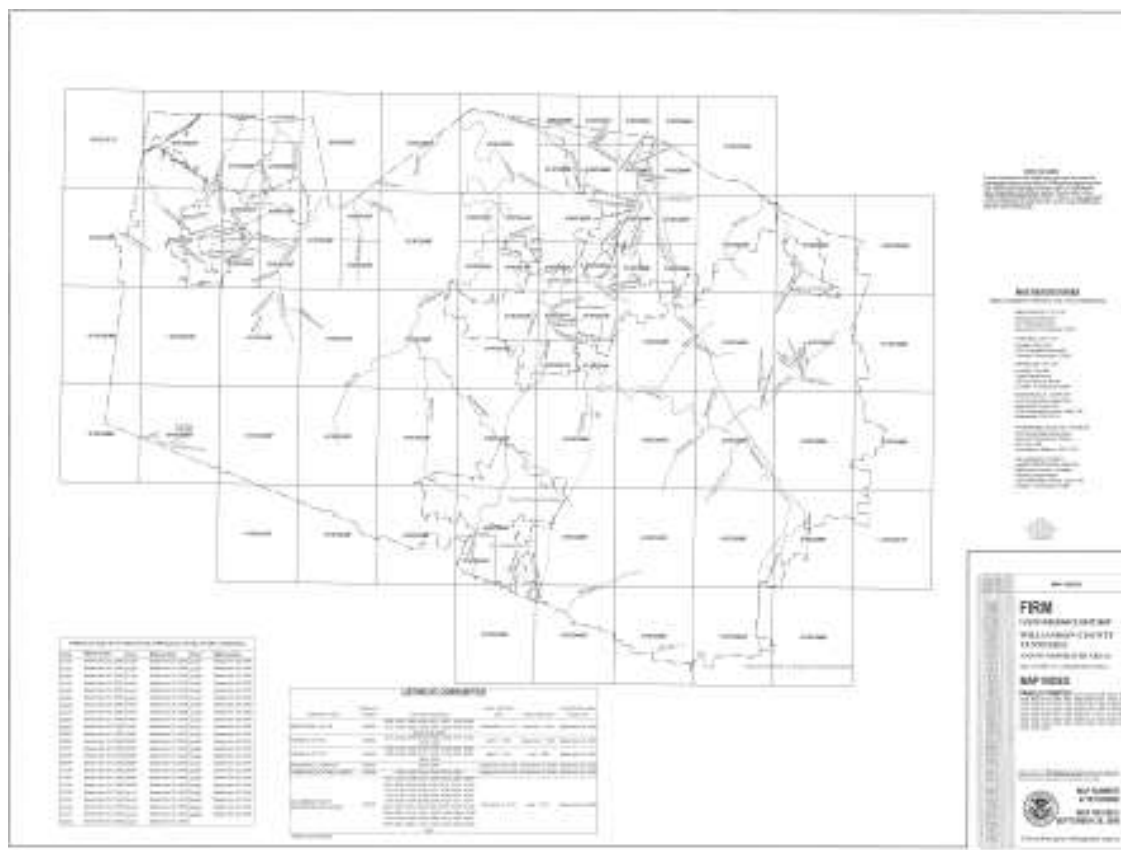
- *Credibility and reputation*: How the public perceives the handling of the crisis can improve or destroy a company's image.
- *Organization and communication*: Must be done efficiently and in a timely manner.
- *Transparency*: How transparent to be is the company's choice – but because of legal ramifications, it can be an extremely challenging choice to make.

Crisis situations can strike at any moment, with no warning. By knowing what actions to take, depending on the level of the situation, FFMC can keep patrons safe and operations running smoothly.

## Section 2: Eliciting Risk Indicators through Assessments

It is our goal to provide information to FFMC that will give the clinic tools to assess its particular risk factors. This section of the report will look at historical data collection, direct observation, quantitative research, and qualitative research. Questions are provided that FFMC should ask when assessing the risk factors, as well as limitations FFMC might face in the risk assessment process.

To determine level of risk, an individual should look to Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) for multi-hazard risk management. A Risk MAP can be found through a local government authority and through FEMA's website. An example of a flood map has been placed below.



**Figure 2:** Example of a flood map

### *Recording Historical Data*

While the flood map is a great example, there are many different hazards that need to be taken into consideration. To gain insight into potential hazards and the level of risk associated with each area, it would be best to create a chart listing the various dangers and the risk level (low, moderate, and high) for the area associated with each. A sample worksheet has been placed below.

<i>Possible Hazards and Emergencies</i>	<i>Risk Level (None, Low, Moderate, or High)</i>	<i>How can I reduce my risk?</i>
<b>Natural Hazards</b>		
1. Floods		
2. Hurricanes		
3. Thunderstorms and Lightning		
4. Tornadoes		
5. Winter Storms and Extreme Cold		
6. Extreme Heat		
7. Earthquakes		
8. Volcanoes		
9. Landslides and Debris Flow		
10. Tsunamis		
11. Fires		
12. Wildfires		
<b>Technological Hazards</b>		
1. Hazardous Materials Incidents		
2. Nuclear Power Plants		
<b>Terrorism</b>		
1. Explosions		
2. Biological Threats		
3. Chemical Threats		
4. Nuclear Blasts		
5. Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD)		

By recording historical data, a business can determine current trends and future possibilities of various hazards, the areas level of risk for each danger, and establish preventative measures.

### *Direct Observation*

Another method of data collection is known as **direct observation**. This method is a valuable and sometimes overlooked method for collecting pertinent information. Direct observation is most associated with loss control. **Loss control** is the control of expenses that will affect your ability to compete in today's market. It is the proper application of business techniques and skills to control losses to employee, products, or equipment. In short, loss controls seeks to identify physical and behavioral risks to a business. Documented inspections can protect a business in at least two ways:

1. By detecting unsafe physical conditions.
2. By detecting unsafe work habits/behavior.

All too frequently the inspection process has focused entirely upon the physical environment; yet the majority of costly injuries and lost time results from employee actions. While employee actions are difficult to control, a business can set up codes and guidelines to aid in the prevention of dangerous situations. It is also recommended that if a potential hazard is observed, the hazard should be recorded and then inspected. Loss control can be accomplished through self-inspection and documentation and/or through the business's insurance carrier. If chosen, a business can elect to have its insurance carrier send an agent from the company's loss control department to administer an inspection of the premises. The inspection should be done at no charge to the business and could be useful to identify potential physical hazards.

### *Quantitative Research*

Quantitative research methods involve the analysis of numerical data. Its goal is to measure and analyze concepts through the use of surveys and questionnaires. Various questionnaires can be utilized to obtain quantitative data.

1. Departmental questionnaires for employees
2. Questionnaires for vendors
3. Questionnaires (optional) for patients

**Questionnaires** are the most inexpensive way to gather data. Most questionnaires consist of a list of open-ended questions and/or closed-ended questions. An open-ended question would allow the respondent to come up with his or her own answer. A closed-ended question would give the respondent the opportunity to choose an answer from the options given to him or her (I.e. Yes or No). The questionnaire should also flow from general to specific topics. There are various ways a questionnaire can be administered. These methods are: paper and pencil, face-to-face, and computerized.

## *Qualitative Research*

While quantitative research focuses on measurable and scientific research methods, qualitative research tends to be much more subjective, allowing the researcher to include their own bias into the data. The qualitative research method focuses on in-depth information. It seeks to comprehend a topic from the perspective of the people directly involved in the issue. A business could benefit from the in-depth information gathered from this method through the use of interviews and focus groups. Potential groups include:

1. Individual interviews of employees and vendors
2. Departmental focus groups

**Interviews** tend to be a more expensive way to gather information when compared to questionnaires because interviews are much more labor and time intensive. However, while an interview is more costly, it has the ability to introduce more complex questions. An interview can explain individual experiences and pin-point group norms.

The other method used to collect data is known as the **focus group**. The focus is a qualitative technique that utilizes a small group of people and a moderator to facilitate group interaction. Focus groups can be administered by department or even through a departmental mix to gather information.

## *Questions and Limitations*

Risk assessment consists of an objective evaluation of risk in which assumptions and uncertainties are clearly considered and presented. It also summarizes defensive measures and associated costs based on the amount of risk the organization is willing to accept (i.e., the risk tolerance). The difficult part of risk management is measuring your level of risk. There are two particular measurements involved that are especially troublesome—both potential loss and probability of occurrence.

One of the main fallacies of risk assessment techniques involves the use of severity classes associated to specific outcomes (i.e. accidents, incidents, and severe disasters). Such classes tend to assume a linear link between isolated single hazards and specified consequences for safety. This assumption tends to neglect the fundamental complexity of the systems under analysis and reduces the opportunities for an effective involvement of operational experts.

An alternative approach to overcome these limitations would be to allow **operational experts** to prioritize the severity of hazards observed in concrete operational scenarios (e.g. public health, severe weather, natural disasters, technological issues, legal issues). These experts should also be involved in the possible means of forecasting and preventing hazards.

Because risk assessment is a process that does not result in a fixed final answer, it is impossible to determine the true magnitude and extent of any risk factor. The following fallacies of risk assessment for FFMC were observed in this section:

- Lack of data
- Insufficient analysis expertise and time

**Lack of Data** – Many risk assessment analysis techniques involve gathering data. Data can include developing models or simulations to help predict the impact of events, such as natural disasters caused by severe weather conditions like the recent floods in the Nashville area. Unfortunately, creating accurate models requires extensive data collection, which can be expensive and not completely reliable. Examples include an inaccurate projection of flooding and earthquake zones, medical research, population and governmental data, and surveys.

Cost-benefit analysis activities undertaken to identify countermeasures may also suffer if incomplete data collection occurs. Legal, social, and/or ethical requirements may override financial advantages.

Using data to make decisions may be unwise if the use of simple indicators does not reflect the complex realities of the situation at hand. Applying a decision intended for one small aspect of the project to the entire project may cause unforeseen results.

**Insufficient Analysis Expertise and Time** – Using decision trees to analyze risks may provide comprehensive input but analyzing the consequences arising from a myriad of possibilities may prove ineffective. With the latest technology, the use of computer software programs to simulate activities that can cause a negative impact on project schedules has become much more cost effective. However, it still requires comprehensive skills and knowledge to interpret the results correctly.

Complex programs with many variables require trained personnel who may not be assigned to the project. Similarly, analyzing historical data to determine potential threats requires access to past project documentation and expertise in interpreting the criteria used to evaluate risks on prior efforts.

Reliance on historical assessments alone can create a false sense of security if up-to-date skills and knowledge are not applied by trained personnel. Even when highly skilled individuals work on defining threats and proposing solutions, time may be insufficient to gather each person's expertise and conflicts may arise.

Qualitative analysis, using conversational input, can help identify risks but numerical data generated by quantitative methods should also be used to balance decision making.

## Section 3: Risk Management Prevention Tips

The students researching this portion of the Crisis Management Plan found a “SLAM it!” philosophy of Risk Management Prevention that is shared for FFMC’s review and consideration:

**STOP** — This is the first step in the SLAM course of action. All tasks must start with an analysis of risks. The employee must STOP and consider the work to be done and determine how he/she or others might be injured or how equipment could be damaged. The surroundings, environment, equipment, tools, assistance, procedures and regulations must also be taken into consideration.

**LOOK** — After stopping, the employee must LOOK for specific hazards created through the correspondence of the employees and their environment. This review includes environmental, accidental, and behavioral hazards in the workplace that have the potential to cause accidents and injuries.

**ASSESS** — The employee must then ASSESS the risks and rate them according to the risk matrix (next page). Based on the hazards identified in the LOOK phase, the employee evaluates the consequences and the likelihood of their occurrence and determines the level of risk.

**MANAGE** — The employee must then MANAGE all risks to as low a level as reasonably possible. Consequences can be reduced by 'removing, reducing or guarding'. The likelihood of occurrence can be reduced through job planning with risk assessment, effective tools and processes, and continual situational assessments. Controls to be applied to each and every risk are elimination of hazards, substitution or redesign, training, plans and personal protective equipment.

Each employee is responsible for risk prevention by SLAMing it in their daily activities!

1. **Stop** – During one’s daily activities, employees should stop and consider the work to be done and determine how they, or others, might be injured or how equipment could be damaged.
2. **Look** – After stopping, look critically for specific hazards created through interaction between people, property, and environment. Looking occurs before, during, and after a crisis is identified.
3. **Assess** – After determining potential risks, assess the liability according to the risk matrix. The risk rating designated for the new policy proposal will be based on an assessment of the likelihood of risk occurrence, the consequences, and the remaining risk after risk variables have been applied to the potential crisis.
4. **Manage** – Crises can be minimized by 'removing, reducing or guarding' persons and property. This can be applied through taking the appropriate action to eliminate or decrease any hazards.

Likelihood	Consequences				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost certain	M	H	H	E	E
Likely	M	M	H	H	E
Possible	L	M	M	H	E
Unlikely	L	M	M	M	H
Rare	L	L	M	M	H

Rating risk level:	(E)	Extreme risk - detailed action/plan required
	(H)	High risk - needs senior management attention
	(M)	Moderate risk - specify management responsibility
	(L)	Low risk - manage by routine procedures
Likelihood:	A	Almost certain - expected in most circumstances
	B	Likely - will probably occur in most circumstances
	C	Possible - could occur at some time
	D	Unlikely - not expected to occur
	E	Rare - exceptional circumstances only
Consequences:	5	Severe - would stop achievement of functional goals / objectives
	4	Major - would threaten functional goals / objectives
	3	Moderate - necessitating significant adjustment to overall function
	2	Minor - would threaten an element of the function
	1	Negligible - lower consequence

Figure 2: Risk Matrix (Australian Government)

## Section 4: Crisis Communication Plan

This segment of the FFMC Crisis Management Plan will serve as a guideline for the execution of communication protocols in compliance with the Crisis Communications Policy BEFORE, DURING and AFTER a crisis. The objectives are to:

- Prepare staff to efficiently and effectively manage communications.
- Ensure staff communications are factual, consistent and professional.
- Maintain FFMC's reputation and vital role in the community.
- Guarantee appropriate distribution of information to staff, media, patients and the public.

### *Crisis Communications Policy*

All crises are managed under the guidelines of the Crisis Communications Policy and are to be reported to the FFMC Executive Director, who may also serve as the chair of the Crisis Management Team (CMT).

The CMT Chair or his/her designees are the only individuals authorized to release information outside of FFMC and will direct any further communications within FFMC.

All comments are delivered professionally and with consideration to any effects on the reputation of FFMC.

Any information regarding patients or FFMC personnel will remain confidential and consistent with HIPAA guidelines.

### *Crisis Communications Execution*

**Planning** - Prior to a crisis, certain steps can be taken to assist FFMC in being fully prepared in the event of an emergency.

- Keep an updated list of external emergency contact personnel (Police, Fire, Medical, Hazardous Materials, etc.).
- Organize a Crisis Management Team (CMT), name it's Chairperson and key communication tree roles (*See page 3 for Crisis Telephone Tree*).
- Create and regularly update CMT Contact information as appropriate to low, medium, and high crisis handling procedures.
- Provide access to training and tips for any individuals whose role may include communicating with the media.
- Prepare and have the CMT approve key statements and crisis communication templates that can be readily customized to a crisis. Two versions of statements are helpful for those crises contained to FFMC only or others involving a larger portion of the community.
- Perform regular reviews of the Crisis Communications Management Plan for accuracy.

**Execution** - Once a crisis occurs the first step is to understand if it is actually a crisis or possibly an event. An event is an anomaly or abnormal occurrence in the FFMC environment. A crisis is an event that is determined to have a negative repercussion on the staff, patients, or facilities at FFMC. An example incident could be sudden loss of power to the FFMC facility. In this situation, an event would be due to a brief interruption from the power source; a crisis would be a result of a major weather or natural disaster event, fire, or intentional, malicious removal of the power. Events can be documented and closed without need for communication to external sources. If it is a crisis, then the following steps should be followed:

- Assess immediate safety concerns.
- Notify CMT Chair and convene members of the CMT.
- CMT evaluates the crisis and assigns a severity level (low, medium, high).
- CMT will create communications items for impacted individuals both internally (staff & patients) and externally (media & public).
  - What happened?
  - Who needs to know?
  - What immediate steps should be taken?
  - Who will be impacted?
  - Are there severe stress or emotional considerations?
  - What media will be used?
  - What will be said/not said?
  - Who will communicate?
  - When does communication start?
- Execute communications (*see page 4 for Crisis Communication Flow Diagram*).
- Document all communications and progress during the crisis.
- Assess crisis to determine closure.
- Upon closure, distribute appropriate closure communications both internally and externally.

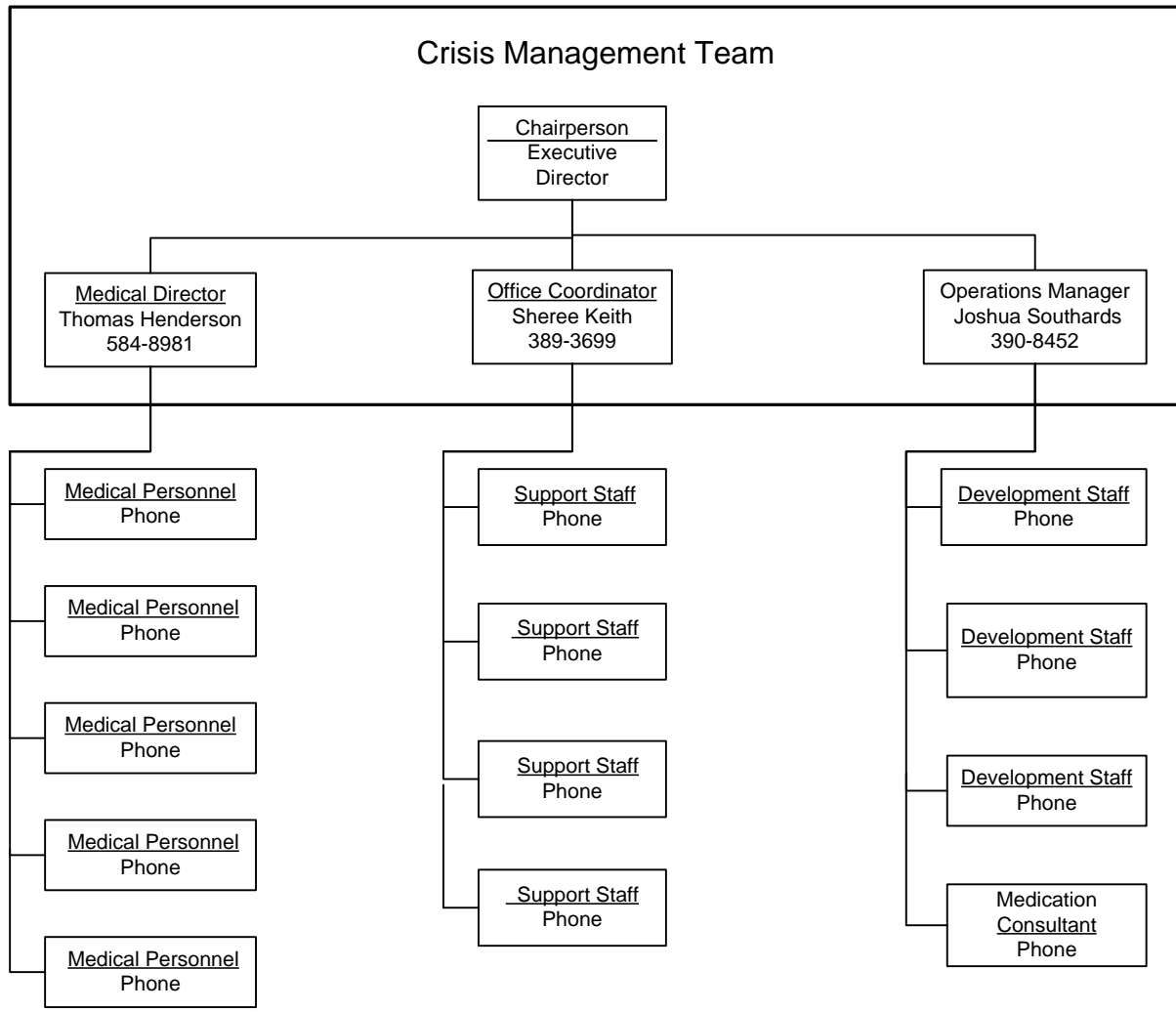
**After** – Once a crisis is closed and all closure communications have been delivered, an evaluation of the execution of the crisis management plan is performed to provide any suggested plan updates.

- Maintain documentation, records and metrics on the management of each crisis and suggested improvements.
- Final communications to thank or recognize special contributions can be delivered if warranted.

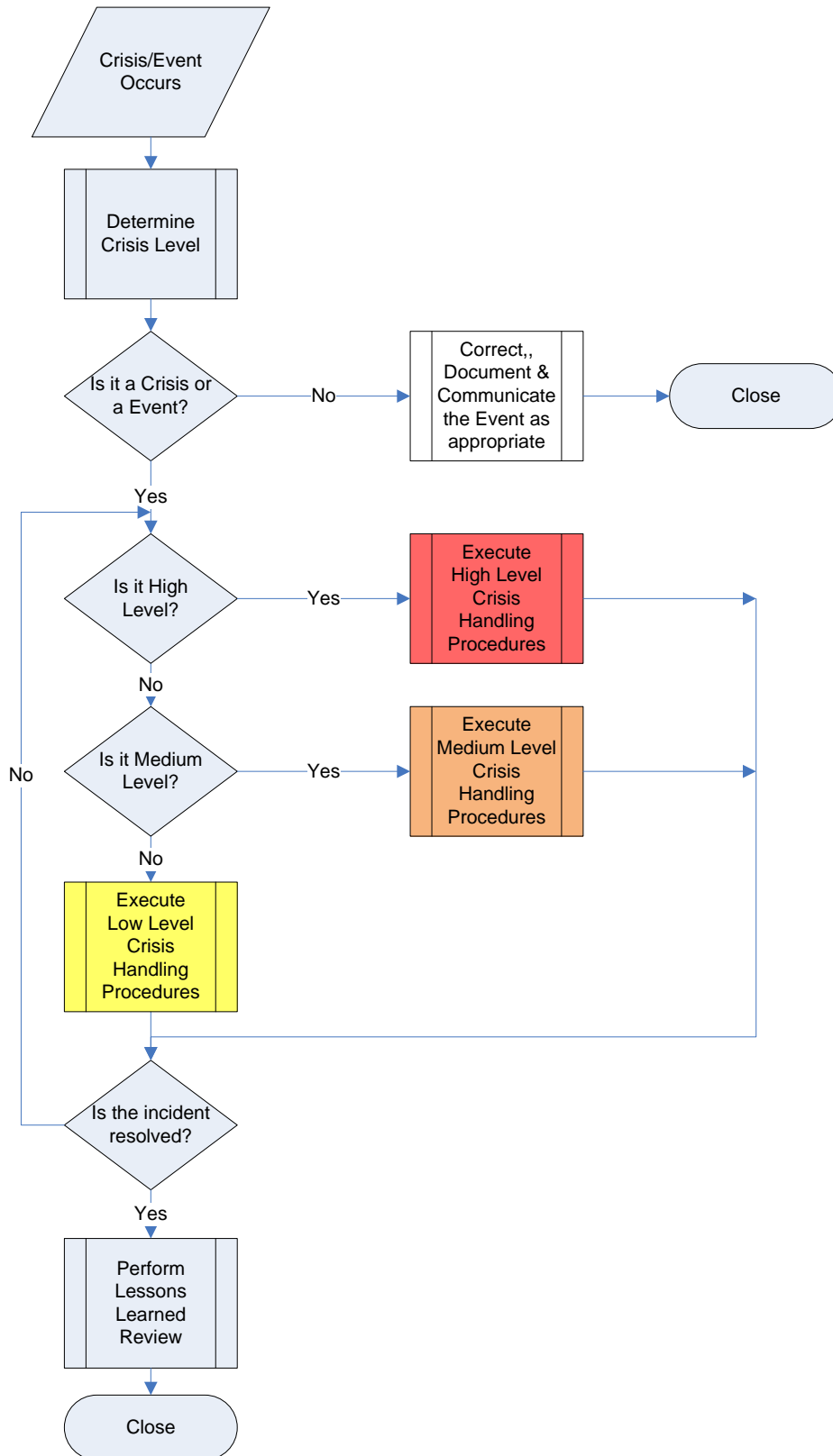
#### *Crisis Communication Statement Tips (see Section 5 also)*

- Consideration should be given to utilizing external resources such as Marketing, Communication or Legal firms for assistance in the development of communication templates and statements.
- Statements must be timely, factual and with details.
- All Communication materials should be kept confidential by the CMT until released.
- Establish an offsite venue for delivery of communications in the event that the FFMC facility cannot be used.

Crisis Telephone Tree



### Crisis Communication Flow Diagram



## Section 5: Special Section: Spokesperson & Press Conference Tips

Every company needs a plan to deliver information in difficult times. A plan of action can reduce a bad outcome in an already tense setting. In times of crisis it is important that the least amount of further damage is done.

It is best to designate a single **spokesperson** for times of crisis. Communication is essential in a crisis; minimizing rumors and negative feelings is vital to how the business or company is viewed by the public. If the people who respect and support your business are given a reason to lose that respect it could have a negative impact on your company's future. The cost of acquiring a new customer is much more expensive than retaining a lifelong customer, so when a crisis occurs it is beneficial to have a plan in place that will address the crisis AND retain your current clients and reassure them that they should continue their support. It is also important to have **press conference tips** on hand for the designated spokesperson, or any individual that suddenly finds him/herself in the role of designated spokesperson.

### *Spokesperson Tips*

In every crisis a business or company spokesperson needs to keep these goals in mind:

- Get the message out clearly and to the point
- Decrease the anxiety of the stakeholders
- Maintain the integrity of the business
- Avoid legal liability

When facing a crisis and before giving any public speech, the crisis management team and the spokesperson should research all information available about the **facts**. Those are the key points that should be addressed:

- What happened or what is happening?
- Is there a risk/danger for anyone?
- Who reported the issue and why?
- What is the size of the problem?
- Where is it?
- Has FFMC begun to solve the issue?
- Does FFMC already have some resources in the location of the issue?

If the spokesperson has this information, it can have a positive effect, and decrease the anxiety of the stakeholders. Once FFMC has collected all information effectively and accurately, it can face the public with a spokesperson properly trained beforehand; hence the information will be delivered in a concise way, and it will be easier to understand for the recipient(s).

### *Delivering Bad News*

When delivering bad news, there are several things to remember:

- First, it should be **buffered** or cushioned by beginning on a positive note such as saying thanks to the audience.
- Second, you should state the **bad news**. Just give the facts; no more, no less.
- Third, give the **reasons**. Everyone's first question when receiving bad news is "Why?" or "How did this happen?" So give the audience some explanation about the causes of the event.
- Fourth, explain possible **solutions** to the problem or crisis and a **course of action or strategy of prevention going forward**.

The spokesperson with the crisis management team can judge what information should be presented to the audience in order to diminish the "spin damage." He or she should also be familiar with **legal liabilities**, and may want to retain **legal counsel and/or a crisis communication expert** before addressing the issue in a public way.

### *Press Conference Tips*

The purpose of a press conference is to collaborate with the media and release information to them.

Press conferences can be classified in two categories: **proactive** and **reactive**. Proactive press conferences are initiated by the company that wants to create or communicate a story, and reactive press conferences are in response to breaking news, or crisis.

#### **Setting up the press conference:**

- Distinctly state a good reason for holding the press conference.
- Choose what message you want to deliver through the media.
- Select a convenient location for the press conference.
- Set the date and time; the best days to hold a press conference are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm
- Invite the media and guests
- Designate a moderator who will control the process and keep the reporters on the subjects
- Make sure everyone in your group understand their roles.
- Prepare your spokesperson

#### **Starting the press conference:**

- Arrive an hour early to check the room and start the news conference on time.
- Have your spokespeople arrive early so that they can review the talking points and go over potential questions from reporters.
- Have the moderator introduce all participants, direct reporters' questions to the appropriate person and officially end the press conference.

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## How to Respond to Questions from the Media

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If you do an excellent job submitting your story, reporters will be interested in learning more. Here is how you effectively answer their questions.

1. When a reporter contacts you, reply back immediately. Be prepared to ask them:
  - What is your deadline?
  - What questions do you have?
  - Who else have you contacted?
2. Know your message.
  - It is important that everyone in your group is clear about the message being conveyed. Have your message points written out and practice saying them before being interviewed.
  - Your message is where your expertise lies.
3. Your response to any question should tie back into your message.
4. If you know that an issue has come up where you might get calls from the media, prepare yourself by making up questions that the media will most likely ask and answering them in ways that tie back to your organization's message.
5. If you have initiated an interview with a member of the media, provide the interviewer with a fact sheet including information you would like to share and even suggestions of questions he or she could ask. The interviewer might not stick to what you gave them, but providing them information in the beginning will increase your chances of being able to cover the information you want to cover. Generally, the interviewer will appreciate your time preparing for the interview.
6. If you are able to schedule an interview, prepare yourself through role-play.
  - Make up some questions that you would expect a reporter to ask.
  - Answer those questions and familiarize yourself with them. Do not forget to tie in your message.
  - Have a partner repeatedly ask you those questions so you can practice answering and better prepare yourself for the interview.
7. Do not be afraid to say you do not know.
  - If you are unable to answer a reporter's question, refer him/her to someone who can, or offer to research the question and get back to him/her. If you take the second approach, be sure to follow up quickly.
  - If you realize you stated an incorrect fact or misstated your thoughts, immediately let the reporter know.
8. Provide any information that you may have for an upcoming story.
  - Reporters appreciate the gesture and this helps to build connections with media outlets.
  - Building rapport with a reporter will give you a better opportunity to frame your story for the public.

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## How to Write and Deliver a Successful Speech

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1. Find out in advance who your audience will be and what type of event you are speaking at - what kind of group you will be addressing, what the group may want you to talk about, if they will want to ask questions after your speech, and how many are expected to attend.
2. Try not to speak longer than 15 to 20 minutes, if possible. Audiences are used to the fast pace of TV programming and tend to have very short attention spans.
3. Wear comfortable, professional clothes. Solid colors are good, especially if you get TV coverage; loud, clashing colors and prints "jump around" on TV. Avoid large, clanking jewelry; podium microphones pick up the "jingling" sounds. Bring copies (10) of your speech for your host and for the media.
4. Decide what message you want to convey. Write it in a brief sentence. Decide the key arguments of your message. Include short anecdotes, one or two short paragraphs, to illustrate your points.
5. If you think your audience will be likely to disagree with your point of view, list the potential significant objections and write a strong two-sentence rebuttal to each one. Then turn the rebuttal around and make it into a positive, factual statement.
6. Make sure your "message sentence" is at the top of the speech, and use the second paragraph of your speech to expand your sentence. Keep it short. If your speech is covered by the media, you must have your most important points at the beginning of the speech. Most media have to leave early to catch deadlines and other events.
7. Your last paragraph should be a strong finish. Never say "in conclusion" or "to sum up" or anything predictable. It can be appropriate to pause and say "thank you" at the conclusion of the speech.
8. Decide if you will speak from note cards or from paper at the podium. Leave lots of white space in your final copy; don't cram the pages from top to bottom. Double-space your lines for easier reading.
9. Practice reading your speech aloud and time it for length. Pitching your voice lower and enunciating makes for better projection. Make sure it has plenty of short sentences and active verbs, and that you can read it easily without stumbling or running out of breath.
10. Save your speech for future use. If you have the chance to use it (or part of it) for a different audience, it will save a lot of time. But rework the speech for a new audience. Even politicians particularize their stump speeches for each event.
11. Now that you have researched, written and given a great speech, use it for other purposes. Publish it in your organization's bulletin or shorten it and submit it as an op-ed to your local newspaper.

## *Legal Issues*

FFMC should uphold its values even in times of crisis. Things to avoid when preparing for a press conference include:

- Disclosing too much personal information
- Sharing anything that might have been shared in confidence
- Focusing too much on specific persons and not the organization as a whole

Some questions cannot and should not be answered at the time of the press conference, due to lack of information or legal liabilities. There are polite ways to address these issues such as statements like: “We are not ready to discuss this matter at this time” or “When more information becomes available we will let you know.”

Lawsuits are not common in the nonprofit world, but can occur. There are many positive steps FFMC can take when faced with a potential lawsuit.

First, hire a lawyer. Lawyers are professionals in their field and have real world experience within the legal system. **Contract disputes** are one of the main legal liabilities that a nonprofit such as FFMC could face. Contract claims can be easily avoided if the business pays attention to the content of the contract. Many times nonprofits are not aware of the entire agreements within the contract and that is when they make a mistake. Contract length and how the contract may be terminated are the main objectives of most lawsuits. Two ways FFMC can avoid disputes within contract claims are by:

- Understanding all of the content in the contract
- Have a lawyer look over it before you sign

**Employment claims** are another common legal liability that nonprofits face. Some common employment claims that are usually filed are: sexual harassment, wrongful termination, discrimination, and wage and hour disputes. To avoid such claims FFMC should take the following measures:

- Hire and fire carefully
- Train and supervise thoroughly and adequately
- Implement solid personnel policies
- Maintain a safe working environment
- Purchase appropriate insurance
- Legal counsel should look over their employee’s benefit plans often
- All employees and volunteers should be treated with equal fairness.

Associations can also be held liable for **injuries** to individuals who are **using the association’s facilities**. To avoid such claims, associations should:

- Have proper signs around their facilities to warn people of dangers

- Have appropriate insurance in case a claim does happen

State Laws generally require that nonprofit organizations keep and make available to inspection by any member certain **corporate records**. Failure to produce records requested could end up in legal action against the association. For an association to prevent this from happening it should always be aware of what records might be called upon.

## Conclusion/Recommendation

It has been our privilege to work with FFMC on this project this semester. Specifically, we hope FFMC gains significant insight from the research contained in this report, and that it can develop a practical and beneficial Crisis Management Plan from these beginnings.

In addition to these 5 sections (Defining a Crisis, Eliciting Risk Factors through Assessments, Risk Management Prevention Tips, Crisis Communications, and Spokesperson and Press Conference Tips) a Crisis Management Plan may contain many other types of helpful information.

Resources on this topic are numerous. For a listing of resources used in this report, see the References section attached.

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