



A Partner for Nonprofit Innovation, Efficiency and Accountability

Crisis Management Policy

What is a crisis?

A crisis is a major event that threatens to harm individuals, organizations, or the general public, or when something goes wrong that can potentially cause long-term damage to the reputations of individuals and organizations.

Events likely to result in a crisis for CNDC:

- An injury or death within CNDC or one of its Projects or clients.
- A criminal action (or allegation of criminal action) by a CNDC staff person, volunteer, donor, funder, board member, or anyone related to one of CNDC's Projects or clients.
- A natural or man-made disaster that involves CNDC or one of its Projects or clients.

What is crisis management?

Crisis management is how individuals and an organization respond to stakeholders and the media during a crisis in order to mitigate the potential damage the crisis may cause.

Purpose of a Crisis Management Policy

A Crisis Management Policy ensures that CNDC has set procedures in place so that the organization has clearly defined channels by which to provide a formal, accurate, and professional response to organization stakeholders and the media during a crisis. Crisis planning helps CNDC prepare for the worst, have systems in place to mitigate crisis, and maintain a reputation of leadership and transparency when a crisis happens.

CNDC's Crisis Management Policy

1. Anything you think might be considered a crisis, even if you're not sure, should be reported to a supervisor and Melinda Higgs, CNDC President & CEO, immediately.
2. CNDC will have a pre-defined Crisis Team (see below) that will be contacted and convened when a crisis is reported. All staff, board, and Projects should have access to the contact information for CNDC's Crisis Team.)
3. Upon report of a crisis, the President & CEO, or the next in line on the Crisis Team, will initiate the steps outlined below in this policy for developing a Crisis Communications Plan to address that individual crisis.
4. Only the chief spokesperson and pre-defined back-up spokespeople are authorized to release information to the media and to the public. All staff, board, and other stakeholders should be professional and helpful to the media by connecting them with the spokespeople but will neither speak to the media about the crisis, nor provide any information to the public.

5. There will be one designated crisis management lead person, directing and coordinating all aspects of the organization's response, including managing the messages and the media. Depending on the crisis, the crisis management lead and the spokesperson may be the same person.
6. All communication should be guided by professionalism and transparency and serve to mitigate the crisis while reinforcing the leadership role of CNDC. When possible, responses should be proactive, responsive, and action-oriented.
7. Personnel matters are to remain confidential. Anyone involved in the organization, whether involved in the crisis or not, should practice prudence and confidentiality when it comes to discussing the crisis internally or sharing information about the crisis via email, social media, and any other communication channels.

CNDC's Crisis Team

CNDC's Crisis Team will be responsible for making sure the organization's Crisis Management Policy is followed, and for developing and implementing a Crisis Communication Plan that will be used to respond to the public, the media, and key organization stakeholders. The team shall be confirmed and updated, if necessary, each year.

The CNDC Crisis Team includes:

1. President & CEO – Chief Spokesperson
2. Chief Operating Officer – Back-up Spokesperson
3. Chief Financial Officer
4. Board Chair
5. At least one other member of the Executive Committee

The Crisis Team may assign other board members or staff from CNDC or its Projects or clients to the team, if necessary. CNDC will develop a call list/card with Crisis Team notification contact information. This list will be updated annually.

Crisis Communication Plan Steps

As soon as a crisis is reported, CNDC's President & CEO, or the next in line on the Crisis Team, will initiate the following steps to respond to the crisis with a communication plan.

1. Ensure safety of staff and location and contact 911 emergency services, if necessary.
2. Notify CNDC's legal and insurance representatives, as necessary.
3. Contact and convene CNDC's Crisis Team. The Crisis Team will be responsible for implementing the rest of the Crisis Communication Plan steps.
4. If appropriate, notify staff and board, providing only key facts and information as needed to inform the team the crisis management policy is in effect.
5. Create a situation analysis by identifying issues and gathering as much information as possible. Identify immediate next steps for internal and public communication.

6. Create an internal communications strategy to keep staff, board, clients, and Projects updated and informed. Develop a fact sheet to be distributed to the board and staff with important information, key messages, and other pertinent details.
7. Develop a public communications strategy, with positioning messages and responses to the general public and media that are accurate, honest, and frequent.
8. Notify other "key publics", such as volunteers, donors, funders, partners, and community leaders, as needed.
9. Formally address and/or respond to the media.
10. Document all conversations, decisions, details, and communication around the crisis.
11. Monitor the media coverage of the crisis and respond as necessary.
12. When the crisis is over, create a debriefing analysis of how the crisis was handled, and identify any future improvements needed in the Crisis Management Policy or Crisis Communication Plan steps.

Remember:

- It is imperative that everyone associated with CNDC maintain the utmost professionalism throughout a crisis.
- Although a crisis could damage CNDC's reputation, it also is an opportunity to present the organization as honest, professional, responsible, and steady under fire.
- CNDC will ultimately be judged by how the crisis is handled.

If you are contacted by the Media

- Tell reporters that you are not at liberty to discuss the situation and let them know that all questions should be directed to the organization's chief spokesperson, Melinda Higgs, President & CEO. Offer to contact the spokesperson on their behalf or give the reporter the spokesperson's phone number and/or email address.
- Be firm, but respectful. Use the "broken record" technique for persistent reporters. Repeat the same phrase, "I am sorry, but I am not the authorized spokesperson." Sticking to the same phrase does not allow the reporter any openings.
- Never say "No comment." This sounds rude and evasive and implies you have something to hide. Simply explain that you are not the spokesperson.
- Never use "off the record". Never tell a reporter anything you don't want to eventually see in print or have broadcast. This is a good rule of thumb for any encounter with a reporter, even in positive circumstances.