

# Central Michigan University Crisis Response Plan

February 2003

## **DEFINITION**

A crisis for the purposes of this response plan is an emotionally significant event that threatens the well-being of one or more individuals or the university as a whole. A crisis may include (but is not limited to) an abduction/hostage situation, accidental death, civil disturbance/riot, communicable disease outbreak or other health threat (e.g., chemical spills), fire caused by accident or arson, hate crimes, homicide, a natural disaster, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, suicide, threat of danger, or violent crime.

## **GOALS**

The university's goals when a crisis occurs are to:

- Respond quickly to immediate threats to the well-being of students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- Respond to the emotional as well as physical impacts of a crisis on victims, family members, and the greater university community.
- Protect the human, physical and financial assets of the university.
- Communicate openly, honestly and proactively with the university's constituents, recognizing the importance of avoiding panic, speaking with one voice, and balancing individuals' legal rights to privacy with the public's need to know about the situation.
- Demonstrate through its management of the crisis that the university is maintaining responsible control of the situation, viewing each crisis as an opportunity to establish trust and build the university's credibility and reputation.
- Initiate internal review of the crisis situation as appropriate.
- Ensure appropriate follow-through on commitments made during the crisis and, after the crisis has subsided, evaluate the university's response in order to improve procedures.

## **CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM AND CRISIS CORE GROUP**

The university has established a crisis response team that may be called together to develop and manage the institution's response to a crisis. In addition, a crisis core group, made up of four members of the crisis response team, also has been established. The senior officer for public relations and marketing is responsible for coordinating the institutional response; however, the president, vice presidents, or any other member of the team may call upon any member of the core crisis group to call the team together if a crisis occurs. The crisis core group will determine which members from the crisis response team will be called upon to aid in the university's response. Members of the team are considered to be on-call as needed (phone lists are included on pages 5 and 6 of this document). They are:

- Vice President, Finance and Administrative Services (chair, core group)
- Director, CMU Police (core group member)
- Associate Vice President for Public Relations and Marketing (core group member)
- Dean of Students (core group member)
  
- Associate Vice President, Facilities Management
- Associate Vice President, Institutional Diversity
- Director, Counseling Center
- Director, Health Services
- Associate Vice President, Residences and Auxiliary Services
- Associate Vice President, Human Resources/Staff
- Director, Student Life
- Director, Risk Management and Insurance
- Others as appropriate (e.g., legal counsel)

## **CRISIS RESPONSE**

**Policies and procedures:** The university has a number of policies and procedures in place to respond to specific crisis situations. For example, university police have procedures to respond to reports of crime, the counseling center has procedures for responding to students in emotional distress, facilities management has a disaster plan for responding to natural disasters, and residence life has plans for responding to events in residence halls. While most of these plans outline procedures for immediate responses to events, they should be viewed as part of a larger, coordinated university response to a crisis.

**Assembling the response team:** As a crisis occurs, offices will use existing plans to provide immediate response to protect the well-being of students, faculty and staff. A member of the crisis response team will contact a crisis core group member as soon as he or she becomes aware of the crisis. Together they will determine the need to assemble the crisis response team. The crisis core group member will:

- Assemble the crisis response team. Responsibilities of the team are outlined below.
- Designate a crisis coordinator as appropriate. The coordinator will work closely with the crisis core group to respond to the situation or will assume full responsibility for the coordination of services and activities.
- Notify the president and appropriate vice presidents of the university as soon as possible and keep them informed. The president is responsible for communicating with the board of trustees if deemed necessary.
- Convene meetings to coordinate services and facilitate communications so that all needs are met efficiently.
- Convene a meeting of pertinent individuals to evaluate the adequacy of response to the crisis.
- Manage communication about the crisis with university constituencies in accordance with the public relations and marketing office's emergency communications plan.

The first response to a crisis, aside from initial emergency aide, should be to consult with others before initiating a response.

**Team responsibilities:** The assembled crisis response team will:

- Gather and share information about the event.
- Separate and clarify issues; define terms; identify additional information needed.
- Determine overall university responses/positions to event.
- Identify individuals or groups affected by the event.
- Plan appropriate responses for each group.
- Assign responsibility for carrying out plans.
- Recommend initiation of internal investigation of incident.

A checklist outlining examples of these activities begins on page 3 of this document. This list is intended to provide focus for discussion during a highly pressurized situation and should not be considered a limit to potential responses. Some members of the team will automatically assume certain responsibilities based upon the nature of their positions. The dean of students, for example, will oversee the direct care and service to students and families who are closely involved in a crisis.

**Residence life:** Special procedures to address incidents isolated to residence halls follow.

- The hall director will contact the counselor liaison or the counselor on call in counseling services and the appropriate assistant director of residence life.
- The associate vice president for residences and auxiliary services or a designee will notify the dean of students and/or the associate vice president for public relations and marketing to notify them of the situation. Depending on the nature of the crisis, they may elect to assemble the crisis response team.
- The residence life staff will notify relevant offices on campus.
- The dean of students and associate vice president for residences and auxiliary services or a designee will determine appropriate follow-up meetings, which may consist of debriefing or be therapeutic in nature.

**Student life:** When an incident is isolated to a student organization, the adviser or president of the organization will contact the student life staff member assigned as the organization's contact. The student life staff member will contact the director of student life, who will contact the dean of students. Student life staff will work with the Greek crisis protocol. The director of student life and dean of students will determine whether additional notification of members of the crisis response team is appropriate.

## **Crisis check-list**

### **Gather information**

*Define, for example:*

Nature of event  
Names, ages, phone numbers, addresses, status (e.g., student, staff) of those involved, including witnesses  
Date, time and location of event  
Nature/number of injuries  
Property damage/estimate of loss/nature of insurance  
Nature of immediate response (what has already happened)

### **Define issues**

*Does the situation involve, for example:*

Controlled substances  
Race  
International/overseas student  
Gender/sexual orientation  
Guns  
Arson  
Security  
Safety  
Sexual/other assault  
Prominent student/staff

### **Determine additional information needed**

*For example:*

What policies, procedures, educational programs are in place to address the issues (e.g., student code, sexual assault awareness programs)?

### **Define overall institutional response**

Prepare statement if appropriate

### **Identify affected groups and groups needing information**

*For example:*

Victims  
Victims' family, friends, roommates  
Students  
Faculty and staff  
Community members  
Media  
Prospective students, families  
Legislators, government agencies  
Trustees  
Alumni and donors

### **Define response actions and assign responsibilities**

*For example:*

Contact victim, family  
Free phone calls home  
Extension of academic and fee deadlines  
Expanded escort service on and off campus  
Meeting with student organizations  
Grief counseling  
Special housing arrangements  
Cancellation of events  
Letters to families/alumni/donors  
Rumor-control hotline  
Increased security  
Closing facilities  
News conference

### **Other considerations**

*For example:*

Use of call list established with university's emergency closing policy

Sites for managing crisis and meeting with media in relation to crisis scene

Special security, telecommunications, computer or equipment needs

**Follow-up and evaluation**