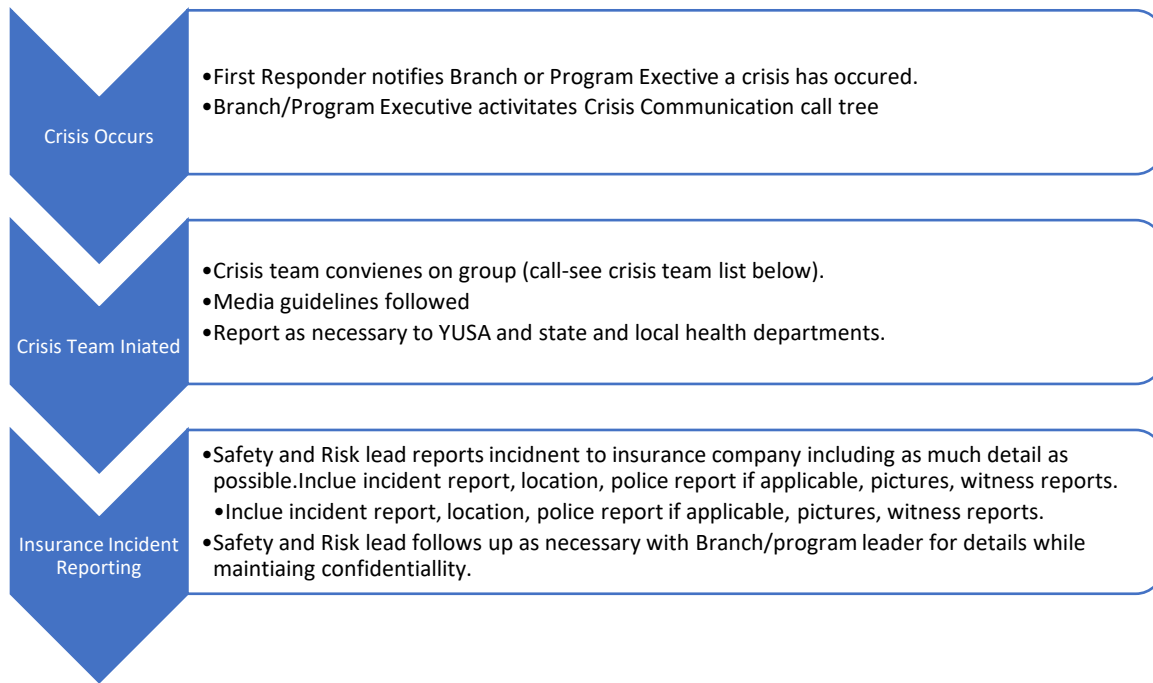


Crisis Communication Procedures



CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS (including site specific branch/program executive)

NAME	TITLE	MOBILE	OFFICE/HOME
Dave Morgan	President and CEO	715-498-3150	414-274-0711
Leila Wright	VP Operations / CDO-Safety & Risk	262-384-0303	414-357-2805
Emily Salas	Marketing Executive	262-308-1414	414-357-2815
Mike Hamlin	Executive Facility Operations	414-526-6230	414-357-2812
Blake Compton	VP Youth Development / Child Protection Guardian	414-447-4432	414-678-9941

Depending on the nature and location of the crisis, a site for meeting with reporters may be needed. The site should be accessible, have sufficient electrical outlets and telephones, and cause minimum disruption to members and operations.

Crisis Communication Procedures

Crisis Communication Procedures

WHAT TO DO DURING A CRISIS

No two crises are alike, so our YMCA's response will depend in large measure on the nature and magnitude of the emergency. However, the following steps are good communications practices for any crisis.

- As a first step, **convene the crisis team** to assess the situation, gather information and determine who needs to be involved in setting the response strategy.
- Inform the **insurer and attorney** of the situation as soon as possible. They will identify considerations that people without their expertise would not.
- Using the key message prepared in advance as a guide, **create additional key messages** that specifically address the crisis. These should serve as the framework for all communications.
- Generally, communicate proactively with staff, volunteers, members, and supporters, and **communicate reactively with the media**.
- **Communicate with your staff and volunteers first**. They should not learn of the crisis from another source. Make sure they have the name and contact information of the spokesperson, so they can forward along any inquiries they receive.
- **Then communicate with members and other key stakeholders** (e.g., donors, partners, community supporters). You want them to hear about this from the Y, not the media.
- **Make sure your media-response materials are ready** by the time your first communication goes out. Word travels fast, and the media could find out within minutes. If you receive calls from reporters before you are ready to respond, take down their contact information and tell them you will get back to them as soon as possible. Do everything you can to meet their deadlines.
- **Keep a log of media inquiries and your responses**. This will be helpful if follow-up is needed, either to correct misinformation during the crisis or to contact the reporter down the line to pitch a positive story about your YMCA.
- **Monitor the public's response to the crisis** and adjust your messages and strategy if people do not seem to understand what you are saying. Keep in mind that the response to a crisis is rarely positive.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Reporters are not the enemy, even during a crisis. Their job is to cover and report news stories. Your job is to reach the public with your key messages, and reporters remain the best conduits for doing so. In other words, you need each other.

As with all relationships, there will be tension. Reporters work in a climate of instantaneous communication, immediate deadlines, and intense competition—the information cannot

Crisis Communication Procedures

come fast enough for them. During a crisis, it is rare for all the facts to be available immediately, which means reporters will be after something you may not have right away. Therein lies the tension. Understand that your best chance to control the story is to provide the facts — and your take on the facts — quickly and responsibly, so tell reporters what you know when you know it and offer to tell them more when you learn more. Again, if you do not tell your story, somebody else will.

This does not mean you need to meet all a reporter's demands or answer all his or her questions. You do not want to cede control to the reporter, but you do need to treat him or her professionally and respectfully. You also have a right to expect the same in return.

Some other guidelines for working with the media — and communicating in general — during a crisis are:

- **Return reporters' calls promptly**, even if you have limited information. You want the story to include your Y's point of view.
- **Do not withhold information from reporters** that is publicly available — through police reports or legal filings, for instance—or that you are sharing with members or other large audiences. This will only arouse their suspicions (and anger them), and when they eventually learn this information, they will write or broadcast another story — which only serves to extend coverage of the crisis. Get all the sad news out at once.
- **Accommodate reporters but know your rights.** YMCA facilities are private property, so reporters need your permission to enter, interview members, etc. If you do not want reporters on the premises, you can ask them to leave—but do so calmly and professionally in case tape recorders or cameras are rolling. Explain that your Y's policy is that media outlets need to schedule visits through the CEO/Executive Director (or public relations/communications staff). When reporters are on site, make sure a staff member accompanies them; do not allow them to roam on their own. If your YMCA is in a public space, reporters have a right to come and go as they please.
- **Avoid simply saying, "No comment."** There are instances when you should not comment but offer an explanation. For example, "Because the investigation is ongoing, we cannot comment. All questions should be directed to the police department." Or "Personnel matters are governed by privacy laws, so we cannot comment further." Or "Because this is a legal matter, any comment will need to come from the district attorney's office." Or "It is our Y's long-standing practice not to discuss internal policies publicly."
- **Tell the truth.** Honesty is one of our core values, but this would be good practice even if that was not the case. Your credibility—critically important in a crisis—depends on it.
- **Give simple, affirmative answers.** Avoid jargon and obscure abbreviations. If the reporter uses pejorative or loaded words in his or her question, do not repeat them in your answer or get defensive.

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- **Know when to stop talking.** Give the answer you want to give and nothing more. Let the reporter fill the silent spaces. If the reporter asks the same question but in a unique way, give the same answer. There is nothing wrong with repeating your key messages and the facts.
- **Stick to your key messages and the facts.** Avoid speculation and opinions — be clear about what you know and what you do not.
- **Feel free to say, “I don’t know” or “I’ll need to get back to you.”** There will be times when you do not have all the answers — do not guess or make something up. Be sure to follow up with the reporter in a timely manner if you promise to do so.
- **Make clear that you are taking the crisis seriously.** Do not attempt to downplay what happened or blame someone else.
- **Be human.** Speak in personal terms when possible, and express regret and sympathy — even if you do not believe your YMCA is responsible for what happened. The Y is a caring organization, and that needs to come through in a crisis. Remember: You are talking to the public through the reporter.
- **Provide reporters with a news release or statement,** so they have the facts in black and white. This increases the possibility of reporters getting the story right and reduces the likelihood of them asking questions and quoting your spokesperson about the unflattering details of the crisis. The spokesperson is then better positioned to provide the human, caring face of the Y.
- **There is no such thing as “off the record.”** Avoid casual conversations with reporters. If you do not want to read it in the paper or see it on TV, do not say it.
- **Do not take it personally.** Media attention is rarely entirely positive — and it never is in a crisis. Do what you can to make the best of a tough situation, but do not be offended if the coverage is unfavorable despite your efforts.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

- Preserve Y’s reputation as a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community.
- Position the Y as an ethical, responsive community citizen.
- Maintain the Y’s credibility and the public’s trust.
- Put damaging information or charges into perspective.
- Exhibit Y’s core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

HELP FROM YMCA OF THE USA

YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) stands ready to assist your YMCA with its communications strategy, messaging, and execution during a crisis. Call Y-USA at 800-872-9622 for support.

Crisis Communication Procedures

Association CEOs can contact Y-USA 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the **YMCA CEO Hotline** at 800-822-9622. Please note that this line is for CEOs and emergencies only.

FACTS ABOUT OUR YMCA

Chief Executive Officer: Dave Morgan

Chief Volunteer Officer: Jeffrey Luken

Number of branches: 3

Years serving community: 165.

Number of members served:

Percent Family Members _____

Percent Seniors _____

Number of children served _____

Child Care _____

Afterschool _____

Enabling _____ parents to work (estimated number)

Health programs _____

Participation _____

Financial assistance

Number of recipients _____

Total value _____

Value of program subsidy _____

Number of volunteers _____

Number of hours donated _____

Value of services _____

Key association stats

Number of staff _____

Annual budget _____

Funds raised annually _____