

# Crisis Communications

SOBC Volunteer Professional Development Series

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***Special Olympics***  
*British Columbia*



# Introductions



- **About our session**

- Crisis communications is distinct from incident response  
– it's a support to your EAPs, not a replacement

- **About me**

- 15 years with SOBC (6-7 Provincial Games, 4 National Games, 2 World Games, wide range of provincial and Local situations)
- Journalism background
- Here for you!!

# Introductions



- **About our purpose today**
  - Sharing best practices and plans
  - Collaborating to develop more resources
- **About Crisis Communications & Risk Management**
  - Crisis communications: relates to internal and external communications during and following a crisis
  - Risk Management: proactive approach to minimizing, avoiding, and managing risk scenarios
  - Crisis comms planning is part of risk management

# Introductions



- About YOU
  - Wide range of communities
  - Wonderful range of background experience
  - PLEASE share your insights! Thank you!
  - Any questions/priorities?

# Fundamentals: You got this!





# What is a crisis?

- A significant threat to Special Olympics BC's reputation or operations
- Potential to generate significant public scrutiny and erode or destroy trust in SOBC
- Hinders your ability to operate
- Damages the organization's reputation

# A crisis can:



- Emerge and grow over time, or occur suddenly
- Come from within or outside the organization
- Start online or offline, and quickly move between the two worlds
- Be the result of intersecting issues that on their own are manageable
- Develop from a real or apparent pattern of behaviour and missteps

# Potential Special Olympics crises



- Death or injury
- Abuse
- Travel incident
- Organizational operations
- Volunteer issue taken to media
- Athlete issue taken to media
- External issue
- Environmental emergencies near SOBC events/programs

## *Operations examples:*

Theft, financial, accreditation loss, charitable status, cybersecurity breach etc.

## *Volunteer/athlete issue examples:*

Disagree with policy, not endorsed, suspended etc.

## *External issue examples:*

Situations with SOBC members or supporters occurring outside SOBC events/programs, external situations occurring near SOBC events, comments by former members, etc.

# How we respond



# Within 30-60 mins: Assess



## Is it a crisis?

- Is there a current or potential threat to SOBC's reputation or operations?
- Does the threat have the potential to generate significant public scrutiny?
- Could the threat erode or destroy trust in the organization?

If yes, then activate crisis communications response.

# 60-90 mins: Gather key factual info



- What happened?
- Where did it occur?
- When did it occur?
- Who is involved? (*full names, and roles if possible*)
- Who else is affected?
- What caused it?
- Why are we concerned?
- What do we not know yet?
- When will we know more?

# 60-90 mins: Focus on facts



- SOBC has to be careful to distribute only the information we are absolutely certain of – identify what you know for sure, and what is rumour or hearsay.
- SOBC needs to hear from you ASAP – so don't wait until you know “everything” to contact the Provincial Office – share what you know to the best of your ability at that time, and label what is fact and what is rumour.

# 60-90 mins: Contact SOBC



- Contact the VP, Sport & Programs:  
Call/text 250-802-4019 or email  
[mcruickshank@specialolympics.bc.ca](mailto:mcruickshank@specialolympics.bc.ca)
- She will notify SOBC's Senior Leadership Team  
(President & CEO, VPs of Sport and FD/MarComms,  
Directors of Operations and MarComms)

# SOBC Senior Leadership Team role



- Gather available information.
- Categorize the risk – low (monitor), medium (prepare & react), high (proactive activation).
- Assess impact on stakeholders.
- Determine communications approach, and activate when needed.
- Continue communicating with staff/Locals who are directly involved.
- Review and adjust, as needed.
- Monitor for misinformation and emerging trends.



# Your **ongoing** role

- Continue monitoring, documenting, and updating SOBC.
- When necessary, work with SOBC & supplied messaging to execute local stakeholder communications.
- Monitor for misinformation and emerging trends.

# On discretion



**DON'T  
PANIC**

# Wait but why



- Proactive communication can prevent issues from escalating.
- Timely, informed, informative, and compassionate communication makes a difference.



**Let's discuss**



# Crisis examples

**Let's discuss**



# **Crisis communications resources**

**(online and offline)**

# Thank you!

**Please stay in touch!**

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