



Crisis Management Plan and Communication Guidelines

Message to LSC Leadership: By virtual of your LSC leadership position, you may need to help the Utah Swimming organization through a time of crisis. Under nonprofit governance laws, the members of the Utah Swimming Board of Directors have the duty to exercise a high standard of care in managing the business of the organization. In a crisis, this duty extends to insuring that the assets of the organization are protected and helping the organization manage its communications with key stakeholders, members, strategic partners, employees, news media, and the community. The board's responsibility prior to a crisis is twofold: (1) to be sure there is a crisis management/disaster recovery plan in place and (2) to know and understand its own role in helping the organization through a crisis and to know your role in implementing the plan.

What is a Crisis? A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of your organization. It may be brought on by adverse or negative media attention. It can also be a situation where, in the eyes of the media or general public, your non-profit organization did not react in an appropriate or timely manner.

Purpose of this Crisis Management Plan: To help volunteer and staff LSC leadership effectively manage crisis leadership roles, decision making and communication. It is especially important that communication be through a formal, clearly defined channel in order to mitigate the crisis or any serious negative repercussions while maintaining its reputation of leadership and transparency. It can also serve as a model plan for Utah Swimming clubs.

- The Utah Swimming Crisis Management Plan defines key leadership roles and stakeholders. It also outlines both general procedures and best practices to manage a Utah Swimming crisis.
- The Crisis Communication Guidelines detail the process of gathering and distributing critical, and possibly sensitive, information to stakeholders, including the media and public.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

People

Current designees for Crisis Leadership Roles are marked on the Board of Directors list.

Descriptions of Crisis Leadership Roles:

- **Spokesperson:** General Chair or Designee - The person authorized to speak to the news media, public, membership, and stakeholders during a crisis. Responsible for management of any issues.
- **Information Officer:** Person(s) appointed by the General Chair and approved by the Utah Swimming Board of Directors – The commander-in-chief of the crisis communication plan who is charged with conducting the preliminary investigation of the crisis situation by gathering information from all relevant sources.
- **Crisis Management Team:** Members of the crisis management team must be constantly accessible any time of the day or night.
 - A. Primary Team: Spokesperson, Information Officer, General Chair, USA Swimming Representative, and Legal Counsel
 - B. Secondary Team: Remaining Members of the Utah Swimming Executive Committee and Immediate Past General Chair
 - C. Situational: Other individuals may be identified collaboratively by the General Chair and Information Officer to serve on the crisis communication team based on their expertise and/or relationship to the situation. This may include Utah Swimming staff members.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those members of key constituent groups who have a vested interest in Utah Swimming. They include:

- USA Swimming
- Utah Swimming Board of Directors & Staff Members
- Utah Swimming Members - Clubs, Coaches, Athletes, Non-Athletes
- Parents of Utah Swimming Member Athletes
- LSC Volunteers (Events, Committees, etc.)
- Partner Organizations and Sponsors
- Media and Public

Crisis Management Action Plan Process

How is the Crisis Management Action Plan activated?

- Anyone who has cause to believe the plan should be activated should contact the General Chair or Information Officer and present facts.
- The General Chair will select one of the two approved appointees as the Information Officer for that situation and confer. The selection will be based primarily on the nature of the crisis with respect to both the board position of the selected appointee and his/her relationship to the crisis situation.
- The Spokesman and designated Information Officer decide if and when the Utah Swimming Crisis Management Action Plan is activated.

Where is contact information for those in Crisis Leadership Positions?

- 1) Board of Directors list (Utah Swimming website)
- 2) Wallet card prepared by the UTSI Board Secretary and given to potential crisis leaders annually, or as updated.

Crisis Management Action Plan

1) **Gather**

Information Officer **gathers and confirms all the information** from relevant sources

- a) Determine what happened, when and where
- b) Determine who is affected
- c) Identify cause
- d) Determine reaction to incident and possible repercussions
- e) Determine when there will be more information/update

2) **Review**

General Chair and Information Officer **review information**. If needed, they **convene** the primary and/or primary and secondary crisis communication team(s) via conference call or in-person meeting.

- a) If needed, determine a Crisis Center location. (May be a home)
- b) Team will be alerted by phone call to home number, work number, cell number
 - i) The use of email is discouraged at this point.
- c) Depending on situation, Information Officer will involve others as appropriate

3) **Respond**

Team determines appropriate **response to crisis and develops plan and timetable**

- a) Determine what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. Plan could include intervention or mediation to help mitigate any impending crisis.
- b) Determine what to say, who will say it, to whom it will be said, when it will be said, and by what means it will be said. Determine whether to take a proactive or reactive approach.
 - i) Proactive: Put forth message before being asked
 - ii) Reactive: Respond only to inquiry
 - iii) More in *Crisis Communication Guidelines*

c) Is a plan needed to answer inquiries from parents, or others?

4) **Inform**

Spokesperson or Information Officer **informs appropriate stakeholders of situation and response**

- a) Description/background of situation and the response are communicated to stakeholders by established timetable
- b) Stakeholders are given contact information for Spokesperson or Information Officer as well as other contact information that may apply in the situation.
- c) Spokesperson, in concurrence with Information Officer, **makes any necessary public statements** to news media, direct meetings of membership, or others as appropriate

5) **Monitor**

Team **monitors situation and reacts accordingly**

6) **Review**

- a) Secure Loose Ends: Appropriate communications should be made to the appropriate audiences (including UTSI Board and members) summarizing the resolution of the crisis. Check to be sure interaction with all media contacts has been completed
- b) Review: Re-convene the crisis communication team to evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis management plan including the following: planning, response, actions, what worked and didn't work, what procedures should be revised for the future, etc. If appropriate, engage the board of directors in this review.
- c) File: File all notes, video/sound clips, talking points, communications, etc. into an electronic file to be housed permanently. The hard copies of all official documents should be filed and kept in the Utah Swimming storage unit in a locked file.
Sensitive and/or confidential information is kept by the General Chair.
- d) Update: Revise the crisis communication plan to reflect any suggested changes and present to the Utah Swimming Board of Directors for approval.

What do Utah Swimming Board Members need to know and/or do during a crisis?

- Utah Swimming board members and staff will remain "calm" and take the "high road" during a time of crisis. It is imperative to remain focused under pressure situations to allow for the best possible handling of the crisis and to insure that the business operations of Utah Swimming continue to be carried out efficiently and professionally during the time of any crisis.
- Board members should return phone calls and emails directing the inquirer to the designated Spokesperson. The Spokesperson is responsible for following up with all communications including phone calls and emails. ***Under no circumstances should a board member provide any information other than the contact information for the Spokesperson when approached by any third party.***
- Upon receipt of any information related to the crisis, board members should immediately relay that information to the Information Officer ASAP.
- Members of the Utah Swimming Board of Directors should minimize the use of email communications related to any existing crisis during the activation of the crisis management plan. Private conversations among board members are the preferred method of communication during this time.
- Information regarding the crisis will be shared with the board members and stakeholders of Utah Swimming at the appropriate time.
- ***Issues regarding personnel and Board of Review matters are to remain confidential.***

Crisis Communication Guidelines

Best Practices

- Utah Swimming understands the urgency in getting its message out first. This allows UTSI to better control the content and its accuracy as well as stabilizing the situation and solidifying the reputation of Utah Swimming.
- Crisis communication planning must be designed to help manage the first 48 hours of a crisis.
- After gathering facts to help understand the crisis situation, it is imperative that Utah Swimming communicates the right message. Consultation with legal or PR counsel may be necessary to insure that appropriate information is shared at the appropriate time(s).
- The Spokesperson or Information Officer will share information regarding the crisis with the board members and stakeholders of Utah Swimming at the appropriate time.
- Issues regarding personnel and Board of Review matters are to remain confidential.

Before Going Public

- 1) Questions to be answered include:
 - a) What is the situation?
 - b) What will happen next?
 - c) What immediate steps need to be taken?
 - d) What is known and who already knows it?
 - e) Is there potential public interest?
 - f) Who will be affected?
 - g) What are people feeling – what emotions need to be considered?
 - h) What information is needed and who beyond board and staff needs to get it? When will it be available?
 - i) What should Utah Swimming do about it? Proactive vs. reactive?
 - j) What resources are needed to manage the crisis? Is legal or PR counsel needed?
- 2) Formulate an appropriate response to the crisis
 - a) Determine what can and cannot be said
 - b) Develop a factual, responsive message
 - c) Construct an appropriate script to be used by the staff, voice mail system, board members, etc.
- 3) Construct a communication plan/process and timetable that appropriately address the crisis
 - a) Determine if the desired approach should be proactive or reactive
 - b) Determine who will deliver the response (usually the Spokesperson)
 - c) Determine how the response should be communicated.
 - i) Ex: Constructing a statement to post on the website, email to membership, and/or distribute to the media; holding a news conference; conducting a Spokesperson interview; hybrid approach (combination), etc.
 - d) Decide to whom the response should be communicated
 - e) Develop a timeline for communicating the response
 - f) Create an action plan for internal and external communication

Going Public

- 1) Alerts key stakeholders
 - a) The Information Officer establishes communication with the identified stakeholders providing them with background information regarding the situation and the response
 - b) The stakeholders are given contact information for the Information Officer, Spokesperson, and other crisis communication team members as needed
- 2) The Spokesperson begins external audience outreach as set forth in the crisis communication plan
- 3) Update web site as needed

After Going Public

- 1) Continually evaluate the effectiveness of the message as the situation progresses

- 2) Implement methods for updating both internal and external audiences with new information as it becomes available
- 3) Distribute post-crisis communications to appropriate audiences.

Ongoing Implementation of Crisis Management Plan

Annual Tasks

- At the first UTSI Board of Directors meeting following the annual Utah Swimming House of Delegates:
 - The Board of Directors will review the current LSC crisis management plan to insure that all board members are aware of the procedures and their roles during a crisis. The plan will be integrated into board orientation training.
 - The General Chair will bring forth, for board approval, two recommended appointees to serve as a potential crisis Information Officers for the upcoming year. These appointees must be current members of the Utah Swimming Board of Directors, be readily available to lead the investigation of a crisis, be thorough and detail-oriented, and possess the ability to remain calm under pressure.

Ongoing Responsibilities

Board Members and Staff

- Crisis *prevention* is a priority for Utah Swimming and is supported by continually maintaining sound business practices and effective internal and external communications. Do your part to help this happen.
- Receive annual training on LSC crisis management procedures and their role during a crisis.
- It is the responsibility of all Utah Swimming board and staff members to constantly monitor the LSC and national swimming environments as well as the local, state, and national news coverage of issues or trends that might lead to public relations problems for Utah Swimming. Upon becoming aware of the existence of any potentially harmful situation, board and staff members are required to contact the General Chair with as much information and documentation as possible regarding the potential situation.
- Issues regarding personnel and Board of Review matters are to remain confidential.

General Chair

- Insure Crisis Management Leadership Roles are filled and current Board of Directors lists accurately reflects designees
 - Annually, either accept role of Spokesperson during a crisis, or designate someone else to fill this role.
 - At the first UTSI Board of Directors meeting following the annual House of Delegates, bring forth, for board approval, two recommended appointees to serve as a potential crisis Information Officer for the upcoming year. Appointees must:
 - Be current members of Utah Swimming Board of Directors
 - Be readily available to lead the investigation of a crisis
 - Be thorough and detail-oriented
 - Possess the ability to remain calm under pressure
- As needed, adjust Crisis Management Leadership Positions assignments with Board approval.

Secretary

- When updating the Board of Directors list, see if any Crisis Management Leadership Positions are affected, if so notify General Chair. Update positions on list when needed.
- As needed, update wallet cards with current contact information (Names, Home, work, cell phone numbers & emails of General Chair, Spokesperson, Information Officers, Primary and Secondary Teams)
- Give each person listed on the wallet card a current copy of it

Wallet Card

Wallet cards for crisis leadership contain the following:

- **Contact Information for Key Crisis Leaders**
 - a) Name, position, phone numbers (phone, cell, work) and email for General Chair, Spokesperson, Information Officers and potential Crisis Management team members
- **Key Actions**
 - 1) **Gather**
 - a. Get all the information
 - 2) **Review**
 - a. Formulate your response
 - b. Alert/call together Crisis Team
 - c. Come up with a plan
 - 3) **When appropriate: Respond and Inform**
 - a. Loop in appropriate stakeholders
 - b. Communicate
 - 4) **Monitor**
 - a. Assess situation
 - 5) **Reassess**
 - a. Summary of resolution
 - b. File appropriate documentation
 - c. Review the crisis management plan