

Sorority & Fraternity Affairs

Supplemental Chapter Crisis Management Plan

It is an unfortunate reality that from time to time serious injury, loss of life, major property loss, or criminal activity may occur in a chapter. Events of this nature impact not only the chapter, but also the Florida Greek community, UF campus community, families and friends of members, and the (inter)national organization.

Advanced planning and preparation helps a chapter respond quickly and effectively to crisis. Safety inspections, fire drills, the elimination of improper and illegal activities, and liability and risk management seminars are essential to control risk. Should any event occur, however, the chapter must be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately. **A copy of this policy should be kept in an easily accessible place and distributed to all chapter officers.**

In emergency situations, it is critical that you react calmly. The success of this plan depends on thoughtful and cooperative response by all members

** Please keep in mind that your (inter)national organization may also have a crisis management plan to which you will need to adhere. Chapter officers should familiarize themselves and educate members on both plans.

Role of Sorority & Fraternity Affairs (SFA): 352-392-1671

In an emergency situation, SFA staff is ready and willing to assist you. Our primary concern is for the safety and well-being of your members. In many cases, SFA staff can assist you in making important arrangements such as organizational management, group and individual counseling, administrative notification, and communication with the appropriate officials.

Planning/Preparation

EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARDS

Keep on file with the president, or House Director when applicable, an emergency card or page for each member and aspirant/pledge/associate/new member. Included on the card should be:

- a. Member's full name, UFID, and birth date
- b. Member's local address and telephone number (if other than the chapter house)
- c. Name, address, telephone numbers and email addresses of parents or guardians. Be sure to get this information for both parents when possible. Include parents' residence, work, and cellular telephone numbers.
- d. Name, address, and telephone numbers of another person to notify in the event the parents cannot be reached (Examples: neighbor of parents, relatives)
- e. Medical information (allergies, medical conditions, etc.)
- f. Name and telephone number of the family physician
- g. Insurance information

DETERMINE WHO IS IN CHARGE DURING AN EMERGENCY / CRISIS

The chapter president oversees the response in every emergency situation involving a crisis, serious injury, or death. In the absence of the president, a ranking order of officers is to be established and communicated to chapter members. A listing of these names and positions is to be posted in an accessible location. The House Director, Chapter Advisor, and SFA council advisor should also be informed about and provided a copy of these procedures.

OFFICER	NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL
1. President			
2.	_____		
3.	_____		

Response/Recovery

PLACE EMERGENCY PHONE CALLS

In an emergency situation where emergency personnel (police, fire, ambulance) are needed:

1st: **Call 911.** Be prepared to provide your name, location, the nature of the emergency, and type of assistance needed. For housed chapters, be sure to notify your House Director immediately after calling 911.

Call/Notify House Director

Home _____ Cell _____

2nd: Call your Sorority & Fraternity Affairs Council Advisor

Home _____ Cell _____

3rd: Call Chapter Advisor

Home _____ Cell _____

4th: Notify appropriate chapter leadership for additional support.

Sorority and Fraternity Affairs staff will discuss the situation with you and in all serious cases will be at the chapter house or designated location in a matter of minutes. Always call if you are in doubt as to whether a situation is serious or not.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC INCIDENTS

I. Death

- Notify your chapter advisor and SFA council advisor.
- Do not notify parents/guardians; this will be done by emergency or campus officials.
- Do not announce the death until all members of the immediate family have been notified. SFA staff and public safety officials will know when this has occurred.
- Assure your chapter advisor has arrived to help before making an announcement of the death. It is very helpful to have someone from the Counseling & Wellness Center present when you make the announcement to help your members deal with the shock (SFA staff will arrange this).
- If the deceased member lived in the chapter house, do not remove or rearrange any of his/her personal possessions. If the member had a roommate, the roommate should be moved to another room temporarily.
- After the family has been notified, the chapter advisor or president may wish to call the family to offer sympathy on behalf of the chapter and ask what their wishes are in regards to the possessions.
- Before the family arrives, be sure all borrowed items are returned to the deceased student's room and, if possible, lock it. When they do arrive, you want to have empty boxes available and offer to help. This is an emotional trauma for parents and they may want privacy. You may want to consider coordinating with SFA staff to have a counselor present to help the family through this difficult task.
- It is proper to send sympathy cards, notes, flowers, etc. If the funeral is nearby, it could mean a great deal to the parents for members to attend. Offer to make a statement on behalf of the fraternity at the memorial service. If the funeral will be out of town, you may want to arrange a local memorial service. Staff from SFA and the Dean of Students Office will assist you in making arrangements.
- It may be the first time some of your members are experiencing the death of someone close to them. Watch for members who appear to be having difficulty coping with the loss and encourage them to talk with a counselor.
- The Dean of Students Office (DSO) will take care of notifying the deceased student's instructors and other campus offices of the death.
- When someone close to you dies, it is difficult to accept the loss and you and your members may find yourselves consumed by pain, fear, guilt, and anger. Grief is a normal response to losing someone important to you.
- One means of expressing our grief is to attend the funeral or memorial service. A funeral helps confirm the reality of death and serves as a focus for expressing feelings of loss. Family and friends are often brought together and supported through services of remembrance. Being present demonstrates that although someone has died, friends like you remain; it shows you care. Both before and after the funeral, it is important that you find ways to express your feelings; for some that is through crying, consoling others, journaling or actively remembering the loved one. Crying is both healthy and normal. It may also help to hold a discussion to help members with accepting the loss.

II. Fires

- In case of a fire, encourage calm. Avoid panic and confusion.
- Activate the fire alarm.
- **Call 911** no matter how minor you consider the fire to be. Don't take a lot of time looking for the fire beforehand.

- Where appropriate and safe, use an extinguisher. Do not put yourself or others in harm's way.
- If possible, check as many rooms as possible on the way out to see if everyone is alerted to the fire. Check to make sure doors to all rooms are closed on the way out.
- When you are in a room when the alarm goes off, feel the doorknob to see if the heat is intense. If it is hot, do not open it. If you think it's safe, then open the door slowly with your shoulder against it to see if the fire is in the hallway. Because toxic fumes and high temperatures usually fill the highest levels of the air, it is best to crawl out of a burning building. Cover your face with a cloth, preferably damp. If the fire is in the hallway, exit out of a window, if safe.
- Have a plan to account for members. A roommate check system may work best. Have a predetermined spot where members are to congregate in the event of a fire. Take a head count to make sure everyone is out of the house. NEVER go back into the house to attempt to rescue anyone. Allow emergency personnel to do that.
- Move cars out of the way for fire engines to get in.
- NOTE: Conduct drills each semester to establish active procedures and familiarize residents with the actions to be taken. Official chapter houses should work with the House Director to conduct the drills.

III. Members in Distress

- Sometimes your chapter may have a member that is experiencing a behavioral health crisis or exhibiting disruptive or disturbing behaviors.
- If a member is a risk to harm themselves or others – that is, they are exhibiting or verbalizing dangerous intentions – call 911. If a weapon is present or threatened, immediately call 911 and avoid further confrontation.
- If the member is disruptive or acting in a disturbing manner, where safety is not an immediate concern (i.e. threatens harm to self or others, but will accept help; demonstrates bizarre behavior or communication; disruptive to the living/learning environment), call your SFA council advisor. You may also call the Counseling & Wellness Center at any time at 352-392-1575 for mental health consultation or referral.
- In the event that you have a chapter member in distress, do not assemble your chapter. Discuss what steps you can take to handle the situation with SFA staff and campus officials. Campus officials will determine if the parents need to be contacted.
- SFA is your connection to other resources on campus. When in doubt, contact an SFA advisor for assistance at 352-392-1671. It is better to ask them than assume nothing is wrong.

IV. Serious Illness

- There are several procedures and precautions that group members should take in the event one of your fellow members develops what appears to be a serious illness (including substance addiction or eating disorder). An ill member may ignore his or her condition and may not take the initiative to seek proper medical attention. As responsible chapter members, be sensitive to the physical and psychological welfare of your fellow members. If you become aware of someone who is suffering from a serious illness, take immediate action by following these guidelines and contacting people who can help:
 - Initially bring your concern to the attention of the member. Tell the member you are aware of his/her condition and that you are concerned. Refer to specific behaviors you have noticed. Avoid using psychological jargon.
 - Determine what kind of medical attention or psychological counseling the

- member has utilized.
 - If the ailing individual continues to ignore his/her physical or psychological condition, contact your chapter advisor or council advisor for assistance. With housed chapters, it may be appropriate to consult with the House Director.
 - Information about the situation should be brought to the advisor's attention; consult the Counseling & Wellness Center for guidance on establishing a specific plan of action to help the member.
- It is important that members be understanding and sensitive in dealing with cases of serious illness. There may be some cases when an ailing person will not want your assistance and will strongly object to any contact with parents. It is important to respect the wishes of the person; however, you may find yourself in a situation where respecting a person's wishes may not be medically wise or sound. The realities of the situation should not be ignored. Consult with your advisor or SFA staff.

CALL A MANDATORY EMERGENCY CHAPTER MEETING

If a crisis has occurred within your chapter, call a MANDATORY emergency chapter meeting immediately. Make sure your chapter advisor, member of your alumni advisory board, and/or SFA staff is present.

- Explain that there is an emergency situation and members are to report to the house or designated location immediately.
- Encourage members to remain calm during the crisis.
- Ask chapter members to refrain from making outgoing phone calls and text messages to other persons, as well as communicating information through social media, until further notice.

For housed chapters:

- Depending on the situation, out-of-house members may need to be called in for a meeting.
- **Close the house at once.** Permit only your members and appropriate officials to enter. Assign one or more members to calmly and politely receive and admit eligible persons at the door.

At this meeting:

- Thank the members and others for coming on such short notice.
- Explain the situation and gather facts; present information that is verified by authorized persons familiar with the situation.
- Project a confident leadership presence and encourage members to remain calm.
- Clarify the identity and role of the spokesperson (normally the chapter president). To provide a consistent and accurate message, discourage anyone else from making statements or answering questions about the situation.
- Instruct members to refrain from discussing the incident with persons outside the chapter, including significant others and family members. This restriction is to be observed until the situation has been resolved and members are notified otherwise. In the event of a fire or accident, members are encouraged to notify their parents to let them know they are okay.
- Develop a follow-up plan for the next several days.

- Instruct your members to cooperate with campus or law enforcement officials investigating an accident. If there are questions about authorized requests, address them to the chapter president or advisor.
- The president, or designated spokesperson, will make a planned statement to the media when accurate information and appropriate support services are in place. The content of the statement is to be discussed with Sorority & Fraternity Affairs. Make sure all members know what the prepared statement will be.

MEDIA RELATIONS

- **It is critical that an officially designated chapter spokesperson be the only person to speak with the media.** No exceptions!
- Consult with your SFA council advisor, chapter advisor, and attorney (if applicable) so that they can help you prepare for any media contact. They can also assist you in developing a prepared statement that can be read to the press. Prior to the development of a statement, the following standby statement should be used (avoid saying “no comment” — it sounds as if you are trying to hide something): “We can confirm that (describe the incident very briefly) occurred on (day) at (time) at (location). The chapter is cooperating with authorities and all interested parties. Further information will be released when we have completed our investigation of all pertinent matters.” Absolutely nothing else should be said. The only response to other questions should be: “When we have completed our investigation, we will release more information.”
- Instead of a press briefing, you may elect to simply prepare a statement and distribute it to the media.
- When you are being interviewed, tell the truth. Give only the facts. If you don't know an answer to a question, say so. Don't speculate or repeat hearsay. Avoid exaggerations and inflammatory remarks. Stress what positive action you are taking to resolve the situation. If you are asked a question you feel is unfair, simply rephrase the question the way you would prefer to have it asked, and then answer your question. Never make "off the record" comments.
- Consider your appearance. Dress neatly (semi-formal). Your members should also dress neatly even if they are casual (no beer T-shirts, etc.). Clean up your house, being careful to remove trash and anything else that may not look professional in a photograph or on TV. Consider holding a press briefing away from the chapter house, perhaps at a location on-campus. Caution your members not to grandstand in the background during TV interviews.
- Do not release any names until an investigation is complete and the timing is appropriate.
- Don't discuss the personal life of your members with reporters.
- Keep your house locked. Do not let television cameras or photographers into your house without first consulting your National Office, House Corporation, advisors, etc.

Learning

Every incident will provide you with an opportunity to learn from your successes and failures in responding to the situation. Whether it is a special process or part of a regular meeting, incidents of all sizes and scopes should be reviewed by your chapter to gather information that will assist you in the case of another crisis. During this process, you can update existing plans, revise protocol, identify opportunities for future educational development based on perceived weaknesses, and determine relationships that need to be created or developed.