SUGGESTED CHAPTER CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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

In the event of a crisis, 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.* There are several recommended steps to follow in the event of a crisis, with some additional steps to follow in the event of a death of one of your members. *In emergency situations, it is critical that you react calmly. The success of this plan depends on thoughtful and cooperative response by all members.*

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<th>Role of Sorority &amp; Fraternity Affairs: 352-392-1671</th>
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<td>In an emergency situation, SFA staff is ready and willing to assist you. You should not fear approaching the university for assistance in a time of crisis. Our primary concern is for the safety and well-being of your members. In many cases, we can assist you in making important arrangements such as organizational management, group and individual counseling, administrative notification, and communication with the appropriate officials.</td>
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1. **DETERMINE WHO IS IN CHARGE DURING AN EMERGENCY / CRISIS**
   Be certain that each person in your chapter knows that the president is in command of every emergency situation involving a crisis, serious injury or death. In the absence of the president, have a ranking order of officers established and be sure they know where to find this written procedure. If your chapter has a house, be sure that your House Director is aware of these procedures.

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<th>OFFICER</th>
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2. **PLACE EMERGENCY PHONE CALLS**
   If there is an emergency situation where emergency personnel (police, fire, ambulance) are needed,
   1st: Call 911
   2nd: Call Chapter Advisor
        Home ________________________
        Cell ______________________

   Call/Notify House Director
   Home ________________________
   Cell ______________________

   3rd: Call your Sorority & Fraternity Affairs Council advisor
        ___________________________________ Cell ______________________

Sorority and Fraternity Affairs staff will discuss the situation with you and in all serious cases they 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.
3. 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 they need to report to the house or designated location immediately.
- It is important that all members remain calm during the crisis
- Ask chapter members to refrain from making outgoing phone calls 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 guard the door.

At this meeting:

- Explain the situation and gather facts.
- Project a strong leadership image to let your members know everything is under control so they will remain calm.
- Clarify who is the spokesperson (normally the chapter president). No one else should make statements or answer questions about the situation.
- Instruct members not to discuss the incident with anyone, including boy/girlfriends and family members, until the situation has been resolved. In the event of a fire or accident, members should, of course, be encouraged to notify their parents to let them know they are okay.
- Detail the plan for the next several days.
- Instruct your members to cooperate with campus or law enforcement officials investigating an incident.
- The president, or designated spokesperson, should make appropriate statements to the media after the situation is under control and you have discussed the content of the statement with Sorority & Fraternity Affairs. Make sure that all members know what the prepared statement will be.
EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARDS

Keep on file with the president, 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

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC INCIDENTS

FIRES

1. In case of a fire, remain calm. Panic only causes confusion.
2. Activate the fire alarm.
3. Call 911, no matter how minor you consider the fire to be. Don't take a lot of time looking for the fire beforehand.
4. Use an extinguisher if possible.
5. Check as many rooms on the way out to see if everyone is alerted to the fire. Check to make sure all doors to all rooms are closed on the way out.
6. 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 through a window, but be sure to crack the top of the window first to let the smoke draft out. Most people are killed by smoke before they have a chance to jump.
7. 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.
8. Turn off electricity and gas if there is time.
9. Move cars out of the way for fire engines to get in.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

1. In chapter houses, be sure your chapter has a complete first aid kit in an accessible place in your chapter room. Take the kit with you at chapter retreats and other out-of-town functions.
2. Call the paramedics and give necessary information regarding the sickness/accident.
3. In the event of a serious illness or injury, do not notify the parents immediately. The medical officials may wish to notify parents and advise them of the situation.
CHAPTER MEMBERS IN DISTRESS

Sometimes your chapter may have a member that is experiencing a mental health crisis or difficulties, or a member that is exhibiting disruptive or disturbing behaviors.

In the event of a **dangerous member**, where safety for self or others is an immediate concern (i.e. verbal or physical threats to harm others; active threats of suicide and resists help), call 911.

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 and 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 with campus officials steps you should take to handle the situation. Campus officials will determine if the parents need to be contacted.

Sorority and Fraternity Affairs can be your connection to other resources on campus. When in doubt, please contact a Sorority and Fraternity Affairs advisor for assistance.

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 adults, you must be sensitive to your members’ physical and psychological welfare. If you become aware of a member who is suffering from a serious illness, take immediate action by following these guidelines and contacting appropriate 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.
- Determine what kind of medical attention or psychological counseling the member has sought. What kind of care has been described?
- If the ailing individual continues to ignore his/her physical or psychological condition, contact your chapter advisor.
- Information about the situation should be brought to the advisor’s attention, and consult the campus counseling center for guidance on establishing a specific plan of action to help the member.

It is extremely 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 his 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.
DEATH

1. In the event of a death, do not notify the parents; this will be done by emergency or campus officials.
2. Be very careful that the death is not announced until all members of the immediate family have been notified.
3. Do not announce the death until your chapter advisor has arrived to help. You will also want to have a campus counselor (the SFA staff will arrange this) present when you make the announcement to help your members deal with the shock.
4. **If the member lived in the chapter house, do not remove any of the deceased student's personal possessions.** If the member had a roommate, the roommate should be moved temporarily to another room.
5. 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 regard to the possessions. You may offer to pack them in boxes, but chances are the parents will prefer to do this themselves.
6. Before the family arrives, be sure all borrowed items are returned to the deceased's room and if possible, lock it. When they do arrive, you may want to have empty boxes available and offer to help. This is an emotional trauma for parents and they may want privacy.
7. It is of course proper to send sympathy cards and 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. You can contact the Office of Sorority and Fraternity Affairs or Dean of Students Office for assistance in making arrangements.
8. Check to see if your ritual contains a ceremony for memorial services.
9. For some of your members, this may be their first experience in dealing with the death of someone close to them. Keep an eye out for members who appear to be having difficulty coping with the situation and encourage them to talk with a counselor.
10. The Dean of Students Office (DSO) will take care of notifying the deceased student's instructors and other campus offices of the death.
11. 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, and grief. Grief is a normal response to losing someone who was important to you. Grief hurts, but it is necessary. When a death tears your world apart, grieving is the process that puts it back together.
12. Grief runs through stages, although not everyone experiences every stage, and your members will pass through the stages at their own rate. That is why it is important to understand the stages of grief:
   a. **Denial** - This response is nature’s way of protecting you and insulating you from what happened.
   b. **Anger** - You may feel angry toward the doctors and nurses who couldn’t save the life of the deceased. You might even feel angry at the deceased for leaving you. These feelings of anger may lead you to feel guilty.
   c. **Guilt** - You may feel guilty for simply being alive when someone else has died. You might feel guilty about not saying goodbye, or you may remember a fight you had with the deceased.
   d. **Depression** - Even if you are normally a committed, caring person, you may find that you don’t care about anything or anyone. This is a common feeling as are the others.
e. *Acceptance* - Hopefully, the grieving process will accept the death eventually. That does not mean you have to forget the deceased. It just means it is time to go on living.

One of the best ways to begin working through grief is to attend the funeral or memorial service. A funeral confirms the reality of death and serves as a focus for expressing feelings of loss. You begin to help the family of the deceased, and yourself, by attending the funeral. Being there demonstrates that although someone has died, friends like you remain, and it demonstrates that you care. Both before and after the funeral, it is important that you express your feelings. Crying is both healthy and normal. It may also help to hold a discussion to help members with accepting the loss.

**INVESTIGATIONS**

Make written notes of all details relating to any incident. It will be especially important to get the names of all members present, the names and telephone numbers of any witnesses (in some cases you may want to get signed statements from the witnesses), and the names and telephone numbers of anyone injured (however slightly). Some incidents may result in lawsuits, and if you are called to testify in court months after the incident, the notes will be invaluable. Share the information you collect with your chapter advisor and any campus or law enforcement officials conducting an investigation. Itemize any property losses, and keep records of any expenses related to the situation.

**MEDIA RELATIONS**

Again, it is critical that the officially designated chapter spokesperson be the only person to speak with the media. No exceptions!

Consult with your chapter advisor, your SFA council advisor, and your 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 (unless you specifically want to invite them in for a press conference.)