SYTA
The Voice of Student & Youth Travel

# Crisis Response Planning Guide (CRPG)

CENTER for STUDENT TRAVEL SAFETY

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# STUDENT & YOUTH TRAVEL ASSOCIATION'S
# CRISIS RESPONSE PLANNING GUIDE

## Introduction

When traveling with students, it is vital for student travel organizations to have an effective Crisis Response Plan (CRP). Having a plan in place can prepare an organization to respond timely and appropriately in the event of a crisis. The CRP can demonstrate to current and future clients that your organization is committed to their safety and well-being. Many SYTA members already have plans in place that work for their organization, but for those that do not, this guide will help you develop a plan.

In many ways, a CRP is an extension of an organization's Incident Management Plan (IMP). Things can and do go wrong on trips such as; a student coming down with the flu: a case of chicken pox on a trip, food poisoning, or any other safety or health challenge. SYTA members deal with these types of situations regularly during a trip. Having a well-developed CRP in place to deal with worst case scenarios can make the handling of minor situations easier.

## Learning Objectives:

This Crisis Response Planning Guide is a reference to support student travel organizations in building effective crisis response plans.

After reading this guide, learners will be able to:

- explain what a crisis is in reference to student travel.
- identify the three different levels of a crisis.
- compose a crisis response plan specific to their organizational needs.
- demonstrate a simulation of the crisis response plan in action.

## Outline:

- Definition of a crisis
- Three levels of crisis
- Format for developing Crisis Response Plan packets
- Additional support documents
- Training and practice drills
- Keeping your response plan up-to-date
- What if I am a small operator?

**What is a Crisis?**
A crisis can be defined in several ways. We offer two that capture what a crisis could mean to a SYTA member.

**Definition 1**
***"Any situation or problem considered as having the potential to damage the health and well-being of travelers and/or the credibility or reputation of the organization."***
***-Michael J. Bowers***

What is appealing about this definition is that it acknowledges that a situation can start out at one level and then either escalate to a higher level or subside to a lower level incident.

**Definition 2**
***"A critical event or point of decision which, if not handled in an appropriate and timely manner (or not handled at all) may turn into a crisis".***
***-Princeton University***

In this definition, once the event occurs, emphasis is placed on the proper and timely handling of the situation so that it does not escalate into a major crisis.

**Goals of a well-developed crisis response plan**
1. To safeguard the well-being of your customers and staff
2. To minimize the impact of the crisis on the day-to-day operations of the business
3. To ensure the reputation of the business is kept fully intact

During any crisis, the priority is attending to the well-being of all impacted travelers, staff and their families. It is also likely the organization will have more than one trip operating at the same time and it is important those trips not impacted by the crisis, receive the support they expect and deserve.

## Levels of Crisis

There is no way to describe every possible event that could be considered a crisis, so in this guide we will offer a three-level approach. Within the definition of each level, the word “Team” is used to describe the individual or group of individuals assigned to a specific task of the CRP.

**Level 1**

A major incident and/or loss of life, serious injuries to one or more tour members.

***Example:*** *A bus runs off the road and there are casualties and injuries to several tour participants. In this type of incident an organization would activate most, if not all, teams within the CRP.*

**Level 2**

Serious incident with injuries but no loss of life.

***Example:*** *A single student is injured during an activity and has broken bones, but the injury does not appear to be life threatening. In this example, an organization may activate relevant emergency response teams, but the situation most likely will not require all response teams.*

**Level 3**

No major incident or serious injury has occurred. However, there is a strong possibility of a crisis developing.

***Example A****: A student with Type I diabetes is taken to a clinic with symptoms of low blood sugar levels that he/she was not able to control.*

**In this example the situation could become more serious but there is not enough information to make that determination. The chaperone was proactive by seeking professional help to determine if there is a serious problem developing.*

***Example B:*** *Two student travelers are missing after the tour group traveled through a crowded area. The tour leadership team initiates procedures to back-track the group’s steps to find the two students but they have not yet been found.*

**In this example the tour leadership was quick to report the problem to the Travel Organization’s office and initiated efforts to find the travelers. The organization may want to assemble a small group of the first response team to gather additional information or track the incident until it can be downgraded or escalated. In this type of scenario, it is important to have a plan that sets the point in time when contact is made with the student’s parents. The intent of early notification of the parents is not to alarm them of a situation that may be resolved quickly. The intent is to be transparent. It is possible that once the students realize they are separated from the group, they may call home first.*

## How to Build a Plan in 3 Steps

### Step 1- Ownership of the Plan

Developing a CRP will require input from everyone involved but there should be one person who manages gathering all the content and oversees the development of the plan. This person could also maintain the plan going forward. The CRP owner may not have a strong background in crisis response planning, but given the opportunity, will gain experience working with the teams to collect the information. In time, they could become an in-house expert.

The CRP plan owner should possess the following qualities;

a. Organized
b. Detail oriented
c. Ability to write clearly
d. Effective verbal communication skills
e. Reliable
f. Ability to train or teach
g. Collaborative
h. Someone with a high level of operational common sense and experience

### Step 2- Select the Teams to Develop the Plan

Once the CRP owner is selected, bring necessary people together to build the teams. When developing crisis response teams, it is important to gather people within your organization that have experience in areas you address in your plan.

This guide suggests areas that could be included in the CRP. Student travel organizations come in many sizes and have varying business models. Reviewing the list below could prompt an organization to think of other critical areas that need to be addressed in your organization's CRP.

A response plan consists of many different teams. Each team may play a critical role during a major crisis. That is why each team should develop a detailed list of actions they must complete.

Some student travel organizations have limited staff. While building the first response teams list, give thought to how you would address the challenges utilizing the staff you have during a crisis. If you decide you need additional resources during a crisis, you may consider partnering with another student travel organization or other experienced organizations to share resources during such an event.

# Potential First Response Teams

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Air/Ground Transportation | Employee Families | Call Center | Travel Response |
| Care Team/Family Liason | Facilities | Finance | Ground Operations |
| Tour Guides/Chaperones | Media Liason | Risk Management/Legal | Technology |
| Person In Charge (PIC) | Duty Officer | Emergency Response Officer (ERO) | |

**<u>First Response Team Definitions</u>**

### First Point of Contact (POC)

The POC is not a team and does not have a packet within the ERP. The POC is simply the first person who received the call alerting your organization of a crisis. The POC may not be connected to the CRP as it may be an employee working in your call center, an employee in your accounts payable department that was the last person to speak with a parent about payments, or anyone else within your organization. All staff members must receive training so they understand they could get a call reporting a crisis and understand how to appropriately respond. In Step 3 – Building the Response Packets, you will learn that having a document available that guides employees through gathering information and specifically what to ask, is recommended.

### Air/Ground Transportation

This team is responsible for air and/or ground travel arrangements. Although a tour may have traveled by motorcoach to their location, during a crisis, you may need to provide air travel. This team also arranges travel for the support team and for family members of the tour participants who want to travel to the site of the incident. If your organization is smaller, your Air/Ground Transportation Team and Ground Operations team could be combined for efficiency.

**Employee Families**
If a crisis happens, you may have your own staff impacted. Give thought to how you will communicate and support their families. It could be challenging to combine the families of your staff with families of the tour members during a crisis due to the association they have with your organization. It is important to keep these groups separate for many reasons. In larger organizations, the Human Resource Department could develop and be responsible for this team. For smaller operations, a senior staff member may need to be assigned to this team who is trained in family assistance support practices.

**Call Center**
This team handles all inbound and outbound calls. Calls could be related to the crisis or related to a different trip. This team could be called on to make outbound calls to impacted families of travelers involved in the crisis. Remember that all communication related to the crisis should be scripted and approved by the Media Team prior to any calls being made.

**Travel Response Team or "Go Team"**
This team is dispatched to the scene of the incident to establish an on-sight command center. The team may perform the following function;

a. On-site liaison with all emergency response entities.
b. Responsible for collecting all personal items of impacted tour members involved in the incident.
c. Photographing the scene if permitted by local law enforcement.
d. Removing company logos from the accident scene if allowed.
e. Setting up facilities and arrangements to house families who may need to travel to the incident site.
f. Establish media gathering point.
g. Arrange for local transportation as needed.
h. Track hospitals and morgues where victims are taken.
i. Provide hospital liaison to track all impacted travelers' conditions

**Care Team or Family Liaison**
The establishment of a care team will be covered in depth in a separate guide. In general, family assistance team members are trained in how to support victims and their families. They are aware of what to say and what not to say during these sensitive and sometimes highly emotional situations. They are also aware of what the travel organization can and cannot provide during such an event.

**Facilities**
During a crisis it is possible the media will come to the travel organization's office. You need a plan to control visitors and allow the privacy needed for your employees to deal with the crisis at hand. The packet for this team may include securing the building and closing all window blinds. They may also be responsible for hiring security to protect the business property.

**Finance**
During a crisis response, you will need to spend money to support the efforts and the finance team ensures everyone has what they need. The finance team can supply tools such as debit or credit cards, increasing limits and tracking crisis related expenses. Tracking expenses will be important when working with your insurance provider later.

**Ground Operations**
The ground operation team is made up of employees who set up the service agreements in the locations the tours travel. They have relationships with service providers and can help if more people are needed on the ground at the site of the incident. They can also support other teams by recommending motorcoach companies, hotels, and alternate tours.

**Tour Guides-Chaperones**
Your CRP must provide guidance for company selected tour guides and/or company hired chaperones who are on the trip with the students. The guides/chaperones need to know your expectations; what to do in the event of an emergency, who to contact first, how to care for the uninjured, as well as steps to move the unaffected travelers from the scene of the crisis. Once the team has developed their packet, the document can be incorporated into your pre-trip training and orientation.

**Media Liaison**
The media team creates all communications to be released outside of the organization. They write the holding statement, the scripts for the company spokesperson, and all responses on all social media sites. The checklist for the packet outlines each announcement and when it should be released to the public. A member of the media team may or may not be the spokesperson for the organization, but they craft all the scripting and must approve all text before it is published. After the initial media interview following a crisis, a senior member of the media team may be appointed to deliver the scheduled updates on a crisis response. It is recommended the first interview with media be presented by the highest-ranking official in the company who has the experience and ability to positively present your organization.

**Risk Management-Legal**
The risk management team is made up of legal counsel and members of your organization whose responsibilities center around evaluating risk. They are very important during the on-going support of the crisis response. This team would likely be in contact with insurance providers to keep them up-to-date on events as they unfold.

**Technology**
If your organization has access to a technology team, they can be critical during a crisis. Loaner laptops for Go Team members or additional cell phones can be very helpful during a response. This team may be responsible for securing rosters of tour participants. You don't want any records accessible to anyone who does not have a need to know including the media.

**Person-In-Charge (PIC)**
The Person-In-Charge (PIC) makes the critical decisions during a crisis until the Crisis Response Officer (CRO) is contacted and able to participate in the response. Each organization needs to designate and communicate to the staff who the PIC is during a crisis. The PIC may be the highest-ranking person on duty and able to immediately respond to a crisis. That person would then retain the PIC responsibilities until relieved by a higher-ranking or more experienced individual.

**Crisis Response Officer (CRO)**
Organizations should designate who the CRO will be during a crisis. This person may be off-site initially and not in a position to take the responsibilities of the CRO but they are the first person called by the First Point of Contact. This person is the one who determines the level of response and how many of the crisis response teams are activated. The CRO can serve as the PIC when they are on-site and able to fully participate in the response. It is important that the CRO is accessible at all hours of the day or night while tours are in progress. It may be appropriate to appoint more than one person who could fill this roll and then share a duty phone specific to the position. That way one person doesn't have the responsibility for the entire travel season.

The CRO will have a strong opinion about the information released to the media and will work closely with the Media Team. It is important that everyone understands who is in charge and who will make the decisions with regard to the response approach.

**Duty Officer**
The title of Duty Officer (DO) represents the person in charge of the operation on a daily basis. This may be a senior member of your team or a supervisor. It is the person most likely to be on-duty when a crisis call comes in.  They would be the first management person to get the report and to contact the CRO to determine if the response teams will be activated. Once direction is received from the CRO, the DO may activate the phone tree to ensure all parties are notified of the crisis. More information about phone tree options will be included later in this guide.

The Duty Officer is also the person to activate the Crisis Center, or the area designated for all team members to go when they have been notified of a crisis. This area should be pre-stocked with supplies needed during a crisis response such as, white boards, extra phones, TV's to monitor news coverage, and a host of other supplies needed to help the various team members respond.

***Important: You never know when a crisis will happen so having a back-up plan in the event some team members are not available, allows your teams to move forward effectively in case of a crisis.***

**Step 3- Building the Response Packets**
You now have an owner of your CRP and you have selected the team leaders who will head up each team. The number of response teams need to fit the size and shape of your organization; however, the areas listed above still need to be addressed in your plan, so you may need to combine some of the teams. If you do combine teams, pay special attention to the order of the response actions listed in the packet as to complete actions in order.

Travel organizations should understand that the members selected will not necessarily be knowledgeable about how a CRP works or how to start developing the packets. We suggest bringing all team leads together as a group and clearly explain the goals and process of building

the packets. Remind the team leads they are in this role because they are the experts in their area. After the initial meeting, they will go back to their own departments and identify who best to put on their team and then start developing their packet. The CRP owner should meet with each team leader on a regular basis during development for status updates and offer support.

**Format for Developing Packets**
Each packet contains a listing of critical steps that must be taken and the order to be completed. On the bottom of this section an example is provided for what the Person-in-Charge (PIC) list may look like once they have been informed of a crisis. The list is not intended to be a complete listing of every step to be taken. It is provided as an example of how the packet may appear. The specific steps and response requirements would need to be determined by each organization.

**Title Line and Kit Number-** Each kit should have a title line announcing which team's list it is intended for. It is a good idea to number each packet. In the example below, the packet is #2. It is not important what order the packets are numbered. All packets are vital to the overall response of the organization to the crisis. Numbering the packets does make it easy for teams to know which packet belongs to which team.

**Objective Statement-** This is a very important feature. The reader of the checklist is likely to be nervous at the onset of a crisis. The objective statement can set the tone and put them in the right frame of mind to move through the list of actions they are required to perform.

Here is an example of an objective statement:

"Because you are the first person to respond to this incident, **YOU ARE NOW IN CHARGE OF THIS EMERGENCY**. You will remain the **"Person-In-Charge"** until relieved by someone with higher authority. **Complete the check list below NOW."**

Notice the objective reminds the reader that they are in charge. It also reminds them that they will remain in charge until relieved by a higher authority. Lastly, it gives them a direct order to complete the checklist. Notice how ALL CAPS are used with bold letter to shout out the commands.

**Task Numbering-** It is a good idea to number the tasks. It is important to understand what needs to be done first. In the example shown you will notice a step 2.2a. By numbering in this fashion, it's easy to update and revise the packet based on your experience gained during training exercises and drills. You simply add a line and renumber the task (2.3, 2.4. etc.) without having to change the numbers for every task.

**Immediate Action-** This is where you tell the reader of the packet exactly what to do. The actions are written as if the form were giving commands to the reader. They should be written in as few of words needed to accurately provide direction on what to do next. This is not a time to explain the detail behind each action. That should take place during training. On the back of the checklist, each action could have a more comprehensive description of how to accomplish the task if needed.

**Assigned To-** The list should note whom the direction was given to. In the example below, the Duty Officer (DO) will complete the task. It is possible that the DO may delegate some tasks and will need to track who was assigned the task. During a crisis, things can happen quickly and trying to recall those details at a later date may be difficult or even impossible.

**Time/Date-** Log the time and date the task was assigned and completed.

**Initials-** The Duty Officer would initial each task as it is completed.

# Duty Officer CHECKLIST
## Packet 2

**OBJECTIVE**

Because you are the first person to respond to this incident, **YOU ARE NOW IN CHARGE OF THIS EMERGENCY**. You will remain the **"Person-In-Charge"** until relieved by someone with higher authority. **Complete the check list below NOW.**

| IMMEDIATE ACTION | | Assigned to | Date/ Time | Initials |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | Acquire information from First Point of Contact – **Take *completed* POC Information Card.** | | | |
| 2.11 | **Ensure Emergency Medical Services** have been contacted. **IF NOT, Contact Them**. | | | |
| 2.2 | **ASK: Has Crisis Response Officer (CRO) been called?**<br>**If NO, Call Crisis Response Officer now: *000-000-0000***<br>Provide information and follow directions given.<br>**ASK CRO if you should replace hold music with script?**<br>If YES, proceed to 2.2a. If NO, proceed to 2.3 | | | |
| 2.2a | **If approved:** Turn **OFF hold music.** Replace with standard holding script.<br>(Provide directions to turn off music or prerecorded messaging on the back of this form) | | | |
| 2.3 | **Call Tour Guide/Chaperone phones** to validate incident, if necessary. | | | |
| 2.4 | Ensure **all staff are aware of crisis** and that you will **provide updates**. | | | |
| 2.5 | **Notify service provider(s)** of impacted tour group(s). | | | |
| 2.6 | **Forward your desk phone** to **your DO cell phone:** | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.7 | **Proceed to Designated Command Center** for set up. | | | |
| 2.8 | **Turn on lights.** | | | |
| 2.9 | **Turn on overhead projectors** | | | |
| 2.10 | Upload **Tour Roster**. Display on **Projector.** | | | |
| 2.11 | **Turn on CNN News** | | | |
| 2.12 | **Open conference line**.<br>1-000-000-0000 – Moderator passcode 000000<br>Participant Passcode - 000000 | | | |
| 2.15 | **Position both flip charts** and ensure **pens** are available. | | | |
| 2.16 | **Fill out whiteboard** with available information. | | | |
| 2.17 | **Keep Crisis Response Officer up-to-date** at **000-000-0000** on any new information as necessary. | | | |
| 2.18 | **Brief Person-In-Charge** when they arrive. | | | |

***You can use either Excel or a Word program to build this type of checklist.***

**Backside of Form Definitions**

Consider writing more detailed definitions on the back of the form. That way if the reader is confused about any step, they can get more direction from the back side of the checklist. If there are passcodes used to perform certain functions like turning off canned music or phone recordings on your company phones lines, the directions could be made available in this location. Here is an example of how that might look for this packet.

**Duty Officer Kit 2**

**2.1 – Acquire all information collected from the First Point of Contact.**

It is important to obtain the contact number of the caller in case you are disconnected. Record the date, time and location of the crisis, and tour group contact numbers for all involved. Obtain a copy of the POC Information Card.

**2.11 – Ensure Emergency Medical Services** have been contacted. **IF NOT, Contact Them**.

It is critical to ensure Emergency Medical Services have been dispatched to the crisis site if that has not been done.

**2.2 – Call Crisis Response Officer at 000-000-0000 (if not already called), and follow directions given.**

The CRO will determine the level of response and, if needed, will activate the phone notification system to alert appropriate teams to immediately come to the Command Center.

**2.2a – Turn the hold music off the telephone and replace with the standard holding script.**

(Insert directions on how to turn off hold music and how to upload holding script. Once the Media team arrives, they will update the holding scripts as needed.

**2.3 – Call Tour Guide or Chaperone phones to validate incident, if necessary.**

It will be important to validate the caller's information regarding any tour. The call to the CRO should not be delayed. Once you have a tour guide or chaperone on the line, attempt to keep them on the line to provide timely updates.

**2.4 – Ensure all staff members are aware of the incident.**

Ensure every company representative is made aware of the incident. Inform them to transfer any calls made from the crisis site directly to you until relieved of Person-In-Charge duties.

**2.5 – Notify the Service Provider Partners for the impacted tour.**

Contact the Service Provider impacted by this crisis. Share detail of crisis and location of tour group. Ask them to activate their Crisis Response Plan.

**2.6 – Forward your desk phone to Duty Officer cell phone: 000-000-0000.**

Provide directions on how to forward phone lines. During a crisis completing simply task like this can be forgotten.

**2.7 – Proceed to the Command Center (CC) for set up.**

**2.8 – Turn on lights.**

**2.9 – Turn on overhead projectors.**

Provide specific operating instructions for the projector if one is used in your organization.

**2.10 – Upload a tour group roster. Display on Projector.**

By posting a roster in the command center and adding tour members' current status, such as injured or not injured, can help all teams have the most current information of each person involved in the incident.

**2.11 – Turn on CNN News.**

During a major crisis involving death and injuries, it is very possible CNN will find this news worthy and dispatch a news team to your office or the site of the incident. Regardless, it is a method of determining if the incident will be captured by the media.

**2.12 – Open conference line.** 1-000-000-0000 – Moderator passcode: 000-000-0000 Participant Passcode: 000000

**2.13 – Position each of the two flip charts and ensure pens are available.**

Flip charts in the command center can be a good way to display updates, meeting announcements, and other important information to the teams in attendance and those that come and go from the command center.

**2.14 – Fill out whiteboard with available information.**

Having a white board can also be an effective means to track the latest information about the impacted group. Having updates centrally located can provide a good source of information for all teams.

**2.15 – Keep the Crisis Response Officer up-to-date at 000-000-0000 on any new information when it comes in.**

As new information becomes available to you, contact the CRO at 000-000-0000 to ensure she/he has the most up-to-date information to help decide the appropriate course of action.

**2.16 – Brief Person-In-Charge when they arrive.**

Provide a complete update and any open actions that must be addressed to the Person-In-Charge when they arrive in the Command Center.

**<u>Additional Support Documents</u>**

Now you have your packets developed for all the teams. Your CRP is nearly complete. There are a few other important pieces of information to help make any CRP more effective. They are;

**Employee Contact List-** The CRP needs to have current phone numbers for all active company employees involved with the plan.

**Service Provider Contact List-** The CRP needs to have current phone numbers for all service providers used. You never know which organization or location will be involved in a crisis. Keeping the list up-to-date is critical.

**Media Phone Contact Number-** If your company does not have one, consider setting up a media phone line that can be monitored during a crisis. Having a phone number your employees can refer media inquiries to can help track each request and give your organization a means to return all calls in the order they were recieved.

**Insurance Phone Numbers**- List the travel insurance providers used or that your group participants purchased insurance from. Many insurance companies have response plans of their own that handle crisis situations. They may have a duty manager available to handle the escalated events.

**Government Agencies**- No matter where you are traveling, it is a good idea to have contact and website information for at least the following agencies;

- **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** http://www.cdc.gov.CONTACT/
  You can make public inquires at 1-800-232-4636 or email at cdcinfo@cdc.gov
- **American Red Cross** http://www.redcross.org 1-800-733-2767
- **U.S. Department of State– Bureau of Consular Affairs** http://travel.state.gov
- **U.S. Embassies Abroad** http://www.usembassy.gov
- **American Citizens Service and Crisis Management (ACS)**
- http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html 1-888-407-4747
- **Passport and Visa Information** 1-877-487-2778
- **Child Welfare Information Gateway-Child abuse reporting gateway.** http://childwelfare.gov

**First Point of Contact Information Card**

As mentioned earlier, the emergency notification call informing your company of a crisis can come in to your organization in multiple ways and locations. The best way to prepare to receive these calls is to develop an informational card. The intent of the card is to remind the employee taking the call, what is important to ask the caller. This is the information you will use to set the CRP in motion. Key information to collect during the initial call should include;

1. Callers Name.
2. Caller's phone number. (Getting the call back number as quickly as possible is very important in the event the call is dropped and you need to call them back).
3. The traveler or tour group they are calling about.
4. Brief but accurate description of the incident being reported. At this point if there are causalities, it would be good to alert another employee to make the call to the CRO while your call continues.
5. Time the call was received.
6. Call taken by.
7. Location of the incident.
8. Date of the incident.
9. Time of the incident
10. Local time at incident site.
11. Service Provider (if known)
12. Number of injured (if known)
13. Names of Tour Guide, Chaperones, and any students impacted.
14. Hospital names if already transported.

The form should have the phone number of your CRO so the POC can reach the CRO quickly.

Printing the form on a bright colored paper is also recommended so you can easily identify if the form is next to each phone. Bright red can be an effective color and the form could be referred to as "The Red Card".
Once your contact card is developed, place a copy under all phones in your organization so when the call comes in, your staff will be ready.

**Training and Practice Drills**

Now that you have developed a CRP, you need to train your organization. Many of the employees assigned to a packet will understand their responsibilities but for an CRP to work, you need to provide training to everyone in your organization. Training can and should be at different levels for different responsibilities. Here are a few tips to consider:

**Employees Not on Crisis Response Teams**

For employees not directly involved with the response teams, a short overview of the plan is appropriate. Special emphasis can be placed on the proper use of the First Point of Contact Information Cards that will be placed by their phones. You will also want to remind them to NEVER speak with the media and provide phone contact for all media inquiries to be forwarded to. By conducting this training, the employees will learn that the organization is well-prepared for a crisis. The training will give them enough background to field questions they receive from clients in the course of their normal work. This should be an annual training to remind all staff that being prepared for a crisis is very important to your organization.

**Employees on Crisis Response Teams**
For employees on a response team, a more complete review must take place, so they understand how all packets within the plan fit together. This is the perfect time to announce the CRO(s) and ensure everyone has a copy of the Crisis Response Plan.

**Packet Specific Emergency Response Training**
Each team lead should hold training for all members of that team. They should go through their packet in detail to ensure every member is prepared to carry-out the steps necessary to respond to the crisis. They should designate which team members can carry out the tasks on the list and assign back-ups for each step, in case the primary appointee is absent.

## Practice-Practice-Practice

It is not enough to have a CRP; you need to practice so everyone knows how to use the plan. This can be accomplished in a couple ways;

1. **Conduct Table Top Exercises -** During a table top exercise, teams meet in a room and a situation or possible crisis is presented to them. Then one-by-one, the various teams report out what they would do in that situation and what order the tasks would be accomplished. This can be very productive as all teams get to listen and better understand all other teams' responsibilities and priorities. There is no right or wrong response. This exercise can produce a good exchange of information or ideas so your staff can learn. It will also prove to be a good method to check for redundancies between packets or items missing from a list that should be included. Table top exercises should be held once a year. Twice a year may be appropriate to help employees learn their role in a crisis.

2. **Conduct Simulation Crisis Response Drill -** During a table top exercise, you simply walk through the details of a scripted situation and review every team's packet. In a simulation, team members act out their part as if the simulation where a real crisis.

   A script of the simulation needs to be prepared presenting a situation that could happen with your organization. You don't announce the specific time the drill will start but it is a good idea to let people know the day it is scheduled. It is important to announce the planned drill to all employees, so they do not misinterpret the drill as an actual crisis. The simulation call then comes in and every responder simulates the actions they would take.

   A code name can be used to help reduce confusion within the organization. That code name can be used when preplanned calls related to the crisis come in to your organization to help ensure the employee answering the phone doesn't mistake the drill as a real event.

In this situation, the caller states the code name or announces that this is a drill, then proceeds to deliver the message the simulation script dictates.

Simulations can be short in duration, such as 1 ½ to 2 hours. You will know when the simulation has run its course. After the drill, bring everyone involved back together to debrief on what they experienced. This can be helpful in discovering where the CRP needs to be adjusted and preparing your team for a real crisis.

3. **Why Conduct Drills?**
   During a crisis, people can sometimes freeze up and may be afraid to take action. This lack of action can be caused by the individual having no reference point or knowledge of what to do during a crisis. Conducting drills and table top exercises can give your team members who lack that experience, a memory to draw from in the future. This helps ensure they will react appropriately during a real-life event.

**Phone Trees**

For a smaller organization, a phone tree can be an effective way to reach all response team members quickly. A phone tree works by having one person call three people to notify them of the crisis and that they must respond to the command center. This continues down the line until the entire team has been notified.

Phone trees should be tested to make sure phone numbers are working and that everyone understands their role.

**Automated Notification Systems**

For larger organizations a phone tree may not be appropriate. There are many notification companies who provide services at reasonable rates. These systems can send pre-recorded messages out and request a response from the call recipient. Some systems allow for the call recipient to enter a response time. If you have such a system in place, practicing call notification is important. You will quickly learn what numbers are out-of-date or where you have phone contacts listed in the wrong order. Announcing the phone contact practice drill is also important as you don't want an employee's spouse answering the home phone and think it is a real crisis.

**Keeping Your Crisis Response Plan Up-to-date**

This is one of the greatest challenges for all organizations. You have built a great plan filled with all the right packets representing every task. Two weeks after you print the plan to hand it out, three people let you know their phone numbers have changed.

Organizations need to schedule updates to the plan on a regular basis. There are some options on the market that allow organizations to upload plans to a shared App that employees can have pass coded access to, but no one else can see the plan. They usually charge an annual fee to upload your Crisis Response Plan onto the App. For updates, you simply have your administrator update the forms. When the App is opened for use, the most current information will then be displayed. Using a shared App can also save in printing costs.

**What do I do if you are a small Operator?**
This guide was developed to help tour organizations, no matter what size, understand the many areas of responsibility that should be addressed during a crisis. With that said, many SYTA members do not provide the leadership on their tours or over sight of the students but may provide a Tour Guide. Schools that SYTA members travel, may prefer to handle many of the areas of responsibility outlined in this guide. It is critical that a travel organization develop a method to clearly establish with a school or teacher who will undertake which tasks during a crisis.

One possible solution to consider is using a document with the school during the contract negotiation process. The document could ask important questions such as;

1. In the unlikely event of a crisis, who will contact the parents of the student travelers?
   ☐ The school ☐ The travel organization.

2. Who would you like to handle all media responses related to the crisis?
   ☐ The school ☐ The travel organization.

3. In the event of an crisis, who should respond to the incident site to support the victums and the families traveling to the site to be with the impacted student?
   ☐ The school ☐ The travel organization.

4. If the school will handle all media calls, what number we forward media inquiries to?
   ______-______-_______.

5. What other support would you like from the travel organization during an emergency or crisis? ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

| ______________________ | ________________________ | __________ |
|---|---|---|
| Signature School Official | Signature Travel Organization | Date |

These are just a few important questions that should be discussed with clients in advance so there is no confusion in the highly unlikely event a crisis materializes during a trip. The client may be surprised in your asking and gain a better appreciation for your preparation and planning to ensure they are supported during travel. A signed copy of the document should accompany the trip contract.

**Summary**
We hope you find this guide useful in the development of your CRP or in reviewing the plan you have. Thank you!

## SYTA DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

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