

Crisis Communications Event *Framework*

Communications Team

Crisis Communications Leads

Primary Communications Lead: _____

Backup Communications Lead: _____

Crisis Response Team and Responsibility

- Media Response: _____
- District Communications: _____
- Digital/Social Media: _____
- Internal Communications: _____
- District/Superintendent Engagement: _____
- IT Operations: _____
- Human Resources: _____

Decision-Making & Approval Process

Who approves public messaging?

- Superintendent
- Communications Director
- Legal Counsel (when appropriate)
- Other: _____

Legal Review Trigger

Legal review is required when the incident involves:

- Student injury or death
- Employee misconduct
- Litigation
- Criminal investigation
- FERPA/privacy concerns
- Other: _____

Fast-Track Approval Process

Communications Lead>Legal Review (if needed)>Superintendent Approval>Public Release

Goal: Initial holding statement within 30–60 minutes of confirming an incident.

Notification Plans

Who needs to know first?

Immediate Notification

- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Safety Director
- ☐ Legal Counsel
- ☐ Other _____

Secondary Notification

- ☐ Communications
- ☐ School Admin
- ☐ District Leadership
- ☐ School Board
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ TDOE
- ☐ Partner Agencies

District Crisis Communications Framework

☐ Other _____

External Notification

- ☐ Families
- ☐ Community
- ☐ Media
- ☐ Other _____

Internal Staff Message

"Please direct all media inquiries to the District Communications Office. We will provide verified updates as information becomes available. Please do not share unconfirmed information publicly or on social media."

Holding Statements

Prepare draft statements for:

- Student safety incident
- School violence
- Medical emergency
- Weather emergency
- Cybersecurity incident
- Data breach
- Personnel investigation
- Facility emergency
- Transportation incident
- Community controversy

Potential Crisis Event Examples

- Student safety incident
- School violence
- Data breach/cyber security
- Policy controversy
- Leadership misconduct or personnel issue

District Crisis Communications Framework

- Natural disaster impacting schools
- Statewide testing issues
- Lawsuits/investigations
- AI deepfake/misinformation

Draft Holding Statement Example

"Our district is aware of an incident involving _____. Our immediate priority is the safety and well-being of our students and staff. We are actively gathering verified information and working with the appropriate agencies. We will provide updates as soon as additional information is confirmed."

Rapid-Response Playbook

First 15–30 Minutes

- ☐ Confirm facts
- ☐ Determine what is known vs. unknown
- ☐ Activate crisis communications team
- ☐ Notify superintendent
- ☐ Notify key internal leaders
- ☐ Prepare holding statement
- ☐ Begin media/social media monitoring
- ☐ Determine if scheduled communications should be paused

First 60 Minutes

- ☐ Release initial communication
- ☐ Notify families (if appropriate)
- ☐ Notify employees
- ☐ Notify School Board
- ☐ Respond to media inquiries
- ☐ Update website

First Few Hours

- ☐ Update stakeholders

District Crisis Communications Framework

- ☐ Publish FAQs
- ☐ Prepare spokesperson talking points
- ☐ Coordinate with law enforcement or partner agencies
- ☐ Continue monitoring misinformation

First 24 Hours

- ☐ Provide regular updates
- ☐ Issue staff talking points
- ☐ Monitor community sentiment
- ☐ Correct misinformation
- ☐ Document communications timeline

Social Media Protocol

Before Posting

- ☐ Verify facts
- ☐ Obtain approval
- ☐ Ensure the message aligns with other communications

Monitor

Watch for:

- ☐ Rumors
- ☐ False screenshots
- ☐ Edited videos
- ☐ AI-generated misinformation
- ☐ Impersonation accounts

Response Strategy

- ✓ Correct factual misinformation.
- ✓ Link to official district updates.
- ✓ Avoid engaging in arguments.

Post-Incident Review

Complete within one week of the incident occurring.

Discussion Questions

- What worked well?
- Where did communication slow down?
- Did staff understand their roles?
- Were approval processes efficient?
- Did stakeholders receive timely information?
- What misinformation emerged?
- What templates or procedures should be updated?

District Readiness Checklist

Before a crisis occurs, does your district have:

- ☐ A written crisis communications plan
- ☐ Defined communications roles
- ☐ Current stakeholder contact lists
- ☐ Draft holding statements
- ☐ Spokesperson identified
- ☐ Media distribution list
- ☐ Family communication platform
- ☐ Social media monitoring process
- ☐ Annual tabletop exercise
- ☐ Post-incident review process