Navigating Your Way to a Comprehensive Crisis Management Program

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Overview

- Context of crisis management
- Definition of crisis
- Crises in residential life
- Developing a program
- Case Study: OSU Dept. of Res Life
- Goals for the future
- Reflections
Major Crises

- Hurricane Katrina
- Virginia Tech Shootings
- Union University Tornado
- Northern Illinois Shooting
- They happen more than you think

What impact have these events had on your institution?
Momentum for Change

- Increased expectations
  From students, parents, politicians, and the media
- Impetus for action
  Changes are being made, must be proactive
- Greater sensitivity to behavioral concerns
- Reevaluate current practices
Definition of Crisis

- “How an organizational unit defines crisis has a significant impact on the crisis management system it develops”
- We operationally define crisis in our department as:
  Any event, incident, or emergent situation that affects our residence halls or the students who live in them and requires prompt or immediate attention from the university
Common Crises

- Weather Related
  - Tornado, Winter Storm, Flooding, Earthquake, etc.

- Police Involvement
  - Crime in progress, civil disturbance, vandalism, rioting, etc.

- Facilities Issues
  - Power outage, gas leak, hazardous materials, loss of utilities, etc.

- Student Emergencies
  - Medical issues, alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, missing student, mental health issues, student death, etc.
Crisis Management

- Crises are 10% what actually happens to an institution and 90% how that institution reacts
- Good reactions are formalized, universally agreed upon, and comprehensive
Crisis in the Residence Hall

- Special relationship with residents
- We provide life necessities
- No “pack up and go” mentality
- Possible role in the larger community
- Residential Life departments must be proactive
- Leading role in crisis planning at colleges and universities
Comprehensive Crisis Management

3 steps to initiate a comprehensive crisis management program:

1. Design protocol
2. Build bridges
3. Training, training, training
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Starting a committee
  - Making the commitment
  - Internal buy-in
  - Selecting membership
  - Goal setting
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Developing protocol
  - Research!
  - Brainstorming
  - Utilizing reputable sources
  - Synthesize
  - Individual authorship; group review
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Building bridges
  - Identify partnerships
  - Attain buy-in
  - Pre-draft meeting
  - Post-draft meeting
  - Secure commitment
  - Maintaining connections
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Training, training, training
  - 3 essential functions:
    - 1. Introduce new protocol
    - 2. Communicate importance
    - 3. Build competence
  - Audience-specific training
  - Advanced skill development
  - Add water and stir
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Current initiatives
  - Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
  - Aligning policies with protocol
  - Resident education
  - Bolster readiness; drills and kits
  - Professional development
  - Ongoing training
Case Study: OSU Department of Residential Life

- Goals for the future
  - Ease and accessibility
  - Espoused values to enacted mission
  - Prevention and mitigation
  - Living document; constant evaluation
  - Capacity to assist larger community
  - Building a culture of concern
  - Greater understanding of campus violence
  - Further integration throughout Res Life
Reflections on the Process

- Internal buy-in more difficult than external
- Take manageable steps
- Know your timeline; accountability
- Get committee up to speed
- Don’t be afraid of long meetings
- It’s worth it in the end
Resources/References


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