Responding to Emergency and Crisis Situations as Entry-Level Professionals

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Introduction of Facilitators
Who we are and why we’re here...

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Who is in the Audience?

Introductions of Participants

Areas of Specialization
- Greek Life
- Health Services
- Housing and Residence Life
- Judicial Affairs
- Student Activities
- Others

Years of Experience
- Graduate Student
- Entry-Level Professional (1-2 Years)
- Professional (3-5 Years)
- Experiences (5 Years or More)
How Often Are Critical Incidents Occurring?

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics report that of 6,266,447 students enrolled at American universities in 2004, 95,270 reported crime, either violence or property based. This is only 1.5%; does this surprise you? (http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_09.html)

Here’s an example. In Spring 2004, there is a building of 289 people. Of those, four of them would be involved in an incident that would qualify as a "crime," which includes:

- Murder
- Non-negligent manslaughter
- Forcible rape
- Robbery
- Aggravated assault
- Burglary
- Larceny
- Motor vehicle theft
- Arson

Four of the 289 students equals approximately 1.5%, so perhaps it's not so surprising.
Suicide and Mental Health Issues

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported in 2003 that suicide is the third leading cause of death among college-age youth (20–24 years).

Homicide - Second leading cause of death among college-age youth

*Risk for homicide is much lower among college students compared to the general population of similar age. To date, no studies of death among college students allow for a comparison between homicide and suicide as causes, yet many advocates of suicide prevention education believe that suicide is likely the second leading cause of death, with an estimated 1,088 suicides occurring on campuses each year (National Mental Health Association [NMHA] & The Jed Foundation [JED], 2002).*
National survey of college counselors found that 84% perceived an increase in students with more serious psychological problems over the past five years (Gallagher, 2002).

Almost sixteen percent of college women and ten percent of college men report having been diagnosed with depression at some time in their lives (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2001).

Forty-Four percent of students surveyed at four-year colleges reported drinking heavily during the two weeks prior to taking the survey (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000).
Suicide and Mental Health Issues Continued...

Big Ten Suicide Study

- 1980 to 1990
- Most comprehensive report broken down by age, gender, and race
- Collected data on 261 suicides of registered students at 12 Midwestern campuses
- Reported a rate of completed suicide of 7.5/100,000
  - Largest number of suicides for both males and females was in the 20-24 year age group (46%) and graduate students (32%)
  - Overall rate was half of national rate for sample matched by age, gender, and race
  - 31% of females and 25% of males were in the 17-19 range, but it only accounts for only 9% of female suicides and 14% of male suicides
Suicide and Mental Health Issues Continued...

Frequently, the incidents we deal with on our campuses are attempted suicides.

According to the CDC’s National College Health Risk Behavior Survey in 1995, among a representative of approximately 5,000 undergraduate students in both two-year and four-year institutions (1997; Brener, Hassan, & Barrios, 1999):

- 10.3% of respondents reported seriously considering attempting suicide during the twelve months preceding the survey.
- Students who had seriously considered suicide were also more likely to report use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.
- 6.7% of students surveyed reported that they had made a suicide plan
- 1.5% reported that they had attempted suicide one or more times in the previous twelve months.
- 0.4% reported that their suicide attempts required medical attention ‡ These are likely the calls we, as student affairs professionals, were called to respond to.
Depression Among College Students

Researchers at Kansas State University conducted a 13-year study (1989–2001) of 13,257 students who sought help at a large Midwestern university counseling center. They found that “students experience more stress, more anxiety, and more depression than a decade ago. Some of these increases were dramatic. The number of students seen each year with depression doubled, while the number of suicidal students tripled, and the number of students seen after a sexual assault quadrupled” (*Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton*, 2003, p. 69).
Alcohol Abuse

The Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study Survey (Wechsler et al., 2000) reports 44.4% percent of college students describe themselves as binge drinkers.

- No statistics to report on how often our students are going to detox or the hospital to combat the effects of alcohol poisoning.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reported that 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related injuries (2002).
- Studies also indicate that intervention can impact these issues. The retention rate for students who received counseling was 14% higher than for students who didn’t receive counseling (Kitzrow, 2003).
Divide Into Groups
First Case Study

“You are the residence life coordinator for a large, traditional-style residence hall. Two nights ago, a fire was intentionally started in one of the community bathrooms on an all-female floor. Luckily, your building does have a sprinkler system so no one was hurt and damage was kept to a minimal. The individual was not caught, but it was hoped that this was an isolated incident. However, last night another fire was started on the same floor. For both fires, all of the students in the building had to evacuate for several hours in the early morning while the fire department inspected the scene and cleared the smoke. In the second fire, several of the women on the floor had many belongings damaged due to the water from the sprinklers. Students and parents are understandably upset, many worried about how safe residents are in your facility. There are many rumors that a third fire will occur tonight, and the local television news station is covering the story. What steps must you take to respond to this crisis?”
Second Case Study

“You are the director of student activities and two members of your programming board, Jack and Duncan, also work for you as building managers for the student union. Earlier this afternoon, Duncan didn’t show up for his shift nor did he give any notice, which surprises you considering that he is usually a very reliable student employee. You leave a message on his voicemail to inquire on his whereabouts, but understand that students are still learning responsibility and plan to discuss the matter with him the following day. Later that evening, while you are still on-campus for an event, Jack comes looking for you very concerned. Jack explains that he spoke with Duncan’s roommate this evening and Duncan is missing. Apparently, Duncan and his girlfriend, Katharine, went camping at the local waterfalls last night and never came home this morning. Katharine’s roommate is very concerned too. You are aware of the waterfall area by campus, and know that while students hang out there regularly, it is a rather unsafe place to be at night. After following-up with local police, you learn that police found Katharine’s car parked at the camping area and the sheriff has called the local rescue team to assemble based on his assessment of the situation. Knowing that this situation could possibly end tragically, how should you proceed?”
Third Case Study

“You are the coordinator of Greek Life and serve as the primary contact for concerns which occur within the campus’ fraternity and sorority houses. One evening, you are contacted by Jennifer, a chapter president, in regards to an incident which occurred at her house. When she arrived home this evening, she found that two of her sisters were having a loud argument which was attracting the attention of most of the women in the house. She was surprised that the argument was between Kristen and Angela, who are very close and spend most of their time together. Being a leader in the community, Jennifer spoke to both of the sisters individually and learned that the argument began when Angela found out that Kristen had accused Angela’s friend, Nathan, of sexual assault. Angela does not believe Nathan could commit such an act and believes Kristen is only embarrassed because she drank too much last Saturday and slept with Nathan despite barely knowing him. Kristen admits to drinking too much, and only remembers bits and pieces of what happened that night. Kristen was getting advice from some other friends when Angela came home, overheard the conversation, and the argument began. Jennifer feels things have calmed down for now, but needs advice on what to do next. She also shares that Kristen is scared about reporting the incident since Nathan lives in the fraternity house next door. How do you proceed?”
Break

Please Return in Ten Minutes
Fourth Case Study

“You are the newly hired director of the campus’ women’s center. Your office is small with you being the only full-time staff member and the rest of the office being composed of student workers and volunteers. One evening, following a program on self-esteem and body image, two young women who you recognize as having attended several of your programs ask to speak to you in private. They introduce themselves as Shayna and Emily, and confide in you that they believe one of their friends, Danielle, has been cutting herself due to the amount of stress she has been under. Shayna went to high school with Danielle and is aware that Danielle has a history of cutting. However, she was under the belief that Danielle had ‘grown out of that.’ Asking for further information, you learn that neither Shayna or Emily have seen Danielle hurt herself directly, but they have seen numerous cuts and scrapes on her arms recently. They are also aware Danielle is failing two classes. Further complicating the matter, you learn that the ‘Danielle’ they are referring to is the same Danielle who works as a student worker in your office. As you process this information, you recall that Danielle has not been her usual cheerful and energetic self and that she has in fact been wearing only long sleeved shirts and sweaters recently. How should you respond?”
Fifth Case Study

“You are the live-in community manager for a four-hundred bed complex on the edge of campus. Your facility is only three years old, the newest on campus with state of the art amenities. It has always been at full capacity, with a large waiting list of students wishing to live at the campus’ premier residence. Weather in your area is usually pretty mild, with no major storms having occurred for several years. Over the past couple of days, the forecast has predicted severe thunderstorms for where you are located, although these warnings occur quite frequently and storms usually pass without much disruption. You are then called one evening by one of your resident advisors who informs you that a tornado warning has been placed in effect and residents are asking staff members what they should do. As you begin to leave your apartment, you hear the tornado sirens go off. As you meet with your staff to assess the situation and plan the next steps, you are aware that the storm is coming down hard and moments later, the power goes out. Luckily, you and your staff were successful in getting all residents to designated safe areas. However, while no tornado actually touched down, you find there has been major damage to the overall building. Numerous windows have been blown out, parts of the building have no power, trees have fallen onto cars, flooding, etc. How do you respond?”
Sixth Case Study

“You are the assistant director for student judicial affairs, in the position for the first year, but overseeing the office while director is away at a conference. You are contacted by the director of residential life, who informs you of an incident involving a student by the name of James. Last night, a community assistant named Michael responded to a noise complaint when he saw James whom Michael was aware had been banned from the residence halls the prior semester. Michael spoke to James, who initially tried to lie and state he was not banned, but then changed his story to state that the ban was now lifted. Unaware of the ban being lifted and sensing James may be lying about this too, Michael asked James to leave for the evening so he could speak with his supervisor and resolve the issue in the morning. James demanded that Michael call his supervisor immediately to sort everything out, while screaming, cursing, and waking up multiple residents on the floor. James then began making physical threats toward Michael, as well as to other community assistants and fellow residents who had heard the commotion and came to help. Campus police were called as James’ tamper and anger continued to escalate, and it was necessary for campus police to escort James out of the building in restraints. The director of residential life would like you to resolve this matter quickly, as many residents are very upset and feel threatened by James. Sadly, you are aware of James as he has had a history of outbursts and aggressive behavior on campus, which James attributes to being diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Campus counselors have met with James and also believe he may be showing early symptoms of schizophrenia. Lastly, campus police have informed you that James has been released and has already likely returned to campus. How do you feel would be the best way to handle this situation?”
Where Are We Headed?

A look at strategies for moving forward...
Multiple Forms of Communication

- Text Messaging
- VOIP Phones
- Voice Mail
- E-mail
- Institutional Website
- Local News Media
- Door to Door
- Campus Sirens
- Code Blue Kiosks/Emergency Phones
- Closed Circuit Cable Channel
- Facebook
- Intercom on Fire Alarm Systems
When to Use Your Alert System

- In Emergencies Only
  - Closing Campus (Lockdown or Evacuation)
  - Severe Weather Alerts
  - Ongoing Safety Threats
  - Timely Notification of Crimes
- To Test the System Periodically
  - “You do not want to overuse the system because of its convenience.”
Who Should Be on the Alert System?

- Students, Faculty, and Staff
- Parents or Guardians?
- Spouses or Significant Others?
- Anyone Else?
Schools Where Multiple Channels Have Been Put to Use

- Northern Illinois University
- Delaware State University
- St. John’s University
- University of Wisconsin, Madison
- University of Michigan
- University of Louisville

This is only a sampling.
Campus Student Care Teams

- Key University Officials
  - Dean of Students Office
  - Counseling Center
  - Residence Life
  - Judicial Affairs
  - Campus Police
  - Health Services
  - Faculty Representative
  - Others on as Needed Basis

Meet regularly to discuss any students in need of assistance or interventions, discuss incidents from the weekend and preceding week, and any other items that may arise concerning student care.

- Assist students in crises on an as needed basis.
- Serve as additional follow up if needed.
Threat Assessment Teams

- Key University Officials
  - Expertise in Human Resources/Employee Assistance, Law Enforcement/Threat Assessment/Tactical Applications, University Operations, Medical Knowledge, and Student Affairs
  - Human Resources Representative
  - Vice President for Business Affairs
  - Public Safety/Campus Police
  - General Counsel for the College or University
  - Health and Wellness Representative (Counseling/Health Services)
  - Student Affairs Representative

- Assist in addressing situations where students, faculty, or staff are displaying disruptive behaviors, potentially endangering the safety of themselves or others.

- Make recommendations to protect the campus community.

- Procedure in Class to Report Concerns
- Procedure to Follow-Up on Concerns or Evaluate Validity
Emergency Response Teams

- Key University Officials
  - Vice President for Business Affairs
  - Provost
  - Vice President for Student Affairs
  - Media Relations/Communications/Public Relations
  - Public Safety/Police Department
  - Director of Housing and/or Residence Life
  - Physical Plant Representative
  - Environmental Health and Safety Representative
  - Others as Deemed Necessary
- Review emergency response protocol.
- Develop “Table Top” discussions or presentations on scenarios.
- ‘What To Do In Case of a Campus Shutdown’
- Identify essential staff; review essential staff.
- Meet regularly to stay abreast of situations, current trends, etc.
- Team may handle issues from natural disaster to acts of violence.
Emergency Response Protocol

- Get it up to date.
- Get it posted.
- Make it available in multiple formats.
- Keep it up to date.
- Review it regularly.
- Modify and add to it as needed.

BE PROACTIVE.
Crime Alerts

- Act requires all institutions that participate in federal aid programs to release information about campus crime and safety in a timely manner.
- Crimes Committed on Campus or in Close Proximity to Campus
  - Crime Statistics
  - Crime Log

Crime Reports
- Murder
- Sex Offenses
- Robbery
- Aggravated Assault
- Burglary
- Motor Vehicle Theft
- Manslaughter
- Arson
- Drug and Weapons Violations
- Some Alcohol Violations
Liability Concerns
Eastern Michigan University

- **New York Times** reported on July 4, 2007
  - “Officials at Eastern Michigan University violated federal law when they publicly ruled out foul play in the death of a student who had actually been raped and killed in her dormitory room, a Department of Education review concluded. The federal report said the school’s actions violated the Cleary Act, which requires colleges to disclose campus security information. The school said…’University officials told her parents and the news media that she died of asphyxiation but that there was no sign of foul play.’”

- Fines Totaling $358,000
- Program Review by the U.S. Department of Education
- Lawsuit from the Family
- Lost Jobs
Questions & Final Thoughts

Thank you for your attendance and participation! Please take a moment to fill out an evaluation.