

2014 Convention Program Summaries

For those of you who either couldn't make it to the annual convention or attend every workshop we asked presenters to share summaries of their programs in the newsletter.

Thank you to those of you who allowed us to include these in our newsletter!



After-Hours Campus Emergencies: Training, Collaborating, and Responding as a Team

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Knowledge and application of crisis management has become a critical part of professional development for all student affairs professionals. However, different disciplines within student affairs often approach training and operations in this area differently. Our program introduces a multi-disciplinary training and real-world delivery model of campus crisis response, including perspectives from counseling, housing, student development, and crisis management. Results of utilizing the model at our institution for over five years will be discussed.

Crisis teams need to be intentional and proactive and not put together in a moment of crisis. Institutions need to have a plan in place to deal with crises for the entire campus (Dolan, 2006; FEMA, 2013; Wisen, 2006). Corporate America has continuously been ahead of student affairs in terms of crisis preparedness and we are just starting to get to where we need to be in this area (Clark, 2012). For a long time in student affairs, a more reactive approach to crisis was used. While one cannot prepare for every crisis, there can be a plan in place for most crisis/emergency situations (Dolan, 2006). One lesson from emergency management, law enforcement, and corporate crisis planning is a plan is no good unless it is practiced and refined on a regular basis (Wuthrich, 2008). Our comprehensive, annual preparation and training model allows us to use our experiences to learn how to better serve our campus community the next year.

Learning from what other institutions have experienced in terms of crisis is essential to planning for one's own campus (Rock, 2000). University of Texas-Austin is one of the leaders in crisis management at the University level (Dolan, 2006). They are forward thinkers in this area and are often looked to by other schools for their crisis preparedness. Schools have learned from the events at Virginia Tech, the effects of Hurricane Katrina, and the various high profile acts of violence at schools around the nation (Dolan, 2006; FEMA, 2013).

Crisis management teams tend to be made up of non-academic personnel who know what their roles are and are able to make decisions quickly (Wisn, F. & Lischer, D., 2006). This information is also true for K-12 institutions when dealing with students who may have emotional or behavioral problems (Rock, 2000). Crisis teams need to have continuous training and all members need to want to be on the team. This continuous training should be interdisciplinary and teach team members to use a common language, model, and tools (FEMA, 2013; Wisn, F. & Lischer, D., 2006; FEMA, 2008, FEMA, 2003). This leads to increased collaboration and effectiveness when responding in a stressful emergency situation.

For instance: How does a crisis team determine that a crisis is occurring? The behavior must be specific and observable, in other words, all members of the team must be able to identify what is considered a crisis situation. Who from the team responds to what situation? Every member of the crisis response team should know their role (FEMA, 2003; FEMA, 2008; Rock, 2000). The team must also determine when and what technology to use in order to notify members of the crisis team that a crisis is occurring (Rock, 2000). Where does everyone meet up during the crisis? Can the person involved be isolated? Why did the crisis happen? Having a crisis response model that provides a framework that is flexible, multi-component, and can allow mental health professionals and non-mental health professionals to work together is a key part of answering all of these questions (Rock, 2000; Everly, G. & Flynn, B., 2006).

Relationships with campus partners are essential in order to assure that everything runs as smoothly as possible during a crisis situation (Dolan, 2006; FEMA, 2013). Follow up needs to happen as soon as possible after the crisis, in order to make sure the students involved are able to return to a normal life (Wuthrich, 2008). Campus partnerships are essential in order to assure a connection with a student is made immediately (Wisn, F. & Lischer, D., 2006; Everly, G. & Flynn, B., 2006).

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