Chapter 9

Incorporating Crisis Planning and Management Into Orientation Programs

Dian Squire, Victor Wilson, Joe Ritchie, and Abbey Wolfman

On April 16, 2007, at 6:47 a.m., Seung-Hui Cho stood outside West Ambler Johnston residence hall. Approximately 30 minutes later Cho shot and killed Emily Hischler and a resident assistant, Ryan Christopher Clark. By 7:30 a.m., a "person of interest" had been identified, and the University's Policy Group called a meeting. Within an hour of the incident, the chief of police provided information to the Policy Group; requested the Virginia Tech Police Department Emergency Response Team arrive at the scene; and the Policy Group discussed how to notify the community of the homicides. Meanwhile, Cho chained three doors inside Norris Hall and began shooting at 9:40 a.m., entering classrooms and firing on students and instructors. The police attempted to enter the building but were stopped by the chains holding the doors shut. At 9:50 a.m., e-mails and messages over loud speakers warned students to remain inside their buildings because a gunman was loose on campus. At 9:51 a.m., Cho shot himself in the head. In all, 174 rounds were fired. Cho killed 30 people in Norris Hall and wounded 17 more (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

In the aftermath of the tragedy at Virginia Tech, many asked how the killings could have been prevented. Others began to examine how university officials responded to the crisis and its aftermath. As a result, many campuses examined and revised or instituted crisis management plans. This chapter offers an overview of crisis management planning paying particular attention to orientation programs. The chapter opens by defining the kinds of crises educators might expect to encounter on campus and outlines strategies for developing, implementing, and assessing crisis management plans. The chapter concludes with case studies of crisis responses in the orientation setting.

What Is a Crisis?

On college and university campuses, crises can take many different forms. They include major weather-related crises like Hurricane Katrina (2005) or violence on campus like the shootings at Virginia Tech (2007) and Northern Illinois University (2008). They may also include smaller scale crises such as dealing with irate parents, misbehaving students, missing presenters, or dismissed staff members. Rollo and Zdziarski (2007) suggest that crises have five distinct components. First, crises have the perception of being a negative event or having a negative outcome. Individuals perceive that the event "exceeds the resources and coping mechanisms" currently available (Gilliland & James, 1993, p. 3). As such, crises often pose a threat to stability. Second, crises have an element of surprise.

While some crises are predictable (like a hurricane), others are not, and it is this unpredictable nature, paired with a belief that they cannot or will not happen, that make them an issue. Third, crises provide a limited time for action, requiring quick decision making and allocation of resources for responding to them. Fourth, there is an interruption or disruption of normal patterns of operation. Last, there is a threat to the safety and well-being of certain members of a community.

Sherwood and McKelfresh (2007) offer a slightly different definition of crisis, identifying three different origins: (a) environmental, or those originating from nature; (b) human, or those relating to a person and facility; and (c) those originating from inside a man-made structure (e.g., fire, internal flood, power outages). Within each type, different levels of crises are seen. The levels are defined below and examples of crises associated with these levels are found in Table 9.1.

◇ *Level 1. Minor crisis* describes those incidents that do not affect outside constituents; however, these may cause a sudden change in normal procedure. Most of these problems can be solved by a student paraprofessional, but some of them will require the action of a professional staff member.
◇ *Level 2. Moderate crisis* involves issues with a bit more severity or those that may affect outside constituents (e.g., parents/students/visitors to campus for an orientation program) but do not cause harm to these constituents. A student coordinator, graduate assistant, or professional staff member usually handles these problems. Actions may also require assistance from outside offices such as campus safety or residence life.
◇ *Level 3. Major crisis* affects outside constituents and may cause disruption to scheduled events. They may also result in minor injuries to participants.
◇ *Level 4. Severe crisis* may involve injuries requiring hospitalization or death. Such crises typically require a widespread response from multiple units within the organization.

Even though major and severe crises are low-probability events (i.e., they do not happen often or have a very slight chance of happening), an effective crisis management plan is essential for every orientation program. Crises require the ordinary practitioner to be creative, flexible, organized, energized, relaxed, and poised in the face of uncertainty, chaos, anxiety, and possible loss. They also require contingency planning and "integration and synergy across institutional networks" (McConnell & Drennan, 2006, p. 59). Because major and severe crises have the potential for the greatest disruption to campus systems and the lives of those connected to the campus community, they are the primary focus of this chapter.

Preparing for Crises in Orientation

Higher education professionals must have crisis management plans in place so that when a crisis occurs personnel can react quickly and appropriately. Events that have no immediate response protocol can cause chaos, confusion, and feelings of insecurity. Orientation staff members need guidance, guests need answers, and problems need quick solutions. As numerous schools throughout the Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Katrina can attest, natural catastrophes have the potential to wreak havoc on campus facilities and place students, employees, and visitors in physical danger. As much as orientation professionals would rather not deal with these unwelcome situations, crises are a part of what they are charged with when handling the day-to-day care of campus guests.

According to McConnell and Drennan, a "crisis is [not] amenable to being packaged into neat scenarios" (p. 64). There is no single set of rules or strategies that can solve every problem, but developing a "broad, movable and often abstract set of principles which then need to be translated

Table 9.1

Strategies for Managing Different Levels of Crises

	Examples of crises	Planning for Crisis	Addressing the Crisis	After Crisis Tasks
Level 1. **Minor crisis**	◇ Firing a worker ◇ Technology problems ◇ Parking issues ◇ Presenter absence ◇ Staff member illness or tardiness ◇ Other problem not affecting outside constituents	◇ Develop basic written protocol or make staff aware of informal protocols ◇ Examine all aspects of program and discuss contingencies with appropriate coordinating partners or staff ◇ Train staff to perform multiple roles (presenting or job duties) ◇ Keep paper backup copies of all technology-based presentations	◇ Address problem immediately using protocol ◇ Replace staff member with another student worker or student coordinator ◇ Use allied office's resources ◇ Return to non-technology-based teaching if possible	◇ Address situation with staff member ◇ Contact appropriate maintenance personnel ◇ Revisit and assess crisis plan ◇ Make changes to crisis plan for future and retrain staff if necessary
Level 2. **Moderate crisis**	◇ Poorly behaved students ◇ Party in residence halls ◇ Disrespect toward a staff member to the extent that staff member does not feel comfortable in group ◇ FERPA-related issues ◇ Other problem that does not physically harm but may affect the integrity of the program	◇ Identify professional staff member who will handle these types of situations ◇ Coordinate with partners (residence halls/campus safety/academic colleges), including notification program dates, participants, and activities ◇ Determine who will handle reporting of crisis ◇ Train staff to identify problem issues and how to deal with non-escalated situations and role model correct behaviors	◇ Remove problem student from situation and discuss solutions. Make decisions based on best judgment. ◇ Address problems logically using evidence-based arguments (e.g., FERPA language, evidence of poor behavior, residence hall policy)	◇ Inform proper contacts about actions taken if you remove student from program (e.g., colleges, residence halls) ◇ Notify guardians of action taken (if necessary) ◇ Assess the messages being sent to guests and how they can be improved (e.g., FERPA, overnight stay rules) ◇ Revisit and assess crisis plan ◇ Make changes to crisis plan for future and retrain staff if necessary

Table 9.1 continued

	Examples of crises	Planning for Crisis	Addressing the Crisis	After Crisis Tasks
Level 3. Major crisis	◇ Weather related (non-large scale, e.g., rain, lightning, snow, ice) ◇ Injury to person (non-hospitalization)	◇ Identify professional staff member who will handle these types of situations ◇ Coordinate with partners (residence halls/campus safety/academic colleges), including notification program dates, participants, and activities ◇ Determine who will handle reporting of crisis ◇ Develop contingency plan for large-scale and small-scale programming ◇ Ensure that all staff members are signed up for campus alerts on their cell phones and e-mails	◇ Immediately move guest(s) to a safe location ◇ Assess situation and make evidence-based decision ◇ Keep a staff member with injured guest at all times ◇ Use phone tree or other communication system to inform all staff in danger of situation and actions to take ◇ Formally document all incidences and actions taken ◇ Assess student safety concerns and either implement alternative programming plan (if weather related) or continue with program	◇ Inform proper contacts about actions taken, especially if you remove student from program (e.g., legal, parents, colleges, residence halls) ◇ Make proper accommodations for injured guest for the rest of the program ◇ Revisit and assess crisis plan ◇ Make changes to crisis plan for future and retrain staff if necessary

Table 9.1 continued

	Examples of crises	Planning for Crisis	Addressing the Crisis	After Crisis Tasks
Level 4. **Severe crisis**	◊ Active shooter ◊ Large-scale natural disasters ◊ Injury to person (causing death or requiring hospitalization)	◊ Coordinate emergency protocol with appropriate campus constituents (e.g., safety, health center, legal, student/academic affairs, residence life) ◊ Identify professional staff member who will handle initial procedure in these types of situations (should be highest level official in office) ◊ Keep track of weather-related events continuously until threat subsides ◊ Determine who will handle reporting of crisis ◊ Develop contingency plan for large-scale and small-scale programming ◊ Determine procedure/technology systems needed for notifying family ◊ Ensure that all staff members are signed up for campus alerts on their cell phones and e-mails	◊ Immediately notify all staff of crisis and inform them to remain in a safe, locked location ◊ Notify all appropriate parties (e.g., police, fire, emergency, central administration) ◊ Remain calm and gather as much evidence as possible regarding situation ◊ Do not try and address the conflict yourself. Allow professionals to handle situation ◊ With serious injury or death, ensure that there is no danger for others in the area, suspend programming if needed, and notify proper channels ◊ For large-scale natural disasters, suspend programming until the threat is over ◊ Provide the basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, safety) ◊ Manage volunteers	◊ Contact campus counseling center to update on situation and provide services, if needed ◊ Ensure that targeted groups (if any) are safe and attended to (e.g., Muslim students after 9/11) ◊ Complete documentation of incident ◊ Follow-up with appropriate contacts to ensure consistent messages and information are being disseminated ◊ Provide as much information as possible without releasing sensitive information. ◊ Make proper accommodations for injured guest for the rest of the program ◊ Revisit and assess crisis plan ◊ Make changes to crisis plan for future and retrain staff if necessary

into 'good practice'" may be the next best thing (McConnell & Drennan, 2006, p. 60). In other words, orientation, transition, and retention professionals should prepare a flexible crisis management plan, train orientation staff members in best practices, and spend a significant amount of time analyzing program protocol and schedules to forecast possible issues. In short, a crisis plan should include six components:

1. A definition of the crisis
2. Clear objectives of the crisis plan
3. Detailed crisis alert procedures
4. External communication protocols
5. A game plan that includes evaluation and action
6. Tactical operations or public statements and press releases (Sherwood & McKelfresh, 2007).

By looking at the four-level crisis spectrum introduced in Table 9.1, orientation professionals can begin to discuss how to address different crises that might occur during an orientation program. The table outlines the four levels of crises as well as tips for planning for, addressing, and following up after the crisis has taken place. Table 9.1 offers few direct solutions to crisis response; rather, it provides a framework and suggested actions that may be taken in these types of situations. Because all campus organizational structures are situated differently, crisis plans should be developed around those structures. This leveled system offers orientation professionals a basis for their program's crisis management plan.

Similarly, Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel's (2007) Crisis Management Cycle provides orientation professionals with an organizational structure for developing a crisis management plan. The cycle involves five stages or steps: (a) planning for the crisis, (b) preventing the crisis, (c) responding to the crisis, (d) recovering from the impact of the crisis, and (e) learning from the crisis what can be done better next time. These stages, in turn, might represent the logical sections of a written plan.

Yet, simply creating a written plan for dealing with crises is not sufficient. Rather, Perry and Lindell (2003) argued that "it is important to avoid confusing planning with a written plan...the plan itself represents a snapshot of that process at a specific point in time...preparedness is dynamic and contingent upon ongoing processes" (p. 338). In essence, creating a written plan is only the first step in a multi-step process to ensure readiness or emergency preparedness, which involves analyzing and creating a set of principles that are translated into good practice by examining possible threats, surveying human and material resources, and organizational structures and policies (McConnell & Drennan, 2006). More simply put, preparedness requires an orientation professional to examine every aspect of a program and identify possible threats as well as likely responses. It also requires ongoing training to ensure feasibility.

Perry and Lindell (2003) provide 10 guidelines for creating an emergency preparedness plan. When applied to their own work, orientation professionals can feel more assured that crises can be averted and/or handled successfully.

1. *Base processes on likely threats and likely human responses*. This is called a vulnerability assessment. After identifying possible threats (e.g., institutions located in earthquake prone areas, near nuclear power plants), orientation professionals should discuss how these threats can be reduced and, when they cannot be prevented, the resources available to those who must take action. This also allows professionals to identify areas where they have little expertise so that they can learn more about appropriate responses. Once a list of deficient resources

or response options has been identified, orientation professionals should identify a plan for addressing these deficiencies.

2. *Encourage appropriate actions by leadership*. Leaders must know how to accurately assess a crisis and the range of available response options. Orientation professionals must remember that while in the midst of a crisis, they must remain calm and collect all relevant information so that an appropriate decision can be made. The appropriate response is much more important than the speed with which a response is made. Research shows that people are less likely to panic if they receive complete and clear messages (Archer, 1992; Perry & Lindell, 2003). Making decisions based on incorrect information can cause more confusion or inappropriate actions.

3. *Encourage response flexibility*. Plans should focus on "principles of response" (Perry & Lindell, 2003, p. 342) rather than specific processes, especially since orientation professionals cannot determine all possible contingencies. Furthermore, complex plans are difficult to remember, and some aspects of those plans can become quickly outdated. Instead, orientation professionals should ensure that staff members are thoughtful, creative, and professional. Staff members should be able to take the framework of a crisis plan and apply their own good judgment in addressing the problem.

4. *Encourage interdepartmental coordination.* Stein, Vickio, Fogo, and Abraham (2007) discussed a "network approach" (p. 332) to campus coordination in university disaster preparedness. Their research showed that network creation and "boundary spanning" (p. 333) ensured that networks existed when disasters occurred, reinforced that creating these networks is not difficult, and also showed that there were not enough network connections present on university campuses especially among academic and mental health units. To ensure that a networking approach is implemented properly, a list of relevant campus offices/services must be generated and included in disaster planning meetings. It is also important to include front-line staff in the creation of crisis plans since they often bring a different perspective to crisis situations.

5. *Integrate emergency plans from all coordinating offices.* Those charged with developing a crisis plan should scrutinize individual office plans and meet with related offices and organizations to ensure that all bases are covered and to avoid duplication of efforts. Where appropriate, certain offices should be designated to lead the particular aspects of the crisis response.

6. *Provide training programs for managers*. Many schools have emergency plans, but lack a training component. Training components provide an opportunity for those charged with acting to become familiar with the plan. Training is "an integral part of the disaster planning process, and when carefully attended to, so likely to yield high dividends in terms of effectiveness of emergency response" (Perry & Lindell, 2003, p. 346).

7. *Perform testing and drills of emergency procedures*. Continuing with the training process, plans need to be tested. Testing may take the form of asking orientation leaders to respond to hypothetical crisis situations during training week. It may also include practice using a phone tree or other communication system. Schinke, Smith, Myers, and Altman (1979) found that paraprofessionals who were trained in crisis intervention and response techniques provided better service, recalled detailed information more accurately, and were more competent overall.

8. *Review and update emergency plans regularly*. Emergency plans continually evolve as new situations or conditions present themselves. If a service is no longer available, responses to incidents need to change to reflect that loss of service. Written documents should be regularly updated to reflect changes in the emergency plan.

9. *Realize that planning sometimes occurs in the face of resistance.* While campus officials are less likely to question the need for emergency response systems now than in the past, it may be necessary to stress to coordinating offices the importance of having a plan in case these highly improbable incidents take place. Stressing the importance of this sort of program to other offices may require some political maneuvering by an orientation office, which may have to prepare the plan and present it for the office instead of creating it in a collaborative manner. This does not assume that an orientation office should be responsible for creating an entire campus plan, only that it should play some role since orientation programs involve large-scale coordination of groups of people.

10. *Recognize the difference between emergency planning and emergency management.* Planning concerns all matters prior to an actual incident. Management refers to "meeting the emergency demands by implementing the assessment, corrective, protective and coordinating actions identified in the planning stage" (Perry & Lindell, 2003, p. 347). Once again, orientation professionals cannot simply create a written plan. Being prepared to implement and assess crisis management are equally important steps in the process.

While smaller organizations often rely on informal communications and personal connections to make decisions (Perry & Lindell, 2003), some formal structures for crisis management should exist. These structures are likely to become more formal as institutional size increases. A lack of preparation causes "delays, cacophony, divisions, ineptness to handle the multidimensional nature of the crisis. . . [and the] inability to form cooperative links with other external units" (Boin & Lagadec, 2000, p. 187).

Responding to Crises in Orientation

Dealing with post-crisis responses is not always the responsibility of the orientation professional, but if a crisis occurs to a student during a program, or if an orientation staff member is called on to be part of a response team, it is important to discuss some issues related to crisis response. Additionally, orientation professionals are occasionally tasked with disseminating information to various constituent groups (e.g., students, parents, local media outlets, and the general campus population). This section describes some of the issues that come with information dissemination and how to cope with those issues. Providing clear, specific information as often as possible is the best way to reduce chaos and confusion among the public.

Basic Communication Strategies

Communication is one of the most important tools that an orientation professional can use during a crisis. Effective communication can get people to safety, calm nerves, and prevent further complications. Poor communication can cause chaos, anxiety, confusion, and promote additional disruptions. First, a crisis communications team should be developed prior to implementing the first orientation program. Who will collect, compile, and disseminate information to the proper authorities? Part of the plan should include providing front-line staff members (e.g., administrative assistants, student workers) with the names and phone numbers of the university officials to whom media inquiries should be referred. Second, orientation professionals should determine what modes of communication are the most effective in different situations. In the case of natural disasters, where there may be time to make arrangements, updated school and office web sites and automated voice messages on office phones may suffice. For more immediate actions, updating a

web site may not provide the necessary information in a timely way. Delegating phone call duties to other professional staff members followed by e-mails may be a more appropriate response.

When an emergency originates within the orientation program, campus police should be notified to determine whether an emergency alert alarm or text-message to the campus community may be appropriate. Communication with all appropriate staff (including student workers) is also necessary and a phone tree or texting service should be used to disseminate appropriate information to staff in affected areas.

As a part of preparing for a campus crisis, it is imperative that campus officials put forth a plan that will outline what information will be shared, who can share information, and with whom. Two federal laws—FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and HIPPA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act—place restrictions on the kinds of student information administrators can share with family members, external law enforcement officials, the media, and others on campus. While FERPA allows for information to be shared to "appropriate parties" in emergencies that involve the health and safety of students, universities are sometimes reluctant to share such information for fear of being sued (Roan, 2007). For this reason, orientation professionals and others engaged in the development of a crisis management plan should consult with institutional legal counsel to gain a better understanding of the parameters of these laws and what can be shared with whom during a crisis.

During an emergent crisis, campus officials may not be aware of all the facts and may have little information to share. Members of the campus may become very agitated if they feel administrators are withholding information. If local media outlets pick up on these tensions and report them, it can exacerbate the crisis for campus officials. To help avoid such a scenario, a designated spokesperson should address the campus community as soon as possible, providing as much detail about the nature of the crisis and the institution's response as can be reasonably shared at that time. Regular updates should continue during the resolution of the crisis.

What is important to remember is that communication during a crisis is not solely one person's task. Communicating to various publics is a team effort. As long as consistent messages are shared, a communication plan is followed, and information is disseminated quickly and accurately, communication can be shared from various sources.

Communicating with students. Many schools and universities are looking at more effective ways to communicate with students and others on their campuses when an incident occurs. Campus staffs are working with a student population that wants current information in a variety of formats. Through the use of their computer, laptop, iPod, or cell phones, students have become accustomed to obtaining information when and where they require it. Orientation professionals should research these methods of communication and determine, along with other campus administrators, what the best form of communication would be in the case of a crisis. By using a variety of delivery methods, a school is more likely to ensure that students receive the message (Kennedy, 2007).

Because orientation participants have not yet officially matriculated, communicating with them during an emergency can be challenging. To address this, institutions may require students to sign up for a campus e-mail address prior to registering for orientation or have parents and students register for text alerts during an orientation program session. During an orientation session at the University of Maryland, College Park in 2008, students, parents, and staff were notified via text message through the UMDAlerts system to stay indoors during a powerful storm. The notice provided up-to-date information on the storm's location and possible threats. Staff were able to monitor the situation and make appropriate decisions, and students and parents experienced how the alert system functioned.

Communicating with parents. Understandably, parents will worry about their children when they become aware of a crisis on campus, especially if they have not talked to their son/daughter

during or immediately after the crisis. Occasionally, they make extreme requests, asking campus officials to locate their children and have them call home. While these requests are understandable, they cannot be addressed in the midst of a campus emergency. Staff should be prepared to provide general information about the institution's response to the crisis, while expressing concern about the welfare of individual students.

A crisis management plan should include strategies for responding to the potential onslaught of parental requests that might hit the campus during a crisis. Some suggestions include creating a campus phone bank such as the one that the Critical Incident Response Team created in the wake of the bonfire tragedy at Texas A&M University in 1999. Additionally, a room in the student center was designated as a meeting point for parents and students to receive information about the incident. Phone calls to each family member involved with a crisis (if possible) can also be made as they were when the Oklahoma State Men's Basketball Team's plane crashed in 2001. A parent and family affairs office may be another beneficial resource, serving as a coordinating point where parent questions can be routed in the event of crisis.

Communicating with media. Over the past 50 years, as advances in technology have expanded the reach of televised media and communications, campus tragedies have become more prominent, regardless of where they occur. During larger crises, campuses should expect some media coverage. What is unplanned for, at times, is the way the media works with the campus to get the information out to others. Many times, campus officials accept the notion that because they are in the middle of a crisis that the media will be their biggest supporter. This is not always the case.

Frequently, the media can be the vehicle that creates more problems for the campus. What they report and, quite often, what they do not report can cause panic, confusion, and anger among the local and campus community. Thus, campus officials need to ensure that they have a strong and solid plan of action for working with the media during these difficult times. What orientation professionals should strive for is a decrease in speculation and an increase in information gathering (Paterson et al., 2007). The more solid evidence that is in-hand, the less media outlets will be required to speculate and the less the situation will get out of control. Methods of communication with the media include: press statements, press conferences, visuals or videos, photos, teleconferences, e-mails, web sites, and telephone calls (Lawson, 2007). Orientation professionals are not often required to be the media spokesperson during a crisis; however, they may play a critical role in gathering information for the administrator who serves in that capacity.

Questioning of Decisions

As a part of serving in an administrative role on campus, it is inevitable that there will be times when decisions are questioned. However, having a plan in place will minimize questioning that may arise during a crisis. Such a plan should ensure that sound decisions are made before, during, and after a campus crisis and that appropriate campus personnel are involved. Once in the middle of the crisis, it is difficult to deal with individuals who question the decisions of administrators. A time of crisis is a time to act. As a result, it cannot be a time for public input. Administrative decision-makers will need to prepare to be steadfast in supporting their decisions during a crisis while remaining open to the notion that changes may have to be made. Conversely, if changes are required, these changes need to come from those charged with doing so and not because campus opinion differs.

Once a crisis has been resolved, those charged with managing the crisis should examine their response and its effectiveness. As part of this process, they may ask critical questions about their performance. For example, following the death of a student on campus, administrators might ask: Did the college or university reach out to the student's family and friends? Did the institution offer

assistance to an affected department? Was the staff able to work through a difficult loss? Was there a sense of support and compassion among the staff? (Zdziarski et al., 2007). When appropriate, the larger campus community might also be invited to offer feedback on the response to the crisis and thoughts on how such events might be handled in the future.

Responding to the Psychology of Crises

In tragic incidents, people are "suddenly swept into an event over which they feel they have no control and which they think they may not survive ... they are left to repair their assumptions of the world and implement their capacities for adaptation" (Griffin, 2007, p. 150). No matter the severity of the incidence, the person may feel a lack of control and be unsure how to proceed or resume their normal activities, sometimes leading to depression or anxiety. It is the role of the counselor (e.g., orientation professional, campus counselor, administrator) to address the issue and provide coping mechanisms for this person. It is important to note that counselors should be well trained and credentialed and if the orientation professional is not that person, that the affected persons be referred to the correct resources. More often than not, the orientation professional will not be in this role, but basic counseling techniques such as Critical Incidence Stress Debriefing, a debriefing technique used to deal with those who sustained physical or psychological stress, can be used.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2002) provides basic guidelines for dealing with persons who have experienced a trauma. While focused towards violence victims, some of the same principles can be applied to all crises.

1. Most people recover from their traumatic events, but it is important not to minimize the importance of or ignore the recovery process. The goal is to assist them in recovery. This could mean referring them to the appropriate resources or being an informal counselor for their needs.
2. The basic needs of that person need to be met first (e.g., first aid, shelter, food) so that they can feel normalized before treatment or counseling can occur. This is more easily accomplished during orientation since many of these resources are readily available.
3. Interventions should be optional and open only *if* people want them, not as a mandatory part of recovery.
4. Crisis intervention programs need to be culturally sensitive. With an increasingly diverse student population on campuses, it is important to be appreciative of, responsive to, and respectful of differing cultural needs. For example, it has been shown that socioeconomic status may cause individuals to have lower self-perceived worth (Twenge & Campbell, 2002). Racial discrimination may be the perceived cause of a crisis and, therefore, should be treated as a valid concern by the counselor (Herman et al., 2007).
5. Emergency mental health should be a part of the crisis response plan of the overall institution.
6. Intervention is a "multidisciplinary, multiphasic and integrated program" (Griffin, 2007, p. 155), which includes planning, triage, training, assessment, and referral. This part will probably be handled by the counseling center, but follow-up can certainly be a role for the orientation professional to play.

Campus responses to psychological needs can be addressed at the individual level, in group meetings, or through vigils and remembrances (Griffin, 2007). Remembrances provide a way of the

community to show respect for injured or deceased community members; help people to reflect on an event, person, or persons; and bring a community together.

Case Studies

The cases that follow describe the responses during crises affecting orientation programs. The first cases address responses to an emergent crisis while the third case addresses how the orientation program dealt with the aftermath of a campus tragedy. Questions follow both cases, prompting readers to consider how they might address similar crises on their own campuses.

Preparing for a Hurricane

Dealing with an impending natural disaster is never easy as there is always an element of unpredictability when dealing with Mother Nature. In 2004, the state of Florida was hit with multiple hurricanes. Most of them occurred during the academic year, but one hit the state in mid-August prior to the University of Central Florida's (UCF) fall term. Fortunately, the hurricane hit the campus a few days before the final series of orientation programs. However, there was a great deal of destruction both on the UCF campus and within the state of Florida. As orientation professionals prepared for orientation, they had to provide updated communication to the students that orientation was still occurring through e-mails, voicemails, web sites, and through the News & Information Department.

Due to the devastation of the hurricane, campus officials knew that many students would not be able to attend orientation and would only be able to make it for the start of classes. The orientation office put together a checklist of offices students would need to work with upon arrival to campus. As each student called, the office assistants explained what they needed to do and that the Orientation office should be the first point of contact upon arrival on campus. This was a university-wide effort with each office providing additional assistance to these students (e.g., advisors were available to assist with registration, late fees were waived).

More recently, UCF had a hurricane scare the week prior to classes for the fall 2008 term that threatened to disrupt fall orientation sessions for first-year and transfer students. On Monday afternoon of that week a decision was made by UCF to close the campus on Tuesday due to an impending hurricane. Upon receiving the official word that the University was closing, an e-mail was sent immediately to those students letting them know that the orientation session was cancelled and provided them with an alternate date. If they could not attend the alternate date, then further instructions were given. Besides notifying all of the students, plans were made for a larger than usual orientation program at the end of the week. All departments that work with orientation were contacted, and meetings were scheduled with staff in key offices to discuss logistics such as check-in, room capacities, and the computer system's ability to handle a large influx of students for registration at a particular time. Modifications to the orientation program were made and sent out as soon as possible.

Thoughtful questions for orientation professionals:

1. Based on the region of country where an institution is located, what types of natural disasters (e.g., blizzards or ice storms, tornadoes, floods, wild fires) may affect the campus?
2. Does the campus have an emergency plan if a natural disaster strikes?
3. How will program participants be notified if a natural disaster affects the campus before a program? During a program?

Responding to an Injured Student

In the evenings of the two-day first-year student orientation program, students spend an hour at the campus recreation centers—the Eppley Recreation Center (ERC) or the Outdoor Recreation Center (ORC), which includes a pool. Twenty-five orientation advisors, two student coordinators, and the ORC staff of trained lifeguards and medical personnel staff the program.

One evening in the summer of 2008, a participant in the first-year program was seriously injured at ORC. Approximately half way through the swim time, a student jumped off the diving board and hit the back of his head on the board. He was clearly injured and bleeding. The student coordinators immediately alerted the ERC and ORC staff members of the incident. Since the recreation center staff was trained to respond to medical emergencies, the orientation staff were not needed to assist the injured student. The student coordinators ensured that all other program participants exited the pool and escorted them back to the residence halls. Students who were inside the ERC (playing basketball, volleyball or climbing the rock wall) remained at those locations for the remainder of the period.

The student coordinators immediately notified the assistant director, who was on a campus visit out of state, concerning the situation. Contact was also made with the director of Orientation and the program coordinator to ensure that all parties in the office were made aware of the situation. The immediate health concerns of the participant were handed over to local emergency personnel, and the ERC staff took responsibility for contacting the student's parents.

The student coordinators and assistant director were, thus, free to handle the other needs of the injured student, including making arrangements with residence life and academic advising. Residence life staff were notified that the student would not be staying in the room overnight and that he would not be able to check out the following day. This required residence life to notify the staff handling checkout so that could make arrangements to store his luggage until his parents could collect it and waive charges associated with failure to return the room key. Residence life staff also talked with the injured student's assigned roommate to ensure that he was aware of the situation. Calls were also made to the college advising the student so that he could be advised and registered for classes without repeating the orientation program.

Thoughtful questions for orientation professionals:

1. What role will coordinators or other student staff members play during an emergency?
2. What types of communications and relationships does the staff have with orientation partners? Are the roles all partners assume in a crisis clear to the partners themselves? To the orientation staff?
3. Who needs to know about a crisis, and in what order do should those people be contacted?

Responding to a Campus Shooting

Acts of extreme violence, like shootings on college campuses, are shocking and unimaginable. On February 14, 2008 at Northern Illinois University (NIU), a former student opened fire during a lecture, killing five students and injuring 18 others.

The day before the campus shooting, Orientation & First-Year Experience (OFYE) had just conducted their first training session with the 2008 orientation leaders. One of the first things the office did on February 14 after details of the event were confirmed was to get in contact with the orientation leader staff. Once OFYE received confirmation the student staff was not directly impacted by the shooting, they were able to concentrate on helping NIU with its response.

A few weeks after the shooting, OFYE began to move forward with planning the orientation programs and orientation leader training. The location of the shooting, including two major lecture halls and other classroom space, was completely closed down. NIU had to move class meeting locations, and as a result, the program lost space for April orientation programs. Working closely with the advising offices, OFYE reformatted and cancelled two of the five scheduled orientation programs. In addition, the publication timeline for handbooks and other orientation items were pushed back.

Preparing for the first orientation leader training session following the shootings was extremely important. The professional staff knew that the student staff was not in the classroom where the shootings occurred but felt it was important to understand how the students were feeling about the campus shootings, especially since crisis reactions can be delayed or may resurface at later times. It was decided that the director of OFYE (who has a counseling background) and a counselor should be present. In the beginning of the session, the professional staff provided an opportunity for the student staff to talk about whatever they wanted. Several of the orientation leaders had classes with students who had been killed, but none had friendships with them. Also, several orientation leaders were in the surrounding area when the shootings occurred. The orientation leaders were concerned about how to handle questions from students and family members during the summer. The professional staff assured the students that while they may not know how to handle those questions now, they would certainly figure it out when summer arrived.

During summer training prior to the beginning of the first programs the NIU police department and Counseling and Student Development came in to speak with the staff. The director of Counseling and Student Development provided insight into how to handle questions related to the shootings but also suggested that most first-year students would ask the same questions and raise the same concerns that they had had in the past. The director also felt some students and family members may want to know what was going to happen to the classroom where the shootings occurred but would not be interested in the details of the event. Also, it was important for the orientation leaders to remember they were in control of the discussion. Therefore, the director suggested the orientation leaders bring up the campus shootings and discuss how campus was moving forward and move on to other topics.

The NIU police department gave the orientation leaders a broad overview of safety procedures and services provided on-campus. Safety and security are common concerns shared on most college campuses, so training in this area was no different. Similar to training in years past, the orientation staff discussed emergency preparedness with the orientation leaders. The content of this training was supplemented by the emergency protocol plan implemented by NIU prior to the shootings.

During the orientation program, the staff mentioned the campus shootings in the morning welcome. They did not focus on the event, but rather how the NIU community is strong and resilient in the face of tragedy. Throughout the orientation day, some students and family members asked questions regarding safety, security, and NIU's emergency response system. While some participants expressed interest in knowing plans for the classroom where the shootings occurred, the incident was rarely mentioned directly.

Dealing with the aftermath of the campus shooting was difficult both personally and professionally. It was certainly stressful to deal with the orientation program and training components and to try to process the events personally. However, with the support the NIU community provided, the program staff made it through the summer and year. An important lesson learned was to make sure to take care of one's self personally and to not be afraid to ask for help from colleagues.

Thoughtful questions for orientation professionals:

1. What plans are in place to communicate with student staff during an emergency? Because cell phones often stop working in an emergency, are alternate communication strategies being considered?
2. Have backup locations for orientation events been reserved?

Conclusion

While crises are rare and often minor, orientation professionals must plan for the worst while hoping for the best. Rarity and scope are hardly excuses for poor planning and preparation when dealing with large groups of students, family, and visitors on campuses. It is difficult to plan for every possible crisis, but it is possible to build a network of cooperating offices and their services, create a skeletal outline of a response plan, explore communication plans, and train staff members in basic crisis management techniques. As with all programs, assessment of these plans is key. Because major crises are rare, administrators may not have the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their plan; however, they can study how other institutions respond to crises and make adjustments to their campus plans where appropriate. Administrators should also revisit crisis management plans yearly to ensure that all information is up to date and situation appropriate.

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