

MEDIA TRAINING

PREPARING FOR THE HOT ZONE

HEIDI WHITE

FINEMANPR))



Outside

The Forest Service Is Silencing Women

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Employee of Elite New York Summer Camp Arrested on Sex Abuse Charges

CBS NEWS

Camping teens mauled by grizzly bear in Alaska

The Boston Globe


Milton teen dies in Ark. bike accident

Was on cross-country trip with group when car struck 7 riders

WHAT NOT TO DO



What Not To Do



**ARE YOU READY
FOR THE HOT ZONE?**

THE HOT ZONE

Unexpected... Surprise
Escalating flow of events
Usual operations hampered
Brand, bottom line threatened
Lack of control /information
Feeling under attack
Short-term focus
An inclination to hide/be quiet



The Hot Zone

News won't wait
Questions don't go away
Some truth to coverage
Public feels a "right to know"
No one cares how you feel
Lots of "experts" on the issue
New storylines emerge
You are expected to know

WHAT MAKES NEWS?

TIMING

The word *news* means exactly that - things which are *new*.

SIGNIFICANCE

The number of people affected by the story is important.

PROXIMITY

The closer the story to home, the more newsworthy it is.

PROMINENCE

Famous people or household brands tend to get more coverage, and controversy will elevate an issue, person or brand in the newsroom.

HUMAN INTEREST PIECES

Appeals to emotion, but unless there are elements of the above, it remains “evergreen” and may be put on the “back burner.”

WHAT FUELS MEDIA + SOCIAL MEDIA?

Sensational Headlines

Catchy Name

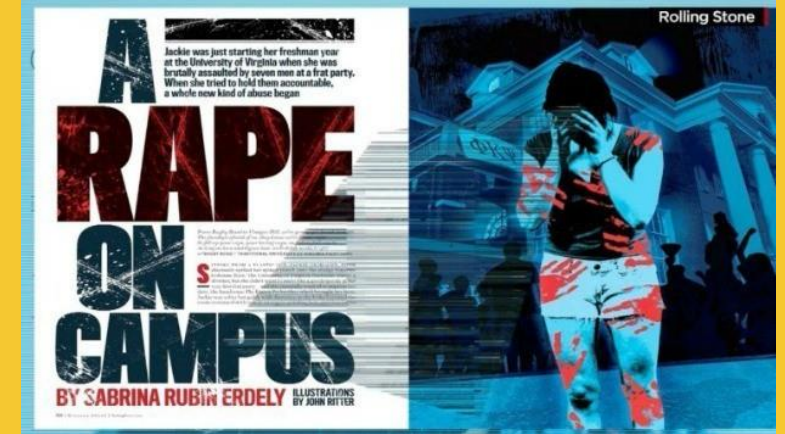
Public “Deception”

Celebrity Involvement

Large Scale

Tragedy

Odd News



College tour in California ends in fiery wreck, leaves 10 dead



An Outside investigation of sexual harassment in outdoor workplaces, where unwanted advances, discrimination, and assault are a frequent and destructive occurrence for far too many women



WHY TALK TO THE MEDIA?

- Obligation to keep affected audiences informed if necessary
- Based on likeliness of media story
- Pre-empt adversaries
- Set the record straight
- Opportunity to tell your side of story; don't allow others to tell your story for you

GOALS

- Preserve or enhance reputation of your organization
- Maintain normal operations
- Keep communications open and flowing internally and externally as needed

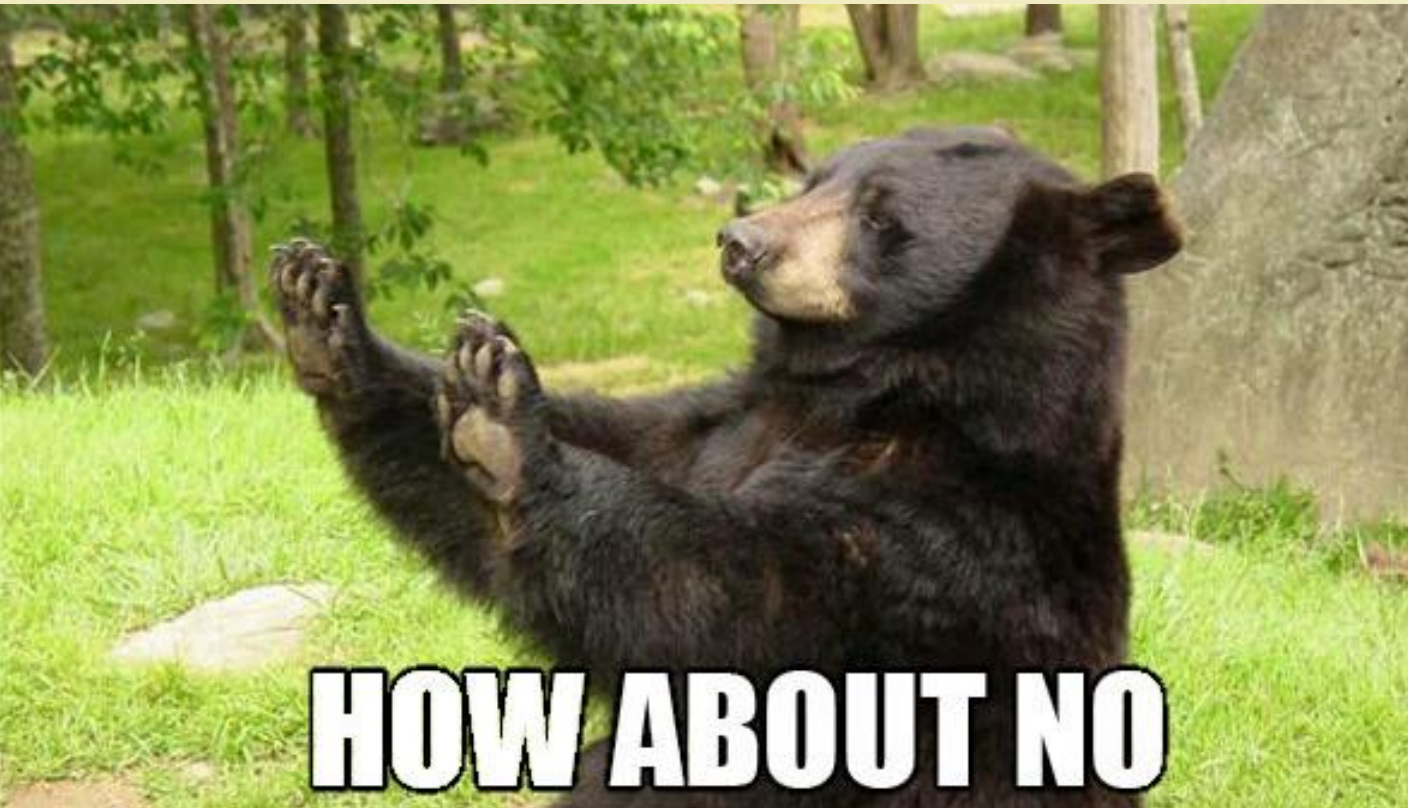


WHEN THE CRISIS HITS: DO A **PANTCHEK**

- P**ublic welfare is the first priority.
- A**ll bad news out at once. Assemble the facts.
- N**o blame, no speculation and do not repeat the charges.
- T**ell your side of the story, first and with facts, or take responsibility if you are wrong.
- C**are and concern for affected audiences.
- H**igh-level organization spokesperson must be accessible and responsive.
- E**nsure that it will not happen again, and describe how and why not.
- K**eep separate plan for moving ahead.



“NO COMMENT” IS **NO BUENO**



- We’re looking into the situation and I will provide you with an update when more information is available.
- At this point, we are urgently trying to gather information about what happened. I will inform you of new developments as soon as possible.
- We are aware of this situation, and we’re doing everything we can to help those involved determine the facts. I will provide further information shortly.

Guidelines for prioritizing CRISIS communications during the first 48 minutes



Priority

Is anyone's safety at risk? Immediately activate the emergency notification system.



Provide key facts: What is happening? What are the relevant known facts?



Define the audience: Who is directly affected? Who is in a position to help?



Focus on action: What should people do to reduce/eliminate risk and help victims, law enforcement, emergency personnel?



Provide a timeline: When can people expect the next update?



Identify official sources: Where can people turn to for the most accurate and current information?

External Communication

Remind staff about news media & social media policies



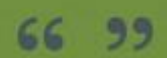
Who is authorized to serve as spokesperson/s?
Who is authorized to post on official social media channels?

Equip front-line teams to handle the first wave of inquiries



Website
Social media
Customer service/hotline/front office

Share information with media



Develop statement with known facts and provide timely updates as the situation unfolds

Internal Communication

Activate Crisis Communications Team



Designate internal and external spokesperson/s

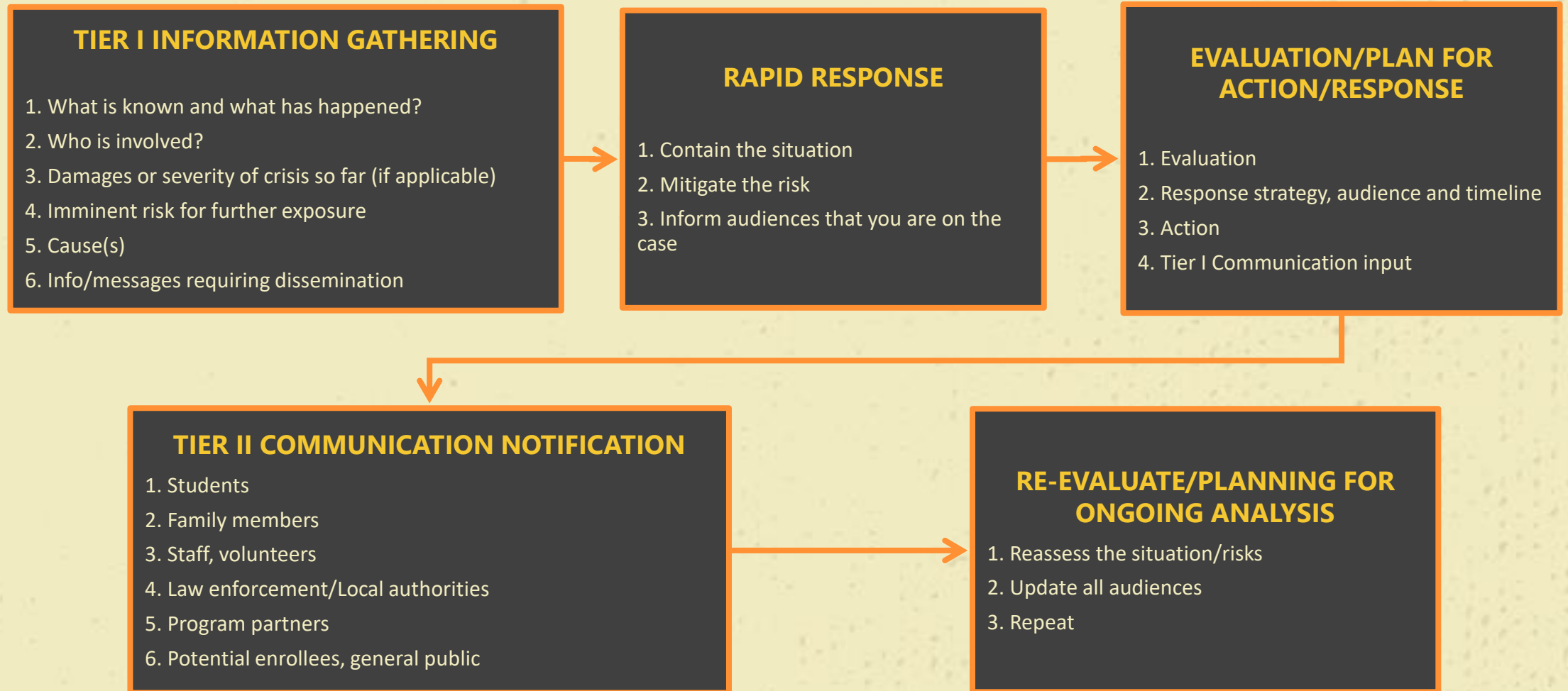


Establish communications control center



Consider alerting outside counsel:
Legal
Public Relations
Industry alliances, certifying agencies
Subject matter experts/consultants

OVERVIEW OF FACT GATHERING



PREPARING (YOUR SPOKESPERSON) FOR THE INTERVIEW

Develop Key Messages

Anticipate Tough Questions

Know Your Boundaries

Practice



TARGET AUDIENCES

CRAFT MESSAGES
WITH
ALL AUDIENCES
IN MIND



Students



Family members



Staff, volunteers



Law enforcement/Local authorities



Program partners



Potential enrollees, general public



Any others that should be considered?

**HOW YOU SAY
SOMETHING
CAN BE MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
WHAT YOU SAY**



BODY LANGUAGE

- Keep good posture ... don't slouch
- Move hands naturally
- Look the reporter in the eye

LOOKING THE PART

- Clean clothes
- No sunglasses
- No hats
- No suits

TONE

- Convey confidence as the expert
- Don't react with sarcasm
- Think about a positive demeanor (if appropriate)

COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE

INTERVIEW DO'S

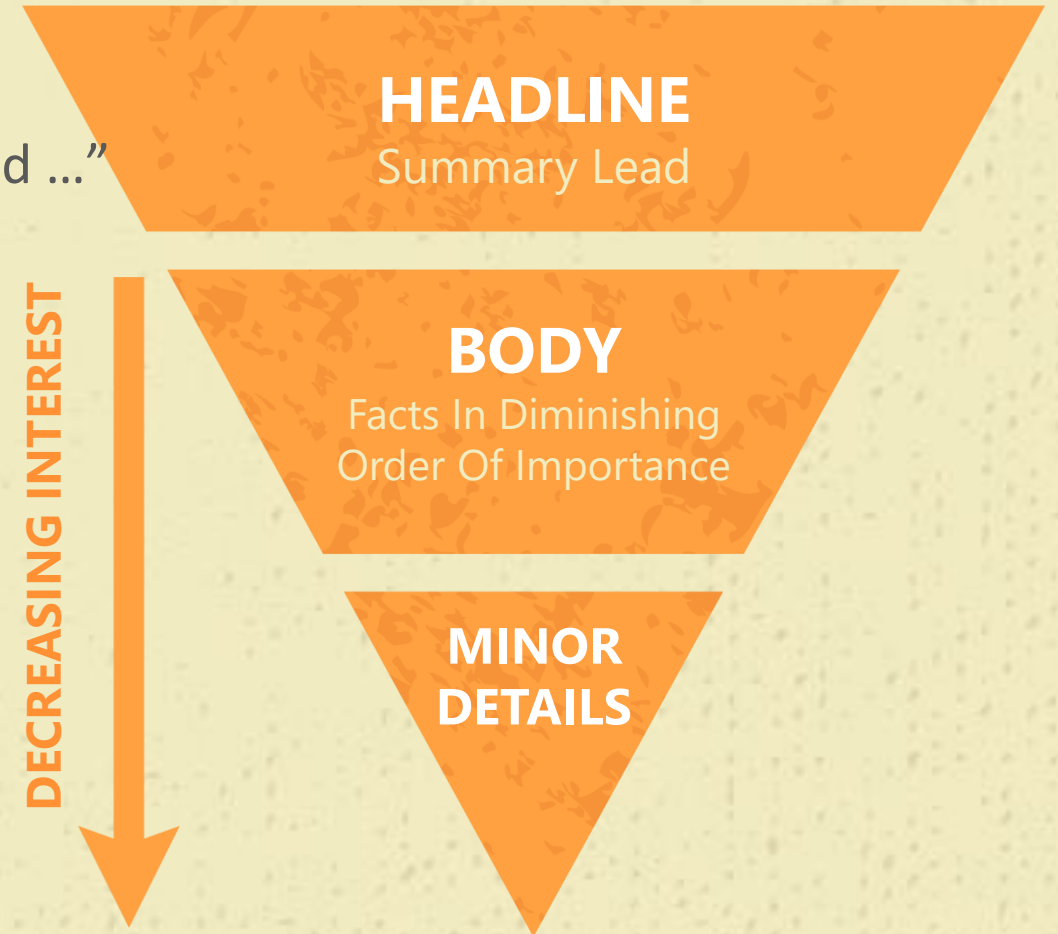
- Do listen carefully to the entire question
- Do remember you're the expert
- Do be respectful
- Do correct mistakes on the spot
- Do show enthusiasm
- Do remember your relationship with the reporter

INTERVIEW DONT'S

- Don't expect questions in advance
- Don't ramble
- Don't say "no comment"
- Don't go off the record
- Don't ask to review or edit the story
- Don't be belligerent or sarcastic

MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS AND TRICKS

- Stick to Key Messages
- Block and Bridge - “Keep in mind that ...”, “Let me add ...”
- Flag - the key thing to remember is ...”
- Be Aware of Tricky Questions - Hypothetical, leading
- Managing Quotes
- Personalize Message
- Use Statistics Wisely



MEDIA PREPAREDNESS EXERCISE

A group of people, likely hikers or students, are gathered in a forest. One person in the foreground is kneeling and looking at a small device, possibly a phone or a map. The group consists of several individuals, some wearing backpacks, suggesting they are on a hike or an outdoor activity. The background is filled with trees and green foliage, indicating a wooded area.



THE SCENARIO

You are the program director for a summer day camp with students ranging in age from 8 to 17. Your programs include onsite activities like swimming and ropes courses as well as offsite excursions like hiking, biking and rafting. All staff are employees (not contractors). Your facilities include two locker rooms with showers. You also have two private changing rooms. You have 50 students enrolled in various programs.

The local police department arrested a staff member onsite at noon. While police tried to avoid making a scene, the arrest was seen by many students. You were not there when the arrest was made. You are getting information from the assistant program director who was there when the arrest took place. Within an hour of the arrest, your phone is ringing off the hook and your inbox is flooded with questions from parents and from KETC, the local ABC TV affiliate.



THE BASIC FACTS



- A male employee was arrested at your facility for possession of child pornography.
- The police say they don't know if any of your campers/students were involved, but they said they will return later in the day to check your facility for hidden cameras.
- The employee has worked for your program as a swimming instructor and offsite guide for three years. He is well-liked by staff.
- He has held staff positions at several other camps and outdoor programs.
- He passed a background check.

THE BASIC FACTS

- KETC (local ABC affiliate) sent an email asking if the camp wanted to comment.
- Parents don't know the reason for the arrest, but they heard through the grapevine that a camp counselor was arrested. They are very alarmed.
- Your social media intern reports seeing posts by students about the arrest. He also flags tweets from KETC replying to students' posts asking for more information.
- The Head of Camp said she will serve as a media spokesperson, but she is relying on you to lead the response strategy because she knows you attended a media training session at WRMC. She is well-spoken and comfortable with public speaking, but she has not been media trained.



INFORMATION GATHERING

- What facts do you need to get from your assistant program director?
- What facts do you need to get from the police department?
- Is there anyone else from whom you need information?



INFORMATION GATHERING

- What facts do you need to get from your assistant program director?
 - Who what where when (What happened, what campers saw the arrest, reaction of campers, timeline)
 - What current (and past) students/campers did this person interact with?
 - Accused schedule/camper group list (age group of the campers)? Parent contacts of these campers?
 - HR file – Background, any previous complaints?
 - Has the asst. director spoken with anyone re: the incident (staff, parents, campers, media)?
 - Does she have the contact info. for the liaison at the police department?



INFORMATION GATHERING

- What facts do you need to get from the police department?
 - What are the charges? What do they stem from? Where did they find the photos? [Any chance on Camp computer/s?]
 - Who tipped them off?
 - What evidence do they have? What other information do they have? Why do they think there are cameras?
 - Do they know if any current students were involved?
 - How can we help? What do they need from the camp? Do they need to interview current campers?
 - How will they be sharing updates (will they be making media statements or putting out info via social media)?
 - Who should be our main contact?



INFORMATION GATHERING

- Is there anyone else from whom you need information?
 - The social media intern. He sees what students and media are saying. What students posted on social media
 - Students/Campers – those posting on social (those who witnessed the arrest)
 - Other Witnesses
 - IT contact – can we have microsite ready to post info
 - KETC (the media)– get their questions and deadline.
 - Prior employers



POTENTIAL MEDIA QUESTIONS

What are some of the tough questions you anticipate from media and how would you prepare the Head of Camp to respond?

- What happened? Who was arrested? Why?
- Did you know/when were you aware?
- How did you let this happen?
- Do the campers/parents know?
- Were there allegations or complaints about this camp counselor prior to his arrest?
- How many students at this summer's camp did he interact with? Do you know if any current (or past) campers were affected?
- Would he have been alone with a camper during a class or during camp?
- How do you screen your employees?
- What are you doing to keep kids safe?
- How are you going to ensure this will not happen again?



MEDIA RESPONSE

- Based on the information you have, what media response do you recommend to the Head of Camp?
- Communication channel/s?
 - Brief holding statement (Reactive) – Use as foundation for other audiences (parents, etc.)
- Messages/Statement content?
 - What happened/current status
 - Deeply troubled by this and supporting law enforcement’s investigation into this matter
 - Commitment to camper safety (could reference the camp’s good record; this has never happened before)
 - What doing now and/or will update as you have more.
 - Boiler plate (the who what where when paragraph about your organization)



ACTION PLAN

- The Head of Camp has responded to KETC. They said the story would air on the 5 pm news. It is now 4:30 pm.
- What do you think the next few steps would be??



ACTION PLAN

- Inform staff, all stakeholder
- How and what are you communicating to parents and students?
- E-blast (parents/outside of school)
- Script for staff/admin answering phone
- How will you handle incoming calls to the camp and how to direct/track those?
- In addition to KETC, are you going to reach out to other local media?
- How will you monitor news coverage? (Corrections?)
- How will you monitor social media? And respond
- What messages are you going to prioritize over the next few days to reassure various audiences?
- When will you communicate with media again?
- If situation is escalating and don't have resources to handle internally, may want to enlist outside help. Some insurance companies cover crisis communications.

Addition options to consider when immediate urgency lets up:

Scenario planning -Planning for different scenarios or scenarios that may affect your audience:

- The perpetrator was falsely accused.
- The perpetrator molested one child, three children, etc.
- The perpetrator was not being accused of harassing/molesting any of the campers ... it was from another time in his life or from another area of his life (like his girlfriend's daughter for example).



A hand holding a vintage-style compass against a background of dense green foliage. The compass is the central focus, held in the palm of a hand. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with various shades of green. The overall mood is one of guidance and reflection.

THANK YOU

Remember:

A crisis does not end until you learn from it.