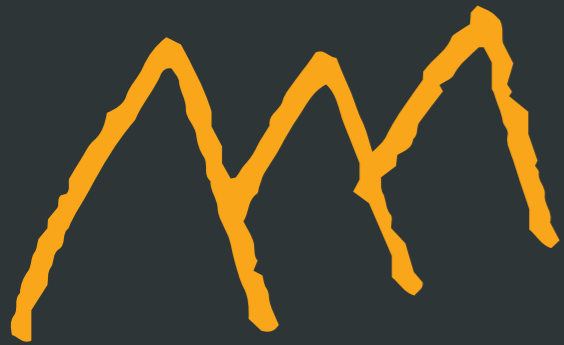




# **CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

# **A PRE-PLAN IN ACTION**



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# METHOD

**OVERVIEW OF NOLS CRISIS RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**SCENARIO**

**ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE**

**PLAN FOR QUESTIONS**

# DEFINITIONS

- **Crisis:** An event that is, or has potential to be, a turning point in the organization. A crisis may overwhelm the organization's available staff and resources and impact its ability to operate.
- **Emergency:** An event that may require urgent response but is within the scope of the organization's resources and does not threaten its ability to operate.

# NOLS CRISIS CASES

1989: Fatality, Wyoming, mountaineering

1992: Fatality, Wyoming, avalanche

1996: Fatality, Wyoming, river crossing

1999: Fatality, Alaska, glacier travel

2011: Multiple injury incident, Alaska, bear attack

2011: Fatality, India, backpacking

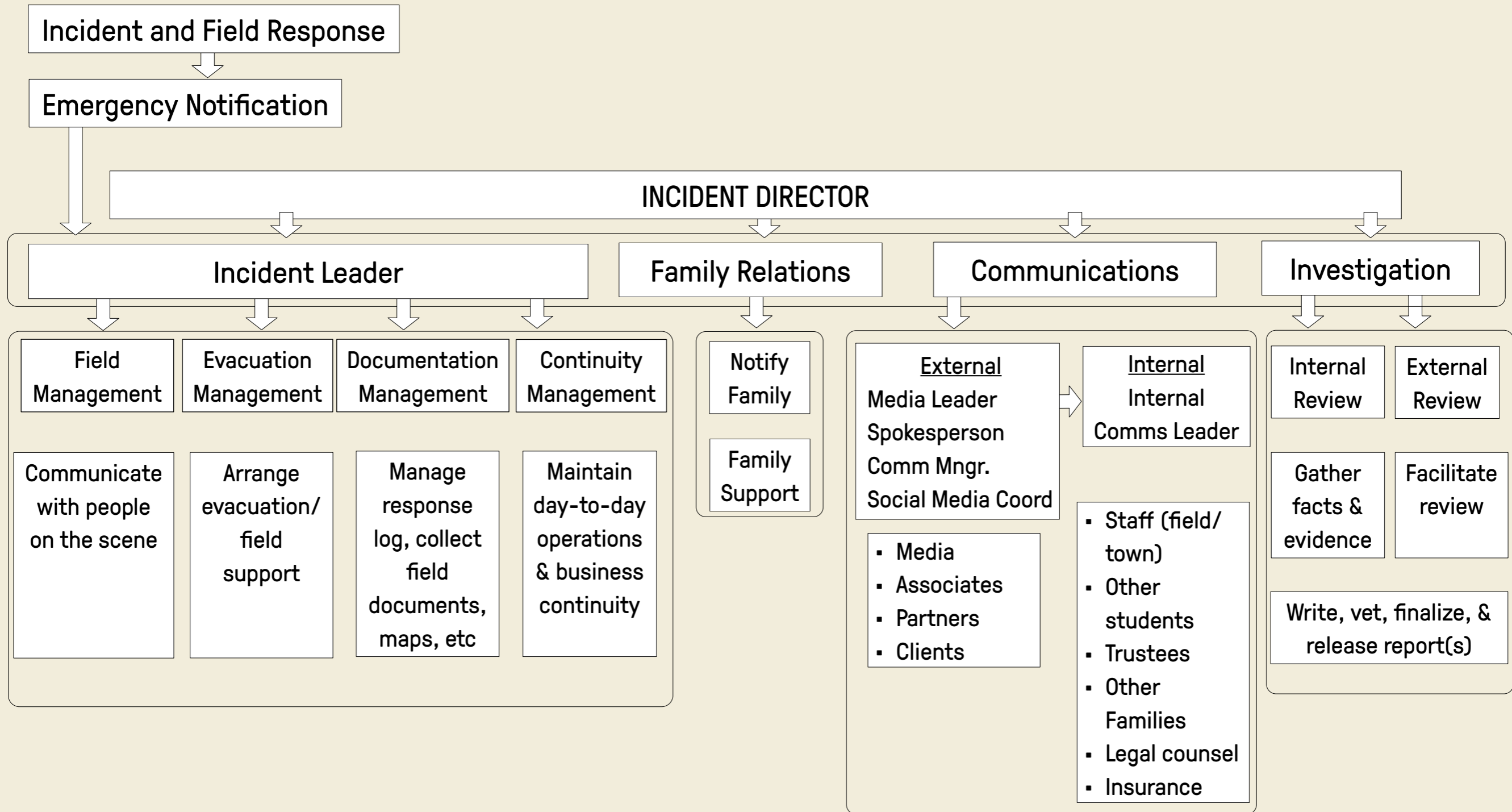
2018: Cardiac arrest, Wyoming, WEMT

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

1. Provides guidance for your response and management
2. Prioritize tasks and actions, and deploy resources
3. Pre-determine certain actions and decisions



# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



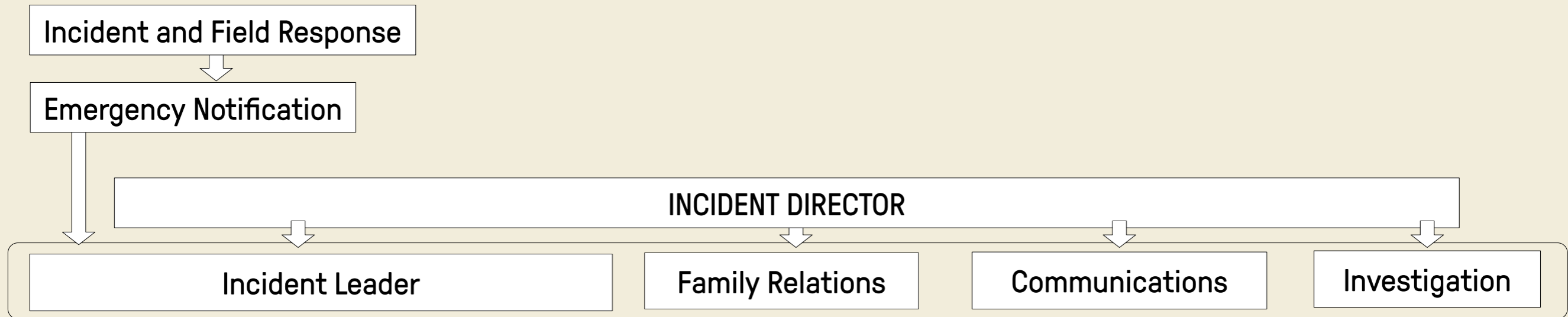
# AN INCIDENT OCCURS

## DAY 1

- 6:30 PM, Friday, July 28
- On-call emergency contact person receives a satellite phone call from an instructor stating there has been a fatality on ABW 7/2 and she provides latitude and longitude coordinates.
- Connection is poor and the call is cut off suddenly.



# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC

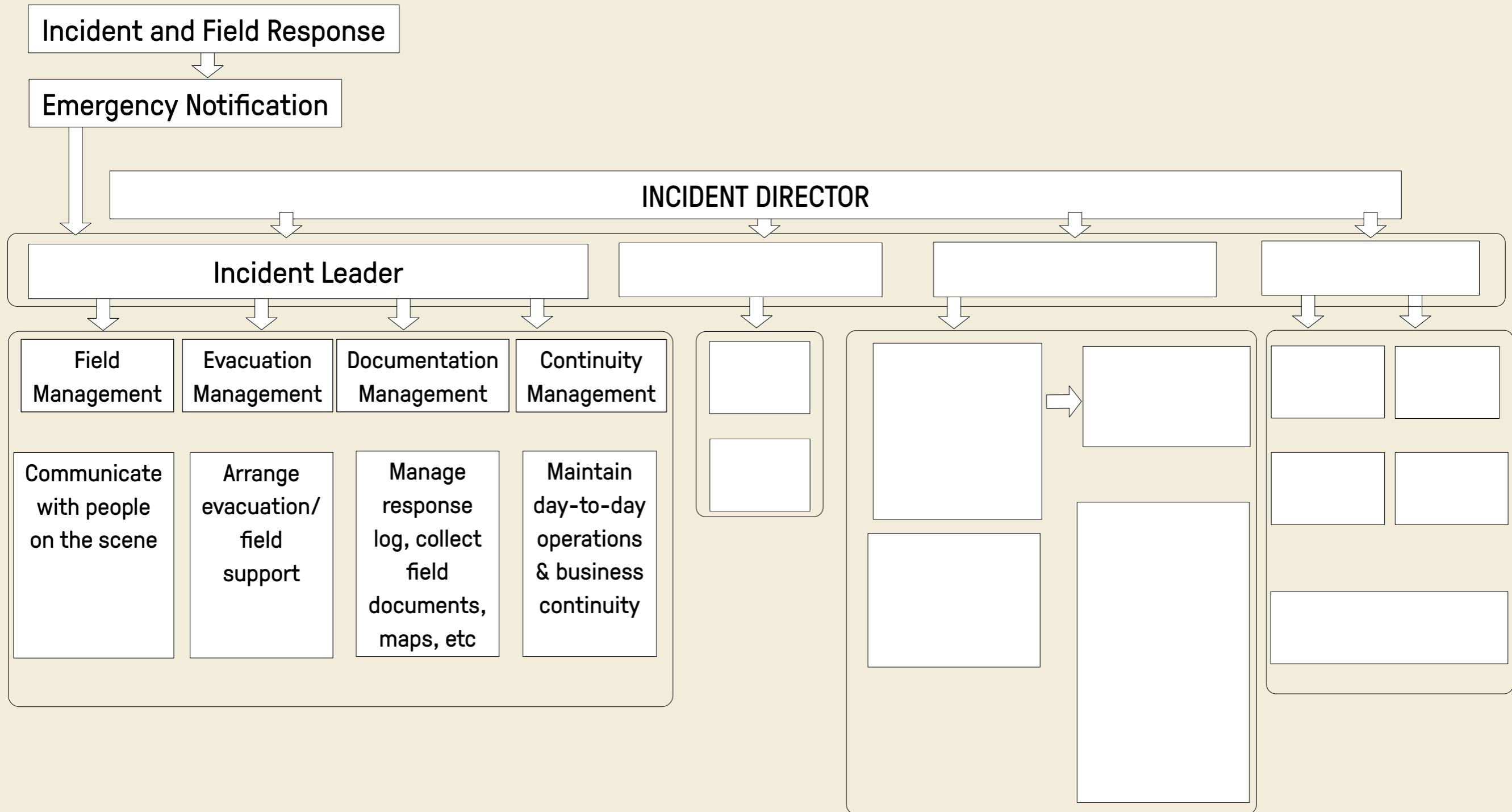


# LEADERSHIP

## INCIDENT DIRECTOR & LEADER

- Organize team structure
- Assemble personnel resources
- Communicate among teams
- Assign roles and responsibilities
- Establish priorities
- Make/facilitate decisions
- Develop contingencies
- Plan for long duration response
- Knowledge of law enforcement, SAR, investigation requirements
- Knowledge of land agency requirements
- Determine course continuation options

# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



# FIELD OPERATIONS

## What we did: Day 1 evening

- Established satellite phone contact; gather additional details
- Began preparing to support the group with people and supplies
- Connected with law enforcement
- Initiated evacuation planning; helicopter retrieved the body

# FIELD OPERATIONS

## What we did: Day 2

- Deputy sheriff and staff flew to the course
- Deputy returned and briefed crisis team
- Runner party arrived at the road head; met by driver/vehicle
- Continued to support other courses (~25 at that location)

## What we did: Day 3

- Course arrived at trailhead in late afternoon; vehicles waiting
- Returned to campus: showered, ate, connected with families

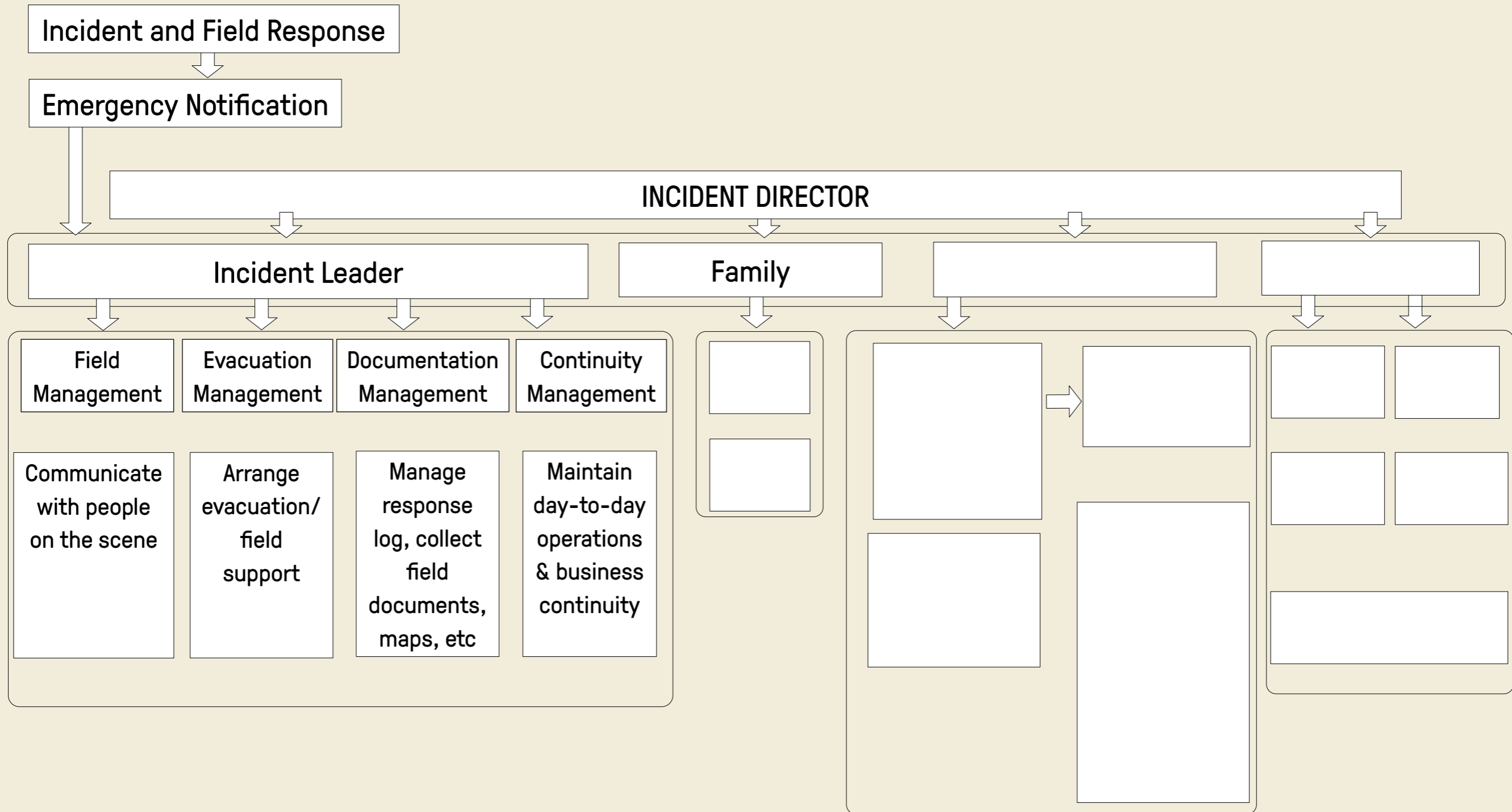
# FIELD OPERATIONS

## **What we did: Psychological Support**

- Psychological stress discussion next morning
- Counseling made available for students and staff
- Normal end-of-course tasks
- Group activities for students; instructors stayed involved
- Resources in the crisis plan for response team, students, instructors, and other staff



# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



# FAMILY RELATIONS

## **If this were your program:**

- How is the family contacted?
- Who informs them?
- What factors are considered?

# FAMILY RELATIONS

## What we did:

- President (or designee) telephoned family
- Organized, compassionate, and caring
- Sample script for initial notification
- Stayed in contact over time

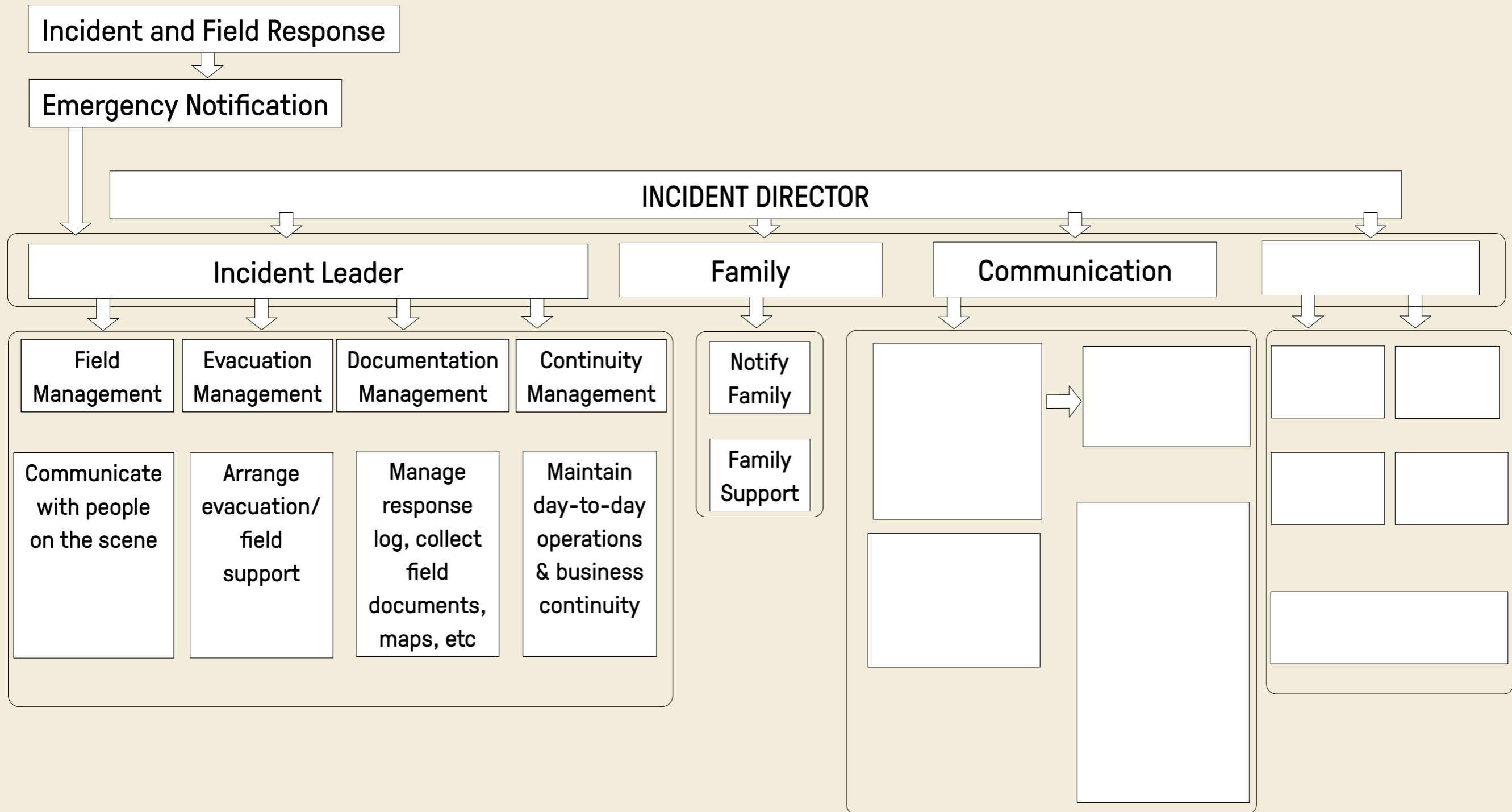
Hello. Mr./Ms\_\_\_\_\_I am\_\_\_\_\_(title)\_\_\_\_\_from NOLS.  
\_\_\_\_\_(*name of student*) was\_\_\_\_\_(*hit by rock/fell/in an accident*)  
while on their NOLS course. I am terribly sorry to have to tell  
you that \_\_\_\_\_(*name*) (*died/was seriously injured*).

# FAMILY RELATIONS

## Other considerations:

- Designate family liaison (consider divorced parents)
- Can organization representative attend funeral/memorial?
- Family onsite at your location? If so, consider:
  - ▶ Interactions with students and staff
  - ▶ Visit to incident site?
  - ▶ Grief counselors, clergy, or therapists available?

# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



# AN INCIDENT OCCURS

## **If this were your program:**

- Who needs to be informed?
- How is communication managed?
- What do you need to watch out for?



# COMMUNICATION

## What we did:

- Established leadership: Communication/Media Leader
- Factual statement and media message form the baseline message for all audiences
- Two broad audience categories:

### **External**

- Media
- Associates
- Partners
- Clients

### **Internal**

- Staff (field/town)
- Trustees
- Other students
- Other families
- Legal counsel
- Insurance

# COMMUNICATION

## What we did: External Audiences

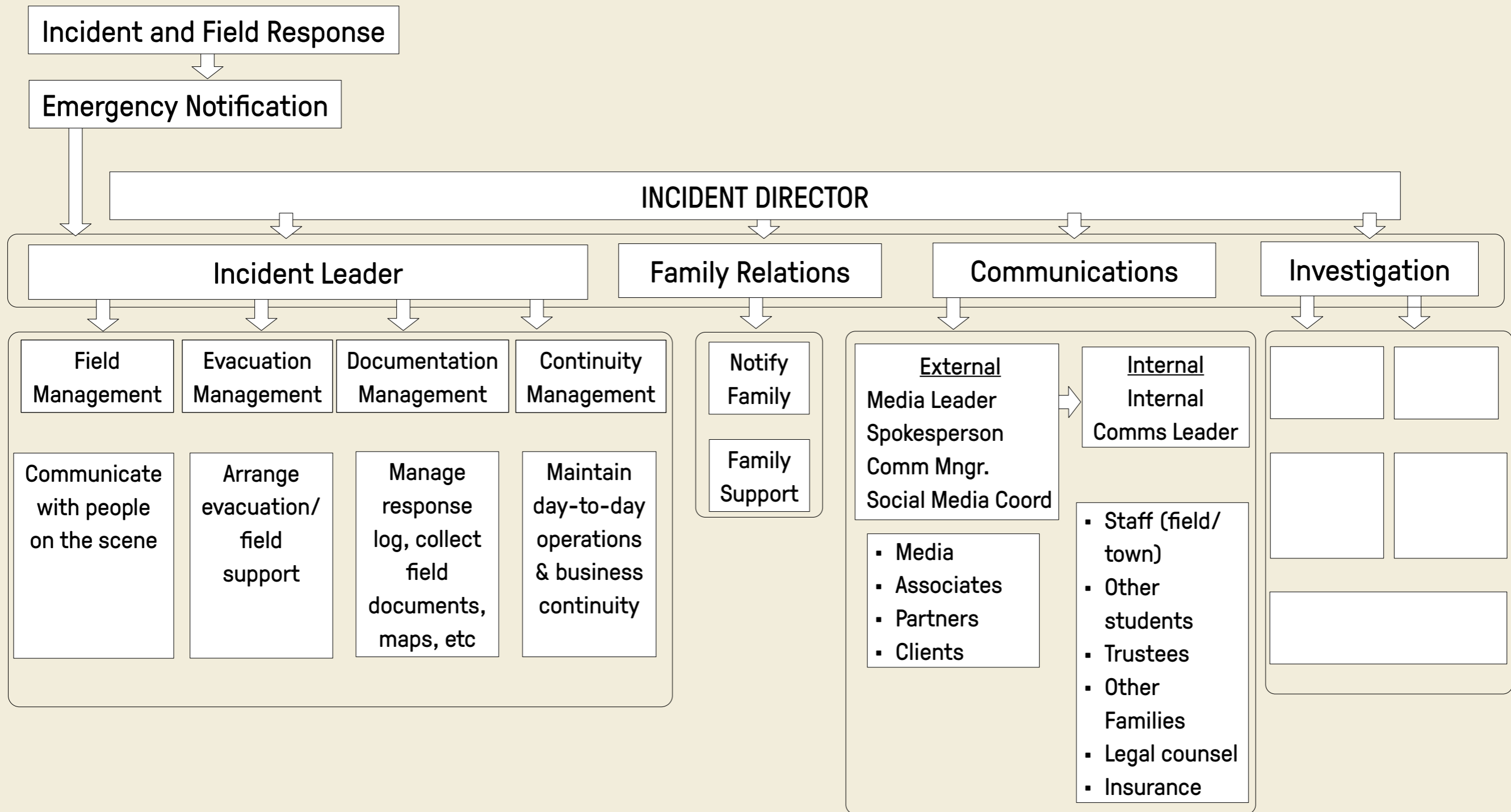
- Stand-by / buy time statement
- Press release
- Use of website
- Social media plan
- Media engagement: do our best to cooperate and respond to media inquiries

# COMMUNICATION

## What we did: Internal audiences

- Informed all staff
  - ▶ Held all-staff meeting(s)
  - ▶ Inform other NOLS locations and staff in field
  - ▶ Watch for staff judging the incident
- Called each family of other course members
- Directed people to the website

# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



# INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

## **Three phases:**

1. Field
2. Administrative
3. Incident review

# INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

## What we did—field

- Witnesses
  - ▶ Just the facts (who, what, when, & where)
  - ▶ Written accounts by leaders
- Evidence, photos, sketches
- Site visit

## What we did—administrative

- Google Doc
- Student factual interviews
- Staff factual interviews



# INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

## What we did—documentation sources

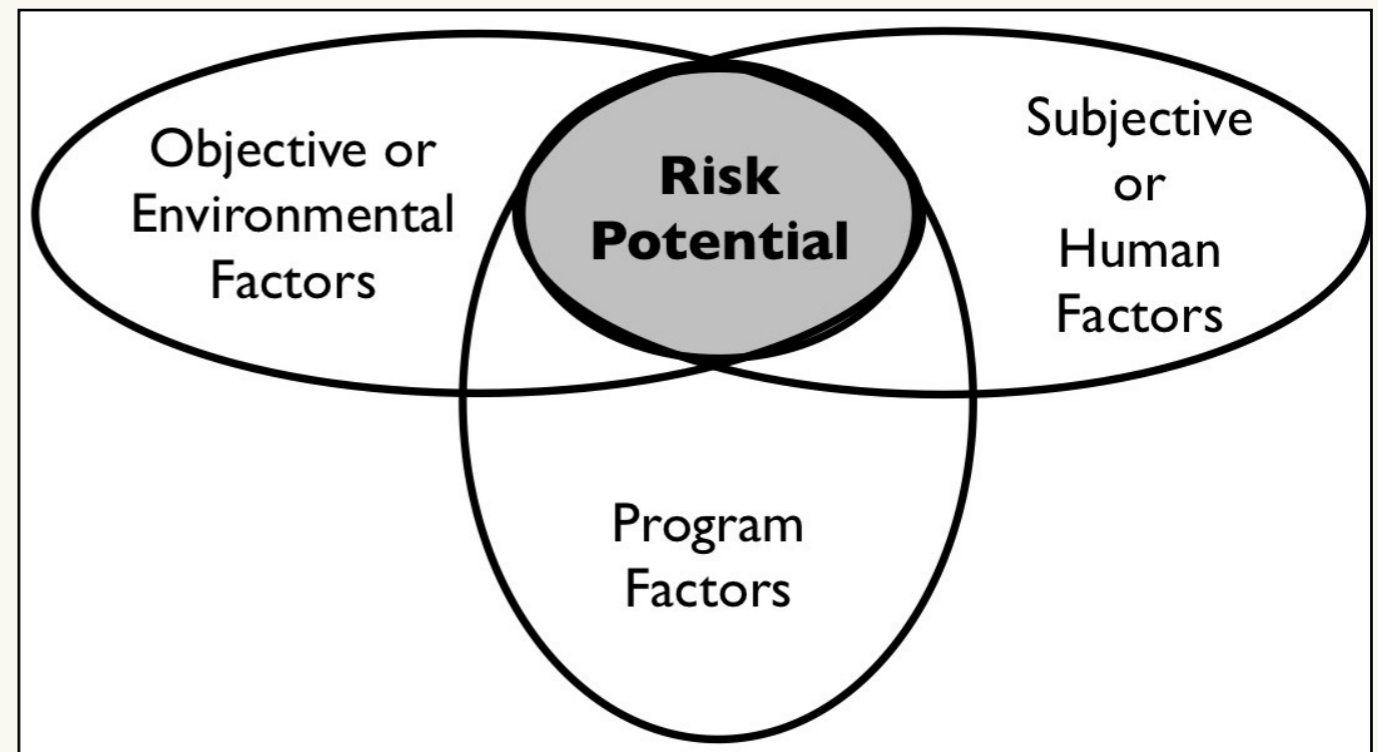
- ☑ Witness statements (written)
- ☑ Instructor statements (written)
- ☑ Interview notes
- ☑ Maps and location coordinates
- ☑ Photos and diagrams
- ☑ Weather & Environmental records
- ☑ Incident response logs (Gdoc & others)
- ☑ Course paperwork
- ☑ Daily travel plan
- ☑ Outfitting records (gear/rations)
- ☑ Briefing information
- ☑ Evaluations (student, instructor, program)
- ☑ Contact logs w/family
- ☑ Reports from other agencies (SAR, law enforcement, land agency, FOIA requests, etc.)

# INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

## What we did—incident review

### Internal review

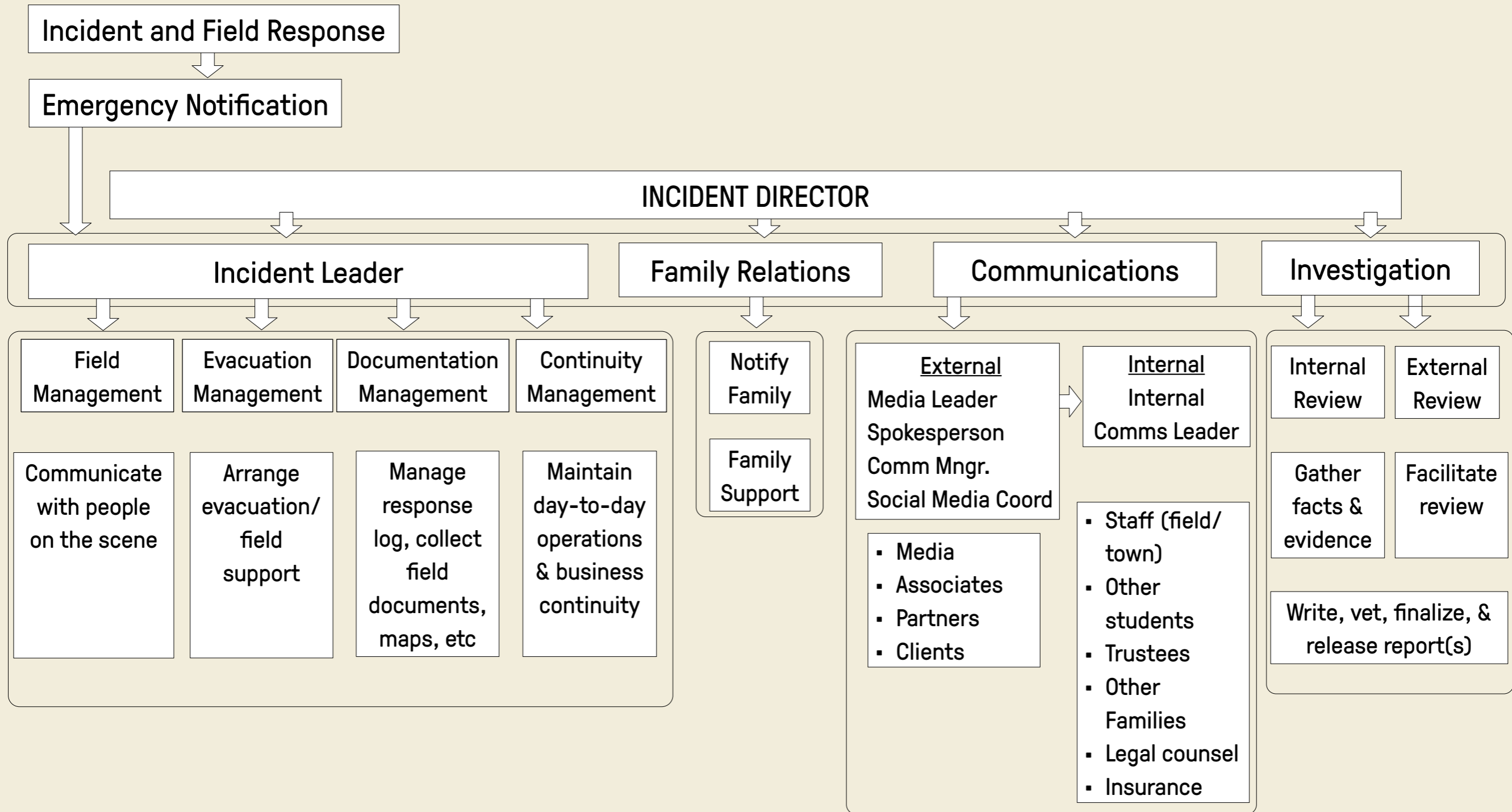
- Captured the story
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Recommendations for change (if any)



### External review

- Yes or no, and other considerations

# NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC



# ACTION ITEMS

**“Keep a cool head and a warm heart.”** United Educators

1. Use the NOLS schematic as a guide to develop a crisis plan
2. Identify key players in your organization who will be involved with crisis management and assign roles and responsibilities
3. Practice your crisis plan. Run a drill to identify strengths and gaps.

# SO, WHAT ABOUT THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC?

Our plan served us well when the pandemic escalated. It provided structure and guidance for our response.

- Leadership roles and decision-making structure
- Evacuation and field ops systems to pull all courses
- Communications structure guided messaging to high volume of stakeholders (internal and external)
- Extensive use of Google Docs
- Tools still being used in ongoing response: International Decision Matrix, psychological first aid resources

**“A crisis is a brutal audit of prepared plans.”** Weick and Suttcliffe

## Thanks

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