

Crisis Communication Plan

*Updated: May 2015*

## **Georgia District of Key Club International**

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**INTRODUCTION**

How Key Club reacts and communicates during a crisis can have a long-lasting impact on its reputation among Kiwanians, faculty advisors, current and prospective members, parents and the public. When it comes to an organization concerning students/youth, as Key Club does, it’s important to communicate accurately, quickly and effectively, particularly in crisis situations. **This plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are reported initially. All emergencies should be reported to 911 immediately.**

### Purpose

#### This plan identifies Key Club’s audiences and establishes policies and procedures for gathering, approving and disseminating information to each audience during a crisis. It also outlines who should be contacted in the event of a crisis and who should speak on behalf of the organization.

### Objectives

Key Club’s crisis communication plan will assist in:

1. Assessing each situation to determine what communication response is needed.
2. Assembling a communication team that will recommend appropriate responses.
3. Identifying audiences that should be informed about the situation.
4. Communicating the facts of the crisis to those audiences to ensure Key Club’s position is presented in a clear, consistent and timely manner.
5. Demonstrating Key Club’s concern for its members and the community.
6. Minimizing rumors and incorrect information.
7. Restoring order and confidence in Key Club, while maintaining its credibility.
8. Protecting Key Club’s reputation by increasing the likelihood of balanced media coverage.

### Proactive vs. Reactive Crisis Communication

#### Taking a proactive approach to crisis communication is critical to successful crisis management. Releasing information as soon as it is verified is a highly effective strategy because it allows Key Club to control the flow of information and can quickly eliminate the “breaking news” urgency of a story. Providing facts in a timely manner often defuses a public relations crisis, even when the news is unpleasant or embarrassing. If the relevant information is provided for a story first, the need for a follow-up, which always keeps a story alive, is eliminated. Furthermore, as a youth organization, providing accurate information to affected schools and families is expected. The policies and procedures in this plan are based on quick disclosure as a preferred strategy for managing crises.

### General Assumptions About Key Club

Key Club is the world’s oldest and largest service program for high school students. It is a student-led organization that teaches leadership through serving others. Key Club is made up entirely of high school-aged students. For the Georgia District, these members come from high schools or organizations with members of a high school age within the state of Georgia. Given the organization’s mission and cause, the media will often be sympathetic to its responses. That being said, it is still critical that Key Club responds in a swift, proactive way in the face of crises. While media relations are important for our organization’s reputation, the most important element when dealing with a crisis is ensuring the safety of members and relaying information to affected members’ schools and families.

#### **KEY CLUB’S CRISIS COMMUNICATION POLICY**

### General Policy

Key Club is committed to taking a proactive approach to communication during crises, using timely disclosure as the preferred strategy, wherever possible.

Only approved spokespersons are authorized to release information to the media, schools, Kiwanis and parents/guardians. The official spokesperson of the Georgia District is Cody Nichelson, Assistant District Administrator. In the event Cody is unavailable, District Administrator Brad Malone may act as the district’s spokesperson.

Cody Nichelson, in association with the rest of the adult committee as well as in corporation with Key Club and Kiwanis International will develop crisis communication strategies, as needed.

The Georgia District of Key Club will maintain contact with the Georgia District Kiwanis Governor, Georgia Kiwanis Executive Director, the Key Club International Director and the Kiwanis International Executive Director to help identify and monitor possible crises and their development. The Georgia District’s adult committee will gather and verify information about each crisis and develop strategies for how information is to be released, who should speak for the organization and what audiences should be notified.

### Crisis Communication Procedures

##### Assessment – At the time of a crisis, the adult committee should immediately work to gather accurate information from the appropriate sources and report the information to Cody Nichelson and Brad Malone.

Cody Nichelson and Brad Malone will determine if a communication response is needed. If it is, the team will begin working immediately to develop a response and share information with appropriate authorities.

**Crisis Communication Team** – The crisis communication team will include at a minimum (core team):

1. District Administrator Brad Malone
2. District Assistant Administrator Cody Nichelson
3. District Assistant Administrator Robert Barron
4. District Assistant Administrator Kelsey Meiring
5. Georgia District Kiwanis Executive Director Alexia Lieber
6. Georgia District Kiwanis Advisor Bill Lieber

### Response

After assessing the nature and scope of the potential crisis, Cody Nichelson and Brad Malone, with assistance from the core team, will develop a plan of action including some, or all, of the following:

#### **Establish a crisis communication command center**

Determine if a command center where the team will be based is needed and if a media briefing area is necessary for large media gatherings or press conferences. The first choice for a communication command center is the Georgia District Kiwanis Office. At a minimum, the command center must have a dedicated telephone line and access to a computer. A large white board is preferred. In the event that a crisis occurs at a district event, Cody Nichelson and the adult team will work to identify a proper location for the command center.

##### Designate a spokesperson

In most cases, the spokesperson should be the regular company spokesperson, Assistant Administrator Cody Nichelson, who should work with a person possessing direct knowledge of the situation.

In cases where Cody is unavailable, Brad Malone may take the lead to convey Key Club’s response to the crisis, show the organization has control of the situation, calm public concern and lend credibility to the response.

##### Draft a fact sheet, initial/holding statement and news release

If needed, Cody Nichelson, with assistance from other adult committee members, will draft a fact sheet containing a summary statement of the situation, including all known details to be released to the media. If the crisis involves a specific individual, the name of the individual should **not** be released. Refer to the individual as “the student,” “the Key Club member,” “the advisor,” “the Kiwanian,” or some other appropriate, unidentifying pronoun (avoid gender- and age-specific pronouns). The fact sheet should never be released to the media, but should be the basis for a statement or news release.

#### **Notify key audiences and emergency personnel**

Determine key audiences that should be informed of the crisis. Effective communication with each audience will help quell rumors, maintain morale, develop a sense of loyalty and guard the company against rumor and incorrect information. Key Club’s key audiences, in the order they should be informed, include:

* Emergency personnel. In the event that a student, advisor, or other individual needs medical assistance, is missing or if a crime has been committed, the adult committee member who first discovers the crisis should **immediately** contact appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 911.

1. Georgia District Adult Committee — Notify by calling each member of the adult committee, beginning with Brad Malone.
2. Affected party’s immediate chaperone — Notify by phone or in person
3. Georgia District Kiwanis Governor and Executive Director — Notify by phone
4. Kiwanis International Executive Director — Notify by phone
5. Georgia District Key Club Board of Trustees — Notify in person or by phone
6. Affected party’s school and/or family — Notify by phone, if/when appropriate (Note: it may be most appropriate for the immediate chaperone and/or emergency personnel to initially contact these audiences)

Faculty advisors in the district – Notify through ConstantContact email from Cody Nichelson

1. Media – Notify media through phone calls, emails, news releases and press conferences.

#### **Assign members of the crisis communication team to each audience**

A team member should be assigned to each audience to serve as a liaison between that audience and the spokesperson. The team member can answer general questions using information from the fact sheet or news release. However, further, more specific questions should be forwarded to the spokesperson, Cody Nichelson. The assignment of team members should be as follows:

1. Emergency personnel — initially, the first adult who comes across the crisis; beyond that, Brad Malone should act as the point of contact
2. Georgia District Adult Committee – Cody Nichelson, Brad Malone
3. Affected party’s immediate chaperone — Brad Malone
4. Georgia District Kiwanis Governor and Executive Director — Cody Nichelson
5. Kiwanis International Executive Director — Cody Nichelson
6. Georgia District Key Club Board of Trustees — Cody Nichelson, Brad Malone, Kelsey Meiring, Robert Barron
7. Affected party’s school and/or family — Brad Malone
8. Media and the public – Cody Nichelson
9. Georgia District faculty advisors — Cody Nichelson
10. General members and faculty advisors — Cody Nichelson, Brad Malone, Kelsey Meiring and Robert Barron

**Reacting to the crisis**

* If a Key Club member or adult has experienced an injury, do **not** under any circumstances attempt to treat the affected individual.
* Only individuals with appropriate licensing/training/certification should attempt to operate an AED or perform CPR.
* **No** medication should be given to a student or adult without consenting his/her medical release form.

#### **Respond to media**

Determine if a news conference is appropriate or if interviews combined with a news release or statement will suffice. Key Club will determine the logistics of a news conference, including when, where and how the media will be contacted; what media will be contacted; who will supervise the conference; who will speak and answer questions; and where and when the news conference will take place. (See Appendix C for news conference guidelines and Appendix D for tips on working with reporters.)

#### **News Conference Sites**

The optimum site for news conferences is the area just outside the Georgia District Kiwanis office. This site provides a recognizable visual in the Kiwanis logo and ensures that all media pass through the main lobby. Emergency personnel should be on hand for news conferences. If the crisis occurs at a district event, the adult committee will identify an appropriate meeting space and work with event coordinators/vendors to secure the space.

#### **Photography and video**

Key Club will not release any photography or video of a crisis, especially no photos or videos related to affected parties.

### After the Crisis

Following any situation, the crisis communication team should meet within a week of the event to review all actions taken and determine their effectiveness and efficiency. The team should make any needed adjustments to the plan. The team also should see that letters are written thanking anyone who played a role in bringing the crisis to a close.

**APPENDIX A**

###### **Crisis Communication Checklist**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Brief description of incident:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Crisis assessment**

Key Club Adult Committee is notified of crisis \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Key Club Adult Committee confers with GA Kiwanis & International \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Crisis team convenes; reviews communication, legal, other issues \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Strategy development

Key Club Adult Committee gathers information \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

All media contacts directed to Cody Nichelson, official spokesperson \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Crisis team recommends communication strategy, if needed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cody Nichelson and Brad Malone approve communication strategy, if needed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

###### **Communication**

Georgia District Adult Committee prepares fact sheet, statement and news release \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies emergency personnel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies adult committee \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies affected party’s chaperone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies Kiwanis Governor and Exec. Dir. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies Kiwanis Int’l Exec. Dir. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies Key Club board of trustees \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies affected party’s school/family \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies media and the public \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Assigned team member(s) notifies faculty advisors and members \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

###### **Monitoring**

Key Club Adult Committee monitors news coverage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

###### **Evaluation and follow-up**

Key Club Adult Committee presents overview of news coverage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Key Club Adult Committee presents overview of employee coverage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Key Club Adult Committee follows up with Kiwanis Int’l and GA Kiwanis \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Key Club Adult Committee sends follow up to GA District faculty advisors \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Crisis team evaluates overall communication management effort \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

#### **APPENDIX B**

##### Gathering Information

When a crisis occurs, media will be looking for quick answers to such questions as:

1. What happened?
2. Where?
3. When?
4. Why did it happen?
5. What areas are affected and how?
6. What operations were affected and when will those stopped resume?
7. Any injuries or deaths?
8. Identities of those injured or killed (Release only after next of kin has been notified).
9. Name of hospital where injured were taken.
10. Extent of current danger, if any.
11. Extent of damage to company facilities.
12. What is being done to control situation and minimize harmful effects?
13. If a chemical spill, name and type of chemical and its hazards?
14. Are employees being sent home?
15. Details on company’s safety record.

##### Preparing an Initial News Statement

As soon as possible, an initial statement about the incident should be prepared with input from the core team. A news statement is used for response to media inquiries and should not be distributed generally. The statement **should include** **only**:

1. **What** happened
2. **When** it happened, including date and time
3. **Where** it happened
4. The **presence or absence** of continuing threat to life or property in the surrounding community
5. Brief non-technical explanation of the function of the facility involved (**what it does**)
6. Number of injured, dead or missing (**NOTE:** Notification of relatives must be made first)

The statement **must not** include:

1. Any discussion or speculation about the **cause** of the incident
2. Any discussion or estimation of the **amount of damage**
3. Any speculation of the **impact** of the incident on members or other individuals; the community; the organization or the environment
4. The **specific identify** of affected individuals

An appropriate response to these questions is, “At this time, we are unable to determine the cause, amount of damage or impact of the incident.” Never speculate or answer hypothetical questions. These issues will be discussed later when more thorough research has been completed.

###### **APPENDIX C**

###### **News Conference Guidelines**

1. When notifying media of news conferences/availabilities, be sure to define what kind of event will occur. News conferences are held to announce something for the first time. Press availabilities are held simply to make individuals available to answer questions.
2. Don’t call unnecessary news conferences/availabilities. If it’s not worth their time, the media will be angered.
3. If holding a news conference, try to tell media in advance some details of what you will be announcing.
4. Gauge the size of your crowd carefully when preparing a room. It’s better to have too much than too little space. Make sure microphones, chairs, lighting and water are in place at least 30 minutes prior to the event.
5. Decide format in advance, including who will introduce speakers, who decides when question/answer period ends and other details.
6. Decide who will maintain control at the news conference, who will decide where cameras are set up and who will sit where.
7. Try to plan the length of the news conference, but be flexible.
8. Consider the time of the news conference. To make the noon, 6 p.m. or 11 p.m. TV and radio news, allow time for crews to travel and edit tape.

###### **APPENDIX D**

###### **Working with Reporters**

1. Quickly return a reporter’s call, but do not answer questions or discuss company actions or positions.
2. Ask your own questions. Determine what the reporter is trying to find out, what his story idea is and where Key Club fits. Ask if he’s talked with others, either in the organization or outside.
3. Gather any information the reporter requests and put it in a logical form. Then, anticipate any questions that may be asked and prepare answers.
4. Get Key Club’s message across. Don’t stick to the reporter’s requests. Weave in details of what Key Club has done to remedy a crisis.
5. Keep answers short and to the point. Always speak energetically. Remember, sound bites rarely last more than 10 seconds.
6. For newspapers, offer lively, though-provoking quotes.
7. Never rely on “No comment” as an answer. Refusing to comment outright gives the impression the company has something to hide. If you legitimately cannot answer a question, explain why and steer the question back to key messages. If you simply don’t know, tell the reporter you’ll find the answer, then get back to him promptly.
8. Always be truthful. If a mistake was made, admit it with remorse, then share details about what is being done to correct the problem. The best attack is to admit the mistake, state how it’s going to be fixed and assure that it will not happen again. Always convey such information with a tone of concern and empathy. Never appear defensive.
9. Always begin and end an interview on a positive note. Try to become involved in the reporter’s thought process for the moment, but don’t probe too hard.
10. Expect anything you say to appear in print. Never provide information “off the record.” Always answer in a professional manner – never use too casual of a tone.
11. Never expect a story to be totally in Key Club’s favor. Reporters are expected to provide a balanced account of events.
12. If erroneous information appears, correct it promptly. Phone the reporter, tell him of the error and ask for a correction. No error is too small. Even if you simply point out the error, the reporter knows you’re involved in the issue and are monitoring coverage.

###### **APPENDIX E**

###### **Crisis Communication Channels**

Because crises are intense experiences, communication teams may concentrate too keenly on a single audience or a single method of conveying important messages. Key Club’s communication strategy should include the following tools:

1. News conferences
2. Daily news briefings (for prolonged crises)
3. GAKeyClub.org
4. Email/ConstantContact
5. Letters to members
6. Letters to faculty advisors
7. Letters to Kiwanians
8. Speeches to civic, social or professional groups
9. Personal visits to injured parties and their families

###### **APPENDIX F**

###### **Dos and Don’ts**

###### **DO:**

###### Prepare a short list of key messages and present them when speaking with the media.

###### Demonstrate the organization’s constant concern for the well-being of members and the community

###### Accentuate the positive aspects.

###### Learn and respect media deadlines.

###### Keep yourself updated with the latest information.

###### Provide regular updates as information becomes available.

###### Keep a record of all media contacts, including names, phone numbers and basic questions.

###### Be completely accurate and only release information you are sure about.

###### Answer a negative question in a positive way.

###### Keep community members informed to prevent rumors.

###### Monitor media coverage and politely point out and correct any mistakes.

###### Appear confident and calm at all times. Give the impression that things are being handled quickly and properly and that anxiety is unwarranted.

###### **DON’T:**

###### Speculate on the cause, blame, negligence or impact of a crisis.

###### Give damage or loss estimates.

###### Release the names of injured or casualties until relatives have been notified.

###### Speculate on physical conditions of injured parties. Direct inquiries to the hospital

###### involved.

###### Cover up facts. Never lie.

###### Ignore a media inquiry. That only creates problems.

###### Make “off-the-record” comments. There’s no such thing.

###### Answer an unfair question. Decline gracefully.

###### Be forced into a “yes or no” answer.

###### Sound cold or official. Let your concern show.

###### Display excessive emotion.

###### Play favorites with the media. Release information to all media simultaneously.

###### Leave reporters or photographers alone on-site.

###### Allow media near a situation if there is even the slightest chance of danger.

###### Become visibly irritated if reporters keep pushing for information. That’s their job. Simply explain why you cannot provide the information and say when additional details can be expected.

###### Get caught unprepared or uninformed. Never appear nervous or panicked.

###### **APPENDIX F**

**Who to Call**

#### **In the event of a medical or other emergency, immediately dial 911.**

#### Cody Nichelson – Assistant Administrator and Official Spokesperson 678-906-9246

#### Brad Malone – District Administrator 770-842-7813

#### Robert Barron – Assistant Administrator 706-499-3621

#### Kelsey Meiring – Assistant Administrator 770-846-8817

#### Alexia Lieber – Georgia District Kiwanis Executive Director 478-960-5637

#### Stan Soderstrom – Kiwanis International Executive Director xxx-xxx-xxxx

#### Mark Smith – General Counsel xxx-xxx-xxxx