

One Step Ahead Series

Crisis Management and *Working With the Media*

irwin siegel agency, inc.
risk management services
human service programs



Crisis Management
and
***Working With
the Media***

Crisis Management and Working with the Media

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Overview

In this modern age, crises are inevitable. Some result from events we cannot control, such as earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes. Unsafe acts or conditions, like human error, criminal and violent acts, reputation damage, and financial or personal loss cause others. Effective crisis management focuses on more than just planning for natural disasters.

Crises usually occur not simply because of one event or mistake, but because several significant components of the service delivery system have failed. To manage crises, one needs to maintain a broad perspective of the organization and situation. Of course, there are catastrophes that we cannot foresee, but we can anticipate the possibility that they may occur. Anticipation and preparation can afford us the luxury of effective, strategic response, as opposed to a frantic, knee-jerk reaction to an already dangerous, embarrassing or tragic situation.

The more complex the service delivery system, the greater the chance of something going wrong, and the more widely felt the consequences may be. Service delivery systems are more closely linked than ever before. Financial and staffing constraints have put providers' ability to supply consistent quality services on a long-term crisis footing. Swift communication links can blow small town news into national prominence in a matter of seconds, compounding the scope of media coverage and its potential for damage. An increasingly litigious society keeps providers' reputations and financial stability extremely vulnerable to attack. Violence, bomb threats and natural disasters may all threaten the safety and welfare of provider agencies.

Crisis Management is based on the premise that for most crises, the damage can be controlled. Some problems can be spotted and addressed before they escalate into a crisis. Crisis Management includes watching for danger signs and managing unsafe acts and unsafe conditions. With the right preparation, some crises can be avoided or kept to a minimum. Crisis Management is about preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. This booklet reviews the components of Crisis Management and proposes planning strategies with emphasis on crisis communications and working with the media.

Looking at What Goes Wrong

Some quality and safety improvements are retrospective solutions developed after major disasters. If we don't look at the cause of past problems, we might miss opportunities to avoid them in the future. Much of what we know about crisis management we have learned from the real life experiences of organizations around the country and around the world.

Can there be success in failure? Yes, if we learn from the experience and use the knowledge wisely. Can there be failure in success? Yes, if the success defeats your overall mission.

The following examples show how improvements to quality of care can evolve from crisis and media attention:

- State legislation and federal guidelines were introduced after a series of articles in the Hartford Courant reported deaths from restraints and seclusion across the country. The articles dealt mainly with abuses in mental health facilities but asserted that such practices were also used with people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.
- In 1972, New York television reporter Geraldo Rivera gave a scathing report called "The Great Disgrace," about appalling conditions at a state institution for people with developmental disabilities. The report led to the closing of many large long term care institutions, the growth of community based services, state protection regulations and standards of care, and even spurred the development of the self advocacy movement in the state and across the nation.
- In 1999, the press sharply criticized providers in Washington D.C., revealing serious management problems reflected in inadequate investigations of unexplained deaths, abuse and corruption in some privately operated, city-sponsored group homes for people with mental retardation and other disabilities. The Federal District Court Judge fined the District over \$5 million for failure to comply with an earlier 1974 settlement. That settlement was supposed to have improved safe living conditions and habilitation services to people with developmental disabilities who had resided at DC's public long term care facility (Evans v. Barry, now Williams). The 1999 articles were the catalyst for a new quality plan. The plan will lead to compliance by establishing an external monitoring body, new standards for measuring outcomes and compliance, and advocating for persons receiving District funded MR/DD services. The District Government has agreed to contribute \$11 million to underwrite the costs.

Components of Crisis Management

PREPARATION - MITIGATION - RESPONSE - RECOVERY

1. Anticipate the Danger
2. Identify Dangerous and Hazardous Conditions
3. Stop the Problem Before it Gets Worse
4. Respond to the Crisis
5. Restore Operations to “Normal” with Improvements as Needed
6. Public Relations - Know How to Work with the Media Before, During and After a Crisis

A crisis is a major, even catastrophic, event that causes harm to consumers, personnel, the organization and the surrounding environment.

Preparedness activities are those an organization undertakes to build capacities and identify resources on which to draw, should a disaster or emergency occur.

1. Anticipate the Danger: Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst

Preparing for crises is a necessity for every organization. Disaster preparedness should be a major responsibility of your organization's management. Preparing for as many crises as are foreseeable will help to protect personnel, consumers and property, and to maintain quality service provision. Preparation can also give your personnel and consumers a little peace of mind during a crisis, as everyone will know how the organization has readied itself for such an emergency.

Organizations often develop natural disaster plans, but should give equal thought to crisis management strategies to cope with quality of care emergencies such as loss of licensure, funding or employee misconduct. Organizations plan for the expected and the unexpected.

There are 9 major types of crises:

- **Physical Plant** (power outage, gas leak, loss of access to building, breakdown of important equipment, explosion, building collapse)
- **Economic** (funding loss or severe deficiency, theft, corporate noncompliance, workforce shortage, strike, severe market recession)
- **Information** (loss of vital records, false information, confidential information shared inappropriately, communication disruption, computer hacking or virus)
- **Human Resources** (loss of key personnel, high absenteeism, high rate of employee accidents, strike or work slow-down, lack of qualified applicants, chronically high turnover and vacancy rates)
- **Natural Disasters** (fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, windstorm, ice storm, drought, typhoons, explosions)
- **Environmental and Natural Resources** (Food, water, oil, paper or gas shortages, food or water contamination, chemical leak or spill)
- **Health Care** (blood shortage, epidemic, local hospital strike, lack of needed health care in the community)
- **Reputation** (slander, gossip, damage to organization's image, civil lawsuit, allegations of wrong-doing, prejudice against agency)
- **Violent Acts** (terrorism, hostage taking, workplace violence, kidnapping, product tampering, sabotage)

Create comprehensive strategies that address these crises and those events likely to occur in your geographic and service area. Use a “mapping” technique to consider the consequences of each crisis and how it will effect the different areas of your organization. Diagram the path of damage control through the organization and the community. Then, put your plan into writing so that others can follow it for training purposes and in the event of an emergency.

An organization’s mission, culture, workforce, consumers, physical environment and surrounding community determine its vulnerability to crises and its ability to plan for and respond effectively to each type. Only by weighing these elements from both perspectives (cause and cure) can one produce effective strategies for prevention and response. Therefore, crisis management must be considered not an organizational function, but a way of life in which as many people as possible participate.

Disaster Preparedness: A Guide to Preparing for Emergency Situations, an ISA resource, will help you create a disaster preparedness plan. The plan must be in writing, be comprehensive and identify objectives. The plan must designate responsibility and authority and include a schedule for periodic audits and drills.

Appoint a Crisis Management Coordinator to lead the crisis team. This team should monitor and review all crisis provisions and procedures. Additional specialized teams will perform specific functions and report to the Crisis Management Team. Teams may oversee each of the following functions:

- Operations
- Transportation
- Computer Operations
- Support

A team approach assigns specific responsibilities among several employees, to ensure back-up personnel will be available to fill in as alternates, and to coordinate the expertise and experience of individuals from different departments for a common purpose.

Develop a list of community agencies, including police, fire and rescue, as well as hospital, health, social welfare and mental health services. Depending on the type of crisis, juvenile justice, the faith community and related family support systems may also be valuable contacts. These organizations can be helpful in developing crisis management plans. Find out about federal, state and local resources that are available to help during and after a crisis, and their support and involvement before a crisis occurs.

In addition, the provider should have a written policy for reporting incidents. It should outline what needs to be reported, when and to whom. Staff and consumers should be trained in what to do in case of an emergency.

Mitigation is a series of activities undertaken to lessen the impact a potential crisis could have on an organization's operation.

2. Identify Dangerous and Hazardous Conditions: Detecting “Sparks” before the “Fire”

System wide evaluation is an effective tool for identifying problems and developing timely solutions, before the “fire” starts or gets out of hand. Internal Quality Assurance, a formal system of self-evaluation and improvement, needs to be an integral part of operations. It should permeate every level of an organization and be a priority in all departments.

One agency uses quality assurance specialists who regularly visit sites. They listen to staff concerns and relay them for efficient follow up, and offer support and suggestions. The internal quality assurance personnel monitor changes and their effects. They identify trends to administrative staff and recommend appropriate action. The quality assurance specialists monitor safety and regulatory compliance, and have the full support of top administration.

Many agencies factor the value of consumer and visitor surveys into their internal quality assessments. They encourage feedback from service recipients, community contacts and direct support professionals. Consumer satisfaction is a reliable indicator of quality and can no longer be overlooked. A consumer interview or survey can shine a light on service or safety needs that might otherwise remain hidden. For example, a consumer's complaint about feeling badly and not being able to go the doctor may be a red flag to review overall medical responsiveness within the provider's service community.

Assessment of outcomes is critical in analyzing the quality of care received. As an example, an internal quality review may look at how often restraint is being used to control behavior, if at all. Has its use decreased or increased in the past year? Can training steps or procedures be modified to reduce the use of restraints?

Quick detection and appropriate medical follow-ups are further key indicators. Incidents of decubidi or incontinence are also used to gauge quality of care. Staff attendance and turnover may signal problems at a facility and should be monitored. Track and review the number and nature of reported incidents for possible trends.

Benefits of Internal Quality Assurance

- Creates continuous feedback loop
- Plays a supportive role and is appreciated, not feared
- Catches and addresses problems before a crisis develops
- Provides a formal system for self evaluation and improvement
- Enables prompt identification and correction of problems
- Empowers consumers
- Improves overall quality
- Boosts quality standards above levels required by state and federal regulations

3. Stop the Problem Before it Gets Worse

Internal quality controls of assessment, identification, intervention, modification and training are part of an ongoing review and adjustment process designed to neutralize problems. Below is a summary of the problem solving process used to stop problems before they get worse.

Assessment

Identify problems or hazards: Use physical plant observations and check lists, financial audits, consumer satisfaction surveys and interviews, as well as smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors. Have an external third party conduct periodic health and safety checks and audits for quality control.

Analysis

Determine hazards, their causes and how they can be eliminated or reduced. A safety and/or incident review committee should meet regularly to review incidents, identify potentially dangerous situations and make recommendations to address them. Top administration demonstrates full support of the safety committee by carrying out its recommendations.

Correction/Modification Intervention

Remove or reduce the hazard. Adjust crisis management plans to improve safety before a crisis develops. Drills may reveal parts of the plan that need modification because of weak points, gaps or redundancies.

Training

Notify all staff and consumers of new safety procedures developed as a result of your assessment. It is important that staff and consumers are trained in crisis procedures and know how to follow them. Hold drills to practice procedures and refine them as needed.

Implementation

Implement policies and procedures that minimize risks. Don't wait for a crisis to test the effectiveness of your crisis management plans. Stage annual rehearsals or run-throughs of each type of crisis plan.

“Early intervention and quick response from our school district team resulted in no one getting hurt.”

Pamela C., Superintendent, WV, from Early Warning, Timely Response

4. Responding to the Crisis

Safety is the primary concern in the event of a crisis; safety of the people served, of staff and of the surrounding community. Protecting the organization from fiscal harm, physical damage or diminished credibility and reputation is also important. Crisis management plans for specific types of crises should delineate what to do in case of each one. Designate the role of each individual and each response team to prevent confusion.

Initial Awareness of Incident

How is initial word of a crisis at the organization communicated? (One hopes not to learn about it in the morning paper!) An organization should have an internal and external notification system in case of an emergency. Usually, initial awareness is in the form of:

- Direct observation
- An eye witness report
- Discovery of the event
- An allegation by a victim
- Receipt of information from a third party

Primary Response

Crisis management plans should specify an appropriate response to each type of crisis. Plans should clearly assign tasks. The critical first response should be to:

- Rescue anyone in immediate danger. Call for emergency assistance if necessary.

- Protect from harm.
 - Separate people from the dangerous environment or person
 - Seek shelter
 - Correct hazardous conditions as soon as possible

- Provide any necessary first aid, medical attention and evaluation. When possible, obtain information and document any injury or lack of injury.

- Notify - It is crucial to communicate rapidly and effectively during a crisis. Be sure to notify the following people: (Who Is To Be Notified - “FLIER”)
 - Families, as soon as it is appropriate to do so and when you have sufficient information
 - Law enforcement, as needed
 - Internal management who need to know
 - Emergency personnel if needed
 - Regulatory officials as required by state law

In most cases, notify emergency personnel and internal management first, and all of the above within 24 hours. Crisis intervention plans for specific types of crises should indicate who should notify whom and when.

- Preserve evidence if an investigation will be necessary
 - Secure the area and physical evidence if necessary
 - Secure documents that someone might want to alter to cover themselves or others

Secondary Response

- Communicate with staff, consumers and family to keep them updated on what they need to know.

- Start an investigation if needed: Get the “who, what, when, where and why” of the incident.

- Members of the response teams should understand natural stress reactions. They should be familiar with how different individuals might respond to death or loss, including developmental considerations, religious beliefs and cultural values.

5. Returning to “Normal” Operations After a Crisis

Good preparation will ease the recovery process after a major crisis. A crisis management plan should incorporate provisions for resuming normal operations after a crisis takes place.

- Stay out of dangerous or secured areas until your local emergency manager or law enforcement officer verifies that it is “all clear” and safe to return. This would be true for disasters, violent acts and when evidence had to be gathered.
- Assess and report damage losses to your insurance carrier. Note any threats to sue.
- If there has been massive property damage, salvage and clean up with care.
- Conduct a thorough investigation, if applicable. Get statements from everyone at the scene. Summarize the result of the investigation: what conclusions, if any, can be drawn from the evidence obtained? Make administrative recommendations based on the results of the investigation.
- Debrief all involved parties after an incident. Allow them an opportunity to give their interpretation of what happened and express how they feel about it. Listen to their suggestions for prevention or better response in the future. This can be done individually, but if the crisis affects many, small groups may be suitable. Help staff deal with their reactions to the crisis.
- Post Trauma Care: Plan to have social workers or psychologists on hand to assist survivors of a tragedy. Restoring emotional well being and confidence takes time and nurturing. Educate staff about stress and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Provide an employee assistance program or referrals for supportive care. Debriefing and grief counseling are as important for adults as they are for children. Help consumers and staff to cope after a crisis. Provide both short-term and long-term mental health counseling following a violent crisis, as appropriate.
- When working with people who have developmental disabilities or mental health concerns, help parents and caregivers understand how students or consumers may react in the aftermath of a tragedy. For example, a violent tragedy may lead to unrealistic fears of the future, difficulty sleeping, physical illness or being easily distracted.
- Design a plan to make returning to the site of a traumatic event as easy as possible for consumers and staff.

- Help staff and consumers smoothly accept a previously removed child or adult back to the provider community. Perhaps a staff member was suspended during an investigation, or a child is returning from a juvenile detention facility or mental health facility. Explore how to make the transition as uneventful as possible.
- Tell staff, consumers and their families what they need to know and reassure them of how the organization is returning things to “normal.” Provide updates and an open door policy to welcome their comments, questions and concerns.
- It is important for the Crisis Management Review Committee to review the incident to determine what systematic and administrative changes may be needed, and to develop strategies that will prevent the crisis from recurring.
- Make necessary personnel changes in accordance with Department of Labor Laws and the organization’s policies and procedures. Should an Executive Director leave, appoint an Interim Executive Director, and form a search committee to find a replacement. The Interim Executive Director’s role will be to restore and/or maintain daily operations until a replacement is found. He or she should be able to adjust to leaving the position when a permanent E.D. is found. Realize it may take up to 18 months to find a suitable candidate, based on the experiences of other provider agencies.
- Depending on the extent and nature of the crisis, it may take some time to recuperate from the damage and redevelop what was lost. Maintain clear goals and objectives so that all can focus on them and move forward again.

The Key to Effective Crisis Management

Crisis Management consists of preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. Effective crisis management is achieved when all of these phases of crisis intervention are incorporated. A successful leader will anticipate what might go wrong and develop written strategies to prevent and address specific types of crises. Test Crisis Management plans and modify them as needed, before a crisis takes place. Key players will understand their roles and be trained to respond effectively. Not every crisis can be foreseen, but with preparation, the crisis can be controlled.

6. Working with the Media

An important aspect of Crisis Management is working with the media. “Bad press” can be devastating to an organization. It is wise to establish an ongoing relationship with the media so they know the good work you do and can better cover the whole story should a crisis occur, ideally keeping sensational and inaccurate pieces to a minimum. It’s important to maintain composure during a crisis. As you address the event that drew the press to your organization, try to avoid an “adversarial” posture.

Sometimes, media attention can be the crisis. A serious incident may be picked up by the press and sensationalized, damaging and threatening to destroy public trust in your organization. Effectively working with the media can keep serious incidents from getting worse, and can actually enhance public relations and communication. For this reason, we will look at how to move through a crisis with media involvement.

Don't Wait for a Crisis

Your organization should establish ongoing, positive relationships with the media, and your crisis management plan should include guidelines for working with the press when there is a triggering event.

- **Designate a media contact.** He or she will be the face, the voice and the persona of your organization, so choose your ambassador carefully. You want the media to find your organization to be trust-worthy, reliable, competent, credible and available. The spokesperson needs a positive attitude towards working with the media. Have a back-up spokesperson, should your primary spokesperson be unavailable at the time of the crisis.

- **Ask staff to direct all press inquiries to the media contact.** Do this when things are calm. Help staff understand that the goal is to ensure effective communication during a crisis. In the mean time, keep an open door policy to routinely hear and address staff concerns internally. Tactfully phrase your request, and provide a clear, simple statement for staff to say should they be approached by the media (i.e., “Please contact our spokesperson and he/she will be happy to speak with you.”). As an example of what not to say, consider this: a psychologist at a correctional facility under newspaper investigation for improper treatment of inmates with mental illness was quoted as saying, “[The Director] told me not to speak to the press.” The quote didn’t help their case and it hurt their image.
- **Have a contact person at each local paper and radio station.** Develop a list of local media and cultivate a contact person at each newspaper, radio or TV station in your area.
- **Send your media contacts “good news” articles and your best brochures** about the services you provide, to build public relations. They may or may not publish the story, but they may read the information and gain understanding of the organization, or keep it on file for future reference. They may often print it as a human interest story, offering free positive publicity. Share success stories of the agency, staff and people served. Be sure to get permission for use of stories, names and/or photos. Forward announcements about upcoming fundraisers or special events to your contacts for local publication or airing.
- **Prepare public service announcements following publicity guidelines.** Be sure to include contact information for the media personnel if they have any questions. Give the facts of who, what, when, where and why. Give listeners or readers contact information so they can find out more, but don't give personal telephone numbers to the public. Written copy should be double-spaced.
- **Have a public relations policy that is approved by your Board of Directors.** Include media contact procedures with disaster plans.
- **Train all staff about your public relations and media contact policy.**

Prepare Your Message

Before an interview, prepare the message you want to give. Keep it short and simple, using common language. Lengthy messages leave more room for misquotes and misdirection. Of course, announcements should be interesting and not just “company slogans.” Create your own sound bite, or interesting catchy phrase that gives your message life. In addition:

- Stay away from negative phrasing such as, “I did not do it.” It just reinforces the negative and sounds like you are hiding something.
- Be prepared to back up what you say with documentation. A diligent reporter is supposed to dig for credibility and verification.
- Prepare your response to reflect your concern and professionalism.
- Consider your body language, as well as your verbal statement. For example, sitting behind a table at a press conference may make one appear too relaxed, or sitting with the physical barrier between you and the press may make you appear defensive or closed. Swaying back and forth may appear to be nervous or avoidance behavior.
- Who is your audience? Parents, community members, consumers? Prepare your statement for them, not the reporter(s).
- Provide information the audience needs.
- Be honest about any limited information. Don’t pretend or hedge around questions for which you do not have an answer.
- Practice your delivery as you would for any public speaking engagement.

Take Responsibility

It inspires confidence and builds respect when an organization publicly acknowledges responsibility for curing problems, clearing doubts and protecting others from harm. Begin a thorough investigation and assure others of your commitment to resolving the situation. Respond quickly, calmly and effectively to the public. Offer updates as appropriate and avoid dodging the press.

When Vice President Richard Cheney's doctor informed him that he might need a defibrillator implant operation, the news could have undermined the public's confidence in his ability to continue in office. Instead of trying to keep it quiet, he kept the press informed of the possible need for the procedure, so when the device was implanted, it was not a shock to the press or the public. The Vice President's history of coronary disease was already known. He reassured the public that he would be able to continue his normal duties as Vice President, would follow his doctor's advice, and that no restrictions to his daily activities had been recommended. By working with the media, Mr. Cheney turned a potential public relations crisis of skepticism and rumor into a positive display of courage and continuing confidence and competence.

In contrast, it is extremely damaging to give in to the impulse to "duck and hide" and hope the media will go away. They won't, and while you are silent about a situation, the media will speculate on why, often implying guilt or an effort to conceal the truth. Take, for example, the California Congressman whose intern disappeared. The press used his three days of silence to fan embers of innuendo into a blaze of negative speculation that no belated press release could quench. The result: a congressman with a thoroughly scorched reputation.

Don't Jump to Conclusions

Honest reflection on the overall problem has its place as a legitimate internal exercise in problem solving and prevention, but refrain from hastily taking or laying blame, or speculating in public. It may be used against you later. Focus on damage control instead.

Your emotional demeanor speaks volumes in the media. Exhibit your concern without losing self-control. Be informative with the media, not defensive or combative. Avoid sarcasm, promises and speculation when discussing serious incidents.

Respect Rights of Privacy

Refrain from using names of victims, minors, consumers, suspects of impropriety and others. Criminal suspects are often named in press releases, but you should make such announcements only under the advice of legal council. You want to avoid breaching anyone's right to privacy, and to avoid statements that are slanderous or could be construed as a defamation of character.

Be Ahead of the Information

You want the bad news first: the last thing you want is to learn vital information from the media. This requires a sound communication system between all personnel and emergency contacts. Encourage internal information flow and reporting. The crisis management plan should include the communication chain of who should be called and when.

Other points to consider:

- Keep control of the information released. Prepare your statements and anticipate what questions may follow.
- You don't want to be caught off guard and appear to be unaware of what is happening, but don't pretend to know something that you don't. Be as open as possible.
- If you are the first to present information to the public, you will have better control of accuracy, time, place and circumstances. Consider whether your information affects the public, whether they need to know, and the wisest method of sharing it with the media. The Board and top administration should pre-approve primary official statements from the organization.

Working with the Media Check List

PRE-CRISIS PREPARATION

- Create a public relations policy, approved by Board of Directors, that addresses crisis and non crises activities.
- Name spokesperson and alternate.
- Train staff on public relations policy and procedures.
- Establish contacts in the media.
- Provide “good news” human-interest stories.
- Build credibility with the media.
- Include working with the media in crisis management plans.

MITIGATION

- Good Public Relations can ease the damage should a crisis occur within the organization.
- Maintain good working relationships with the media.

RESPONSE TO TRIGGERING EVENT

- Prepare a written statement.
- Provide information as needed.
- Project concern and professionalism, while maintaining your emotional control and focus.
- Be honest, but not self-incriminating.
- Keep ahead of the information and provide updates as needed.

RECOVERY

- Reassure families and constituents of the steps that have been taken to return things to normal, and to provide expected quality of care.
- Maintain contact with the media when things have returned to normal. Share success stories which illustrate that things are better than ever!

FINAL COMMENT

News mediums vary not only in coverage depth and accuracy, but also in the latitude the law offers them regarding those inaccuracies. Live, or on the spot, radio and television are often the least accurate and reach the largest audience, yet some of their errors are tolerated, particularly in crises, as they have less time to prepare their stories and check facts. Daily newspapers are a close second. Errors become less acceptable in weekly publications, and even less so in those appearing monthly. Consider which medium you are speaking to. You cannot take back words spoken on the air. You have little time to correct misinformation given to a daily newspaper, a little more time for a weekly, and should achieve 100 percent accuracy from a monthly. Working with the media can be an effective tool in public relations and crisis management. Your relationship with the media can be key to the success or failure of an organization. It is imperative to have a plan in place for working with the media during times of growth and happiness, as well as during times of crisis.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

As technology becomes more a part of our daily lives, we will need to be aware of any new hazards it may present. Electronic information security is already a concern, and eventually smaller non-profit organizations will be more connected with the Internet. Technology will bring great advances in supporting people to live their lives in the community. Questions as to how much supervision and assistance can be left to technological supports such as medical alert systems or audio/video surveillance will need to be addressed. It will affect information management, billing and payment procedures. While we are already aware of some tech-related hazards, such as those affecting privacy, we cannot anticipate all of them. We can however, respond promptly as they emerge.

How long can the human service delivery system withstand a workforce shortage? With the population continuing to age, the demand for care providers will only increase. Providers in many states already report crisis-level situations in the recruitment and retention of quality direct support staff. Increased demand for services, and competition for the same workers by similar industries (such as nursing homes and home health care) are adversely affecting private providers' ability to maintain a quality workforce. What will be the long-term effects, and what system changes may be necessary? Many organizations lobby for funding and support. They must also address liability concerns regarding sufficient care and supervision. Will provider organizations be prepared for the future?

The consumer-directed service delivery system will become a complex network of service providers, working for individual consumers, and coordinated by a third party. With more interrelated systems, a failure in one aspect of service delivery will more easily affect the whole. Effective crisis management techniques will rely heavily on increased communication and preparation.

GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

An organization's mission, culture, workforce, consumers, physical environment and surrounding community all influence its ability to plan for and respond effectively to crises. All facets of the organization are connected. Therefore, crisis management cannot be relegated to just one part of the organization. An integrated understanding is needed to formulate the best possible strategies and precautions.

For additional assistance in developing crisis management plans, call the Irwin Siegel Agency Risk Management Department at 1-800-622-8272.

Additional Resources:

One Step Ahead - Disaster Preparedness: A Guide to Preparing for Emergency Situations, Irwin Siegel Agency, 1-800-622-8272, <http://www.siegelagency.com>.

The Investigation Process, A Key to Eliminating and Reducing the Recurrence of Accidents and Abuse, Irwin Siegel Agency, 1-800-622-8272, <http://www.siegelagency.com>.

Crisis Response and Communication Planning Manual, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Sara E. Grant & Douglass Powell, <http://www.plant.uoguelph.ca/safefood/crisis/crisis-manual.htm>.

Managing Crises Before They Happen: What Every Executive and Manager Needs to Know About Crisis Management, Ian I. Mitroff with Gus Anagnos, AMACOM.

Early Warning, Timely Response...A Guide to Safe Schools, Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, American Institutes for Research, 1000 Thomas Jefferson St., NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20007, <http://www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide/Default.htm>.

Assisting People with Disabilities in a Disaster, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 500 C Street SW Washington, D.C. 20472. (202) 646-4600, <http://www.fema.gov/r-n-r/assistf.htm>.

Emergencies and Disasters from the National Safety Council, <http://www.nsc.org/issues/prepare.htm>.

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