USF CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS FLOW

1. Initial call goes to 911 or University Police or Regional Campus Police.

2. Designate spokesperson(s). Depending on the situation, this could be the President, Provost, Director of Media Relations and/or dean of affected colleges, Regional Campus CEO, Chief Communications Officer, USF Health, Athletics or University Police spokespersons.

3. Chief of Staff or Campus CEO contacts President and Executive Vice President, determines level of crisis (per EOP). If it’s a regional campus incident, the Chief Communications Officer contacts University Relations.

4. The Assistant Vice President of University Relations and Director of Media Relations will:
   - University Police contacts Chief of Staff and University Relations. Regional Campus Police contacts Campus CEO and Chief Communications Officer.
   - Establish location of Crisis Command Center, if needed.
   - Notify emergency operations team and affected departments of communications strategy.
   - Determine if USF needs photography or video. Assign tasks. Be careful not to release inappropriate information or images.
   - Communicate counseling and medical services to those in need.

5. Executive decision is made to activate appropriate crisis plan. University Relations assembles Crisis Communications Team and notifies regional campuses of plans.

6. Develop communications strategy in consultation with Crisis Communications Team. Delegate responsibilities, including regional campuses.

7. Assemble Crisis Communications Team. If it’s a regional campus incident, this will include Campus CEO and Chief Communications Officer.

8. Gather information from affected sources.

9. Prepare information (press release, talking points, fact sheet, statement, video stream, audio recording, background information, etc.)

10. Immediately notify key constituencies according to the responsibilities on the reverse side of this brochure.

11. Schedule periodic media briefings/updates.


13. Determine if follow-up direct mail is needed.

14. Post information on website, release to media, record on Hotline, send emails and conduct news conference, if warranted.

15. Consider community or university-wide forum to discuss incident.

16. Evaluate effort afterwards and report. Consider changes/updates to this plan.
The purpose of the Crisis Communications Plan is to ensure pro-active and efficient dissemination of information before, during and after a crisis situation. Specific objectives include:

- Disclose relevant and accurate information in a timely manner.
- Avoid insensitive, unsubstantiated, legally libel or private disclosures.
- Ensure accurate media and electronic reporting.
- Use communication to ensure safety or minimize danger.
- Provide staff with clear direction so they can proceed with confidence.

### SUMMARY & SCOPE

It is not the intention of this plan to duplicate or usurp the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which defines and deals with the handling of a variety of critical incidents. This plan focuses on communications only and supplements the EOP. It covers the communications function for the entire USF System.

### RULES

1. Critical incidents must be reported to 911 or University Police at (813) 974-2628.
2. No one speaks to the media during a crisis except those designated in this plan or by the Director of Media Relations.
3. Refer to Emergency Operations Plan for detailed descriptions of crises and other operational procedures.

### PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Crisis Communications Plan is to ensure pro-active and efficient dissemination of information before, during and after a crisis situation. Specific objectives include:

- Conduct an information campaign to staff, students, parents, board members and community contacts on how they can obtain information during a crisis. List websites, hotlines and media outlets on posters, flyers, email announcements and web postings. Continually reinforce the information so people automatically know what to do. Use space on web for emergency updates and background information and drive traffic to it.
- Periodically review and update fact sheets, historical information, contact lists, campus maps, and profiles or bios of key management personnel with photos.
- Identify secondary or “expert” spokespersons on key topics.
- Discuss and decide various sites on and off campus for communications command center for press conferences, media briefings, place for reporters to work, etc.
- Brief media representatives on Crisis Communications Plan.
- Train probable spokespersons and role play high-pressured interviews.
- Make sure communication vehicles are in place:
  - a. Inbound calling hotline
  - b. Web site
  - c. Telephone trees
  - d. Email databases
  - e. Media contact lists
  - f. Internal contact lists
- Learn all aspects of Florida’s public records laws and consult with General Counsel on the Crisis Communications Team if there is any doubt about compliance. Generally follow these guidelines:
  - In response to a direct inquiry about a student, you may only release information that is already published in a USF Directory, which is usually name, address, possibly a phone number, major and enrollment status. For sports figures, it may also include height, weight and other official information published in a program.
  - Do not offer any additional information or even amplify on directory information in any context other than straight, directory information. For example, student courses, financial aid, interests, etc., may not be released.
  - You may discuss incidents in a broad, general context to explain USF policy or procedures, but not in the context of the individual student.
  - You may confirm if someone is NOT a student.

### Before The Crisis

- Provide clear direction and direct people to the crisis response website.
- Develop a list of key website content.
- Make sure the website is working.
- Prepare press releases.
- Provide key information.
- Keep cell and home phone numbers of key contacts handy at all times. Do not be concerned with both sending University Relations personnel at odd hours.
- Send out media releases.
- Use space on web for emergency updates.
- Provide media contact lists.
- Update the Crisis Communications Plan.
- Use follow-up activities needed.
- Contact University Relations before taking any defensive action or generating any media responses. Email notifications may not be sufficient. Keep cell and home phone numbers of key contacts handy at all times. Do not be concerned with both sending University Relations personnel at odd hours.
- Follow the Communications Action Checklist in this plan, which includes designating a spokesperson(s) for each incident in coordination with University Relations and the Crisis Communications Team.
- Develop a local version of this plan, with regional campus contact information listed, along with communication command locations and media contacts.
- If necessary, University Relations will dispatch personnel to the regional campus for assistance. Conversely, regional campus personnel should be willing and able to assist the Tampa campus, if called upon.
- At the completion of the incident, report findings and observations about media coverage and any follow-up activities needed.

### Responsibilities For Notifying Key Constituencies

- President’s Office and University Relations are notified by University Police.
- Law enforcement agencies are notified by University Police.
- Board of Trustees, Cabinet, Campus CEOs, and Chancellor are notified by Chief of Staff or designee.
- Regional Campus Boards are notified by CEO’s.
- Staff and faculty are notified electronically by University Relations.
- Students and parents can be notified through email by Student Affairs and/or by web, media and hotline by University Relations.
- Local community is notified through media, web, and hotline by University Relations.
- Media is notified by University Relations.
- Other government agencies are notified by Associate Vice President, Government Relations.
- Alumni are notified by Executive Director of Alumni Association.

### Crisis Communication Team

- **Chief of Staff**
- **Executive Vice President**
- **Assistant VP for University Relations**
- **Director of Media Relations**
- **General Counsel**
- **Department Head, Dean or chief contact in area affected**
- **Director of Human Resources**
- **Vice President for Student Affairs**
- **Chief of Police or University Police Spokesman**
  - If Regional Campus incident, Campus CEO and Chief Communications Officer

### Regional Campus Responsibilities & Contacts

Any incident on a regional campus that involves agencies outside the campus will be reported in the media MUST be coordinated with the USF University Relations office in Tampa. Common sense prevails, but if there’s any doubt, make the call to Tampa. Regional campus CEOs and/or spokespersons are entrusted to provide leadership and use good judgment while following procedures in this plan, and specifically:

- Contact University Relations before taking any defensive action or generating any media responses. Email notifications may not be sufficient. Keep cell and home phone numbers of key contacts handy at all times. Do not be concerned with both sending University Relations personnel at odd hours.
- Follow the Communications Action Checklist in this plan, which includes designating a spokesperson(s) for each incident in coordination with University Relations and the Crisis Communications Team.
- Develop a local version of this plan, with regional campus contact information listed, along with communication command locations and media contacts.
- If necessary, University Relations will dispatch personnel to the regional campus for assistance. Conversely, regional campus personnel should be willing and able to assist the Tampa campus, if called upon.
- At the completion of the incident, report findings and observations about media coverage and any follow-up activities needed.

### Regional Campus Contacts

**USF St. Petersburg University Relations**
USF Sarasota-Manatee University Relations
Leah Williams: Office: 941-319-4726 Cell: 727-278-0425
USF Lakeland University Relations

**Tampa Campus Contacts**
USF University Relations
Ken Guillette: Office: 813-974-8476 Cell: 813-758-9915
USF Health Communications
Michael Hoad: Office: 813-974-3328 Cell: 813-545-6134
USF Police Communications
May Ross: Office: 813-974-2451