

Crisis Communication – Who Communicates with Whom?

Most crisis communication plans involve a resident director or on-site staff member working with the affected student(s) and communicating with a US-based advisor/staff member. The US advisor/staff member then notifies other key individuals (campus administrators or parents, for example). There are a variety of ways other communications and contacts can impact this basic framework. This checklist of questions will help you to examine your institution's crisis communication plan.

Resident director or on-site staff communicates with US advisor/staff member:

- How are students informed about contacting resident staff in an emergency?
- Are students provided with alternate numbers in case they cannot get through to a primary contact?
- What are students instructed to do if they are unable to reach someone in country?
- What if phone networks are not working? Do on-site staff correspond via multiple means (phone, email and text) in the event of a circumstance that affects more than one program student?
- What does the resident director or on-site staff member do if he/she cannot reach primary contact in the US?
- How are telephone contact lists updated and maintained?
- How are student and staff phone numbers stored and maintained? Is there system redundancy?
- What does the primary contact do if he/she experiences network or communications problems?
- What if information about a crisis originates from someone other than the resident director or in-country staff? How does that change the chain of communications in the plan?

Key US contact communicates with others (for example, on-campus administrators or parents):

- Is it clear in what types of cases or circumstances calls are made to key others?
- What is the sequence of calls, and how does the primary contact determine whether he/she needs help in reaching everyone in the communications plan?
- How are administrator/faculty/staff numbers stored and maintained? Is there system redundancy?
- Depending on the number of students involved in the crisis, who determines when and how messages are sent to students immediately involved, students less immediately affected, parents and/or members of the campus community?

- If communicating with parents, who is authorized and trained to do so?
- How are responses to calls and outreach tracked and managed? Is there one central point where all communications are tabulated/assessed?
- What training is provided to emergency response team members for crisis communications?
- Is the crisis communication system tested, or is there incident debriefing to refine/enhance communications after an incident?