

TIPS
FOR USING THE
NON-PROFIT AGENCY
CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

January 15, 2008

Holly Hart, Ph.D.
Holly Hart Consulting
Holly@hollyhartconsulting.com

Anyone who chooses to use all or any part of this “Tips” document assumes total liability for any such use. Any use of all or part of this “TIPS” document for profit without the written consent of the author is forbidden.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Why Was a Plan for Non-Profit Agencies Developed?	4
But Why Does My Agency Need a Crisis Response Plan?	5
Case Study – It Can Happen	6
Why Was this “Tips” Mini-Book Written?	8
Philosophy and Purpose of the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan	9
Components of the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan	12
Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly	15
Staff Guidelines and Training Instructions	17
Site Crisis Response Team Yearly Duties	20
Site Crisis Response Team’s Duties during a Crisis at Their Site	22
Instructions for Specific Types of Events	25
Response of the Main Office of a Multiple Site Agency when Assisting Another Site of the Agency	32
Appendices	34
Appendixes A-G – Additional Resources	
• Yearly Training/Drill Recommendations and Training Schedule (Appendix A)	
• Drill and Simulation Ideas (Appendix A)	
• Threat Assessment Process (Appendix B)	
• Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome Referral Check List (Appendix C)	
• Communication with the Media During a Crisis (Appendix D)	
• Group Discussion Format Following a Death or Suicide (Appendix E)	
• Go-Pack Suggested Contents (Appendix F)	
• First Aid Kit Suggested Contents (Appendix G)	

Appendices H-K Copies of Forms for Duplication

- Duplicates of Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly (Appendix H)
 1. Crisis Team and Locations
 2. Location of Emergency Manuals and Supplies
 3. Community Emergency Telephone Numbers
- Duplicate of Staff Reference Sheets (Appendix I)
 1. Staff Guidelines
 2. First Responder and Staff/Volunteer Instructions
 3. Quick Reference Guidelines
- Duplicates of Main Agency Team Pages to Update Yearly (Appendix J)
 1. Agency Administration Numbers and Calling Tree
 2. Agency Response Team – At Another Site
 3. Director's Executive Assistant
- Duplicates of Incident Specific Forms (Appendix K)
 1. Bomb Threat Report Form
 2. Bomb Threat Evacuation Decision Considerations
 3. Agency Notification Script
 4. Communication Log Form

Conclusion 37

WHY WAS A PLAN FOR NON-PROFIT AGENCIES DEVELOPED?

Incidents such as the bombing of the Muir Federal Building, Columbine, 9-11, and hurricane Katrina have focused significant public, media and government attention on crisis response planning. Government agencies such as Homeland Security, FEMA, state and regional emergency management coordinators, health departments and others have spent significant time and resources to create crisis plans for cities, counties, and states. Grants and other funding have been made available to local emergency government coordinators, to police and fire departments and to schools. Most public elementary, middle and high schools throughout the country have developed crisis response plans. Since Virginia Tech, colleges and universities have begun to develop crisis response plans. Many large businesses have also developed crisis response plans.

Non-profit organizations such as churches, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, YMCAs, YWCAs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, youth camps, Sunday schools, and senior citizen centers have a similar need for crisis response planning. Frequently, they have a significant number of clients at their facilities. Non-profit agencies generally have limited finances and are dependent on donations for the funding of operational costs. For these reasons, non-profit agencies are unlikely to have the available personnel, staff time or funding to devote to the creation of such a plan. In addition, the need of non-profit agencies to have a crisis response plan has gone mainly unnoticed by government funding sources.

Yet, the need of each non-profit agency to have such a plan is undeniable. It is this unmet need that generated the idea of the development of a basic plan that non-profit agencies could secure at no cost and could adapt to meet their individual circumstances. The basic crisis response plan/template is available, free of charge, on-line to non-profit agencies at www.hollyhartconsulting.com under the "Resource" link. Non-profit agencies can download the document and use it as a base from which to develop their own plan individualized to meet their needs. The document is on-line in the form of a word document so that all or any part of the plan can be downloaded easily and revised to fit an individual agency. Agencies are strongly advised to meet with their local police, fire and/or emergency government personnel to adapt the on-line crisis response plan to fit their circumstances. Agencies that choose to use all or parts of the plan or ideas from this explanation document assume all liability for the download and/or use of the material.

WHY DOES MY AGENCY NEED A CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN?

Many people and agencies will ask, “Why do we need a crisis response plan?” A big catastrophic event is not going to happen here. Unfortunately, people at the Muir Federal Building probably felt the same way. People at Columbine also probably thought that a major crisis would never happen at their school. It is human nature to believe that bad things won’t happen, or if they do, that they will happen in other places. Indeed, most of the time those rationales are true. Fortunately, a major crisis is a rare event. For example, if you are a principal of a school in the United States, you are more likely to win the lottery than to be in charge of the site of school shooting. However, if you are the unlucky one, having a plan can save lives and help clients, volunteers and staff through a difficult time.

In addition, many of the events described in the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan are events that you are likely to encounter. An event such as an injury of a staff person, volunteer or client is one likely scenario. Someone becoming ill is another highly probable event. Preparation and planning to effectively handle these events is important to the people you serve and to the agency that you represent.

Another reason for you to develop a crisis response plan is to ensure that if a crisis occurs, you and your agency will have a say over the decisions that affect your agency, clients, staff and volunteers. If a crisis occurs and you do not have an acceptable plan in place, emergency government personnel will make the decisions for you. For example, if you have not selected a carefully thought out evacuation site, they will select a site and evacuate your people to it.

CASE STUDY

IT CAN HAPPEN

Another way to explain the need for a crisis response plan is to tell a story, a true story. In the school district in which I worked, no one thought that there was a need for such a plan. However, a new superintendent arrived. He had experienced an incident in his former district that led him to believe that every school district needed to be prepared for a variety of possibilities. At the superintendent's request, a crisis response plan was developed by this author and a team of school personnel, firemen, police officers, and other emergency government professionals. Trainings were held for all staff in the district including teachers, aids, secretaries, cooks, and custodians.

Within weeks of the last training session, a call was received shortly after lunch at the main office. The call came in on the Friday prior to the Labor Day weekend. The caller stated that multiple bombs had been placed in several buildings throughout the district. The caller stated that the bombs would detonate in less than two hours and that he was calling so that children would not be injured this time. The recent Muir Federal Building experience had heightened the level of concern for bomb threats throughout the country. After consultation with the police and fire departments and because of the wording of the message and age of the caller, the decision was made to evacuate all district buildings. The crisis response plan was implemented. The order was given to evacuate the twenty two buildings and ten thousand plus students and staff. The evacuation included elementary, middle and high schools, the main administration building and the maintenance building.

The school district Agency Crisis Response Team assembled at their predetermined evacuation site, which was city hall. Immediately, police and fire personnel joined the district team at city hall. The school, police, and fire personnel worked as a team under the chief of police who was selected to serve as the incident commander. (The incident commander is the highest ranking police or fire person in the command center.)

All school buildings were notified and directed to move immediately to their evacuation sites. Each Site Crisis Response Team evacuated its building in accordance with its plan. Public notices went out to parents and the community announcing the evacuation and the closing of the schools. Buses were notified, but they were not available for two to two and a half hours because drivers could not be called in early. Crisis Response Site Teams managed students at the evacuation sites until a responsible adult arrived for a child or until busses which had been rerouted to the evacuation sites arrived at their normal pick up times. Staff remained until all students were gone, and the Site Team remained until all staff persons were on their way

home. The Head of the Response Team at each site called the central command center to notify the incident commander when all students and staff at their evacuation site were accounted for and released safely to an adult, to their normal bus or to their home. At the end of the day, all students and staff had been safely evacuated and returned to their families. The Agency Crisis Response Team and police/fire incident command established a process for searching the buildings so that school could reopen the following Tuesday. The Agency Team and Incident Command Team debriefed that afternoon and evening, and on the following Tuesday, when people returned from vacation, the Site Teams also were debriefed. Plans were reviewed and improved based on the evacuation experience.

After the bomb threat event at the school district, several other area facilities received threats. Since explosive devices were not found at the schools, evacuations were not conducted at those sites. Eventually, the perpetrator was apprehended. However, he did not give up easily, but instead shot it out with the FBI and police who had tracked him down. He was found mentally incompetent to stand trial and sent to a mental institution where, to my knowledge, he remains today.

No one at the school district thought that they would be involved in the largest school evacuation in the history of the state. Everyone was grateful that the superintendent had the foresight to insist that a plan be developed to ensure the safety of the students and staff.

Hopefully, you will never use your plan. However, if the need arises, spending the time up front to plan and to establish a relationship with the police, fire, health and other emergency government personnel will make all of the difference.

WHY WAS THIS “TIPS” MINI-BOOK WRITTEN?

As I developed the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan, shared it with others and asked for feedback, I found that people had many questions. The first question was usually, “Why would a non-profit agency need a plan like this? Another common question was, “Why are decisions made by a team at the site and not by the main office of the agency? However, the most frequent questions clustered around a few central themes. These themes included: 1) How is the Crisis Response Plan organized? 2) Why is it organized that way? 3) Why did you make certain suggestions such as raising a red flag during an evacuation?”

After I reviewed these questions, I realized that when I gave training presentations about crisis planning and about the crisis plan document, I had provided the answers to those questions in my presentation. After several years of presenting on the topic, I had refined the training to include answers to the most frequently asked questions. Providing access to this Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan on-line would mean that many organizations would download and adapt the plan without receiving the information provided in the training presentations. Therefore, I decided to write this “Tips” document to provide the information that would answer the most frequently raised concerns and questions about the plan that had been covered in those training sessions.

The on-line “Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan” document provides a non-profit agency with the “what needs to be considered or done” before, during and after a crisis and also provides suggestions concerning “how” those things might be done. The “Tips” document, by comparison, explains “why” actions are suggested. The “Tips” document explains the logic and reasoning behind the suggestions provided in the Crisis Response Plan so that directors, staff and volunteers understand both the bigger picture and the details to help determine what to include in their plan. It is hoped that providing the explanation of why an action is suggested will help an agency make thoughtful decisions as it adapts the plan to serve and protect its clients, volunteers staff and the agency. I hope that the “Tips” document will assist you as you review the plan, make your decision whether to use all or parts of it and/or adapt it to fit your organization.

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE OF THE NON-PROFIT CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

The on-line Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan is designed to serve as a template to adapt to your local conditions. The plan is based on several assumptions. First, it is assumed that the police, fire, emergency government, health department and/or other government emergency personnel such as the FBI, FEMA, or ATF will deal with the incident itself whether the incident involves a fire, shooter, illness, quarantine, death, etc. All of these government agencies have preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery plans that have been carefully developed and tested through drill, practice and actual use. They are trained to handle the actual crisis. The Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan and this "Tips" document do not address the functions of these government agencies. Instead, they address the preparation and response of the non-profit agency so that it can assist its clients, volunteers, visitors and staff with the issues not normally taken care of by government emergency response personnel. These issues are not part of the police, fire, etc, response, yet, are vital to ensuring the welfare of the agency and its clients, volunteers and staff.

The Crisis Response Plan contains only a few **required actions/responses** for staff and/or members of the Non Profit Agency's Site Crisis Response Team.

Staff members and volunteers are expected to:

- Attend crisis intervention training
- Review frequently the "Staff Guidelines"
- Have a list of the clients in their care available at all times
- Call 911 when appropriate
- Notify the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team if an incident occurs
- Follow the direction of the Site Crisis Response Team and/or government agency incident commander

Site Crisis Response Team Members are expected to:

- Call 911 if it has not been done
- Handle matters related to the well being of clients, staff, and visitors
- Complete the Crisis Response Plan "Yearly Up-Date" pages, calling trees and floor plans
- Refresh the first aid kit
- Update items in the Go-Pack

- Check that a copy of the agency's Crisis Response Plan is available in three pre-determined locations at each agency site
- Send a copy of the yearly paperwork to the main office if the agency has multiple sites
- Check that a copy of the agency's Crisis Response Plan is at the home of the Head of each Site Team and of the agency's Executive Director/CEO
- Provide a copy of the agency's Crisis Response Plan to the police/fire central incident command or emergency government coordinator, if they want one
- Hold yearly drills and training
- Complete appropriate reports and paperwork after an incident
- Remain calm, alert and professional during the crisis and participate in debriefing activities

All other aspects of the plan are suggestions to consider when responding to a crisis situation. The plan was developed based on the premise that the best decisions are made by personnel closest to the incident who know the people and circumstances. It is assumed that personnel closest to the incident can best assess events as they unfold and respond immediately to the situation before them. The specific situation may require skipping some suggested responses and/or adding others. The plan is designed to be implemented from the bottom up, not from the top down. It assumes that good people will make good professional decisions if given proper training and the authority to do what needs to be done.

The plan is designed to be revised to meet local needs and to be duplicated and assembled in a three ring binder. Pages should be run single sided, not back to back, so that pages can be torn out, handed to team members, copied and/or used as a reference document to ensure that important actions/considerations are not missed in the heat of the moment. The cover of the binder should be of brightly colored paper and should contain a copy of the title page of the Crisis Response Plan. The edge of the binder should be of a similar colored paper and should be labeled "CRISIS PLAN." The title page should be edited to include the name of the Agency and the name of the specific site if the agency has multiple locations. The color used for the cover and binding of the plan should only be used for copies of the Crisis Response Plan so that the binder containing the plan can be easily located during a crisis. The eight sections of the plan should be divided with tabs for ease of use. The binders should be placed in three separate locations in three different parts of the agency so that if an incident requires avoiding a section of the building, a copy of the plan will still be accessible. One of the three copies should be in the Go-Pack ready to leave the building in the event of an evacuation. A copy of the plan should be offered to the local emergency government coordinator and/or the police/fire incident commander so that they have immediate access to the floor plans, locations of important items, and calling trees.

Finally, agency personnel should remember that a crisis response plan is like a fire extinguisher. Hopefully it will never be used. In reality, most fire extinguishers are never used. However, when the need arises, it is crucial that it is in excellent working order and that people have the knowledge and training to use it properly.

COMPONENTS OF THE NON-PROFIT CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

The plan has several main components. After the introductory materials, the sections are arranged in the order that they would be used. Sections two through six are designed to be used by the site/location of the crisis. They include: pages that should be updated at each site at the start of each year, pages to give to and review with all staff and volunteers at least once a year, instructions for the Site Crisis Response Team during an event at their site/location, and instructions for handling specific types of incidents. The next section (section seven) contains instructions for the team at the main office of a multi site agency so that they can assist the site/location of the incident and keep other agency locations informed. Section seven is not used if the agency only has one site/location. The last section, section eight, contains appendices that might be useful during or after an event. A list of the sections and their main contents is provided below for reference.

Introduction - Section One

- Letters of introduction
- The history and philosophy behind of the plan
- A list of the people who contributed to the plan

Site Specific Pages to Update Yearly – Section Two

- A list of team members and key locations to be used during a crisis
- The location of manuals and supplies needed during a crisis
- A list of the telephone numbers of community agencies and businesses that may be of assistance during a crisis
- A telephone tree containing the numbers of all staff and a separate telephone tree containing the numbers of all volunteers
- A list of telephone numbers of the main office's administrators and the main office secretary
- Floor plans of the site/location

Site Crisis Response Team Yearly Duties – Section Three

- A list of duties to be completed at the start of each year by the top management person at each agency site/location
- A list of duties to be completed at the start of each year by the secretary or receptionist at each agency site/location

Staff Guideline and Training Sheets – Section Four

- Instructions for the three basic responses expected of all staff and volunteers during a crisis
- Instructions for the “First Responder” at the scene of a crisis
- A “Quick Reference Sheet” to use when conducting yearly staff training and for staff to refer to during a crisis

Duties of the Site Crisis Response Team during a Crisis at Their Site – Section Five

- Duties of the Head of the Crisis Response Team During a Crisis
- Duties of the Site Crisis Response Team during a crisis at their site/location
- Duties of the Site Crisis Response Team member in charge of clients and volunteers, the member in charge of staff and the public and the member in charge of visitors during a crisis at their site/location
- Duties of the secretary, custodian/parking lot attendant, nurse and/or first aid trained responders and food service personnel during a crisis at their site/location

Instructions for Specific Events or Incidents – Section Six

- Incident Specific instructions to assist the Site Crisis Response Team and staff as they deal with a specific type of crisis at their location/site

Duties of the Main Office of a Multiple Site Agency When Assisting the Site Crisis Response Team at another Agency Site/Location – Section Seven

- Telephone numbers of the main office administrators, including the executive director
- A telephone tree of the Main Office Response Team. (This team assists the Site Crisis Response Team members who are at the site/location of the crisis.)
- Yearly duties to be completed by the main office of the agency to be sure that all agency sites/locations (including the main office) have a Site Crisis Response Team in place and that all yearly paperwork has been completed at each site/location
- A fill in the blank sheet to be used by the person at the main office taking the first call from the site/location of the crisis.

- Instructions for specific members of the Agency Main Office Crisis Response Team so that they can assist the Team at the site/location of the incident and maintain the smooth function of the rest of the organization
- Instructions for the agency's main office's business manager during a crisis at another site/location of the agency
- Instructions for the administrative assistant or secretary of the executive director during a crisis at another site/location of the agency
- A script to use to communicate information to all sites/locations of the agency and to board members.
- A "Communication Log" form to ensure the accurate transfer of information from person to person and location to location

Appendices - Section Eight

- Appendices A-G include additional information not provided within the main sections of the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan that may be helpful during a crisis
- Appendices H-K contain duplicates of forms which are filled out yearly or which could be useful to the Site or Agency Crisis Response Team during a crisis

SITE SPECIFIC PAGES/PAPERWORK TO UP-DATE YEARLY

The initial component of the Crisis Response Plan is a group of pages that should be up-dated yearly at each individual site. The first of these pages is a list of **Site Crisis Response Team members** including their work and home phone numbers and a list of the key **locations to be utilized during a crisis**. If the agency has limited personnel, one person may need to cover several functions on the Site Crisis Response Team. The team structure is designed so that if a member of the team is not present or is not available, the team members each move up a position. Team members, therefore, must be familiar with the duties of the positions above them on the team list. Members of the team should be selected for their knowledge, ability to remain calm during a crisis, maintain confidentiality and work as a team. If possible, try not to put staff on the team who would be needed to assist clients during the emergency. If the agency has a custodian, he/she should be included as an additional team member who would be available to assist government emergency personnel if it becomes necessary to shut down electrical and other utilities or mechanical systems. If the agency does not have a custodian, a member of the staff who is generally on site should familiarize him/herself with tasks such as how to shut off water, electricity, gas, heat, air circulation systems, etc.

The “Crisis Team and Locations” page also includes key locations to be used during an emergency. Careful thought should be given to selecting these locations. Consider your potential needs at each site and select a site that best meets your needs. The alternate sites should be located in another area or another part of the building so that if the first locations are not available because they are part of the incident, the alternate locations can function nearly as well. Obviously, the location of the incident command center is critical as are the locations of the evacuation sites. Be sure to get the approval from any facility that you plan to use as an evacuation site. If no suitable evacuation site is available, consider options such as requesting that the governmental agency’s incident commander secure city or school buses to serve as a temporary “evacuation site.” Be sure that the telephone center location has sufficient landline or cell capacity to handle your needs. (Remember that cell phone lines are frequently overloaded during a crisis so try to have at least one land line available. The government agency incident commander can convert this line to an unlisted number, if necessary, to ensure that communication is maintained.)

The next section to be updated yearly is the “**Location of Emergency Manuals and Supplies**” page. Be sure to keep MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) binders up to date and place them next to the Crisis Response Plan binder in the custodian’s office or main office. MSDS binders should also have a distinctive label so that they are easily accessible to the Site Crisis Response Team and emergency personnel from responding government agencies.

It is essential that the list of **Community Emergency Telephone Numbers** is kept up to date and reviewed at least yearly. Check with your 911 call center to determine if there is a delay in ring and pick up time. Some areas have a 5-10 second delay time between dialing the last digit and the caller hearing the first ring. The 911 operator hears the ring, but there can be a delay in the caller hearing the ring. If this is true in your area, be sure to train all staff and volunteers to wait at least 15 seconds to hear the ring. (Suggest that they count “one thousand one, one thousand two,” etc.) If they hang up and continue to dial again and again, they will not get through. If it is necessary to dial a number to secure an outside line (such as dialing an “8” or a “9”), be sure that all staff and volunteers are trained to do so and include that instruction on the cover of the Crisis Response Plan binder.

The **Agency Administration Numbers** page is provided to ensure rapid notification of the appropriate agency personnel. The list of agency administrators and their home and cell phone numbers should be kept up to date. Calling trees should be developed at the site(s) and agency main office if the agency has multiple sites. The calling trees should include all staff and volunteers so that you can rapidly communicate important information after normal work hours. (Calling trees may take up several pages in the manual.) Separate trees are recommended for staff and volunteers so that you can choose whether to activate one or both of the trees. Each person in the calling tree should have no more than three or four numbers to call to ensure the speedy contact of all persons. If a caller cannot reach a person on their section of the tree, the first caller should make his/her own calls and also the calls that the person who could not be contacted would have made. A code word should be selected and be used to verify that the call is legitimate. The code word should have some meaning for all staff so that it can easily be remembered.

Floor Plans should be updated as appropriate and should include the locations of electrical panels, air handling shut down switches, fire extinguishers, chemical storage areas, evacuation routes, tornado shelters, and any other information which would be of assistance to government emergency personnel during a crisis. Evacuation routes should be posted in each room of the agency.

Copies of all pages of this section of the Crisis Response Plan should be **provided to the central office** of the agency **and** to the fire/police **incident command** and/or emergency government coordinator if they would like a copy. This allows faster response.

**STAFF GUIDELINES
AND
FIRST RESPONDER-STAFF/VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS**

These pages are to be copied, given to all staff and reviewed with all staff on a yearly basis. (It is suggested that the pages be run on card stock of the same color as the cover and binding of the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan binder so staff can easily locate them.) These pages contain the responsibilities of staff and volunteers who are not serving as members of the Site Crisis Response Team. All staff and/or volunteers are responsible for: frequently reviewing the information on these pages, having these pages readily accessible and having a list with them at all times of clients and volunteers specifically in their charge (for example on a field trip or in an activity they supervise.)

The **Staff Guidelines** with the Evacuate, Secure, and Hold directives constitute the three standard crisis responses required of staff, volunteers and clients. When any of these directives is given, the reason for the directive should be clearly stated. Straight forward instructions/explanations are recommended instead of code words or made up scenarios. Codes and made up scenarios usually cause confusion. If you choose not to state the facts, clients and staff may not take the situation seriously. In addition, clients are usually smart enough to understand the code or story and figure out what is really happening anyway. All staff should be frequently reminded that any communications over two way communication devices may be intercepted and could appear in the media.

EVACUATE

The evacuate directive should be given in the event of a fire, hazardous material spill, bomb threat or another situation which would make removal of the clients and staff to an alternate site the safest option. Evacuations always entail some risk of injury so they should be practiced, and they should only be implemented when necessary. Use the “Evacuation Decision Considerations” guide to assist you as you make your decision of whether or not to evacuate. Be sure not to evacuate people through the site of the fire, hazardous spill, etc. Block off unsafe areas and/or redirect clients around them. Evacuations should be to the predetermined site or alternate site listed on the Crisis Team and Locations page found previously in this manual. Going to a predetermined site allows other agency personnel, family members of

clients and staff to know where to locate you and ensures a safe, carefully thought out evacuation site. The directions on the Staff Guideline page of the manual should be followed. Exiting immediately is called for in an evacuation. Staff, volunteers and clients can take things within reach, but they should not go to another location to retrieve belongings. They should “grab and go.” They should not try to retrieve items or coats unless they are within easy reach no matter what the item is or what the weather conditions are. Evacuate means exit immediately. It is suggested that lights be turned out as they evacuate a room to let fire fighters and other emergency personnel know that the room is, to the best of their knowledge, “cleared.” Asking staff to follow the last person out, instead of leading the group, decreases the possibility that someone (especially a small child) might panic and/or hide and be left behind. The act of raising the red evacuation “flag” is done to warn people not to enter/reenter the facility. The red evacuation flag should be placed below the United States’ flag and your state flag out of respect for those symbols. If you do not have a flag pole, you could tie the red “flag” to the front door handle. Setting up a client check out procedure ensures that young clients are safely in the hands of appropriate adults and that other clients are with supportive family and/or friends to help them deal with the situation they have just experienced.

SECURE

The **secure** directive is most frequently given when a violent or potentially violent intruder is on site. The main concern in this type of situation is to remain safe and to escape if it is feasible to do so.

During a secure it is recommended that no one be released (even to the bathroom) to ensure everyone’s safety and to reduce the potential of the intruder gaining access to the room you are in. Asking clients not to use electronic devices is suggested to keep lines open, to prevent panic and to reduce the potential of false information unintentionally given by the media further upsetting the clients in your care. Judgment must be used on this item based on the situation.

It is important for staff to remain calm and set an example for clients during a secure. It is also important to remain as quiet as possible so a perpetrator does not follow the sound of voices coming from the room. Blockading the door with whatever is available is suggested to prevent or slow entry by the perpetrator. Pull shades and keep everyone away from doors, windows and other areas where shots could enter.

HOLD

A **hold** is used in situations which require staff or government emergency personnel to quickly complete tasks and to limit movement of clients, volunteers and/or staff. Movement of clients, volunteers or staff could impede the efficiency of the responders or could put clients and/or staff in physical or emotional danger. An example of this type of situation would be holding clients and/or staff in place so that EMT's can treat a heart attack or traffic accident victim. The hold would be instituted until the EMT's had completed their work and transported the victim. Another time a hold might be used would be when you need to provide information to clients and staff about an incident before the clients move to another area of the facility or leave for the day. In this situation, the hold would allow you to provide accurate information and allow time for questions.

SITE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

YEARLY DUTIES

This section of the plan is composed of two parts: 1) lists of duties which should be completed at least once a year and which are needed to keep the plan current and 2) duties of specific Site Crisis Response Team members during a crisis. The **Yearly Duties of the Site Director** page is self explanatory. However, a leader leads by example. Therefore, it is critical that the site director complete the listed tasks in a timely manner and, by doing so, model the importance of the plan to all staff and volunteers. Timely completion of these tasks also ensures that the site is ready for an emergency. The Head of the Site Crisis Response Team should be sure that planning activities include specific plans for all clients, volunteers and staff with disabilities. Accommodation of disabled clients, volunteers and/or staff should be considered in all aspects of planning.

Similarly, the tasks on the **Yearly Duties—Secretary** page must be completed in a timely fashion for the implementation of the plan to be successful. The Go-Pack is an essential component of the plan. The Go-Pack can most easily be housed in a roll out box or cart with a handle. (These boxes/carts are available at most home improvement or office supply stores.) The Go-Pack should be stored at the desk of a secretary or receptionist who is generally present during client hours and who is near a main exit. The Go-Pack should be visible so that anyone could grab it on the way out of the door in the event of an evacuation or during a move to a command center. The contents of the Go-Pack can be altered to fit the needs of the agency and its clientele.

The red evacuation flag is simply a strip of red material that can be raised on a flag pole or placed on the handle of the main door to indicate to staff that it is not safe to enter/reenter the building. (The red flag should never be raised above the United States or state flag.)

Client rosters, contact information and health release of information forms should be kept in a plastic bag or box in the Go-Pack so that they cannot be water damaged. Health information release forms are an essential item in the Go-Pack. Hospitals are not allowed to release information to the agency about clients, staff or volunteers unless these forms have been completed and are sent or faxed to the health care provider. (Forms should be optional for staff and volunteers.)

Staff and volunteers should be given the option of placing a medical release form, and information related to medications, and medical conditions, etc. in a sealed envelope. These envelopes should be maintained alphabetically in a water proof package in the Go-Pack. The envelopes can be given to EMTs prior to transport. If clients or staff have conditions that are life threatening when they do not have their medications, plans should be developed to ensure that these medications are taken out during an evacuation. (An example would be an epinephrine (EPI) pen.) The ten packs of life savers are included in the Go-Pack to ensure that diabetic clients, volunteers or staff could manage for a short period of time by ingesting the life savers.

SITE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM DUTIES DURING A CRISIS AT THE SITE

The next section of the plan lists **team and individual team member's duties during an actual crisis** at their site. Each position on the team as listed on the Crisis Team and Location page has specific duties to perform during and after a crisis. The **Head of the Response Team** sets the pace for the response. How he/she responds will determine the confidence that clients, staff and volunteers have in the way the situation is handled. The duties of the Head of the Site Team include the suggestion that confidential agency and client records be locked up immediately at the beginning of a crisis. This action is recommended to limit access to important records during the crisis to designated members of the team. The suggestion is included because some chaos usually accompanies a crisis. Well intentioned staff or volunteers may access and remove records and, then, all of the necessary records might not be available to the team when needed. Also, confidentiality and the potential loss of records during the crisis are important reasons to immediately secure vital records.

Appointing a key person to serve as liaison to the government agency incident commander and to be at his/her disposal is critical. Assisting in the process of ending the crisis is the first duty of the team. **Understanding that the fire, police or other government incident commander is in charge of and is ultimately responsible for handling the crisis event** is the first rule of any crisis response. This is no time for turf wars. They are trained. This is their job. Help them do it. Good communication between the incident commander and agency personnel is vital.

It is recommended you do not leave an injured person until a family member has arrived at the hospital. If **clients, volunteers or staff members are transported to the hospital** from your site, send one adult with the person in the ambulance if that is allowed. Have another adult follow in a separate car. The second staff person follows the ambulance in a separate vehicle so that both staff members have transportation back to the facility and/or their vehicles.

When the **transport of multiple injured persons** to the hospital occurs, tape the name of each person on their clothing. This is done to help hospital personnel identify each victim. Also, send the health information from the Go-Pack with each transported person, if possible. If it is not possible to do so, fax or deliver that information to the hospital as soon as it can be secured.

Experience suggests that it is best to establish the **media communication** site away from the incident and away from affected clients and staff. It is the media's job to get the story. It is the job of the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team and the Crisis Response Team members to assist with handling the crisis and to protect the clients, volunteers and staff of the agency. Select one spokesperson (usually the Agency Director or Head of the Site Crisis Response Team.) to communicate with the media. Clarify with the government agency incident commander who will speak about what and when announcements will be made. It is important to review the media guidelines presented later in this plan prior to and during a crisis.

All staff and volunteers directly involved in an incident should prepare a **written report** containing their understanding of what occurred as soon as practical and give it to the Head of the Site Team. It is best if reports are written before people talk to each other so that their memory of the event will not be altered by the comments of others. Agency accident report and insurance forms should be completed in a timely manner and sent to the appropriate agency personnel.

Debriefing of the Site Crisis Response Team is critical to helping members of the team deal with the situation and their emotions surrounding it. If the incident is significant, it is recommended that a trained facilitator lead the debriefing. Consider inviting the personnel of the government agencies who handled the crisis to one or more of the debriefing sessions. They may have information or insights to add. They also may need to talk through the events. During the debriefing, persons who need support and or counseling should be identified and connected to the appropriate community resource(s). Finally, use the debriefing process to make a list of things that would improve the plan and revise the plan accordingly.

Communication through the media, telephone banks, letters, emails, web sites, text messaging, etc. are methods of ensuring that clients, volunteers, staff, affected families, and the community receive accurate and up to date information. Such communications are also an important means of controlling rumors.

Detailed plans should be developed for the **first day/time the agency is open after the crisis**. Determine if additional staff/volunteers are needed to support clients and/or staff. Be prepared to handle additional and unexpected issues. Meet with staff prior to opening, provide information to them, answer their questions, and provide training on how they should handle clients. Consider meeting with clients at the start of the day to discuss the situation and their feelings/concerns. If meetings are held with clients, it is suggested that the meetings be held in small manageable groups in order to provide the needed support and in order to keep emotions from escalating. Establish a process for identifying clients, volunteers and staff who are struggling and a referral process to offer them assistance. All of these actions are designed

to assist people as they try to handle the situation and will help the agency return to normal more quickly.

The next part of this section covers specific **duties of the Site Crisis Response Team members**. These pages can be torn out and handed to an available person if the original team member is not available. Insuring the immediate safety of clients, volunteers and staff and the safe delivery of the clients to appropriate adults/family is of primary importance. These two factors will be the primary measures of whether or not the implementation of the Crisis Response Plan is considered successful. **The Supervisor of Clients** is charged with ensuring the safety of and on-going support of clients. Clients should be removed from the Incident Command Center, the Site Response/Communication Center and the telephone bank area so that these locations can operate efficiently. **The Supervisor of Staff/Volunteers** oversees the incoming communication including the telephone bank during the crisis, attempts to verify incoming communication, passes incoming communication to the incident command center, and supports the staff and volunteers during and after the crisis. The role of the **Secretary** is to directly support the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team. The functions of the **Custodian/Parking Lot Attendants, Nurse/Certified First Aid Responder**, are spelled out in the plan. The lead custodian or person familiar with mechanical and electrical systems, etc. should assist the government agency incident commander as needed. When the members of the Site Crisis Response Team have finished their duties as listed in the crisis response plan document, they should report back to the incident command center and assist as directed by the incident commander and/or Head of the Site Crisis Response Team.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF INCIDENTS

Each item in this section provides special considerations for the type of crisis listed. The definition of "crisis" used to determine what to address in this section was broad and included anything that might put the clients, volunteers and/or staff in physical or emotional danger or that could disrupt the smooth functioning of the agency. Additions will be made to this section over time as agencies that use the plan send suggestions for additions and/or improvements. The following section discusses issues related to some potential incidents.

The pages related to **Abuse-Neglect-Sexual Assault of a Child** are specific to Wisconsin law. If your agency is located in another state, it will be necessary to review the law(s) of your state to determine your legal responsibilities. Regardless of where your agency is located, you will need to fill in the blanks for the Department of Human Services' telephone numbers. Then, your agency's board will need to set policies which meet the requirements of your state's law. The crucial decision is to determine if your agency's policy will require employees to report if your state law does not list them as mandatory reporters. You must also determine the age of consent/adulthood in your state to determine your right to report issues related to adults. Confidentiality issues may apply to reports of abuse/assault of an adult. Adults generally have the right to report or to refuse to report abuse and/or assault if they are mentally competent.

Bomb threats involve many considerations. The "Bomb Threat Report" form is designed to be placed at each main incoming telephone line. If a bomb threat is received, the person receiving the threat should try to fill the form out immediately. It is best if it is filled out prior to talking to others so that his/her memories are not altered by the comments of others. The "Evacuation Decision Considerations" pages are designed to help make a quick but thoughtful evacuation decision when the police department, fire department or other government agency cannot or does not make the decision for you. "Search Instructions" are provided to assist you if governmental agency personnel are unable to conduct the search. The level of search will be determined by the level of threat. Obviously, if a bomb is found, government personnel will determine the level of the search and conduct the search. In a low level threat situation, (for example a bomb threat call when the call was obviously made by a young child) you may choose to conduct a low level search. Remember, staff should not be required to assist in a search. The decision to participate should be voluntary. Requiring people to assist would not achieve the desired result and could involve liability and/or union issues. Cell phones and other electronic devices should not be used during a bomb threat because some detonators can be set off by a cell phone signal. Decisions related to whether or not to send staff, volunteers and/or clients home and whether or not to close the agency will be made by the Head of the

Site Crisis Response Team. If possible the decision to close the agency should be made in consultation with the agency director.

When dealing with a possible **food borne illness**, you should secure the utensils, food, and garbage so that the health department will be able to conduct tests to determine the cause of the outbreak. The tests may indicate that the outbreak was not related to the food served at the agency, or the tests may pin point the cause and prevent a similar outbreak.

During a **hazardous material spill**, your first concern is to prevent or minimize the damage to clients, volunteers and staff. Shutting down air handling systems can prevent the spread of fumes. Whether or not to pull the fire alarm should be determined by whether the regular evacuation routes would take some people through the spill site, the type of spill, and the toxicity of the spill.

The key to dealing with a **hostage situation** is to remain calm and not to engage in a power struggle. Dealing with a hostage taker is similar to dealing with a distraught/out of control person, but the stakes are higher. Situations of this type almost always include a need of the perpetrator for power and control. Your body language, words, tone of voice and volume are all important factors that can escalate or deescalate the situation. Listen and try to respond to the person with empathy. Talk softly. Stay out of the person's physical space. Lean or step back while talking rather than moving toward the person. These actions will communicate to the person that you are not challenging their power. Try to convince the person to release some or all of the hostages. Follow the directions of government agency personnel during and after the situation. They are trained to handle situations of this type. Help parents, family members and others understand that revealing or publishing information may jeopardize the safety of the hostages or jeopardize future legal proceedings. Work with government responders to determine what information should be released and when it should be released. Fear and feelings of things being out of control are normal responses during and after this type of situation. Use all available lines of communication after the incident is resolved to provide approved information to concerned parties and to the public to help dispel their fear.

Issues related to **infectious diseases** require assistance from the Health Department. Establish a good relationship with them prior to a situation. Follow their instructions. They are the experts. Use other sections of the plan such as how to relate to the media as appropriate. In this type of situation, over communication with clients, parents/guardians, volunteers and staff is preferable to insufficient communication. Rumor control strategies, a dedicated phone line and communication on the agency web site should all be beneficial.

Injury and illness are probably the most frequently encountered issues. Putting a name/label on each injured person is suggested to assist hospital staff and allow them to more quickly

provide appropriate treatment. Transporting a sick or injured client, volunteer or staff member in an agency or personal vehicle should only be done in extreme circumstances and if an ambulance cannot reach the site. Issues of liability must be considered. Transporting in an agency or personnel vehicle is not advised because it is impossible to know the extent of a person's injuries or other health concerns which could become an issue during transport. Except in extreme instances, people should be transported by an ambulance. If a parent/guardian of a minor client or a friend of an adult client, volunteer or staff person is present, and the client prefers to have them transport, a judgment call is required. (Ask yourself, "Is the person capable of making a rational decision related to transport based on his/her physical condition?" and "What is our potential liability?") Whenever there is doubt in these situations, it is recommended that you call 911. When calling for assistance, provide specific and detailed directions to the 911 dispatcher so that the ambulance can come to the correct location/entrance. Accurate communication can save crucial time. Sending someone outside to greet the ambulance helps secure assistance more quickly. If a client, volunteer or staff person is transported by ambulance, have two staff accompany him/her to the hospital. One person should ride in the ambulance, if possible, and the other person should follow in another vehicle. (The second vehicle provides transportation back to the agency for both staff members.) Staff should remain with the client, volunteer or staff person until a family member or another responsible person arrives. Do not leave an injured or seriously ill person alone at a medical facility. Wait until adequate support arrives.

In the case of **severe injury or death** of a client, volunteer or staff person which occurs on the agency's site or at an agency activity, follow the instructions for "Injury or Illness" presented in the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan on the preceding pages. The first thing that needs to be done in the event of injury or illness is to secure appropriate treatment for the person. After medical care or confirmation of death has been secured, follow the instructions in this section of the Crisis Response Plan. For severe injuries or deaths that do not occur on-site, begin with these instructions. Good judgment, quality leadership, teamwork, and the utilization of area professionals will help guide the team through this difficult time.

Sharing information with staff, volunteers, clients, their families and/or the community is important. However, maintaining confidentiality is also important and failure to do so may have legal consequences. An appropriate balance between confidentiality and sharing information is a juggling act. Confidentiality is important to the persons involved and to the reputation of the agency. Verification of information is a vital element of this part of the plan. Accuracy must be established and double checked. Misinformation can cause emotional distress and complicate potential future legal proceedings. Take into consideration the feeling of family members as to what information to release. However, giving family members veto power over what items to release is rarely good practice. It is important to consider the impact

of information on the agency, clients, staff and volunteers. The recommendation to establish both a primary and alternate family contact is made to increase the probability of reaching an appropriate person to confirm information, to agree to the release of information or to notify the family of information about to be released.

Situations of this type require strong and competent leadership. People need to feel that someone is in charge and that the situation is under control. Emotions usually are running high. It can be tempting for the team and its leader to give over agency decisions to family members or other agencies. It is recommended that the agency stay in charge of agency decisions to provide the maximum support and leadership to clients; volunteers; staff; the affected family; families of other clients, volunteers and staff; and the community. Meet the family at their home or another non-agency site. The family needs to grieve and go through the stages of grieving. These needs are best met off site so that they do not intensify the emotions of other clients, staff and/or volunteers. In most cases, it is recommended that visitation and memorial services be held at another site for the same reasons.

The crisis response plan suggests writing out all announcements to the press and staff so that they are accurate and carefully thought out. Writing out communication also provides documentation, ensures that wording is sensitive to the feelings of all concerned and ensures that potential legal proceedings are not compromised.

Meeting with staff before clients arrive is always advised if it is possible to do so. The purpose of this meeting is to provide accurate information, dispel rumors, provide the staff with strategies for talking with clients about the event, and provide a safe place for staff to deal with their concerns and emotions. A Site Crisis Response Team member should monitor staff responses and actions during the meeting to determine if any staff members are in need of additional support or if they should not work with clients for a short period of time while they deal with their own response to the incident. If you cannot meet with staff prior to the arrival of clients, train Site Crisis Response Team members and have them meet with small groups of staff, volunteers and clients at the start of the day to share information and to determine the impact of the event on those individuals.

The plan recommends that you continue a normal day and schedule because structure and familiar patterns usually help people cope with stressful situations. Again, this is a judgment call. You know your staff and clients. You know the community. Making this decision as a team will provide various points of view and additional information for consideration. If the team cannot agree, the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team should make the decision, preferably in conjunction with the director, if the agency has multiple sites. Once the decision is made, it is important that the members of the team speak with one voice.

More staff meetings to handle questions and dispel rumors usually are preferable to less. Smaller groups are usually preferable to large groups because emotions are less likely to get out of control and “group think” is not likely to occur.

Staff, volunteers, clients and/or the family of the deceased may request that you lower the flag to half mast. Since only the governor of the state or the president can approve lowering the flag, it is recommended that you do not do lower it. Veteran’s groups may complain publically if you lower the flag to half mast.

Monitoring of clients, volunteers and staff to determine if additional support is necessary is a primary need after such an event. This monitoring should include monitoring of the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team and the Site (and Agency) Crisis Response Team members. They will be taking the brunt of the situation. They often will ignore their own needs while concentrating on the needs of others. Bringing in outside counseling personnel is advised. Outside professionals are removed from the situation and often do not know the parties involved in the incident. Therefore, they can have a more objective point of view. It is especially important that outside counselors work with staff to ensure confidentiality.

Inviting a medical person to attend staff, volunteer, client and/or community meetings and to answer questions can help many people reach a point of acceptance and answer lingering questions. Hearing from an outside expert is often helpful.

Removing the name of a deceased person from all mailing, email, transportation and other lists is very important. It is very difficult for the family if they continue to receive routine agency correspondence addressed to the deceased or to his/her parents or guardian days, weeks, or months after the death.

Asking two staff to secure or handle any personal items of the injured or deceased person ensures that all items are secured and turned over to the family. It also ensures that the agency will not be held responsible for anything that is believed to be missing.

Sensitively removing/retiring objects that remind staff and clients of the loss (such as memorials, personal items, etc) is important. Handling this issue, like many other aspects of responding to a crisis, is a balancing act. Some people may be less ready to move on than others. Yet, the longer things remain in place, the more difficult it is to eventually remove them. Work as a team to make these decisions. Secure outside professional advice if necessary.

Be sensitive to religious, cultural and ethnic traditions and to appropriate etiquette related to death, visitation procedures and the funeral. Provide information on these topics to clients, volunteers and staff, if appropriate. If you believe that clients, volunteers and/or staff may

need support at the visitation or funeral, develop a schedule of volunteers who will be able to support others at these functions. Secure non-agency professionals if necessary.

Debriefing the Site Crisis Response Team after this type of incident is important for several reasons. First, it allows the team to determine how members of the team are doing. Second, it allows the team to work through the situation as a team and talk with other people who shared the same experiences related to the incident. Third, it allows the team to plan for the long term support of some staff, volunteers and clients. Finally, it allows the team to make suggestions for improving the plan and process in case a similar event occurs in the future.

One week, one month, one year, five year, etc. anniversaries of the event may cause additional concerns, responses and/or press coverage. The team should plan for these anniversaries. Convene the Site Crisis Response Team in advance of these anniversaries and develop a plan to reduce the impact and provide needed support. Events might be considered to help mark the anniversary in an appropriate and supportive manner. Anniversaries are usually a concern until clients, volunteers and staff who experienced the event are no longer with the agency and/or until sufficient time has passed.

The “Stages of Grief” chart and the “Developmental Understanding of Death” chart are provided to give information to the Site Crisis Response Team and staff. Additional resources can be secured from professionals in your area. A bibliography of appropriate readings may be helpful to some staff, volunteers and clients. Reading about similar situations and writing or journaling about the experience can be therapeutic for some people.

Dealing with an **intruder**, especially if he or she is armed, is one of the most difficult situations an agency can encounter. In many ways, the response is similar to that of a hostage situation. The first few minutes tell whether the intruder plans to do damage or can be reasoned with. If the person is willing to talk, your chances for a positive outcome are increased. Engaging in a power struggle is likely to result in a negative outcome. Determine whether or not to institute a hold, secure or evacuate. If you can talk the person out of the building, lock down immediately so he/she cannot reenter. Then, institute a “Secure.” Preplanning to ensure that all external and internal doors can be locked is the best preparation for this type of situation. Lock down any way that helps to isolate the intruder and provides greater protection to clients, staff and volunteers.

Incidents involving letters and packages potentially containing such things as anthrax or bombs prompted the inclusion of the **Mail/Package Security** section of the plan. Preplanning and continued vigilance are key to this section of the plan. The suggestions under “Reasons to be Suspicious” should be implemented and continued on a regular basis –not just when an incident has occurred. People who regularly deal with mail should be trained. The true test of

a good crisis response plan is that it becomes a regular way of doing business, not just a reaction to a recent event.

Protests/Demonstrations and Sit-Ins present unique problems for any organization. The suggestions in this plan are designed to ensure that the protesters are heard and that the safety and reputation of the clients, volunteers, staff and agency are maintained. Assessing the make-up of the protesting group should help the Head of the Site Crisis Response Team develop a plan for dealing with the situation. Do not wait to deal with the situation until the entire Site Crisis Response Team can assemble. Someone needs to take charge immediately. If the protesters are on public property, the police may be limited in the assistance that they can provide. Constitutionally guaranteed rights to free speech come into play if the protesters are on public property. Managing press coverage is a concern. Refer to the "Communicating with the Media" section in Appendix A. Listen to the concerns of the protesters and when possible, limit the audience of the protesters. Avoid making promises that you cannot or do not want to keep just to end the situation. The key to handling this type of situation is to evaluate and constantly reevaluate the situation and then to respond accordingly.

Suggestions related to the **Release of a Client** are designed to ensure that all clients are physically released after the event to an appropriate and safe person who will provide the support they need. Advance preparation and information that is updated frequently are essential to success in this area.

The **suicide** section of the plan is designed to help a staff person assess the level of threat and respond accordingly. Remember, you are not a professional counselor, therapist or psychiatrist. This section is designed to assist staff so that they can help secure appropriate assistance for the person in need. Having two people do the assessment and working as a team are suggested to ensure maximum help for the person in need and to limit liability. If a death does occur, refer to the section "Injury-Serious or Death" of the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan.

Responding to a **tornado or severe weather** incident is another section that depends heavily on pre-planning. Acquire and use a weather alert radio or have a weather alert notification set up on the computer or cell phone of the secretary or receptionist whose desk is covered throughout the agency's day. Locating the best areas for shelter and evacuation sites ahead of time ensures a better outcome if an event occurs. Practicing on your state's Tornado Awareness Day or at another time, if your state does not have an awareness day, is recommended.

The individual events sections of the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan not discussed above were considered so clear cut that explanations were not considered.

RESPONSE OF THE MAIN OFFICE OF A MULTIPLE SITE AGENCY TO A CRISIS AT ANOTHER SITE OF THE AGENCY

If a crisis is located at the main office, the main office should activate their Site Crisis Response Team and the sections of the plan entitled “Building Response,” “Crisis Team Duties - Individual Site” and “Instructions for Specific Events” that preceded this section of the Non-Profit Agency Crisis Response Plan. During a crisis at their own location, the main office Site Crisis Response Team functions like any other site with a crisis at their location. If the crisis is at a location other than the main office, the main office team would use this section of the Crisis Response Plan. This section of the plan is designed so that the main office can assist the Site Crisis Response Team that has the crisis event at its location and so that they can provide information and support to agency sites not involved in the crisis. Therefore, each year, the main office creates two sets of paper work, one to handle a crisis at their site and one to assist another site that has a crisis. If the agency has only one site, then, this section of the crisis response plan is not needed. Finally, the team from the main agency used to assist a Site Crisis Response Team at another site may differ from the Main Agency’s own Site Crisis Response Team that would handle a crisis if it was at their location.

The Main Agency Crisis Response Team is also responsible for ensuring that all other agency sites have their plans up dated and in place each year and that each site has sent copies of its plan to the main office. The Agency First Responder section is designed to help the first responder at the main office secure adequate information so that the main office can assist the site, handle the media and notify other agency locations. Main office responders should be issued identification badges or screen printed shirts identifying them as main office personnel so that staff and volunteers at the site of the crisis can recognize them if they should need to go to the site. The duties of the main office personnel include determining whether or not the site of the incident has adequate staff to handle the crisis. If they don’t, staff from the main office or other locations should be sent to assist.

It is suggested that the main office handle media issues until the situation stabilizes. It is best to keep the media safely away from the crisis site. Staff members at the site are busy handling the situation and caring for clients and staff. Review the “Communication with the Media during a Crisis” section of the plan before speaking to the media.

The **Agency Notification Script Form** is designed to provide a rapid way to share information with other agency sites and ensure that they will receive information first from the main office

not from the media. Providing accurate information to other agency sites is vital. The other sites may have siblings or other family members of the victims at their location. They may need to consider the impact of the situation on their clients, volunteers, staff and operations. The "Agency Notification Script" covers the main items that should be included. It is set up as a fill-in the blank form for ease of use. If multiple people are making calls, the script should be filled out, photocopied, distributed to all callers, and read word for word so that the message is consistent and contains all necessary information. The code word indicating the validity of the caller should be established at the start of the year and known to all staff who might answer the phone. If possible, the script should be simultaneously faxed or emailed to each site as calls are made so that the sites have a written copy for reference. Drills should be held occasionally to ensure that each site can be reached in a short time frame.

Multiple copies of the **Communication Log** should be run off and used to keep track of incoming and outgoing calls. Keeping these logs is necessary so that important information is relayed accurately and so that the information does not get lost in the heat of the moment. Documentation is also important for liability and insurance reasons.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES A-G – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Yearly Training Recommendations, Yearly Drill Recommendations, and Yearly Training Schedule (Appendix A) sections are included to ensure maximum readiness. Practice through table talk exercises and/or drills can provide excellent preparation for a crisis. Introducing the Site Crisis Response Team members to the staff and volunteers is suggested for two reasons. First, it is done to ensure that volunteers and staff know the people by sight who will be in charge in a time of crisis. Second, the team is introduced to increase the confidence level of staff and volunteers by showing them that knowledgeable people whom they know and trust will be in charge during a crisis. Providing training to all staff members and volunteers using the “Staff Guidelines,” “First Responder,” and “Quick Reference” pages of the plan is suggested to ensure that the agency is prepared. This training may reduce agency liability should an event occur. Ensuring that several staff members know the location of and how to shut down utilities and electrical and mechanical systems and how to activate power failure phones will be helpful to the fire department. Agency staff also may need this information during a hazardous material spill if fire persons are not available. Checking fire extinguishers to ensure that they function properly should be done yearly and should be an assigned task for the custodian or one staff member.

Drill and Simulation Ideas (Appendix A) are provided as examples of topics suitable for table talk exercises. Each of the suggested drill or simulation topics represents an actual crisis event experienced by the author or one of the people who used or reviewed these documents. The Site Crisis Response Team should brainstorm other situations that might occur at the agency.

The Threat Assessment check list (Appendix B) was taken from materials developed by the Secret Service. It is intended as an example of a process you could use to help determine the level of the threat that the people involved in a crisis might present.

The Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome Referral Check List (Appendix C) is **not** meant to be used as a diagnostic tool. Only a trained professional can diagnose Post-Traumatic Shock Syndrome. The check list is intended to be used as a tool to help staff decide who might benefit from a referral to a counselor or other mental health professional. Crisis Response Team members can also use the list as a self check for their own response to the situation.

The section Communication with the Media (Appendix D) was developed to help the Head of the Team and/or Agency provide accurate and appropriate information to the media. The concept of a single agency spokesperson is simply best practice. It ensures accuracy and consistency of the message. Remember to work with the government agency incident commander on joint releases when appropriate.

A section titled “Group Discussion Format Following a Death or Suicide” (Appendix E) is provided to help staff know what to say to clients after this type of event. Staff members and volunteers are often at a loss for how to handle this type of situation. Staff and, if possible, volunteers should be trained using this section of the plan prior to the return of clients so that they can handle the situation appropriately. Consider whether or not it would be helpful to have a mental health professional conduct the training.

The list suggested contents of the Go-Pack (Appendix F) is provided in the Appendix so that the list is easily accessible. (This list is also provided on the “Secretary Duties” page.) It is important that the Go-Pack is always ready to take out in an emergency.

The suggested First Aid Kit Contents list (Appendix G) is provided as a starting point. Review it and add or delete items to fit your situation. The need/use for most items on the list is obvious. Trash bag are included to allow for the clean-up of an evacuation site and/or for proper disposal of items that could carry diseases such as bloody bandages. Paper lunch bags are included to assist a person who is hyper-ventilating. (For Hyper-ventilation have the person breath into the paper bag.)

APPENDICES H-K – COPIES OF FORMS FOR DUPLICATION

Appendix H contains pages that should be completed each year at each site. They are placed here for ease of access and duplication. These pages include the “Crisis Team and Location,” the “Emergency Manuals and Supplies” and the “Community Telephone Numbers” pages. In addition to these pages, the telephone trees and the floor plans should be updated if necessary.

Appendix I contains duplicates of the forms used by staff and for training staff. These include: “Staff Guidelines,” “First Responder and Staff/Volunteer Instructions,” and the “Quick Reference Sheet” pages. Again the duplicates are provided here for ease of access and duplication. These pages should be given to all staff and volunteers each year as part of their yearly training or retraining. They also should be used to train new staff and volunteers as they join the organization.

Appendix J provides duplicates of the Main Agency Team pages which also should be updated yearly. They include the “Agency Crisis Response Team – Multiple Site Crisis” and “Director’s Executive Assistant – Multiple Site Crisis” page. The calling tree should be updated if necessary. This section is not used if the agency has only one site.

Appendix K contains duplicates of incident specific forms that might be needed for a specific crisis. These duplicates are included in this section to make them more easily accessible. The documents include: the “Bomb Threat Report Form,” the “Bomb Threat Evacuation Decision Consideration” form, the “Agency Notification Script” form and the “Communication Log” form. Using these documents can save vital time during a crisis and provide documentation for insurance and liability reports.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, the information and explanations presented in this document will assist you as you develop a plan for your agency. The intent of this “Tips” document is to provide the reasons behind the suggestions in the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan document so that you can decide which elements to include in your plan and which items to revise or exclude so that your plan will meet the needs of your agency. The explanations provided are also intended help your team(s) and/or staff understand the decisions that you make related to the crisis response of your agency.

It is hoped that the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan document will help you prepare for the most common events and give you the confidence and background to handle whatever occurs. If the two documents are helpful to you and provide a safer environment for your clients, volunteers and staff, they will have served their purpose.

If you have suggestions for additions or improvements to the Non-Profit Crisis Response Plan document or the “Tips” document, please email them to me at Holly@hollyhartconsulting.com. If you would like a presentation on the either or both of the documents for a national or state conference or would like a facilitator to assist you as you revise the plan to fit your agency, contact me at Holly@hollyhartconsulting.com.