

# ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 7070 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

## **Introduction**

Tragedy and crisis can strike at any time. Events such as a 1) violent crime, a traffic accident, a youth protection issue or a simple case of bad judgment; 2) natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and floods; or 3) events caused by an action or inaction of a Rotarian or non-Rotarian may lead to a situation that will place a Rotary club officer or board member, an entire club, the District Governor or other Rotarians in a situation that requires their utmost and immediate attention.

When such an event occurs, it is important to have a plan in place that can be followed to ensure that the matter is handled with the utmost care, being sure that those involved in the incident are kept safe, that communication with those who need to know is completed quickly, accurately, and professionally, and that other action is taken swiftly and professionally when needed.

Additionally, in our internet-driven information age, written and video content can be transmitted in a matter of seconds, which makes it important that when a crisis erupts, our Rotary District responds with a clear message, presented honestly and in a timely manner.

## **What Constitutes a Crisis?**

A “crisis” for the purposes of implementing the Rotary District 7070 Crisis Management Plan is an unanticipated, unusual event or occurrence arising out of, or closely related to, a Rotary Club project, event, or program that results in, or is likely to result in, physical or psychological harm, serious injury, or death to a participant, or that is or can be detrimental to the public image of Rotary. Examples include a death or injury stemming either from natural disasters impacting a Rotary project, event, or program (such as fire, flood or earthquake) or human caused (such as accidental or intentional mass casualty event). A “crisis” can include suspected illegal activities where the victim or suspected perpetrator is a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District; or other event that involves a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District that impacts persons or property in a substantial, negative manner.

These events may, but not necessarily, involve youth involved in Rotary functions and activities, such as RYLA students, Interactors, Rotary Youth Exchange students and participants. Such youth programs have carefully designed youth protection. District 7070’s Youth Protection and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy takes precedence over this plan and is to be followed prior to implementing this plan, although every effort should be made to provide simultaneous notification of the “crisis” to the District Governor.

## **Purpose of this Policy**

In the event of a “crisis” it is imperative to operate pursuant to established guidelines to ensure the communication of accurate, timely, and consistent information to Rotarians and the public, and to provide for the immediate care and protection of all individuals involved in the situation, as well as their families.

It is always the policy of District 7070 to deliver the highest level of transparency and cooperation consistent with applicable law and government policy.

## **Policy and Parameters**

1. *The District Governor currently in office is the only officer of Rotary International in the District.* As such, he or she is the main contact between the District and RI and between the District and the Club, event or activity manager of the Rotary activity involved when a crisis occurs.
2. The District Governor holds final responsibility for Crisis Management in District 7070. In the absence of the District Governor, or in the case of his or her inability to act, then, the following individuals, in the order listed, shall hold final responsibility:
  - a. Vice Governor
  - b. The Immediate Past District Governor
  - c. The District Governor-Elect
  - d. The District Governor-Nominee
3. The District Governor shall annually appoint a Crisis Management Team as part of the District Leadership Team to provide support and guidance as needed.
4. Only the District Governor or his/her designate as set forth in item 2 above, has the authority to activate the Crisis Management Team, or involve individual members of the team, when required.
5. An individual Rotary club president or designee will represent an individual club if the incident requires, as requested by the District Governor.

## **Crisis Management Team**

To provide support and guidance as needed, a Crisis Management Team (CMT) will be established annually as part of the District Leadership Team,

The “core” Crisis Management Team shall be composed of:

1. The District Governor as Chair
2. Vice Governor
3. The Immediate Past District Governor
4. The District Governor-Elect
5. District Governor- Nominee

Depending on the nature of the “crisis”, the CMT may include any or all the following as determined by the District Governor.

6. District Youth Protection Officer
7. An attorney at law who is familiar with local law and can give immediate advice as to confidentiality, potential legal action and liability
8. The District Public Image Chair
9. The District Communications Chair
10. An Incident Spokesperson (“Spokesperson”) who serves as liaison to the media, who may or may not be the District Communications or Public Image Chair
11. The Treasurer of the District

In addition, others may be asked to serve on the Crisis Management Team for a specific incident as required and determined by the District Governor:

12. The Assistant Governor of the Area of the incident, if the incident reported happens in a distant community where local Rotary District Leadership presence is important
13. The chair of the committee responsible for the activity where the incident originated, if applicable
14. Individuals or companies at the request of the District Governor

#### Crisis Management Team Education

1. All members of the Crisis Management Team should be familiar with the most recent edition of Rotary International’s Media Crisis Handbook, 515-EN-(507) and the Rotary Youth Protection Guide 775-EN-(2), District 7070’s Youth Exchange policies and procedures, Vulnerable Sector Protection Policy and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy.
2. All members of the Media Contact Team should undergo media relations training available through Rotary International.

#### If a Crisis Develops

1. The Rotary club president or other Rotarian who becomes aware of a crisis shall first determine if appropriate authorities have been called into action, such as law enforcement, medical emergency, or fire responders. Next, immediately contact and consult with the District Governor. If the District Governor is not available, contact the next person on the Crisis Management Team list in the order listed. All youth program staff shall follow the detailed reporting procedures of the District’s Youth Protection and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy before contacting the District Governor, although every effort should be made to simultaneously notify the District Governor as well.
2. The District Governor or designee determines the need to consult the Crisis Management Team and decides if the team or certain members of the team should be activated. The District Governor has sole discretion and authority to determine which members of the team, if any, should be activated.
3. The District Governor will notify members of the Crisis Management Team that he/she has chosen to activate in response to the crisis.
4. The District Governor will confirm that law enforcement has been contacted, if applicable and not already involved.

5. In situations requiring law enforcement or other emergency service involvement, the Crisis Management Team will cooperate with public authorities in all respects and follow the direction of responsible public officials.
6. The District Governor will consult with the Crisis Management Team on whether the matter requires notification of the District insurer.
7. The District Governor will contact Rotary International and the current Rotary International Director for District 7070.
8. The District Governor will designate an Incident Spokesperson if there is not one already so designated. This should be someone who is on top of the issue, communicates well, and is comfortable interacting with the media.
9. The District Governor will direct the Spokesperson to prepare a statement that accurately states the facts, expresses Rotary's position, and conveys the appropriate tone (sympathy, apology, commitment, etc.) and develop key messages to help the Spokesperson convey Rotary's position consistently and accurately. The Spokesperson will develop a set of "talking points" to be used as reference by the Media Resource Team to keep messages simple and focused. The Spokesperson will update the statement and talking points as needed.
10. The District Governor will ask club presidents and assistant governors to communicate appropriate and approved information to affected clubs and instruct all Rotary club members to refer press inquiries to the Spokesperson.
11. The District Governor may communicate with Assistant Governors, District Leadership Team members, clubs and/or individual Rotarians if needed.
12. The District Governor will notify Rotary International and the Rotary International Director of significant changes in the crisis and media involvement.
13. The District Governor will seek further assistance from RI regarding media inquiries as needed.

### **If the Media Contacts You First**

If a Rotary club president, event or activity chair, or some other Rotarian is contacted by the media, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Our goal is to have an organized media response through the Spokesperson. Follow the protocols set out above. Do not issue a statement or make any comment to the media other than referring them to the Spokesperson. Ignoring media can contribute to unnecessary speculation, but it is the responsibility of the Spokesperson to communicate the facts and positions of Rotary to the media.
  - a. For purposes of District 7070's Crisis Management Plan, "media" includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    - i. Traditional print media such as newspapers
    - ii. Broadcast media such as television and streaming
    - iii. Social media platforms
    - iv. Online sources such as bloggers. This may include an untrained citizen journalist who captures an event through photographs, videotapes, or recordings capable of putting online visual, audio and text from the site of a "crisis".

2. The District Governor and the Spokesperson will designate a Media Resource Team who will assist the Spokesperson in interaction with media. This will enable the Spokesperson to divide the workload among several team members in such areas as identified in Section 1.a., above. Each team member may have one area designated to follow and report to the Spokesperson, such as local news, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., allowing the District Governor and the Spokesperson to maintain control of messages propagating on social media. The contact information for the Spokesperson will be provided to anyone reasonably anticipated to be contacted by the media. That information should be accompanied by instructions to refer all inquiries to the Spokesperson in a cooperative and transparent manner that avoids a response limited to “no comment”. The Spokesperson may refer an inquiry to a member of the Media Resource Team.
3. Any Rotarian contacted by the media shall refer the inquiring media representative to the District Governor or the Spokesperson, without comment. *Immediately contact the District Governor or designate, even if in doubt of the urgency or importance of the matter. Let those responsible make the decisions as to urgency and importance.*
4. If you need time to confirm or determine the District Governor or Spokesperson’s contact information, tell the reporter you or a Rotary representative will call back promptly.
5. Before use, the statement prepared by the Spokesperson should be reviewed by Rotary International Public Image and Press Relations staff.
6. The District Governor and/or Spokesperson will be completely honest and truthful, will not say anything he/she is unsure of and will not cover up or make excuses.
7. The District Governor and Spokesperson will represent Rotary. When they speak, they ARE Rotary. No personal observations or speculations will be issued.
8. Monitor the media’s local coverage of the issue for accuracy and tone. If Rotary is misrepresented, let the Spokesperson know. He/she will convey the concern to the District Governor for action, if needed.
9. Remember that nothing said to the media is “off the record.”

**What happens if the crisis is Club specific, but the ramifications could impact on the District or Rotary in general?**

1. The Club President should determine whether the crisis or dispute goes beyond the Club and cannot be handled using the official procedures for arbitration and mediation as outlined in Article 16 of the Standard Rotary Club Constitution. District Governors do not have the authority to make decisions for the Club or to be a “judge” in Club disputes.
2. The Club President should notify the District Governor immediately if there are wider implications of the dispute or crisis.
3. The District Governor will negotiate with the Club President on who should be the spokesperson during the crisis.
4. The Club President and spokesperson should work with the District Crisis Management Team.
5. All Club members should be briefed on the crisis and requested not to talk to the media and to direct all enquiries through the Club spokesperson or the spokesperson of the District Crisis Management Team.
6. The District Crisis Management Team, through the District Governor, will be available to provide advice and support to the Club President and spokesperson.

7. Gather all facts and keep an accurate record of all events and all communications

### **Allegations against a Rotarian not related to Rotary**

1. When it is brought to the attention of the club that a Rotarian has allegedly committed conduct not related to Rotary (whether charged with a criminal offence or not) which has the potential to bring Rotary into question or disrepute, the Rotary club president or other Rotarian who becomes aware of a crisis shall immediately contact and consult with the District Governor.
2. As a rule, whilst everyone likes gossip, members of Rotary should remember the Four Way Test and adhere to the principles of natural justice. In that regard the following principles apply:
  - i. Do not discuss with other members until such time as you have spoken with the individual in question.
  - ii. Obtain their position with respect to the alleged conduct. Do not discuss the matter with anyone further in the club than is necessary.
  - iii. If the alleged conduct has already been disseminated amongst members of the club generally, then the individual may want the opportunity to put his or her side or response to the allegations to the club, although in doing so not to be defamatory about the person who made the original allegations.
  - iv. Rotary should avoid becoming embroiled in defamation claims for circulating defamatory material. This could be dealt with on an individual-by-individual basis, as some people may not want the allegations spread further.
  - v. If the person been charged with a criminal offence you may not immediately seek to do so, but you could ask the member to standdown from any leadership roles until such time as the matter is resolved, but you may wish to keep the individual as a member on the basis that under Australian law you are innocent until proven guilty.
  - vi. If the person is ultimately, following a trial or by virtue of a guilty plea, convicted of the offence, the board could decide to have them removed from the club altogether. In exercising this power, the club board would take into regard the nature of the offence and the impact to the reputation of the Rotary club and Rotary more widely.

### **What do other Rotary members do if contacted by the media.**

1. Assure the person you are speaking to that you will pass the enquiries on to an informed spokesperson who will contact them as soon as possible.
2. Try not to be drawn into conversation about the crisis.
3. Do not give personal opinions on information presented to you by the media.
4. Contact the Club President about the matter.

### **What to do when speaking to the media**

1. Find out:
  - o Who is calling
  - o What media outlet or organization they represent
  - o Their direct contact details
  - o What they want to know
  - o When their deadline is
2. Focus on the key messages given by the District Crisis Management Team.
3. Limit the key communication to 2 or 3 statements.

4. Be completely honest and sure of what you are saying.
5. Release as much information as you can in a statement rather than making “off the cuff statements”.
6. If you do not want something reported, do not say it!
7. Acknowledge any concerns.
8. Explain that you are investigating causes and doing what you can to address the situation.
9. Remain pleasant and as accommodating as possible.
10. Be organized before you communicate with the media.
11. Speak in short, simple sentences. Each statement has the potential to be a headline tomorrow.
12. Strengthen your main message with a short personal and relevant story.
13. Emphasize Rotary is cooperating fully if there is an enquiry.
14. Demonstrate positive voice tone and body language. Show emotions such as sympathy, concern, understanding or regret-whatever emotion is appropriate.
15. At the end, thank the journalist and offer to be available for any follow up.
16. Monitor the media coverage of the crisis. If facts are misrepresented, inform the media through a polite call or letter to the Editor.

#### **What not to do when speaking to the media**

1. Never respond with “No comment”. If you cannot answer a particular question, then explain why. For example: Sorry, but that matter is now part of an official investigation.
2. Never refuse to speak to the Press
3. Do not ignore or delay the media-it can contribute to negative speculation.
4. Do not panic.
5. Do not make any “off the record” comments. The interview is not over until the journalist leaves or hangs up.
6. Do not speculate or give opinions-stick to the key facts.
7. Avoid mentioning or responding to rumours.
8. Avoid Rotary jargon and acronyms.
9. Do not repeat the negative part of a question. Change to a positive.

#### Example

Question: Did the Club fail to provide adequate checks on the host parents of the exchange student?

Response: The safety of our exchange students is of the highest priority.

10. Never cover up or make excuses.
11. Avoid coming across as defensive, nervous or hostile

#### **What happens at the end of a crisis?**

1. Additional follow up matters will be directed and monitored by the District Governor.
2. Within 1 month of the completion of the crisis the District Governor will meet with the District Crisis Management Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the management of the crisis and to make changes to any procedures in the Crisis Management Policy that prove necessary.

### **Updating the Crisis Management Plan**

It is important to review the crisis management plan regularly. The plan shall be updated as follows:

1. Annually prior to the start of the new Rotary year by {insert date}.
2. Following any changes to leadership or other youth protection policies.
3. As a result of recommendations from a debriefing following a resolved crisis, a crisis simulation, or a narrowly avoided crisis.

### **A Final Word**

Remember: Clubs, District committees and individuals are NOT to handle any crisis alone! Do not do it! Ask for help. District 7070 and Rotary International have trained responders who can relieve you of the worry of facing the media when your attention is needed dealing with the actual crisis. The District Governor shall decide the most appropriate course of action. Contact your District Governor as soon as you think a possible crisis is developing or has developed.

### **After the Fact**

Once the crisis has ended, the District Governor and the Crisis Management Team should assess handling of the crisis and recommend changes in procedure to improve future crisis management.

With the start of each new club year on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the District Administrative Secretary will add to the list below, the appropriate names and contact information as directed by the District Governor.

<b>Core Crisis Management Team Members</b>		<b>Cell Phone Number</b>
District Governor		
Vice Governor		
Immediate Past District Governor		
District Governor-Elect		
District Governor-Nominee		
<b>Ad Hoc Committee Members</b>	<i>Shall be members in good standing of clubs in District 5220</i>	
Youth Protection Officer		
Legal Advisor		
Financial Advisor		
Public Image Chair		
Communications Chair		
Incident Spokesperson		
<b>Rotary International Resources for Crisis Management Team</b>		
RI Director		
Club & District Support		
Assistant Club & District Support		
Chief Public Image Officer		
Risk Manager		
Youth Programs Manager		
Rotary Insurance Broker		
Insurance and Risk Management Website		