

ADVERSE MEDIA SITUATION PROTOCOL

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF PROTOCOL

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- ▶ Effectively manage communications with accurate and compelling information that is consistent with your organization and the ASC community's values and positioning;
- ▶ Mitigate a negative media report and limit any potential reputational damage; and
- ▶ Maintain a reputation of leadership and transparency on the vital issues and control breaking news.

The following is intended to serve as a guide for ASCA members. The objectives of this plan are as follows:

- ▶ Prepare to effectively and nimbly manage communications during an adverse situation;
- ▶ Manage the distribution of critical, often sensitive, information to the media, members, and the public; and
- ▶ Ensure proper coordination to help shape a consistent industry-wide response.

PROTOCOL OVERVIEW

- 1 CRISIS LEAD:** A Crisis Lead from your organization should be identified to serve as point of contact for all parties involved.
- 2 REPORTING AND NOTIFICATION:** All adverse situations should be reported to the Crisis Lead immediately in person, by phone or by email. The situation may be the result of a negative media story, a report or an incident within a facility.
- 3 SPOKESPERSON:** Only the chief spokesperson and designated spokespersons should be authorized to release information to the media and to the public.
- 4 INFORMING ASCA:** The Crisis Lead should notify ASCA to ensure consistent industry-wide response and/or to ask for assistance. ASCA can also provide additional information and support, including communication with external stakeholders, validators and other ASC organizations.
- 5 COMMUNICATIONS AND COORDINATION:** Crisis Lead will direct and coordinate all aspects of the organization's response including managing the flow of information, message development, assembling a crisis management team, etc.

PROCESS

Crisis Management Team - Crisis Lead will convene relevant parties to strategically review the situation and manage the communications surrounding the issue.

Situation Assessment - This team should assess the situation, determine facts and begin delegation. Questions to help devise appropriate response include, but are not limited to:

- a. Confirm who is responsible for ensuring that all steps are taken? What will happen next?
- b. Who on staff needs to be involved?
- c. Who will notify ASCA?
- d. What immediate steps need to be taken?
- e. What is known and who already knows it?
- f. Is there potential public interest? Does the issue have traction?
- g. Who will be affected? What are people feeling? What emotions need to be considered?
- h. What information is needed and who, beyond organizational staff, needs to get it? When will it be available?
- i. What should the organization do about it? Proactive vs. reactive? Contact or refer to another organization?
- j. What CAN and CAN'T be said? Is legal counsel needed?
- k. Who will communicate a response as spokesperson?
- l. How will a response be communicated?
- m. Should a resource list be compiled of additional third-party spokespersons?
- n. What media will be contacted?
- o. Never guess at the answer to a question. Let the person know that you will get an answer to them and then be sure to follow up with a response.

Developing Key Messages - The Crisis Management Team will develop factual, responsive messages to be used by the organization and its representatives. All media and public inquiries should be referred to the spokesperson for comment. These messages should be prepared for media inquiries, member updates and proactive phone calls to critical audiences.

- ▶ Messages should reflect the organization's overall messages, leadership role and resource status. They should attempt to reinforce the positive and be action/solution oriented, if possible.
- ▶ Consider what the media knows about the situation and what their potential interest is.
- ▶ Acknowledge serious situations or reports as important concerns that are treated seriously by those involved with the ASC community .
- ▶ Resist the urge to criticize the reporter, the article/news report, the medium and, in nearly every case, others mentioned in the article/news report, including government agencies. Instead, draw attention to the positives of your own story.

- ▶ When answering questions, begin by responding directly to the question, even if your answer is that you can't provide an answer. In other words, it is okay to answer "I do not have the answer at this time." Then, go into the explanation if possible.

For example, some boilerplate talking points are available below and should be tailored after assessing the situation fully:

- ▶ Until all the facts are known, there should not be a rush to judgment.
- ▶ ASCs are modern health care facilities focused on providing same-day surgery, including diagnostic and preventive procedures. ASCs, their owners and the health care professionals who work inside them hold themselves to a very high standard of care and professionalism.
- ▶ All ASCs are subject to rigorous oversight and independent inspections to assess each center's level of compliance with both state and national standards. These on-site surveys, like those conducted at hospitals and other facilities, evaluate ASCs on a wide range of demanding clinical, operational and quality standards.
- ▶ Commitment to quality care is a hallmark of the ASC community. For example, our community has voluntarily established the ASC Quality Collaboration, an independent initiative that promotes quality and safety in ASCs.

When you coordinate your response with ASCA, ASCA can help refine messaging and reinforce messaging as appropriate. Information sharing and collaboration is critical.

Partner and Key Group Notification - Notify organizations, partners and members. Some of these parties may need to be contacted prior to contacting the media. Use the opportunity to assist with industry-wide messages and leverage the national organization's role as a resource.

Record Keeping - Document critical conversations, decisions, details and media contacts and questions regarding the crisis situation in order to effectively evaluate crisis communications management.

Media/Message Evaluation - Evaluate appropriateness and traction of messages throughout the situation. Revise as appropriate.