

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT

INDIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AND RURAL AFFAIRS  
TOOLKIT



**MAIN STREET  
AMERICA™**

*Coordinating Program*

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**INDIANA MAIN STREET**



# What is Indiana Main Street?

- Since 1985, the Indiana Main Street Program has been helping communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts using the National Main Street Center's successful 4 Point Approach™.
- The Indiana Main Street Program is managed by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA.)
- For more information on the Indiana Main Street program, visit our website [here](#).
- Follow us on social media for more!



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# Crisis Management Overview

## Not if, but when..

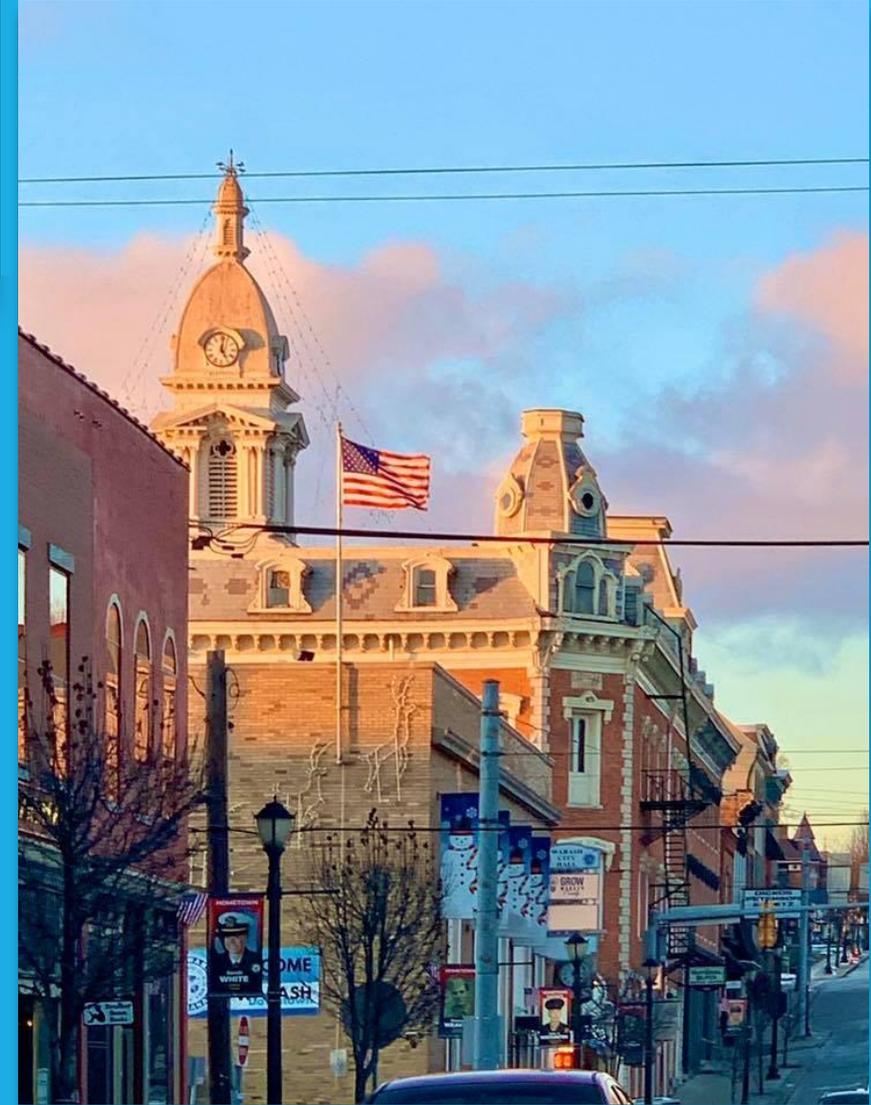
- A crisis situation is rarely predictable, but it is extremely important to plan and strategize for a host of difficult scenarios, including how to communicate when issues arise.
- The image of an organization can be positively or negatively impacted by the public and community's perception of how an incident was handled.



*Franklin, IN*

# Legal Considerations

- The information provided in this toolkit does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice; instead, all information, content, and materials available are for general informational purposes only.
- Readers of this toolkit should contact local counsel to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter. No reader should act or refrain from acting on the basis of information in this toolkit without first seeking legal advice from counsel.



*Wabash, IN*

# Identifying a Crisis

## Internal Crises

- Accusation of discrimination
- Serious injury to employee or volunteer
- Theft/embezzlement
- Sexual harassment
- Employee/Board Member accused of a crime
- Fundraising fraud

## External Crises

- Natural disasters
- Epidemics or pandemics
- Accusations made against partners/funders
- Social unrest/social justice issues
- Any public knowledge of an internal crises
- Elected official death/resignation

# Preparing for a Crisis

- Anticipate all Crises
  - Brainstorming all worst case scenarios ahead of time will allow the Main Street to be more comfortable with situations that may actually arise. Check out this example of an [Integrity Contract form](#).
- Identify Crisis Team
  - Note: Team leadership may change depending on the type of crisis
- Identify target audience
  - To whom are you speaking in a crisis? Note that the media serves as a gatekeeper to many external audiences



# Preparing for a Crisis: Crisis Communication Plan

- A crisis communication plan (CCP) is detailed plan for an organization to follow in case of an emergency or unexpected event. CCPs detail how to respond to the public and to the media, and delegates responsibilities to members of the organization in a crisis.
- Important parts of the CCP:
  - Know who will respond to what - who will be in charge and who will control the platforms and technology to share information? Who is the organization's spokesperson?
  - List of stakeholders - if there is a crisis, who needs to be pulled into the conversation and when?
- For strong examples of CCPs and templates to repurpose and use, click the following:
  - [Creating a CCP for Nonprofits](#)
  - [CCP Template - Colorado Nonprofit Association](#)
  - [Crisis Communications Checklist - Excel Format](#)

# Handling a Crisis: Dos & Don'ts

- **Do** gather *all* the facts. Ask:
  - Is anyone in immediate danger? What information do we still need before we would go public?
  - Has the crisis team taken all possible actions to mitigate the crisis so far?
  - Has Main Street staff been informed? Do they know who to refer questions to?
- **Do** respond quickly.
  - Accuracy trumps speed. It's standard practice to say you don't have the answer. It's better to say you'll follow up with information once you have it rather than spreading misinformation.
  - Remain honest. Share as much with your stakeholders as you can. Be as transparent as possible to demonstrate your sincerity and commitment to fixing the situation.
- **Don't** Disappear
  - Even if your only update is that you have no new information at this time; it's better to share it than to say nothing at all. Avoid responding with, "No Comment." Instead, make note of the question, tell the inquirer you will get back with them.

# Handling a Crisis: Stakeholder & Partner Communication

Stakeholders, internal and external, should be communicated to and have crisis messaging pushed to them first. Stakeholders could include:

- Main Street staff (your most important stakeholder!)
- Main Street Board (especially if you have legal counsel represented on the Board!)
- City/Town leadership
- Frequent partners (Tourism Organizations, Economic Development Offices)
- Relevant vendors
- Residents

# Handling a Crisis: Public Outreach

- Only the pre-designated spokespersons should be authorized to release information to the media and to the public.
  - All other staff and board members should be professional and helpful to the media by pointing them to the spokesperson.
- Anticipate the questions you are likely to be asked and plan answers.
- When possible, all responses to media questions should be proactive and action-oriented.
- Use multiple methods to disseminate information.
- Consider developing a press release to share with media. See examples and templates here:
  - [Massachusetts Nonprofit Network template](#)
  - [Communicating in a Crisis](#)

# Risk Management

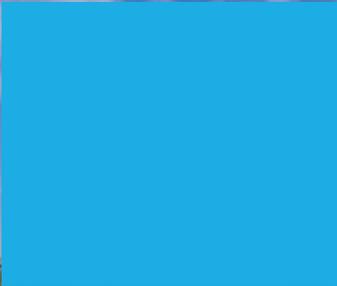
- Risk management is a discipline for dealing with the possibility that some future event will cause harm. Risk management provides strategies, techniques, and an approach to confronting any threat facing an organization.
- First, do an inventory of your Main Street's risk. Check out this Risk Analysis template [here!](#)
- Next, consider developing a risk management plan to ensure your organization isn't caught off guard during an unforeseen event. Risk management for Main Street organizations may include:
  - Purchasing [Directors' or Officers' Insurance](#) for board members
  - Implementing a volunteer screening process
  - Implementing a crisis management plan (as discussed in this toolkit)

# Risk Management: Insurance

- One significant aspect of risk management includes ensuring that Main Street has adequate **insurance** coverage for its risks. Please consult with legal counsel and insurance agents to explore different types of coverage, like general liability, director and officer liability, and property and casualty insurance.
- **Special events** hosted or planned by Main Street organizations present safety and liability risks. Consider special event insurance for fundraisers, Farmer's Markets, and other Main Street-sponsored events. In some cases, general liability insurance may cover claims of bodily injury or property damage in relation to events.

# Post-Crisis Review

1. **Secure loose ends** - Follow up calls, email updates, etc. If necessary, website and social media should be updated.
2. **Recognition of Heroes** - Identify who really stepped up and thank them for doing so.
3. **Crisis Communications Review** - Evaluate response, what didn't work, and what needs to be revised for the future.
4. **Media Coverage Assessment** - Review media coverage for consistency.
5. **File & Update** - File notes, media clips, document the lessons learned. Revise crisis communications plan as necessary.



# Preventing A Crisis: Anecdotal Advice from Main Street Experts

- *Treasurer of Board should always work closely with the bank and pay the director—director should NEVER pay themselves!*
- *When hiring a new ED, consider including a probationary period for six months.*
- *The Board should always coordinate an annual audit, and do so before hiring a new ED.*
- *Treasurer should always do monthly reconciliation on the books.*
- *Remember that the Board is the basis of the organization, not staff.*
- *Set credit limits on card and check payments and require sign-off from treasurer or other executive.*
- *Consider getting liability insurance for director/officers and events insurance to cover profit fraud.*

# Preventing A Crisis: Anecdotal Advice from Main Street Experts, Cont.

- *Board should draft a brief statement in the event anyone is unexpectedly put in a position to comment on a crisis.*
- *Select one Board member to communicate on behalf of the organization..*
- *Stay ahead of gossip by informing the elected officials, stakeholders, etc. to let them know 1) what happened 2) what the Board is doing to fix it 3) how to prevent it from happening again; OR if the gossip is untrue.*
- *If handling an internal crisis, consider bringing in an external mediator (someone in the community that everyone on the Board respects).*
- *Create an operations manual that details how a crisis will be handled by the Board.*
- *Require that ED shares passwords, etc. to any websites, email accounts, banks or anything that requires a password and keep record in a saved document.*



# Questions?

Visit [www.in.gov.ocra/mainstreet](http://www.in.gov.ocra/mainstreet) or contact your [OCRA Community Liaison](#).



## Sources Cited and Additional Resources

- [Crisis Communications Template](#)
- [Colorado Nonprofit Crisis Communications Toolkit](#)
- [Blog Post: Communicating in a Crisis](#)
- [7 Critical Risks Facing Nonprofit Organizations](#)
- [Internal Controls for Nonprofits](#)
- [Article: Do Nonprofits need liability insurance?](#)

