

WWME Leadership Guide

NALG 301 – CRISIS COMMUNICATION/PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN FOR WWME

A Crisis Communication Plan (the plan) has been developed for use by Worldwide Marriage Encounter in the event of an unforeseen circumstance that could occur at the local, regional, sectional, national or North American level.

The plan is to be implemented and adhered to when such action is indicated. The complete copy of the plan is an appendix to this Leadership Guide document to assist those involved in responding to previously not anticipated events.

A copy of the plan must be placed in every administrative box or similar device for the presentation of Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends presented in the United States and Canada and their respective territories, and be available on the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend for referencing.

WWME Crisis Communications Plan Overview

1. What is a crisis?

A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of WWME, and could lead to adverse or negative media attention. Examples: fire or other accidental or man-made disaster during a WWME event; violence (spousal or otherwise) during a weekend; protest by same-sex couples, anti-marriage, anti-Catholic groups; theft, legal dispute, etc.

2. Why do we need a crisis communications plan for WWME?

- To ensure that people are protected.
- To ensure that the integrity and reputation of Worldwide Marriage Encounter is protected.

In a crisis, communicating information is not business as usual. People may not process or respond to messages during a crisis the same way that they react to every day communications. Effectively delivering a message during an emergency can be as important as the content of the message itself.

3. What steps should I take if a crisis happens (or is anticipated)?

- Never ignore the situation. It will only get worse.
- Immediately contact WWME representatives, as follows:

Contact list: Area/County Ecclesial Team
Section/District Ecclesial Team
United States or Canadian Ecclesial Team
North American Ecclesial Team
Weekend Pillar or Public Relations Team

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4. Who talks to the media?

- United States Ecclesial Team, Canadian National Ecclesial Team, North American Secretariat Ecclesial Team and Public Relations couple will implement a plan of action and designate appropriate spokespeople.
- The designated spokespeople (Ecclesial team, Priest, person or couple) will make official statements and answer media questions throughout the crisis. A back up spokesperson or couple should also be identified.
- Weekend team or local Section/District or Area/County Coordinators should refer media to the appropriate spokesperson.

5. What if media approach me; what do I say?

Reporters have the right to interview anyone they want. If they don't get the answers they want from an official source, they will go somewhere else.

- Ask: What information are you looking for?
- Confirm the obvious (a fire broke out while we were in the middle of our session and we evacuated immediately, there has been an accident, etc.)
- Express empathy (we are praying for those who are affected by this tragedy).
- Get the reporter's contact information (phone, email).
- Ask: When is your deadline?
- Say: I will look into this and someone will get back to you.
- Contact the appropriate person (see above).
- Refer media to appropriate source (police, fire chief, etc.).
- Advise the media that someone from WWME will be available to speak to him/her. Get the reporters contact information and ask about his/her deadline.
- People remember what they hear first and last.
- Tell It All, Tell It Fast And Tell The Truth

6. Talking Points

The earliest and easiest to understand message is the one that sticks.

Become the trusted source of information.

Clear - use plain language

Concise -get to the point

Consistent - repeat your key message(s)

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Key messages:

- In an interview, your goal is not just to answer the reporter's questions; it is to deliver your key messages.
- Know what you want to say, before they ask.
- Develop three key messages. Practice delivering your key messages.

7. Tips for talking to media:

- Always address safety issues first.
- Use your own words; speak in your own style.
- Make every word count – Say everything in 3 sentences
- Let dead air hang. Once you've delivered your key message, stop talking.
- Be accurate; don't speculate. Avoid giving personal opinions.
- Do not ramble, use jargon, appear judgmental or make promises that can't be kept.
- Refuse to speculate on the motives of others. Speak only on behalf of yourself.
- Acknowledge feelings. Express empathy for concerns, fears, and anxieties.
- Remember - There is no such thing as off the record. Don't say anything you wouldn't want to read in the newspaper or see on the news.

For more detailed information it is recommended that you read the full Plan in the appendix. This is also available from the North American Weekend Pillar or your Section/District Ecclesial Team