

Critical Incident Communications Protocol

This protocol is designed to provide a campus-level communication response to critical incidents. It is structured around several scenarios and offers a response protocol for each.

The objectives and values of this protocol are to:

- Demonstrate responsiveness and transparency
- Build community (show that we are aware of concerns and harms caused, understand the concerns, support the affected community and are taking steps to address concerns)
- Communicate support, provide information on specific resources
- Convey that we are making decisions based on campus values and principles

Whenever possible, seek to augment written communications with person-to-person engagement (can include healing sessions led by relevant counselors or identity-based groups) as well as deeds and tangible action (targeted or campus-wide messaging represents only a part of our response).

We should balance responsiveness with garnering input from concerned or affected parties.

This protocol is designed to create a more nuanced, thoughtful approach to messaging, one that no longer relies on Cal Messages as the go-to method of response when groups call for a campus response. We should reset expectations among the campus community and exercise discipline in adhering to the new protocols as appropriate. Personalized/local messaging is more authentic and builds greater rapport; actions need to accompany communication or we risk losing institutional trust.

This is intended to be a living document as we learn and adapt to the needs of our community.

Critical Incident Response Team

This team is called together to provide a timely assessment of the communications needs arising from a critical incident.

Membership: Chancellor's Office (chief of staff or designee), EVCP's Office (chief of staff or designee), Equity & Inclusion (chief of staff, communications director), Legal Affairs (chief campus counsel), People & Culture (communications director), Public Affairs (AVC + others), Student Affairs (chief of staff, dean of students representative, communications director). Others may be added ad hoc, as appropriate, given the particular incident (e.g., Risk Services. associate vice provost for the faculty for issues affecting faculty welfare, etc.).

When the incident takes place outside the U.S., include representative(s) from the Academic Planning Division (e.g. vice provost/senior international officer, chief of staff, Berkeley International Office and/or Global Engagement Office, or designee) and/or Berkeley Study Abroad.

Expectations: Each member department will designate one or more individuals who will serve as members of the team. It will be the responsibility of each department to ensure that at least one representative is available at all times and able to join team conference calls on notice. Departments should take into consideration vacation schedules and ensure backup coverage.

Activation: Any member of the Critical Incident Response Team is able to activate the group. It is the responsibility of the first person to receive notification of an incident requiring assessment to activate the group. A procedure will be established for activating the group and convening a conference call. Ideally, this procedure will include both email and text notification of an activation (inform attendees whether the conversation is attorney-client privileged). Those with landline phones, should provide those numbers as well. Based on the severity of the incident, as little as 15 minutes of advance notice may be given for the meeting. More notice may be given in less severe cases but activating the group should not be delayed any more than eight hours.

Conference call procedures:

1. The member who activated the call provides a summary of the situation, including if a campus affiliate is directly involved and what, if any, campus actions are underway or planned to address the issue.

2. Using the checklist below, members ask the questions listed below and assess whether a communication is needed. Also, do we have enough of the crucial information to make a determination at this point?
3. If a communication is needed, members use a checklist to be created based on the information below to determine who will write the message and the timing for approvals. Approvals should be limited to members of the team and each member will need to review and provide edits immediately after receiving the draft. The notification procedure used to activate the group will be used again to notify the members of the need to quickly review the draft.

As appropriate (or as is feasible), seek to involve a member or representative of the affected group/community (advisory committee, staff org, etc.) in the development of a response (student, faculty or staff member). Solicit input on the front end about information that should be included, and any potential sensitivities. This is reportorial, not for approval. Communicate the goal/intention/purpose of the message. While this consultation is important, the value of communicating in a timely manner outweighs this.

Seek expertise from senior campus administrators and/or staff from particular communities who can advise us on certain issues.

Keep campus leadership informed (to include Chancellor's cabinet or subset thereof, Council of Deans or subset thereof, depending on the issue).

Considerations that could shape our decision-making response

This list is not meant to be exhaustive; decision-making related to communications around critical incidents is nuanced and takes many things into consideration.

- Free speech/First Amendment -- we cannot sanction people or groups for offensive speech, but we can and should call it out as being against our values and offer support to the person or community that is harmed.
- Calls to publicly "punish" a student, faculty, or staff for wrongdoing -- Federal privacy laws preclude commenting on a particular student's involvement in alleged

wrongdoing, but we can reiterate our values, state our rules, and share the process for discipline in cases like this.

- Generally speaking, we don't respond to posts or "chatter" on social media. However, there are times when something has reached a viral level of awareness that calls for a response.
- Staff bandwidth
- Higher Education best practices -- Our peers face similar situations and over time and best practices have evolved.
- Message fatigue
- Media deadlines
- Time needed to ascertain the facts around an incident
- Calls and letters coming into the Chancellor's (and other leaders') office
- Reasonable person test -- Is this something a reasonable person or campus stakeholder would expect to hear about? This includes consideration of how a situation may be viewed by a particular affinity group based on their experiences.
- Does the incident (which may seem minor on its own) spur a tipping point?
- "Equity of voice" -- Take care if an issue is polarizing to craft a response through an equity lens, ensuring that the affected community(ies) are given adequate voice.
- Equity of access -- Are we sending a message based on the loudest/most organized voices getting attention, or because the matter justifies a message on its face and based on our protocols/values?
- Campus impact--does the matter/concern directly impact or involve members of our community to a significant degree? (This could mean either/both the size of the community that is impacted as well as the degree of impact on a particular smaller community.)

- Will a message elevate an issue that does not warrant such attention based on our protocols/values and could result in unintended consequences?
- Is there political pressure from local, state or federal elected officials that warrant a public response?
- UCOP/Regents considerations may impact communications decisions.

Communications Checklist

To be used by the Critical Incident Response Team

1. Determine whether a response is warranted

Why are we sending?/What is the objective?/What is driving a response (reasonable test)?

Who is the target audience, and secondary target? What is the most effective way to reach given this particular circumstance? Who is the appropriate signatory if written communication?

Is communication warranted? Why? Is there anything new to say or that hasn't been said before?

What external factors should be considered?

How does a response (or non-response) align with our values?

Campus-wide or more targeted messaging is only one element of addressing the particular issue; consider meeting face to face, more 1:1 or personalized e-mails, organize the community or group (e.g. student organization or a residence hall floor).

Do we have enough information to craft a response? We risk exacerbating the situation if we respond to an inaccurate or incomplete accounting of the incident, or proceeding before the full scope of the incident or situation is known.

Determine who should send or sign on to the message.

2. Messaging elements

- Respond to the incident -- Acknowledge the harm that is felt by a targeted/involved group or groups (individually name groups where appropriate). This maintains

consistency in that we meet students where they are and that we don't get into the business of deciding what does/does not constitute bias, discrimination, etc.

- Reaffirm Principles of Community/values statement (potentially tie back to strategic plan).
- Direct to support services.
- What are you going to do about it -- Meetings with affected parties are taking place, etc.
- Consider word choice during heightened tensions. The perception of what a word or phrase means can cause problems.
- Link to support services (create a master list and provide it to all on the critical response team). Give those support services a heads-up when we are mentioning them in a broad message to campus.
- Message signer should drive content and tone.
- When it makes sense, highlight or feature our thought leadership or research expertise
- Is this an ongoing and evolving situation? Is this a one time message or are we also pointing them to ongoing or evolving support services/opportunities?
- Is there a Cal Community Call to Action needed on this issue. Where do we point community members if they would like to support?

3. Channels/mechanisms/platforms

Use the medium or channel that most directly reaches our intended audience; communicate as close to the intended audience as possible (e.g., dean of students, department/division director, vice chancellor, etc.). This leaves room to escalate to the Chancellor as the situation develops. We should tap vice chancellors/vice provosts and other leaders to be message senders when possible/appropriate.

Targeted emails to individuals, groups or communities

CalMessage

Posting on Berkeley News site

Distribution over campus and/or Student Affairs or other relevant social media channels

Unlisted statement to link to from social channels

Talking points for leaders (and others); scripts for individuals answering phones (Chancellor's Office, UDAR phone/fundraising people, etc.)

Outreach to parents -- Facebook page, phone calls, etc. David Ortega, director of the campus Parent Program speaks to parents on a daily basis and may be tapped for this. Who we designate will depend on the circumstances.

Debrief/Post-Mortem

At some point after the incident, the Critical Incident Response Team should meet to debrief and discuss the following:

Reiterate problem statement -- What were we seeking to address?

Success measures -- Did the affected community feel that their needs were addressed? Did we communicate our position?

Are we adhering to our protocols? Do they need to be adjusted or reaffirmed?

What lessons did we learn? How can we improve our capabilities going forward?

Consider holding an end-of-semester issues management post mortem: how did we do; what still needs to be addressed proactively. Consider involving the following: student group advisors, Student Affairs, E&I, PA, GCR, Chancellor's Office, VCA/UCPD

Scenario Planning*

Scenario 1: Natural Disaster with impacts on the campus community

1a: In/around Berkeley/Bay Area

-- campuswide message offering support resources, advising action if needed (remote instruction/work, shelter in place, etc.) and/or accommodations for those who may be affected (i.e., faculty to grant grace to students). If campus has taken action to support our affiliates (such as place students in emergency housing) include that information in messaging--explain actions taken by the campus to help.

1b: In California

-- targeted email outreach to students based on zip code by permanent addresses offering relevant resources

1c: In the US

-- targeted email outreach to students based on zip code by permanent addresses offering relevant resources

1d: In the world

-- targeted email outreach to students based on country by permanent addresses offering relevant resources

Scenario 2: Event/tragedy off campus (e.g., mass shooting, bombing, etc.)

2a: Proximate

A campus WarnMe message likely will be needed. A campus message would reiterate information in the WarnMe message, address the anxiety spurred, explain campus actions to ensure safety, and offer resources. We would also likely provide time-stamped banner updates on the campus homepage.

2b: Not proximate

Consider whether a campus community member is directly involved and/or if the incident has had such a significant psychological impact on the campus community that a response is warranted. Involve experts beyond the Critical Response Team for additional analysis and counsel. Empathetic messaging would acknowledge the resulting anxiety, point to resources, etc.

Scenario 3: Event/incident on campus (e.g., anonymous messaging targeting a particular community or group or individuals representing a particular identity, communication that harms a particular community or group or individuals representing a particular identity, anything that falls under the broad category of a hate incident)

3a. On campus

Generally, an appropriate campus leader would reach out to the impacted individual to listen, consider their needs and offer resources. For an incident reaching more individuals on campus and/or attracting the attention of the campus community in a significant way, the response may involve coordinated and perhaps in-person outreach to impacted groups and/or campuswide messaging regarding our values and expectations and potential actions if a hate crime etc. is involved. A campus-wide WarnMe message may be a useful tool to consider.

3b. To a current member of our community representing a particular identity regardless of location [[when comes to our attention]] .

For matters not occurring on the central campus or on campus property, an appropriate campus leader could reach out to the impacted individual to listen, consider their needs and offer resources. It is possible that there may be extraordinary circumstances in which action in line with 3a, may be appropriate.

Scenario 4: Global news events that affect a particular community on campus

Criteria: International events that capture US attention

To what extent are members of our campus community directly impacted, indirectly impacted, emotionally impacted. Consider the degree to which the event is resonating in the campus community and impacting its well being. The answers to those questions will inform whether action is needed and if so via what platform or channel.

Scenario 5: Tragedy, such as a death or suspected death, befalling a current member of our community (not related to identity)

[when comes to our attention]

Generally this is addressed at the community or unit level--for example the dean of students' office may be aware of student plans for a vigil and would reach out to assist, support. An academic department or student organization may want to address the issue with that community and the dean of students' office of Public Affairs could offer guidance. In some unique and unusual instances (where there is widespread public awareness and concern) campus messaging may be considered.

Global example: A current Berkeley student dies while abroad. Criteria: Were they in a campus affiliated program? Were the circumstances unusual/shocking (e.g.terrorist attack) and/or one that garnered significant national media attention/concern. Has the parent OK'd Berkeley releasing the name or is the family in the media talking about what occurred to their student, naming that student? Message may reference local campus vigil and should address status of studies in the program (suspended?, counseling abroad and other support for fellow students in the program of the student killed. (Campus assistance to the parents who may need to go to the country where it occurred, may be warranted, whether re logistics and/or financial--especially in situations where a student is missing and feared dead in a high profile incident.)

Scenario 6: Community member involved in misconduct and/or inappropriateness

Very limited - need to consider FERPA and employee privacy. Not a campus message in most instances, but rather a holding statement/values statement or process statement, at most, on hand in case needed. Misconduct that occurred in open view, such as on Sproul Plaza and/or involves UCPD responding, may require proactive campus messaging. Consider giving colleagues in UDAR a heads up about the situation should they receive calls or e-mails.

**Some of these scenarios require Clery notification and information about a particular incident would be sent via a WarnMe message prior to campus messaging. That information is being compiled and will be added to this section.*

APPENDIX

I. Options for campus responses/actions (list is not comprehensive)

- Cal Message, campuswide or to subgroups
- Email message to students via the Division of Student Affairs
- Targeted Messages, to students, subsection of faculty/staff groups
- BerkeleyNews item (Story, photo with caption, resource page with header, etc)
- Social media message of support, solidarity, concern (Campus channel or departmental/unit channel)

- Direct personal outreach to individual (e.g. E&I, Dean of Students office)
- Direct personal outreach to impacted group (special meeting, or appearance at a standing meeting)
- Listening sessions, small or large scale (Example: African American students and climate)
- Response and support actions, as guided by appropriate campus professionals (drop-in counseling, healing circles, etc.)
- Special events (Example: a panel that addresses a sensitive, timely topic.)
- Video message from Chancellor or other senior campus leader.
- Berkeley Conversations/Campus Conversations discussion
- Awareness campaigns/Social Norms
- launch and host a regional or national conference on a hot topic

II. Resources list (needs regular updating/review)

Overview of support services for students, staff, and faculty

A list of services across campus units

For Students:

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Mental Health tips

Call Counseling and Psychological Services at (510) 642-9494, or, when the Tang Center is closed, call the after-hours counseling line (855) 817-5667

Free counseling for Staff/faculty

Be Well at Work - Employee Assistance

Division of Equity & Inclusion

Undocumented Students Program

[Undocumented Community Council](#)

Student Organizations:

Our campus has numerous and diverse student organizations that students may wish to get involved in. You can explore at callink.berkeley.edu.

Centers for Educational Justice & Community Engagement: These centers provide space, programs, and services for Berkeley's diverse student communities. Learn more at ejce.berkeley.edu/mcc or (510) 642-6528.

Reporting hate crimes:

For information and support on reporting hate crimes or hate-motivated acts, visit stophate.berkeley.edu.

Bears that CARE

Learn how you can help when you see incidents of hate, violence and harassment through Bears that CARE – our active bystander training.

Public Service Centers

The Public Service Center brings together students, faculty, and communities to harness their collective wisdom in support of social justice, civic engagement, and transformative social change.

Office for the Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination/Title IX office

The office is committed to fostering a campus community free from harassment and discrimination on the basis of protected categories including race, color, national origin, religion,, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability.

PATH to Care Center

The center offers support to individuals and seeks to transform our campus into a community that is free of sexual violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking through prevention, advocacy, training, and healing.

Blue Light Phones

Notice (and point out to your friends) the Emergency "Blue Light" Telephone stations located around campus. These can be used to notify UCPD that assistance is needed. If you need help, dial 911 or use a blue light emergency phone (located throughout the campus and identified by a blue light on top of the phone box or column)

Gender-Equity Resource Center

The center provides support and connections for the campus women and LGBTQ+ community

Disabled Students Program

The program offers a wide range of services for students with disabilities.

Latinx student community resources

Chicanx/Latinx student development

HSI task force

Chicanx/Latinx standing Committee

Alianza, Chicanx/Latinx staff organization

African-American/Black student community resources

African American Student Development Office

Black Community Virtual Resource Guide, developed to address the holistic healing and well-being of the Black Community

BSFO, staff, faculty, student organization.

CESO: <https://stafforg.berkeley.edu/organizations/identity-based-staff-orgs>

Chancellor's African-American Initiative

ASIAN-AMERICAN students/staff

Asian Pacific American Student Development (APASD) offers advising and programming for Asian American, Pacific Islander, South Asian, Southwest Asian and North African

<https://cejce.berkeley.edu/centers/asian-pacific-american-student-development/sswana-initiative> (AA/PI/SSWANA) communities.

CAPS for API Students is a resource listing counselors who specialize in working with AAPI students.

[Asian American and Pacific Islander Standing Committee \(AAPISC\)](#)

[Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance \(APASA\) staff and faculty org](#)

[Middle Eastern North African South Asian \(MENASA\) staff and faculty org](#)

Employee Assistance is available to any staff member who would like to talk to a counselor.

Stop AAPI Hate tracks and responds to incidents of hate, violence, harassment, discrimination, shunning, and child bullying against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders nationwide.

[Native American Student Development](#)

[American Indian Graduate Program](#)

[Native Cultural Center](#)

[Native American Advisory Board](#)

III. Subject matter experts (individuals and organizations) (Needs regular updating and review)

Leaders/members of Chancellor's Advisory Committees

Leaders/members of registered student organizations

IV. Critical Incident Response Team

Chancellor's Office: Khira Griscavage (chief of staff)

Equity & Inclusion: Dania Matos (vice chancellor), Fabrizio Mejia (interim chief of staff), Will Kane (interim communications director)

Office of Legal Affairs: David Robinson (chief campus counsel)

People & Culture: Eugene Whitlock (associate vice chancellor), Douglas McSkimming (communications director)

Public Affairs: Diana Harvey (associate vice chancellor), Janet Gilmore (senior director, strategic communications), Dan Mogulof (assistant vice chancellor, executive communications)

Student Affairs: Stephen C. Sutton (vice chancellor), Bahar Navab (chief of staff), Sunny Lee (dean of students), Ellen Topp (communications director)

Ad Hoc: faculty welfare, Chancellor's special advisors, etc.

V. Additional Information

[Principles of Community](#)

[How to Protest Safely](#)

[UCPD](#)

[Anti-Racism resources for faculty/E&I](#)

[Inclusive teaching guidance for instructors \(Teaching & Learning\)](#)

Last updated Oct. 24, 2023