



Racine Dominicans
Committed to Truth + Compelled to Justice

Crisis Communication Plan
for the
Crisis Management Team

February 2016

Racine Dominican Crisis Communication Plan

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Introduction

The Racine Dominican Crisis Communication Plan provides the guidelines for communicating quickly and effectively with our various publics during a crisis or controversy. A crisis is a situation that has reached a critical point and requires proactive communication. It may be a disaster, such as a fire, or a controversy, such as negative public perception of a person/community's action or corporate stance.

This guide is intended to assist the Crisis Management Team (CMT) address difficult, often quickly-evolving situations in a caring, professional manner in compliance with the Racine Dominican mission.

Racine Dominican Mission

Commitment to truth in the light of the Gospel compels us to consecrate whatever power we have, personally and as community, to sustain the fundamental right of every person to pursue the fullness of life and to share in the common good.

Today such a stance demands an explicit solidarity in prayer, struggle, suffering, and hope with those who are oppressed by systems designed to serve the interests of the wealthy and advantaged. This perspective governs our every ministry, whether that ministry is among the economically advantaged or among the economically poor.

Committed to Truth
Compelled to Justice

Quick Reference for Handling Controversy/Crisis

Vowed sisters, associates, former members, or employees have the potential to become the focus of a crisis for the Racine Dominicans. Therefore, we need to be constantly prepared for a crisis.

The following steps outline the basic crisis response:

1. Assess the situation.
2. Stay calm.
3. Provide for safety and first aid, if necessary.
4. Call appropriate medical/emergency personnel, if necessary.
5. If the crisis pertains to any sister, Racine Dominican Residence, a sponsored ministry, or any location where the community has a presence, immediately alert a member of the executive committee and the communication director.

6. Follow the directives given by the 1) executive committee member or 2) another member of the Crisis Management Team (CMT).
7. If the crisis pertains to a sponsored ministry (St. Catherine's High School, Bethany Apartments, Senior Companion Program, Siena Retreat Center, Eco-Justice Center, HOPES Center), an institution with a special relationship in ministry or other organization associated with the Racine Dominicans (e.g. – Lincoln Lutheran), *refer questions to the administration of that ministry or institution.*
8. *Do not give information regarding the crisis to anyone except designated emergency, medical, fire, or police officials. All other persons, including media, requesting information should be referred to the appropriate spokesperson on the CMT. Make sure all sisters and staff know they *should not* discuss the situation with anyone without first conferring with the CMT spokesperson.*
9. The CMT should meet as soon as possible to assess who will handle what responsibilities in dealing with the situation.

Purpose and Objectives of Crisis Management Plan

Purpose:

In a crisis situation, the Crisis Management Team will be prepared to respond with open, honest statements, promoting effective and positive communication between leadership and the community's publics.

Objectives:

- Provide accurate outgoing information. Check the accuracy of incoming information.
- Provide action guidelines to sisters, associates and employees.
- Demonstrate to the media and other external audiences that Racine Dominican values are an integral component of the community's crisis response.

Crisis Management Team (CMT)

The Crisis Management Team is the group who assembles immediately upon becoming aware of a crisis or controversy. At that time, they assess the situation and determine who will be the "official" spokesperson. This person will be the *only* one speaking to the media in time of crisis. The team decides what information will be released and how it will be disseminated.

The CMT members are:

- Executive committee members
- Communication director
- Finance director
- Additional personnel will be added to the CMT, depending upon the situation.

The CMT must be accessible at all times to the spokesperson. It is best to meet close to the crisis site, if possible.

Procedure for the Crisis Management Team (CMT)

- 1) The notified CMT member completes Crisis Response Form (*page 8*).
- 2) A CMT member informs the receptionist immediately with the name of the spokesperson and gives her clear directions for the response to inquiries (*see below*).
- 3) Once the crisis level is assessed, the CMT acts accordingly.
- 4) The CMT prepares a brief statement about the Racine Dominicans for the media, *releasing only confirmed facts*. If it is a continuing situation, the spokesperson assures the media and key publics of regular updates. A prepared background sheet (*see Appendix A*) explaining who the sisters are and the ministries in which they are involved will also be available.
- 5) If the communication director is not the spokesperson, she should be kept informed of all contacts with media and other external publics.
- 6) Notify the community-at-large and key publics in order to prevent misinformation and rumors:
 - (a) Initiate standard methods for information dissemination.
 - (b) Post statement on main Racine Dominican Residence bulletin board, as appropriate.
 - (c) If appropriate, gather Racine Dominican Residence sisters and/or sisters in the local area and explain situation.
- 7) As soon as possible, document the events, communications, etc., pertaining to the crisis for future reference and/or legal proceedings.
- 8) Throughout the crisis and post-crisis follow-up, the CMT maintains close contact with sisters, associates, sponsored ministries and staff, as appropriate.

Procedure for the Receptionist

The receptionist has high-level responsibility in a crisis. She may be the first person dealing with the media and key publics. The receptionist should have immediate access to the CMT.

Crisis Procedure for receptionist:

- 1) Remain calm and follow normal phone greeting. Presenting a calm, under-control attitude reduces the impression of crisis-related chaos to the media. Professional behavior at this initial level communicates a positive message to everyone involved.
- 2) Forward all related calls to the CMT spokesperson or designated person.
- 3) Never answer any questions unless instructed to do so by the CMT. Reporters are always hoping for an inside "scoop."
- 4) Stick to the facts; *never* speculate.
- 5) If a caller is insistent say, "I'm sorry, but you will need to direct your questions to _____"
– the designated spokesperson.

- 6) If you receive a call about a crisis outside of the United States, you may be the first person informed about an accident, illness, arrest, disappearance or death of a sister in a foreign country. Proper procedure is important; obtain the following information:
- (a) name of person calling;
 - (b) location;
 - (c) phone number, including country code and city codes, being used in the foreign country, in case you are cut off.

Next, immediately refer call to the community president; if she is not available, call another member of the executive committee. If no one in leadership is available, contact the communication director.

- 7) If this is a continuing or escalating situation, follow these guidelines for additional foreign calls:
- (a) Be discreet in language; do not press for information if your contact is hesitant. This person may be unable to speak freely, but document as much information as possible.
 - (b) Never talk with any government, media or other outside group; say, "I'm taking messages. Someone will contact you as soon as possible."
 - (c) The CMT will arrange a plan for incoming and outgoing calls and keep the receptionist informed. Forward all calls to the designated person only.
 - (d) Keep a log of all phone calls received and persons contacted. This information may be needed by the CMT.
 - (e) Do not share information from these calls *with anyone* other than CMT; they will disseminate information.
 - (f) In addition, consider these precautions when dealing with a crisis in a foreign country:
 - Not all information is public. If something becomes public in the U.S. before it is public in the host country, it could be dangerous for the sister(s).
 - If someone is in hiding, giving out information could endanger local people.
 - Follow directions from the CMT and Racine Dominican contacts in the host country.

Racine Dominican Residence: If a crisis should occur at the Racine Dominican Residence at any time, contact the Coordinator immediately; if she is unavailable, contact the Sister on Call. She will contact the CMT.

Key Groups to Consider

- Sisters
- Associates
- Sponsored Ministries
- Family members
- Church officials
- Other community members in area where crisis occurs
- Employees
- Government officials
- Legal representation
- General public
- Media
- Others?

Appendix A: Forms & Examples

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Media Guidelines

Media Contact Log – Keep a separate tracking sheet for each journalist/story. Know who contacted you, when, about what, how to contact them, what their deadline is, and any follow-up.

Communicating with the Media during a Crisis

- Demonstrate the community's concern for people involved.
- Explain what is being done to remedy the situation.
- Keep the message consistent with all groups. Never tell one group anything that is not being told to the media.
- Be open, honest, and tell the full story. If you do not, someone else will, thus increasing the possibility that the CMT will lose control of the situation.
- Provide *short* answers
- *Never* respond with "no comment"; instead explain why you cannot answer the question. (For example, "we do not have the details confirmed at this time"; "we will provide you with an update when we do have an answer to that question.")
- *Do not guess or speculate.* If you do not know the answer, say so and offer to track down the answer.
- Respect reporter deadlines. If you promise to get information, do so promptly.
- ***Never speak off the record.*** The media can use any information released.
- Never give exclusive interviews during a crisis. All members of the media should have a chance for gathering information.
- Do not provide damage estimate, discuss responsibility for the incident, or discuss legal liability in any way.
- Don't repeat negative statements; shift wording to positive so you don't reinforce negative.
- Notify receptionist and other employees to direct all media inquiries to the designated spokesperson without speculating on the situation. Do not discuss illegal activity *at any time*. If it is assumed, say "Police are investigating. We are cooperating." Refer all questions to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- In cases when media request interviews with sisters, associates or family members, provide a liaison to the individuals with the media so individuals/family can protect their privacy if they choose.
- Do not accept hypothetical questions. Do not repeat negatives as a question. Taken out of context, these remarks can be very damaging.
- Use everyday language, not jargon, when talking to reporters; choose words carefully.
- Provide written materials that give reporters background information. This information will be supplied by the communication office.

Helpful Tips

Interviewing

- Keep calm.
- Don't continue talking after you make your point.
- Use single, clear sentences to make your point.
- Reporters often leave a space of silence to try and draw unintended remarks out of speakers who are uncomfortable with silence.
- Don't repeat incorrect information, even if it's offered by the reporter. It could be the sound byte that is used. Instead offer the correction, framed not as a denial, but as a statement about the facts you want to present.
- If a reporter provides incorrect information, it is okay to correct them with "That's not true... The facts are..."
- If you don't have or know the information requested, don't pretend you do. Offer to get back to the reporter with the information.
- Never say something you don't want to appear in print or be aired.
- Don't go "off the record." There is no real "off the record."
- If you make an error, correct yourself as soon as possible.

Body Language

Eye Contact

- Make eye contact with the reporter. If on camera, don't stare at the camera.
- If you are being interviewed at a remote location and the interviewer is in the studio or somewhere else, do look into the camera.
- Don't be distracted by activity around you.

Posture

- Sit up straight but not like a stick. It helps to keep your feet on the floor.
- If you have a choice, decline being interviewed while sitting on a couch. It's hard to sit up straight and you are often lower than your interviewer.
- Don't fidget. If standing, put one foot slightly in front of the other to avoid swaying.
- Find a place to rest your hands and leave them there – folded in your lap works.
- Use gestures sparingly and naturally.



Sisters of St. Dominic

5635 Erie Street ♦ Racine, WI 53402-1900

262-639-4100 ♦ 262-639-9702 (fax) ♦ racinedominicans.org

SAMPLE

Media Release

Date

Contact:

Name
Phone
Email

RACINE, WI – At 2:45 p.m. today a three-alarm fire broke out at _____, a homeless shelter sponsored by the Sisters of St. Dominic (Racine Dominicans). The fire killed four people. S. Jane Doe, director of the ministry, was among the casualties. The three other victims have not been identified, pending notification of family.

Cause of the fire is under investigation by the Racine fire and police departments. No other facts are available at this time.

During this difficult situation, we ask for the prayers of the Racine community for all involved in this tragedy.

###

Sisters of St. Dominic of Racine, WI

(commonly referred to as **Racine Dominicans**)

A community of Catholic Sisters who ...

- Live by the mission “committed to truth, compelled to justice” through prayer, study, advocacy and action. We use whatever power we have – personally and as community – to sustain the fundamental right of every person to pursue the fullness of life and to share in the common good.
- Sponsor six ministries as of February 2016:
 - ~ **Bethany Apartments** transitional housing and life-skills education for survivors of domestic abuse;
 - ~ **Eco-Justice Center**, dedicated to environmental education, simple living and care of Earth;
 - ~ **HOPES Center**, offering counseling, case management and healing arts services to Racine’s homeless and mentally ill free of charge;
 - ~ **Siena Retreat Center**, offering retreats, spiritual guidance, and enrichment programs in a serene, nurturing space;
 - ~ **Senior Companion Program**, striving to alleviate loneliness and advocating for elders in Racine County;
 - ~ **St. Catherine’s High School**, providing a Catholic education to students of diverse backgrounds.

(More information about these ministries can be found at www.racinedominicans.org)

- Were founded in Racine, WI, in 1862 by Mothers Benedicta Bauer and Thomasina Ginker from Bavaria. These two sisters started schools for immigrant students, especially children from poor, working class families.
- Have consistently had significant impact on the Racine civic community by identifying needs and finding ways to address them (i.e. – initiating Villa St. Anna assisted living in 1990s; launching Adult Learning Program to address literacy problems in 1980; beginning the Health Care Network for uninsured people in 1987; founding Bethany Apartments shelter for abused women and their children in 1990; launching HOPES Center in 2008 to employ collaborative approaches to alleviate poverty; etc.)
- Have had significant impact in southeast Wisconsin by identifying needs and finding ways to respond to them (staffing St. Benedict school for African American children from 1920-1967, when we collaborated to launch Urban Day School; advocacy and community organizing in Milwaukee and Racine from 1960s-present; neighborhood outreach from 1960s-present; educating children, youth and young adults since 1862; etc.)
- Today serve in various ministries in Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Washington and Wisconsin.
- Elect new community leaders, called the Executive Committee, every four years. The Executive Committee consists of the president and two vice presidents.
- Currently have 130 sisters and 71 lay associates (women and men, single and married, who share with the sisters in their mission and ministries in various ways).

Media Conference Procedure

In preparation for a media conference, the outlets will be notified in advance about the time and place for the conference and what issues will be addressed.

The media conference will be held in an appropriate location, monitored for accessibility to off-limits areas. A media kit should be handed out before the conference begins. It will contain a copy of the Racine Dominican mission statement, a fact sheet, background sheet on the community, and any other relevant information and photos.

The statement to the media will include these basic elements:

- A greeting and presentation of concise background information on the Racine Dominicans;
- If applicable, an explanation of events or the situation leading up to the crisis;
- A factual presentation/evaluation of the crisis;
- A sincere demonstration of concern for the people involved but not acceptance of fault;
- An explanation of why you cannot say more (if you cannot);
- A promise for updates as they become available; and an offer to answer questions.

A sample draft statement follows:

"Thank you all for coming. As you know, the Dominican Sisters have served Racine and many other communities for over 150 years. In order to give you background on the community, I've included handouts providing relevant information in your media kit.

"I would like to start this conference by giving you a few basic facts about sisters and their work. First of all, this building is the motherhouse, or in secular language, the 'headquarters' for the entire community."

"The Racine Dominican Sisters serve not only Racine, but in other states as well. Before returning to Racine three years ago, S. Jane Doe served in Detroit, MI, for 15 years, running a women's shelter there. S. Jane ...

"Are there any questions I can answer?"

Appendix B: CMT Procedure for Crisis outside the US

A foreign crisis would be one involving a sister(s) visiting Egypt, Palestine, Central America or any location where an accident, illness, arrest, disappearance, or death takes place.

Phone calls regarding a crisis in any other country will be immediately referred to the community president, and if she is not available, to another member of the executive committee who will relay the information to other CMT members.

These questions should be asked of the foreign contact:

- 1) What are the facts? Get details and documentation (note time of call, contact name, phone numbers and country and city codes, etc. Never assume that someone else has this information. Document information yourself.)
- 2) Who in the United States should be told?
- 3) Who should *not* be told?
- 4) How should these messages be worded?
- 5) Has the foreign government in the host country been notified and have United States authorities been notified?
- 6) What is the best course of action?

The CMT will be in charge of all notifications, including family or friends, local or national government, and church officials.

Additional information includes the following precautions:

- 1) Be discreet; do not press for more information than your contact is able to divulge.
- 2) The United States State Department should be called *only* if the people in the foreign country advise this. In some cases, it can further endanger those involved. Also, the State Department will deal only with families of those endangered in foreign countries. They will not work with religious communities.

Appendix C: Contact Information

Emergency

911

Non-emergency contacts

Racine Police Department	(262) 635-7700
Racine Fire Department	(262) 635-7900
Racine County Sheriff's Department	(262) 636-3822
Caledonia Police Department	(262) 886-2300
Caledonia Fire Department	(262) 835-2050
Caledonia Health Department	(262) 835-4423
Wisconsin State Highway Patrol	
State headquarters	(608) 266-3212
Southeast headquarters	(262) 785-4700
Northeast headquarters	(920) 929-3700
All Saints Hospital	(262) 687-4011
Wisconsin DNR	(800) 943-0003

Legal Council

Lisa M. Gingerich
von Briesen & Roper, s.c
Email: LGINGERI@vonbriesen.com

Office: (414) 287-1507
Cell: (414) 217-2418
Home: (262) 439-9801

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

General phone number
Chancellor: Barbara Anne Cusack
3501 S. Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912
Email: cusackb@archmil.org

(414) 769-3300
(414) 769-3341

Racine Dominican Contacts

Executive Committee

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ssimon@racinedominicans.org

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ajohnson@racinedominicans.org

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Office: (262) 898-4083
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Communication Director

Jean Mullooly

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RDR Receptionist

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Finance Director

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Healthcare Director

Pam Hudson

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Cell: (262) 909-2950
phudson@racinedominicans.org

Facility Manager

Paul Udee

Office: (262) 639-4100, #1293
Home: (414)-327-0708
Cell: (414)-218-0887
pudee@racinedominicans.org

Human Resources Director

Nannette Wellstein

Office: (262) 898-4084
Cell: (414) 559-3921
nwellstein@racinedominicans.org

RDR Residence Fax

(262) 639-9702

Sponsorship Co-directors

S. Chris Broslavick

Office: (262) 898-4088

Cell: (715) 938-1697

sponsorship@racinedominicans.org

S. Carmen Agbuis

Home: (262) 664-4778

Cell: (414) 491-6743

sponsorship3@racinedominicans.org

S. Jane Weiss

Home: (262) 456-7505

Cell: (262) 865-8188

sponsorship2@racinedominicans.org

Sponsored Ministries

Bethany Apartments

806 Wisconsin Ave, Racine

Pamala Handrow, executive director

Work: (262) 633-9446

Cell: (262) 632-0355

Home: (262) 633-4517

ExecutiveDirector@bethanyapartments.org

Senior Companion Program

521 6th St, Racine

Sue Craanen, executive director

Work: (262) 898-2940

Cell: (262) 672-8591

scraanan@racinedominicans.org

Eco-Justice Center

7133 Michna Rd, Racine

Allison Thielen, executive director

(262) 681-8527

allison@ecojusticecenter.org

Siena Retreat Center

5637 Erie St, Racine

Claire Anderson, executive director

Work: (262) 898-2588

Cell: (414) 610-3067

canderson@racinedominicans.org

HOPES Center

521 6th St, Racine

Scott Metzel, executive director

(262) 898-2940

smetzel@hopescenter.org

St. Catherine's High School

1200 Park Av, Racine

Christopher Olley, president

(262) 632-2785

colley@saintcats.org

Shorelight Memory Care at Siena

5643 Erie St, Racine

Jamie Repa, Director of Resident Services

(262) 898-3182

jrepa@sienaonthelake.org

Local Media

Catholic Newspaper

Catholic Herald

Mary Angela Layman-Roman, managing editor

(414) 769-3476

laymanromanm@archmil.org

Fax: (414) 769-3468

Secular Newspapers

Racine Journal Times

Stephanie Jones, editor

(262) 631-1767 (newsroom)

stephanie.jones@lee.net

Lee Roberts, reporter

(262) 634-3322

lroberts@journaltimes.com

Kenosha News

Karl Frederick, religion writer

(262) 657-1000

kfrederick@kenoshanews.com

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Annysa Johnson, religion reporter

(414) 224-2061

anjohanson@journal sentinel.com

Racine Eye

Denise Lockwood, reporter

racinecountyeye@gmail.com

Radio

WRJN/WEZY (1400 am)

Tom Krakow, news director

(262) 634-3311

news@racineradio.com

WGTD (91.1 fm)

David McGrath, news director

(262) 564-3880

mcgrathd@gtc.edu

Racine Dominican Residence Phone (262) 639-4100

Racine Dominican Residence Fax (262) 639-9702

Crisis Response Form

Event:

Date of event:

Location:

Who was involved:

What happened:

CMT members:

RD response:

Name of recorder:

Date:

Crisis Communication Checklist

- ___ Inform crisis management team (CMT) members of possible crisis situation
- ___ Determine location for CMT meeting and set up appropriately
- ___ Identify spokespersons for internal groups & for external groups
- ___ Inform receptionist where to route calls
- ___ CMT review situation and develop appropriate statement for internal audiences and for media and external audiences
- ___ Gather information from appropriate sources and update written statements
- ___ Set up interviews and conferences as needed; advise appropriate individuals as necessary
- ___ Notify internal audience(s)
E.g. – If at Racine Dominican Residence, communicate with sisters and staff
- ___ Notify other sisters and associates, directors of sponsored ministries, diocese, etc.
- ___ Assess proactive communication with media and other external audiences
- ___ Monitor news coverage, bring serious inaccuracies to attention of media
- ___ Follow up with media as necessary
- ___ Send thank-you notes to all who assisted, if appropriate

Phone Log

Date:

Name:

Phone #:

Message:

Name:

Phone #:

Message:

Name:

Phone #:

Message:

Name:

Phone #:

Message:

Name:

Phone #:

Message:

Media Log

Journalist:

Phone:

Email:

Media Outlet:

Deadline:

Issue/focus:

Notes re: conversation:

Notes