

Children's Mental Health Ontario

Crisis  
Planning

# Qualities of a Crisis

- The crisis occurs suddenly
- An event that was not predicted
- It escalates in severity
- The event demands immediate attention
- It interrupts normal operations
- The event creates significant stress and anxiety for those involved or affected
- It threatens the well being or the reputation of the organization and its directors
- It significantly alters how the center operates or is perceived thereafter

# Crisis Management Team - Rules

- The Person in Command (PiC) makes the decisions
- The Team advises the Person in Command
- The Team follows through on decisions at the PiC's direction

*Flip chart – team tells us what it is doing*

# The Crisis

## The Centre

- Residential and non-residential programs at three locations
- The clients
  - 12 residential at 2 locations, 250 outpatient clients
- Full range of mental health issues
- Board of Directors
- 3 senior managers,
- 60 Bargaining Unit staff
- A range of clinical specialists

# The Crisis

*During the previous afternoon a staff member, a skilled professional who previously experienced the death of a close family members who succumbed to the outbreak of SARS noticed staff and kids were showing signs of a similar illness.*

*Later that afternoon and into the evening he worried about what he had seen and at 3:00am during the morning preceding this day, the staff member called his Union Rep. and the local hospital to express his concerns. He also started calling his colleagues who in turn started calling their colleagues.*

# The Crisis

9:30 am

- The Centre's crisis manager has called a state of crisis and convened the Crisis Management Team at a previously determined command centre.
- Staff are asking what is going on.
- Some staff are refusing to come in to work

# The Crisis

Crisis Management Team - What  
Do You Do?

10:00am

The Medical Officer of Health is calling for information and a Public Health doctor is on her way to the centre.

10:45am

The Union President is demanding a meeting with a stop work order citing the Occupational Health and Safety Act

10:50

The Board President joins the Team

The Public Health doctor arrives at the front door wearing a mask and protective clothing

11:20am

- The internal e-mail system crashes. Some information technology staff are at work, but the IT manager refuses to come in to work.

1:00pm

A reporter and cameraman from CBRT, the local TV station arrives at the front door to inquire about the "outbreak".

1:30pm

Clients in the adolescent unit are becoming agitated because some staff have been heard talking about the SARS "outbreak"

# Children's Mental Health Ontario

## **THE GUIDELINES**

February to September '07

CMHO's Member Services Committee

Wisdom and practical experience

Group of critical readers

Feedback on a near final edition

# A Starting Point

A center may

- Apply part or all of these guidelines
- Managing crisis
- An actual commitment to a culture of readiness

Three sections to the Guidelines:

- 1) Crisis Management Pre-readiness
- 2) Crisis Response
- 3) Post Crisis Analysis.

# Desire for Readiness

Depends upon:

- A centre's programs and clients
- A centre's location
- Its resources
- Budget
- The centre's previous experience with crises
- Personal experiences of the decision-makers

# Guidelines

## Complement

- Professional judgment
- Training

Democratic, Participatory Decision-Making  
Shifts to

Centralized, Hierarchical Command-and-Control

# Preplanning

Resources to be kept current:

- Directory for crisis response persons with emergency contact information
- Inventory contact persons party to community protocols
- Identity of persons needing assistance during emergency evacuations
- Accessible backup of databases, software, financial files, etc.
- Inventory of physical assets

# Preplanning

## Staff Relations

- Engaged in development
- A prior agreement on crisis management:
  - The crisis management program
  - Management's role and expectations
  - Extra duties for bargaining unit staff
  - Compensation for extra duties
  - Locking in employees
  - Complaints or grievances

# Preplanning

## Near Miss Program

- Converting near misses into learning opportunities

## Crisis Management Team

## Communications Plan

- Information to the CMT
- Information from the CMT

# Preplanning

## Media Relations

- Need to share pertinent information

## Media strategy:

- Identify who communicates with the media
- Provide media training
- Media kit

## Positive relations with the local media prior to

- Establishing contact with media personnel
- Identify the “go to” person
- Provide them with key messages about the center

# Preplanning

## Advise CMHO

- assist with key messages
- help on location if possible
- provide advice on a media consultant
- finding counsel

## Emergency Plans

- Evacuations for fire, bomb threats & environmental factors
- Communicable disease or illness
- Trauma
- Threats from clients or outside the center

# Preplanning

Policies and Procedures

Training

Readiness Audits

Community Protocols

Specialised Resources

# CRISIS RESPONSE

When Ready, the Center Can Take  
Appropriate Action

PiC Override

# CRISIS RESPONSE

1. Assessment and declaration of Crisis
2. Crisis Management Team with command decision-making
3. Person in Command (PiC)
  - a) Sets priorities
  - b) Ensures immediate action
  - c) Ensures activities and events are recorded
  - d) Assembles the Team
  - e) Prioritises Assessments

# CRISIS RESPONSE

The Crisis Management team:

1. Analyzes the impact of the crisis on the organization by considering
2. Ensures recurring progress reports
3. Re-assesses the crisis
4. Applies an Internal Communications Strategy
5. Applies a pre-determined external communications strategy to
6. Declares the crisis over

# POST CRISIS ANALYSIS

Prior to closure initiate measures to ensure:

- Continuation of service
- Clients and staff are stabilized
- Closure is invoked

# POST CRISIS ANALYSIS

As crisis responses pass start:

- Identifying those in need of therapeutic debriefing
- Assessing the merits and disadvantages of trauma counselling
- Providing trauma counselling if appropriate

# POST CRISIS ANALYSIS

Once the crisis is declared over, the Crisis Management Team:

- Clarifies the facts of the crisis
- Informs the key stakeholders
- Analyzes gaps and shortfalls to prevent future occurrences
- Rebuilds the work unit or organization
- Helps the organization and stakeholders achieve closure on the events