

Before a crisis

Activities for Building Organized Resilience

Crisis Preparation Checklist

Use this checklist to prepare your team for times of crisis.

ENHANCE PLAYER INTERACTIONS WITH CLUB AND OTHER SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

- Encourage players, former players, and staff to interact regularly with support professionals.
- Develop and strengthen relationships with local mental health professionals and clergy.

PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND WELLNESS AMONG PLAYERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

- Provide regular training for players, former players, staff, and their families on topics related to life skills and mental wellness.
- Designate individuals to periodically review wellness information and resources with the team.

FOSTER PEER LEADERSHIP

- Cultivate “peer supports” to assist in times of crisis.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Assemble a Crisis Management Team.
- Define the Crisis Management Team members’ responsibilities.
- Conduct a comprehensive risk analysis and discuss mitigation approaches.
- Hold regular Crisis Management Team meetings.
- Create clear crisis response protocols.
- Instruct all members of the Crisis Management Team to formulate a personal self-care plan to follow in the event of a crisis.

CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE PLAN

- Establish a communications plan and maintain a list of internal and external contacts.

ADOPT MEMORIALIZATION PLAN

- Adopt policies for memorializing the lives of deceased team members.
- Prepare to treat all deaths the same way.
- Be ready to meet with the close colleagues and family of the deceased.
- Plan safe memorial activities.

Appropriately managing a crisis requires significant planning and preparation. Crisis situations, such as a death or the emotional crisis of a player, former player, or staff member, can have profound effects on individuals, the club, and the community at large. Deliberate and thoughtful preparation will make crisis response more effective and minimize potential negative effects. Review the following steps to help your organization prepare for a crisis and build organizational resilience.

ENHANCE PLAYER INTERACTIONS WITH CLUB AND OTHER SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

- ✓ Encourage players, former players, and staff to interact regularly with support professionals including clergy, mental health clinicians, Transition Coaches, and the Director of Player Engagement. Support services should be embedded into the organization's fabric and culture.
- ✓ Develop and strengthen relationships with local mental health professionals and clergy. These professionals typically have training and expertise in promoting positive coping skills ("psychological resilience"), encouraging organizational mental health, and managing mental health crises.

PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND WELLNESS AMONG PLAYERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

- ✓ Provide regular training for players, former players, staff, and their families on topics related to life skills and mental wellness. Topics might include: financial planning and management, healthy relationships, parenting, coping with stress, caring for and supporting extended family, preventing domestic violence, and treating substance abuse.

- ✓ Designate individuals, including members of the Crisis Management Team, to periodically review with players, former players, and team staff the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges commonly experienced by those in professional sports, as well as local and NFL resources available to help address these issues.

FOSTER PEER LEADERSHIP

- ✓ Cultivate "peer supports" to assist in times of crisis. Peer supports should be players who are well-respected by their teammates, embody total wellness, and commit to serving as role models to their peers.

DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

- ✓ Assemble a Crisis Management Team to include the Director of Player Engagement, General Manager, peer supports, clergy, mental health professionals, and representatives from key departments such as Communications/Public Relations, Security, and Human Resources (*see Appendix A: Crisis Management Team Personnel*). The Crisis Management Team may also include a Transition Coach.

- ✓ Define the responsibilities each Crisis Management Team member will have before, during, and after a crisis (see **Appendix B: Responsibilities in Crisis Preparation and Response**).
- ✓ Conduct a **comprehensive risk analysis** and discuss mitigation approaches.

After gathering this information, an analysis is conducted by the Director of Player Engagement to estimate the probability and severity of each potential event. Questions around the team’s vulnerability to these events include:

- How likely is the event to occur?
- How often might the event occur?
- How many people in the organization would be affected by the event?
- What type of impact would it have on the organization—its people, product, reputation, etc.?

Comprehensive risk analysis. To appropriately plan for and be able to respond to crises impacting the organization, it is important to conduct an annual risk analysis. This analysis includes a query of employees and management on potential events, review of the organization’s history of events, review of industry trends (i.e., events impacting other NFL teams), review of “near misses,” in which a crisis was averted, and an examination of geographic location.

The Foreseeable Risk Analysis Grid is used for this analysis. Particular attention and planning are devoted to those traumatic events that are considered to be in the Medium/High Probability and Medium/High Severity categories. In planning for these events, the Director of Player Engagement will also begin to plan for the response to other identified events that are seen as having Low/Medium Probability and Low/Medium Severity.

Low Probability <i>High Severity</i>	Medium Probability <i>High Severity</i>	High Probability <i>High Severity</i>
Low Probability <i>Medium Severity</i>	Medium Probability <i>Medium Severity</i>	High Probability <i>Medium Severity</i>
Low Probability <i>Low Severity</i>	Medium Probability <i>Low Severity</i>	High Probability <i>Low Severity</i>

- ✓ Maintain the Crisis Management Team by holding regular meetings, annually reviewing and revising the Crisis Management Plan, and practicing its operation in annual crisis drills.
- ✓ Create clear protocols for responding to players, former players, and staff members in a psychological or emotional crisis. The protocols must define what constitutes a crisis, who responds, and how they should manage the situation.
- ✓ Instruct all members of the Crisis Management Team to formulate a personal self-care plan to follow in the event of a crisis.

During challenging situations, members of the Crisis Management Team may forget to take care of themselves in the rush to make sure others are taken care of. The best time to plan for self-care is before a crisis begins. Thinking about strategies for self-care ahead of time can help members of the Crisis Management Team internalize what their own responses will be when a crisis does occur (*see Appendix D: Self-Care for Members of the Crisis Management Team*).

CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE PLAN

- ✓ Establish a communications response plan and lists of internal and external contacts to be notified in case of a crisis. Maintain a list of emergency contact information for staff and players, including those on injured reserve and the practice squad. (*see Appendix B: Responsibilities in Crisis Preparation and Response*).

ADOPT A MEMORIALIZATION PLAN

- ✓ Adopt policies for memorializing the lives of deceased members of the team family that honor them and their contributions to their family, friends, community, and team, but be mindful of the risk of inadvertently glorifying the cause of death.

- ✓ Treat all deaths in the same way. Having one approach for memorializing a player, former player, or staff member who died from cancer or in a car accident and a different approach for those who died by suicide reinforces misperceptions and stigma associated with suicide and may be painful to the family members and friends of the deceased. It is equally important to memorialize the deceased in a way that doesn't inadvertently glamorize or romanticize a death by suicide. In the case of a suicide, teams must consider how to appropriately memorialize the deceased without risking suicide contagion among others who may be at risk.
- ✓ Meet with the close colleagues and family of the deceased to identify a meaningful, safe approach to acknowledging the loss. The recommendations made here focus on keeping the regular work environment intact to the maximum extent possible for the benefit of the entire organization, including those who may not have known the deceased.
- ✓ Plan safe memorial activities. The team plays an important role in channeling the energy and passion of players, former players, staff members, and the greater community in a positive direction, balancing the community's need to grieve with the impact that proposed activities may have. Teams can offer specific, constructive suggestions for safe memorialization for those who wish to participate, such as:
 - Holding a day of community service in honor of the deceased
 - In cases of suicide or a mental health-related death, putting together a team to participate in an awareness or fundraising event sponsored by a national mental health or suicide prevention organization, or holding a local fundraising event to support a local crisis hotline or other suicide prevention program



Independent Confidential Support
for the entire NFL Family

- Sponsoring a mental health or health/wellness awareness day
- Making a book or cards available for colleagues to write messages to the family, share memories of the deceased, or offer condolences

Permanent Memorials and Scholarships

Some communities wish to establish permanent memorials (either physical, such as planting a tree or installing a bench or plaque; or commemorative, such as funding a scholarship) to those who have died. While there is no research to suggest that permanent memorials create a risk of contagion after a suicide death, they can be upsetting reminders to bereaved colleagues. Moreover, the team should bear in mind that once it plants a tree, puts up a plaque, installs a park bench, or establishes a named scholarship for one deceased individual, it should be prepared to do so for others. This can become a difficult precedent to sustain.

Further guidance on memorialization after a suicide can be found at <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/aftersuicide.pdf>.