

Reynolds Community College Critical Communications Plan

- I. **Purpose** - The Reynolds Community College Critical Communications Plan provides the general framework for the coordination of communications within the College Community, along with the media and the public, in the event of an emergency or other critical incident. It outlines the roles, responsibilities, and procedures of key Reynolds officials and departments that will guide the College in promptly and accurately sharing information with all of the College's audiences during an emergency or critical incident.

Events may be categorized as:

- life or death situations
- urgent or affects the operating status of the college
- may cause a distraction to staff and students
- statement or reaction to a current event

Example of events may include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, a pandemic or major crime. They may also include police investigations, protests, or other situations that may need a public response.

II. Objectives of the Plan

1. Assess the situation and determine the warranted responses, and the type of communication to utilize.
2. Assemble the Critical Communications Team to determine a plan of action to address the event.
3. Implement immediate actions to:
 - identify constituencies that should be informed about the situation.
 - communicate facts about the critical incident with one voice.
 - restore order and/or confidence.
 - minimize rumors.

III. Procedures

Part I

Assessment of Event – The individual who encounters the potential event should gather, if possible, accurate information about the event, and immediately contact the Department of Police at 65-5911 or (804) 523-5911. There may be events which will require immediate notification by the Department of Police i.e. life safety events; however, the communication of the event will be evaluated using the Emergency Notification Communication Decision Tree as shown in Attachment A.

Event Notification – The Chief of Police, or designee will immediately inform the Vice President of Finance and Administration, or designee and the Director of Communications, or designee of the event. The College President will be notified if possible, prior to the release of the communication by the Vice President of Finance

and Administration who will also notify the Executive Cabinet on release of communication to the college community and constituency groups listed below.

Clery Reporting Requirements - Timely Warning – The Chief of Police, or designee will provide guidance on the required Clery reporting notification. A timely warning will be issued in instances involving specific crimes mandated by the Clery Act.

Parties/Groups to Notify -

- Students
- Internal college community
- College Board
- Foundation Board
- VCCS
- Other VCCS community colleges
- Law enforcement

Emergency Communication Responsibility and Communication Method

- Department of Police – Text Alerts, Alertus Beacons
- Communications/Marketing Team – Web alert banner, mass email to staff and students (internal college community), social media
- College President – Email to external partners, College Board, Foundation Board

Follow-Up Notification – The Reynolds College Department of Police in conjunction with the Office of Communications will provide all initial, follow-up, and “All Clear” notifications.

Part II

Assembly of the Critical Communications Team – The nature of the event will determine the assembly of the team. The Vice President of Finance and Administration will assemble the Critical Communication Team and establish meeting location and time. Composition of the core team will include the executive cabinet and other critical college positions or designees. Types of events which may trigger the assembly of the Critical Communications Team are:

- Life or Death Situations
- Urgent or impacts the operating status of the college i.e. weather event (tornado), gas leak...

Team may include:

1. college president (EC)
2. vice president of finance and administration (EC)
3. vice president of institutional advancement and executive director of the college foundations (EC)
4. vice president of academic affairs (EC)
5. vice president of enrollment management and student success (EC)
6. vice president of community college workforce alliance (EC)
7. vice president of human resources and organizational development/chief diversity officer (EC)
8. associate vice president of research, planning and grants (EC)
9. director of communications/public information officer (PIO) and special assistant to the president
10. director of facilities management and planning
11. chief of police
12. chief technology officer

Depending on the nature of the critical situation, other individuals may be added to the Critical Communications Team.

III. Plan of Action – The Critical Communications Team, after assessing the nature and scope of the situation, should develop and execute a plan of action including some, or all, of the following:

1. Gather relevant and accurate information and develop key internal and external messaging.
The director of communications, or designee, will work with the Department of Police, any relevant internal leaders, and other relevant stakeholders (i.e. external agencies) to gather the who, what, where, and when of the critical incident and prepare a brief but accurate fact sheet to be made available to the college president and members of the Critical Communications Team. The fact sheet should be analyzed with respect to facts that may concern ongoing public perception of the college and concerns for employee and student privacy and security.
2. Determine key constituencies/audiences
The Critical Communications Team will determine which constituencies/audiences need to be informed about the critical incident. These groups may include, but are not limited to:
 - Reynolds faculty and staff
 - College Board
 - Foundation Board
 - General public
 - External law enforcement and/or state agencies
 - VDEM
 - Mass media
 - Students
 - Parents of students

- VCCS leadership

3. Disseminating information to key constituencies/audiences

The Office of Communications will take the lead and work with the Critical Communications Team, if relevant, to determine the best channels to disseminate facts and other timely information to the key constituencies/audiences listed above. This information will provide the relevant and pertinent facts of a critical incident, minimize rumors, restore calm, and communicate whether stakeholders should expect additional updates. These channels include, but are not limited to:

- College external website
- College intranet
- Blackboard landing page
- Electronic smart signs
- Internal flat screens
- Email to all faculty and staff
- Email to all students
- Email to College Board and/or Foundation Board
- Email to external agencies and/or community groups
- College Information Center hotline (804-371-3000)
- Official College social media accounts
- Text alerts via Reynolds emergency mass notification system with additional information separate from any text alerts sent by Reynolds Police at the onset of a critical incident

4. Designate a media spokesperson and determine media next steps

Mass media are an audience of particular sensitivity during a critical incident. The director of communications will work with the Office of the President or the highest-ranking college official to determine who is best suited to be the official media spokesperson in the event the Critical Incident leads to media interaction. The decision should balance the competing needs of minimizing rumors, providing timely and accurate information, and minimizing damage to the public's opinion of Reynolds.

The director of communications will work with key partners (i.e. local law enforcement) and the Critical Communications Team, if appropriate, to determine whether a news release and/or news conference is an appropriate means of minimizing rumors, restoring calm, providing the facts to the general public. The director of communications will determine logistics of the news conference including when, where and how the media will be contacted, which media will be contacted, who will supervise the news conference, who will appear, etc.

5. In the event of a major incident, the director of communications will determine whether a Joint Information Center (JIC) needs to be established in order to best share information between Reynolds Police, local law enforcement, the director of communications and/or the official college spokesperson for the incident, and the Critical Communications Team. Possible physical locations for the JIC include, but are not limited to:

- Downtown Campus – 700 East Jackson Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Community Room
- Parham Road Campus – 1651 E. Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23228
Burnette Hall – Room 103
Georgiadis Hall – Conference Room 238
Massey Library Technology Center – Meeting Room 138
Workforce Development and Conference Center, President's Conference Room
- Goochland Campus – 1851 Dickinson Road, Goochland, VA 23063
Community Room
- The Kitchens – 2500 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, VA 23223
Board Room

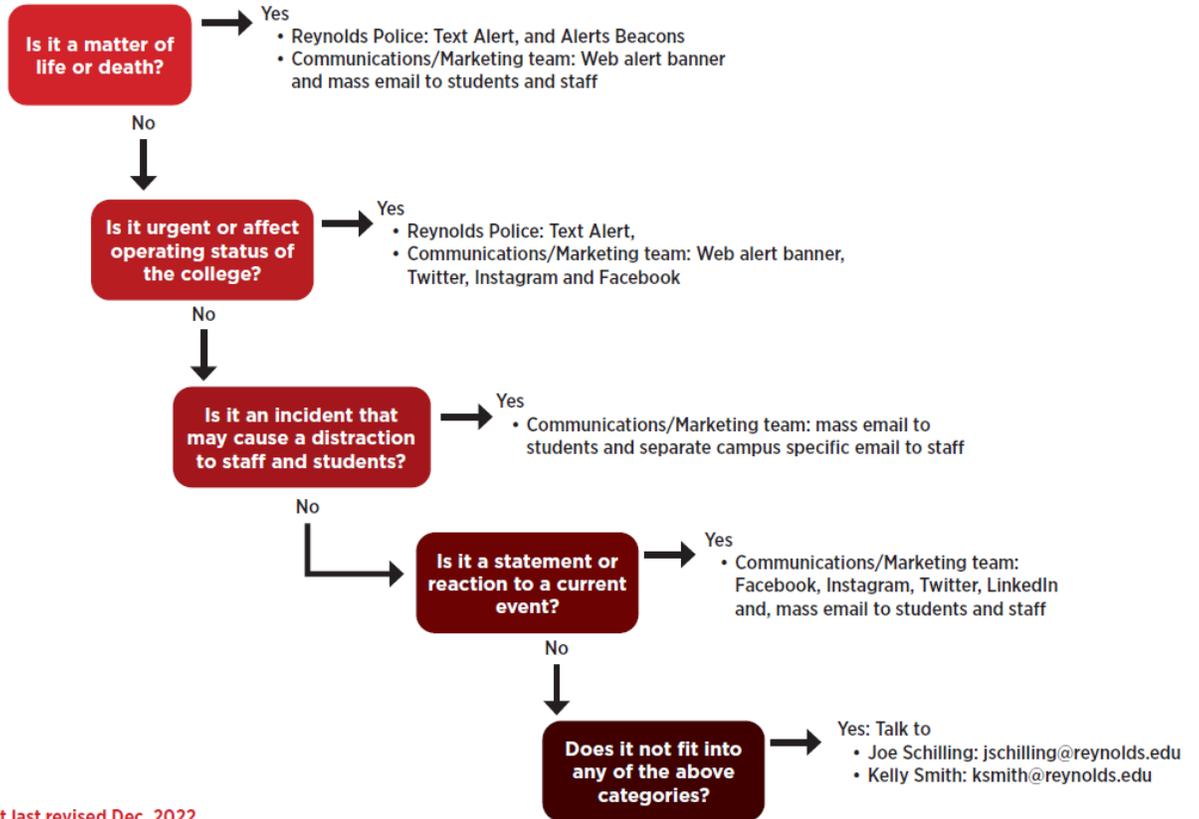
IV. Post-incident Communications - It is critical that after initial information is provided to key constituencies/audiences, the College continue to speak in a unified voice to provide any additional updates or guidance. The director of communications will work with the college president and any relevant members of the Critical Communications Team to develop a plan of action for additional communications to go out to relevant stakeholders with a goal of demonstrating a return to normalcy, empathy to any of those affected by the critical incident, highlights of how the critical incident was handled, and clearly state any next steps.

Depending on the severity of the incident, there may be a need to assist any victim(s) by obtaining information and/or a referral to available resources. The vice president of human resources and organizational development/chief diversity officer will be responsible for notifying appropriate employees and the vice president for enrollment management and student success will be responsible for notifying students of available resources.

The Critical Communications Team shall strive to meet within ten (10) working days following a critical incident to review all actions taken as a result of the critical incident to determine effectiveness and efficiency of operations and make any needed changes to the Critical Incident Communications Plan.

Attachment A.

Emergency Communication Decision Tree



Draft last revised Dec. 2022