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# INCIDENT RESPONSE GUIDE

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## CONTENTS

### INCIDENT PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Overview.....	2
Incident Reporting.....	2
Legal Counsel .....	4
Insurance.....	4
Response Partners .....	4
Document Retention.....	5

### COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Crisis Communication Plan .....	5
Holding Statement Principles.....	6
Tips for Working with Media.....	7

### INCIDENT RESPONSE CHECKLISTS

Incident Response Tools Overview.....	7
Allegation of child abuse.....	8
Major medical and or mental health emergencies .....	9
Possible abduction or missing child .....	10
Felony-level criminal act related to the Club.....	11
Misappropriation of funds, \$25K+ .....	12
Felony criminal/civil action reportable to insurance carrier .....	13
Negative media affecting Club reputation .....	14
Other incident Club deems critical .....	15
Historical allegations of child abuse.....	16
Parent or Constituent Letter.....	17

### INCIDENT RECOVERY

Trauma .....	18
Debriefing.....	19
Other Online Resources.....	19

# INCIDENT PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

## OVERVIEW

The safety and protection of children and teens is the number one priority for the Boys & Girls Clubs Movement. Even one safety incident is too many. Any incident that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care should be taken seriously.

With the goal of zero incidents, preventing accidents and incidents is critically important to the safety of our members. However, it is also imperative that local Boys & Girls Club organizations are prepared to respond should an incident occur.

The Incident Response Guide is designed to assist local Clubs to respond to incidents should they occur, with the goal to protect its members, staff, volunteers and the organization, and mitigate risk moving forward. There are several actions every Club should take to prepare to respond to reported incidents.

- If the incident involves an injury to a member, staff or volunteer, immediately take all necessary steps to ensure they are safe.
- Maintain and adhere to **incident reporting** protocols including reporting to authorities.
- Establish a board-approved **Crisis Communications Plan**.
- Establish a board-approved **Emergency Operations Plan**.
- Identify **legal counsel**.
- Maintain proper **insurance coverage**.
- Identify and develop **incident response partners**.

## INCIDENT REPORTING

Clubs are required to immediately report critical safety incidents to local law enforcement and to BGCA within 24 hours of becoming aware of an incident. Clubs are also required to adhere to their states' mandated reporting requirements, which can be found here: [mandated reporting requirements](#).

Additionally, every local Boys & Girls Club organization should have an up to date policy on reporting and documenting incidents that happen at the Club and during Club sanctioned activities.

Policies should clearly outline:

- Types of incidents, accidents, and activities that are considered reportable;
- Document collection procedures;
- Persons who are required to report and where;
- Timelines for reporting to management and law enforcement; and
- Actions that will be taken should policies not be followed.

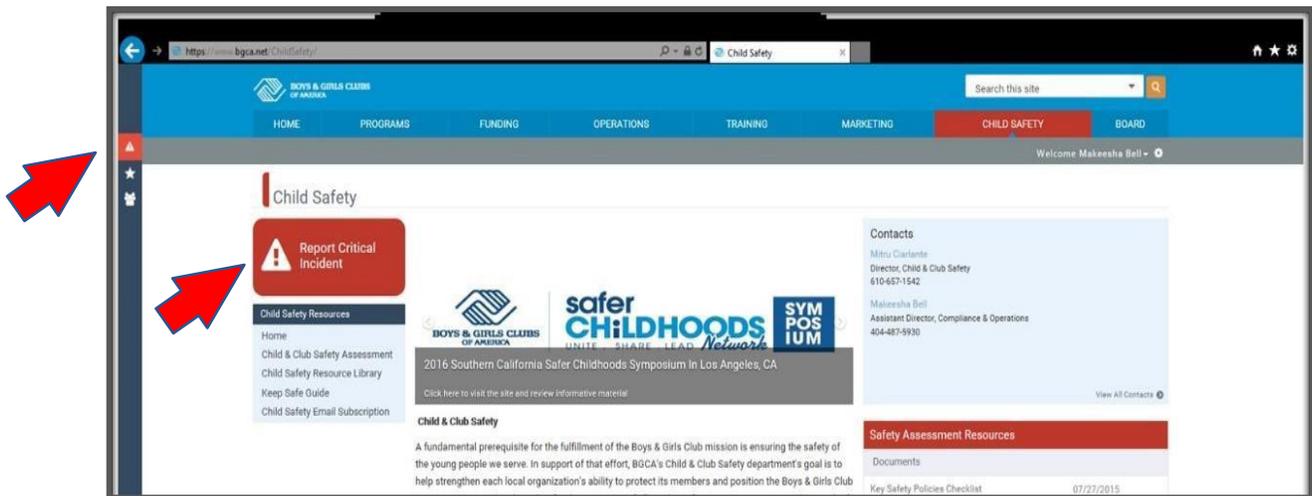
It's also important to remember to:

- Stay calm and strive to calm Club professionals and members during response process.
- Engage appropriate elements of the written **Emergency Operations Plan**, if necessary.
- Engage the written **Crisis Communication Plan**.
- Engage the appropriate elements of this written **Critical Incident Response Guide**.
- Submit a **critical incident report** to BGCA within 24 hours.

In addition to reporting potential criminal matters to law enforcement immediately, allegations that fall within the following categories must be reported to BGCA within 24 hours pursuant to Boys & Girls Club membership requirements:

1. An instance or allegation of child abuse, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse; sexual misconduct or exploitation against any child (Club-related or not) by a current employee or volunteer or any Club-related instance by a former employee or volunteer.
2. An instance or allegation of child abuse, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse; sexual misconduct or exploitation by a youth towards another youth at a Club site or Club sponsored activity.
3. A major medical emergency with a child, personnel or volunteer at a Club site or Club sponsored activity leading to extended hospitalization, permanent injury or death or a mental health crisis with a child requiring outside care.
4. A child who may be abducted or missing from a Club site or Club sponsored activity.
5. A known or suspected felony-level criminal act committed at a Club site or Club sponsored activity.
6. The misappropriation of organizational funds in the amount of \$25,000 or greater or any amount of federal funds.
7. A felony criminal action or civil legal action that would be reportable to an insurance carrier involving the organization, its employees or volunteers (for an open organization-related court case, report within 24 hours any change in the status of the case).
8. Negative media that could compromise the reputation of the organization or the Boys & Girls Club brand.
9. Any other incident deemed critical by the organization.
10. When in doubt, report or contact your DOD.

The **CEO, board chair or a designee selected by the CEO or board chair** can submit the critical incident report on [www.bgca.net](http://www.bgca.net) by clicking the red icon on their homepage or on the Child Safety page. Should you need to assign a designee, contact [childsafety@bgca.org](mailto:childsafety@bgca.org).



**NOTE: Incident reporting checklists are located on pages 7-15 of this guide.**



BGCA has a team in place to assist and support local organizations with any critical incident. Contact your **Director of Organizational Development (DOD)** to access those services

## LEGAL COUNSEL

It is recommended that Clubs identify legal counsel to help prevent incidents and understand your organization. Attorneys can assist in reviewing a Club's emergency response and reporting policies and processes to better prepare for an incident. When responding to an incident or allegation, it is important to engage legal counsel early in the process. Legal counsel can review holding statements or other communications before distribution and provide general guidance in responding to the incident.

Inviting an attorney to serve on your board of directors is also beneficial. While the local Club receives the benefit of ready access to legal counsel if needed, attorneys can support a cause they are likely passionate about, further connecting them to the local community. This opportunity is not lost on new attorneys who are encouraged by their firms to invest time volunteering in the community. If attorneys serving on a Club's board are unable to provide legal counsel directly, they can typically assist in identifying another attorney to engage.

Should your Club organization receive a letter from an attorney threatening legal action, be served with a lawsuit or otherwise receive notice of future or pending legal action, legal counsel should be immediately notified. Clubs should also notify BGCA General Counsel **Kristine Morain** by sending an email to [KMorain@bgca.org](mailto:KMorain@bgca.org) or calling 404-487-5970.

## INSURANCE COVERAGE

Maintaining adequate insurance coverage is critical to the protection of the members and the operations of a Club. Every Club is unique and may carry a wide variety of insurance based on need, size, and services offered. Per BGCA membership requirements, organizations are required to maintain the following types of coverage:

- General Liability Insurance
- Sexual Misconduct Liability Insurance
- Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI)
- Directors & Officers Insurance (D&O)

It is also critical that Clubs locate and permanently retain records of every general liability insurance policy they have ever purchased. Many states have significantly expanded or removed the [statutes of limitations](#) for child sexual abuse claims. As such, claims could be made against an organization since its inception and Clubs want to be able to support all potential victims.

For questions or support in identifying older records please contact BGCA Legal Services at [KMorain@bgca.org](mailto:KMorain@bgca.org) or calling 404-487-5970. Additional information can also be found [here](#).

## RESPONSE PARTNERS

There is power in partnership. Clubs are encouraged to develop relationships with local first responders, emergency management groups, mental health providers, and others to help facilitate incident response. Examples include, but are not limited to:

### Agency:

**Police, Sheriff, Fire, EMS**  
**Child Protective Services**  
**City or County Mental Health**  
**School Counselors or Social Workers**  
**Private Counseling Services**  
**Hospice**  
**Family or Child Shelters**  
**Child Advocacy Centers**

### Possible Incident Support:

First responders, training, official investigations  
Mandatory reporting, training, official investigations  
Counseling, training, family support  
Counseling, bereavement services, family support  
Counseling, bereavement services, family support  
Counseling, bereavement services, family support, training  
Referral services, family support, training  
Child abuse services, family support, training

Developing new relationships with another agency can sometimes be challenging and can be developed beyond just incident or emergency preparedness. Listed below are a few ideas to get the process started.

- Develop and implement Club member community service projects to support the agency.
- Engage training opportunities the agency can provide Club professionals and or Club members.
- Recognize the important work of the agency through “Our Hero’s Day” or other special events.
- Club member “friend” visits to agency (handmade gifts, caroling, cookies, job shadowing, etc.).
- Club members cook and share a planned meal with agency staff or during a shift change.
- Send handmade holiday or thank you cards to individuals in agency.
- Engage Torch or Keystone Clubs to support an event or initiative of the partner agency.
- Recruit individuals in agency as program volunteers or members of Club advisory groups.
- Recruit key individuals in agency as ad hoc members of the board-led Safety Committee.

## DOCUMENT RETENTION

A document retention policy establishes and describes how a Club and its employees are expected to manage electronic and physical documents from creation through destruction. Many document retention periods are mandated by law and are important for the protection of Clubs. Sample document retention policies can be located [here](#).

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

A crisis can strike at any time, without notice. A child may suffer a serious injury, a Club professional could be arrested, or the organization could be named in a lawsuit. In each of these instances, it would not be uncommon for the media to contact the Club for a quote or for additional information.

Every organization should have a board approved **Crisis Communications Plan** in place to help manage these situations, no matter how minor. When developing a Crisis Communications Plan, organizations should consider the following actions:

- Identify a spokesperson for parents or media inquiries (i.e., Board Chair, CEO, VP of Operations, etc.).
- Identify protocols for responding to parents, donors, and relevant stakeholders.
- Identify protocols for drafting statements for the public.
- Implement protocols to ensure personnel, volunteers, and board members do **not speak** to media or anyone outside of the organization and refer all inquiries to the designated spokesperson.
- Review your website, social media, and any additional online presence to assess if there are any photos or content that should be removed considering the crisis.
- Coordinate the tracking of related media, including social media.

A draft Crisis Communications Plan is available [here](#).

## HOLDING STATEMENT PRINCIPLES

A holding statement is designed to help control the message the public receives immediately following an incident. The media may look for additional details regarding the incident, and the holding statement can help position your organization as their primary source. It is the one opportunity Clubs have to shape the message - don't miss it by not being prepared. Holding statements also allow your Club time to investigate the incident and gather additional information before the next communication.

Holding statements are best used in response to a media inquiry, rather than proactively sent to the media. It is recommended that Clubs have a holding statement available, however, Clubs should not share unless asked.

Tips for drafting a holding statement:

- First, reassure the public that child and Club safety is your top priority.
- Keep your statement short and simple; non-emotional and fact-based statements are generally more effective.
- Confirm that an incident has been reported, but do not offer details.
- Explain your priorities and the action you are taking at that point in time.
- Explain that the appropriate authorities are involved, and you are working with them.
- Assure the media you will continue to keep them updated as more information becomes available and identify when and where the next briefing will occur.

Below is a sample generic holding statement for a local Boys & Girls Club:

### Paragraph One – Lead with the priority of safety, then briefly state the allegation or issue.

*“The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any (allegation/situation) that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Any Town is aware of the alleged inappropriate conduct between two Club members. The organization is deeply concerned about these allegations and is cooperating fully with local authorities in the investigation of this serious matter.” IF THERE IS A KNOWN VICTIM, SHOW EMPATHY, i.e., Our hearts go out to the victim and their family.*

### Paragraph Two -- State any relevant action the Club has taken.

*“Upon learning of this allegation, the Club took immediate action by suspending the Club member and notifying the local authorities and the member’s parents or guardian.”*

### Paragraph Three -- State the Club’s strong position of care and concern for children.

*“Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All and employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All supervisory policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.”*

### Paragraph Four -- Summarize next steps.

*“The organization will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and withhold further comment on this incident pending the completion of the investigation.”*



A sample holding statement is provided for each BGCA critical incident category in the **Critical Incident Response Tools** on **pages 7-15** of this guide.

BGCA has a team in place to assist and support local organizations with the review or development of holding statements and constituent letters, if necessary. Please contact your **Director of Organizational Development (DOD)** to access those services.

## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH MEDIA

Designate a single spokesperson to deal with the media. This is the best way to ensure continuity and control your message.

- Prepare a holding statement that can be shared with the media upon request. It is recommended that Clubs do not proactively share statements with media, which could invite a story and potentially pave the way for additional questions.
- Refrain from saying “no comment.” Lack of a response may drive the reporter to seek information from other sources that might not be reliable. Here are some alternatives:
  - ✓ *“I don’t have an answer for you at the moment but let me look into that and get back to you.”*
  - ✓ *“I would like to give you that answer, but we have not been able to confirm facts in that area. We will issue a statement once the details are available.”*
  - ✓ *“This situation is still under investigation. We are fully cooperating with the authorities and will wait until all the facts are gathered and verified before releasing information.”*
- It is recommended that you do not attempt to talk “off the record.” Always assume that everything you say will be documented.
- Try not to repeat negative questions or misleading words. They may end up in print as part of your quote.
- Avoid arguing with a reporter, even when provoked. Any of your statements may end up in print.
- Refrain from ad lib or impromptu statements. Stick to the prepared statements.
- Don’t expect an opportunity to review for approval. It’s not likely that the reporter will clear his/her story with you before it runs.
- Always listen very carefully to what the reporter says. Respond ONLY to what is specifically asked, unless it’s a point you have thought out very carefully in advance. Don’t expand.

## INCIDENT RESPONSE CHECKLISTS

### OVERVIEW

The safety of our members is our number one priority. In the event of an incident, Club staff should take steps to first ensure the immediate safety of members.

The following pages include guidance to assist with response to allegations and reported incidents. These resources are samples and can be modified as organizations see fit. Used in conjunction with already existing response procedures, this guidance can help ensure consistent response and follow-up.

# Allegation of Child Abuse

## RESPONSE ACTIONS

### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Secure the immediate safety of members
- State mandatory child abuse report
- Call 911 (or emergency line)
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- Child Protective Services
- CEO
- Board Chair
- Attorney for Club organization
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- BGCA Critical Incident Report System

### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide media holding statement  
(if asked for comment by media)

### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- Child Safety Hotline (866-607-7233)
- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Trauma Counseling Services
- ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

## HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is our number one priority, and we take any allegation that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) is aware of the alleged inappropriate conduct of a (staff member or volunteer or between Club members). The organization is deeply concerned about these allegations and is cooperating fully with local authorities in the investigation of this serious matter. *IF CONFIRMED VICTIM ADD:* Our hearts go out to the victim and their family.

Upon learning of this allegation, the Club took immediate action by notifying the local authorities, as well as the member's parents or guardian, and suspending the (staff member or volunteer). Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All supervisory policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.

To protect the safety and privacy of those involved, Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and withhold further comment on this incident pending the completion of the investigation.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ChildHelp (800-422-4453)

<https://www.childhelp.org/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.org/>

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

National Children's Advocacy Network

<http://www.nationalcac.org/>

National Children's Alliance

<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/>

Prevent Child Abuse

<http://preventchildabuse.org/resources/>

## Major Medical and/or Mental Health Emergencies

### RESPONSE ACTIONS

#### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Provide Basic First Aid
- Call 911 (or emergency line)
- Initiate Emergency Operations Plan
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

#### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- CEO
- Board Chair
- Attorney for Club organization
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- BGCA Critical Incident Report

#### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide holding statement to media  
*(if asked for comment by media)*

#### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- Local Hospital or Treatment Program
- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Trauma Counseling Services
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

### HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any situation that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) is aware of a recent medical emergency at one of our locations involving a Club member. Our hearts are with the child and their family.

Upon learning of this incident, the Club took immediate action by providing basic first aid and calling 911, as well as contacting the member's parent or guardian(s). EMS transported the Club member to a local hospital.

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All supervisory policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.

To protect the safety and privacy of those involved, Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and withhold further comment on this incident pending the completion of the investigation.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"Be There" Toolkit

<https://www.bgca.net/BeThere>

Children's Bereavement Center

<http://childbereavement.org/resources/helpful-links.html>

National Alliance for Grieving Children

<https://childrengrieve.org/>

Children and Youth Grief Network

<https://www.childrenandyouthgriefnetwork.com/>

## Possible Abduction or Missing Child

### RESPONSE ACTIONS

#### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Call 911 (or emergency line)
- Search the facility (inside and out)
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan
- Initiate Emergency Operations Plan

#### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- CEO
- Board Chair
- Attorney for Club organization
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- BGCA Critical Incident Report

#### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide holding statement to media  
*(if asked for comment by media)*

#### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- Child Safety Hotline (866-607-7233)
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
- Local Trauma Counseling Services

### HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any situation that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) is aware of the recent report of a missing child. We are cooperating fully with local authorities in the investigation of this serious matter and the search for the child. (Or: we cooperated fully with local authorities in the investigation of this matter and are thankful he/she was found safe.) Our hearts are with the child and their family.

Upon learning of this situation, the Club took immediate action to alert the police, as well as the member's parent or guardian(s). The organization is working with the police to fully support the search process.

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All supervisory policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.

Boys & Girls Clubs of (your name) will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and share further information as the search proceeds and when the investigation is complete.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children  
FBI Resources for Parents

<http://www.missingkids.com/> (800-843-5678)  
<https://www.fbi.gov/resources/parents/>

# Felony Criminal Act Related to the Club

## RESPONSE ACTIONS

### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Call 911 (or emergency line)
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- CEO
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Board Chair
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- Attorney for Club organization
- BGCA Critical Incident Report

### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Provide holding statement to media
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- (if asked for comment by media)*

### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- Child Safety Hotline (866-607-7233)
- Local Victim Support Services
- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)

## HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any situation that impacts the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) has learned that a shooting occurred near the (Club or Site Name). Thankfully, the incident did not involve Club staff or members, however, we are cooperating fully with law enforcement in the investigation of this disturbing incident. Our thoughts are with the victim and their family during this difficult time.

Upon learning of this incident, the Club took immediate action by placing the Club on lockdown until the police arrived to ensure the safety of all members and staff.

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Victim Connect <https://victimconnect.org/>
- Directory of Crime Victim Services <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>

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## RESPONSE ACTIONS

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### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Contact Police
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- Liability Insurance Provider
- CEO
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- Board Chair
- BGCA Critical Incident Report
- Attorney for Club organization

### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Provide holding statement to media
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- (if asked for comment by media)*

### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Auditor or CPA Support

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## HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

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During the XX years that the organization has served the community, the most important priorities of the Boys & Girls Club of (Name) have been the safety and protection of the children we serve and the responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by donors. The Board of Directors of Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) recently learned of allegations of potential financial impropriety within the organization, in direct violation of Club policies and procedures. The board has initiated an investigation into these allegations in conjunction with local law enforcement authorities.

The Board is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All policies and practices are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff and full accountability and transparency in all financial matters.

As part of this investigation, the Board of Directors has initiated an immediate and rigorous evaluation of all management policies and procedures to further strengthen and safeguard the organization's finances and operations.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Financial Crime Resources:

<http://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/financial-crime-resource-center/fraud-resources>

# Felony Criminal/Civil action Reportable to Insurance Carrier

## RESPONSE ACTIONS

### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Contact Police
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- CEO
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Board Chair
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- Attorney for Club organization
- BGCA Critical Incident Report

### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Provide holding statement to media
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- (if asked for comment by media)*

### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Victim Support Services

## HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any allegation that might affect the well-being of the young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) has learned that an employee of the organization has been arrested for (crime). We are deeply concerned and alarmed by this allegation and are cooperating fully with law enforcement in the investigation of this serious matter. *IF NOT RELATED TO THE CLUB ADD:* The alleged victim is not associated with the organization, and the alleged incident did not occur at the Club or a Club-sponsored event.

Upon learning of this incident, the Club suspended/terminated this employee and barred them from all access to Club facilities and property.

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity, and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All supervisory policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.

Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and withhold further comment on this incident pending the completion of the investigation and judicial process.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Victim Connect

<https://victimconnect.org/>

Directory of Crime Victim Services

<https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices/>

# Negative Media Affecting Club

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## RESPONSE ACTIONS

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### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- CEO
- Board Chair
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- Attorney for Club organization
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- BGCA Critical Incident Report System

### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide holding statement to media  
*(if asked for comment by media)*

### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Media Coaching Support

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## HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

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For (x number) of years, Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) has served the youth of the (name) community, and the safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority. Recently, we learned of the (incident). *IF NOT CLUB RELATED ADD:* While these allegations do not involve the Club or any of our youth members, we are deeply concerned by these allegations. *GIVE DETAILS ON PERSON INVOLVED SUCH AS:* This individual has not been associated with Boys & Girls Clubs of (NAME) since (year).

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers, including board members, must undergo a thorough criminal background check.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Crisis Plan Fundamentals:

<http://www.resource-media.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CrisisComms.pdf>

## Other Incident Club Deems Critical

### RESPONSE ACTIONS

#### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Call 911 (or emergency line)
- Secure the facility
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan
- Initiate Emergency Operations Plan

#### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- CEO
- Board Chair
- Attorney for Club organization
- Parent or Guardian(s)
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Property Owners (shared-use facilities)
- BGCA Critical Incident Report

#### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide holding statement to media  
*(if asked for comment by media)*

#### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Media Coaching Support

### HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

The safety and protection of the children we serve is always our number one priority, and we take any (situation/allegation) that impacts the well-being of young people entrusted to our care very seriously. Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) is aware of the incident that occurred at one of our locations involving (brief description). We are deeply alarmed and concerned by this incident and are cooperating fully with law enforcement in the investigation of this serious matter.

Upon learning of the incident, the Club acted immediately by (list any actions taken).

Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.

To protect the safety and privacy of those involved, Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name) will continue its full cooperation with the authorities and withhold further comment on this incident pending the completion of the investigation.

## Historical Allegation of Child Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a health crisis across the country. Approximately 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before they turn 18, and less than one-third of survivors disclose the abuse during their childhood. Society is rightfully intolerant of child sexual abuse and other forms of sexual assault. This intolerance is manifesting itself in changes to survivors' ability to pursue legal action. Many states are expanding criminal and civil statutes of limitations to allow lawsuits relating to child sexual abuse to be brought many years after the abuse occurred. As part of our unwavering commitment to safety, we have zero tolerance for any safety violation or abuse and support any updates to legislation that promote abuse survivors' rights and access to justice. No child should ever experience this type of trauma, and our hearts go out to any survivors and their families.

As the largest youth-serving organization with a more than 150-year legacy, it's imperative that we prepare for these changes and potential claims. Please use these response actions and resources to ensure your organization is fully equipped to address the concerns of a potential victim, communicate regarding the situation and effectively address any issues that may arise.

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### RESPONSE ACTIONS

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#### 1 INITIAL ACTIONS

- Listen to the victim empathetically
- State mandatory child abuse reporting
- Document conversation, noting important dates and names
- Report to law enforcement
- Initiate Crisis Communication Plan

#### 2 NOTIFICATIONS

- Police, Fire, EMS
- Child Protective Services
- CEO
- Board Chair
- Attorney for Club organization
- Parent or Guardian(s) (if applicable)
- Liability Insurance Provider
- Board Executive Committee
- BGCA Critical Incident Report System
- Safety Committee

#### 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Develop holding statement
- Develop letter to constituents, if necessary
- Provide media holding statement
- Engage External Public Relations Firm

#### 4 POSSIBLE REFERRALS

- Child Safety Hotline (866-607-7233)
- 501C HR Services Hotline (800-358-2163)
- Local Trauma Counseling Services
- ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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### HOLDING STATEMENT SAMPLE

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The safety and protection of young people is the number one priority of Boys & Girls Clubs of (Name), and we take any allegation that impacts their well-being very seriously. We are aware of the allegations from a former Club member of inappropriate conduct by a (staff/volunteer) in (year). While the alleged incidents took place a long time ago, we understand that time does not take away any pain inflicted on victim(s) and their family(ies) and our hearts go out to them. We respect those who have brought forward these extremely serious concerns. *IF THERE IS A LAWSUIT ADD:* It is our aim to have the lawsuit resolved in a manner that provides support and comfort to the victim(s) and their family(ies).

Our organization will continue to be transparent and do everything in our power to protect the safety of young people entrusted to our care. To learn more about our safety practices and policies, go to (org safety site).

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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ChildHelp (800-422-4453)	<a href="https://www.childhelp.org/">https://www.childhelp.org/</a>
National Child Traumatic Stress Network	<a href="http://www.nctsn.org/">http://www.nctsn.org/</a>
Child Welfare Information Gateway	<a href="https://www.childwelfare.gov/">https://www.childwelfare.gov/</a>
National Children's Advocacy Network	<a href="http://www.nationalcac.org/">http://www.nationalcac.org/</a>
National Children's Alliance	<a href="http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/">http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/</a>
Prevent Child Abuse	<a href="http://preventchildabuse.org/resources/">http://preventchildabuse.org/resources/</a>

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## SAMPLE PARENT OR CONSTITUENT LETTER

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For some incidents, your Club may wish to communicate directly to the parents of members, donors or other supporters.

Below is a template of a parent letter. The wording will vary depending upon the incident and/or the severity of the allegation. Overall, it is recommended that the tone of a parent letter be more conversational and personal than the holding statement, as the purpose is to make the parents aware of the incident and reassured that it is being addressed.

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*Dear (Parent, Supporter, etc.),*

*As you may have heard, (Club name) recently learned of allegations of (incident) involving (staff/Club/volunteer). (Club action taken). We are deeply concerned about these allegations and are cooperating fully with law enforcement in their investigation. I wanted to take this opportunity, however, to update you on the situation and address any concerns you may have. (INSERT RELEVANT DETAILS).*

*First and foremost, the safety and protection of your children is our top priority, and I remain confident that (Club name) is the safest place for youth in our community.*

*Our organization is committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity and does not tolerate inappropriate or illegal activity on the part of any Club staff, volunteer or youth member. All employees and volunteers must undergo a thorough criminal background check. All policies are designed to ensure the maximum safety and protection of Club members and staff.*

*(Club name) will continue our full cooperation with authorities and share any further information when the investigation and judicial process are complete.*

*Again, I assure you that our Club remains the safest place for young people in our community. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions, concerns or suggestions that you or your child may have about this situation, as we are always here for you and your children.*

*Sincerely,*

# INCIDENT RECOVERY

Recovering from an incident is a key consideration in the incident response process. This is a time to determine if trauma support should and can be engaged for victims, Club members, Club professionals, volunteers and/or families. It is also a time to debrief the incident to determine if the organization's safety can be strengthened through additional policies, procedures, training, or technology.

## TRAUMA

### What Is a Traumatic Event?

Almost everyone has been through a stressful event in his or her life. When the event, or series of events, causes a lot of stress, it is called a traumatic event. Traumatic events are marked by a sense of horror, helplessness, serious injury, or the threat of serious injury or death. Traumatic events affect survivors, rescue workers, and the friends and relatives of victims who have been involved. They may also have an impact on people who have seen or been involved with the event either firsthand or as a witness.

### What Are Some Common Responses?

A person's response to a traumatic event may vary. Responses include feelings of fear, grief, and depression. Physical and behavioral responses include nausea, dizziness, and changes in appetite and sleep pattern as well as withdrawal from daily activities. Responses to trauma can last for weeks to months before people start to feel normal again. Most people report feeling better within three months after a traumatic event. If the problems become worse or last longer than one month after the event, the person may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### What Is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an intense physical and emotional response to thoughts and reminders of the event that last for many weeks or months after the traumatic event. The symptoms of PTSD fall into three broad types: re-living, avoidance, and increased arousal.

- **Symptoms of re-living** include flashbacks, nightmares, and extreme emotional and physical reactions to reminders of the event. Emotional reactions can include feeling guilty, extreme fear of harm, and numbing of emotions. Physical reactions can include uncontrollable shaking, chills, or heart palpitations, and tension headaches.
- **Symptoms of avoidance** include staying away from activities, places, thoughts, or feelings related to the trauma or feeling detached or estranged from others.
- **Symptoms of increased arousal** include being overly alert or easily startled, difficulty sleeping, irritability or outbursts of anger, and lack of concentration.

Other symptoms linked with PTSD include: panic attacks, depression, suicidal thoughts and feelings, drug abuse, feelings of being estranged and isolated, and inability to complete daily tasks.

### Trauma Resources

The key for your Club organization is to understand that trauma or secondary trauma can impact victims, Club members, Club professionals, volunteers, and families. This is a time to engage the appropriate local "response partners" to assist. The online resources below may also be helpful for guidance and materials.

Coping with a Traumatic Event - CDC	<a href="https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp">https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp</a>
National Child Traumatic Stress Network	<a href="http://www.nctsn.org/">http://www.nctsn.org/</a>
MentalHealth.Gov	<a href="https://www.mentalhealth.gov/">https://www.mentalhealth.gov/</a>
National Alliance on Mental Illness	<a href="https://www.nami.org/#">https://www.nami.org/#</a>
The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit	<a href="https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/">https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/</a>

## DEBRIEFING

Debriefing is usually carried out within three to seven days of the incident when all those involved have had enough time to process the experience, however, these discussions should not impede the investigative process. Debriefing is a structured discussion aimed at evaluating the response process, seeking safety improvements, and putting an abnormal event into perspective. Discussion items to consider:

- Review sequence of events, possible causes, and each person's experience during the response.
- Determine if all policies and procedures were effectively implemented during the response.
- Consider if there were any deviations from the standard operating procedures or practices.
- Determine if there were any unusual situations, positive or negative, and how were they handled.
- Consider what revised policies, procedures, or training could possibly improve response outcomes.
- Consider what revised policies, procedures, or training could possibly prevent incident reoccurrence.

Finally, if the debrief does result in recommendations to revise or develop additional policies, procedures and or training, then CEO should immediately begin working with the board-led Safety Committee for consideration of those recommendations and eventual board approval of the safety enhancements.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BGCA RESOURCES

"Be There" Bereavement Toolkit	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/BeThere">https://www.bgca.net/BeThere</a>
Native Services "Be There" Toolkit	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/NativePrograms">https://www.bgca.net/NativePrograms</a>
Positive Club Climate	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/ClubClimate">https://www.bgca.net/ClubClimate</a>
Serving LGBTQ Youth	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/LGBTQ">https://www.bgca.net/LGBTQ</a>
Bullying Prevention Program	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/BeAStar">https://www.bgca.net/BeAStar</a>
Cyber Safety	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/Cybersafety">https://www.bgca.net/Cybersafety</a>
Disaster Relief	<a href="https://www.bgca.net/DisasterRelief">https://www.bgca.net/DisasterRelief</a>

### SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

National Dating Abuse Hotline (866-331-9474)	<a href="http://www.loveisrespect.org">http://www.loveisrespect.org</a>
National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-4673)	<a href="https://www.rainn.org/">https://www.rainn.org/</a>
National Sexual Violence Resource Center	<a href="https://www.nsvrc.org/">https://www.nsvrc.org/</a>
National Domestic Violence Hotline	<a href="http://www.thehotline.org/">http://www.thehotline.org/</a>

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)	<a href="https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/">https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/youth/</a>
Youth.Gov Suicide Prevention	<a href="https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-suicide-prevention">https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-suicide-prevention</a>
Society for Prevention of Teen Suicide	<a href="http://www.sptsusa.org/">http://www.sptsusa.org/</a>
Crisis Text Line	<a href="https://www.crisistextline.org/">https://www.crisistextline.org/</a> or Text "CLUB" to 741741

### RUNAWAY OR HOMELESS YOUTH

National Runaway Safeline (800-786-2929)	<a href="https://www.1800runaway.org/">https://www.1800runaway.org/</a>
HHS Family and Youth Services	<a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/help">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/help</a>
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children	<a href="http://www.missingkids.org/">http://www.missingkids.org/</a> or 800-843-5678

### HATE CRIMES

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs	<a href="https://avp.org/ncavp">https://avp.org/ncavp</a>
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## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

SAMHSA (800-662-4357) <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>  
Partnership for Drug Free Kids <https://drugfree.org/>  
Alcoholic Anonymous <https://www.aa.org/>  
Al-Anon <https://al-anon.org/>  
National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/>

## **CRIME VICTIMIZATION**

Victim Connect Hotline (855-484-2846) <https://victimconnect.org/>  
Office of Victims of Crime <https://ovc.gov/>  
FBI Victim Assistance <https://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-assistance>

## **GENERAL SAFETY AND PLANNING**

Nonprofit Risk Management Center <https://www.nonprofitrisk.org/resource-library/>  
Site Assess <https://rems.ed.gov/SITEASSESS.aspx>  
Safety Smart <http://www.ulsafetysmart.com/>