

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER A CARE TEAM ACTIVATION

Dealing with the print and broadcast media after a Care Team activation can be very challenging. The difficulty can be eased, however, by developing specific media protocols and briefing your Care Team volunteers about those protocols.

Whenever possible, a public affairs officer (PAO) should be informed. The following recommendations should be used as a guide for leaders as they prepare for media interaction:

Pre-incident Media Preparation

- Understand Fort Carson policy concerning the media's access to sites on the Installation.
- Commanders and Care Team volunteers should understand the role and function of the PAO. If appropriate, personnel should be instructed to direct any media requests for interviews or information to the PAO.
- Remember that the media are just doing their job just like you do yours. It is their job to figure out what happened and to bring that story to the general public. Accept that they will ask tough and direct questions. By being mentally prepared for that fact, you will be better prepared and look more composed when microphone is in your face.
- Develop possible Key Messages that you would like to communicate.

During the Incident Media Interactions

- Alert the PAO and your Commander as soon as an incident has occurred. Get as many verified incident details to the PAO as soon as possible.
- Assure the media that incident information will be made available to them as soon as it is verified. It is normally not a good idea to tell the media they cannot have access to information.
- Try to limit all media interactions to be handled by one point of contact. The PAO.
- Anticipate questions reporters will ask. Determine ahead of time what you will say and what you won't or can't say.
- Prepare your school premises as specified in your school safety plan for one point of entry and exit. Position a staff member to block unauthorized entry onto the campus. Unless otherwise specified, no media should be allowed to enter school grounds.

Post-incident Media Interactions

- The PAO can assure the media that progress reports will be made available as post-incident facts are verified.
- Keep in mind that certain incidents exhibit a high correlation between contagion and media exposure. Research has documented, for example, a connection between media coverage of suicide and an increase in suicide attempts. Great care should be taken in handling the media with respect to any incident that involves suicide.