



## Preparing for and Working with Media in a School Crisis

### Patterns of Media Response to a Crisis: The First 72 Hours

#### 10-12 hours

- Reporters hear police scanners and are among the first on the scene of a critical incident
- Reporters will grab anyone willing to talk
- Media tries to answer, “*What happened?*”
- Results are incomplete and conflicting stories will emerge
- Media can interfere with police and first responders at the scene

#### 12-24 hours

- Media attempts to answer, “*Who is involved?*”
- Authorities always try to notify the families of the victims before this information is released to the public
- This effort usually causes conflict with reporters doing whatever is necessary to find out everything about the victims.

#### 24-36 hours

- Media shifts focus to, “*Why?*”
- Natural reaction in the aftermath is finger-pointing and to look for blame
- Unfortunately, people have their own ideas on this, whether they have the facts or not
- Facts aren’t always corroborated
- Victim confusion often leads to stories that are sensationalized, but the critical incident may not have happened as they initially recall

#### 36-72 hours

- Media begins a more in depth analysis, “*What happened?*” and “*Why?*”
- A new “spin” may be put on the initial stories
- These spin-off stories take on lives of their own
- Media may question the efforts of law enforcement, first responders and the organization (e.g. what it knew or didn’t know, response, etc.)
- Funeral arrangements and memorial events occur during this time frame, offering a respite for the crisis response teams to regroup and recharge

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