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NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL OUTLINE

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The following outline is adapted from the *Crisis Management Protocol* used by the National Outdoor Leadership School. It is intended to provide a framework or starting point for adventure programs to develop a crisis protocol that best suits their own needs.

I. Incident Occurs

- A. Fatality (one or more persons)
- B. Serious injury (threat to life or limb)
- C. Serious illness (threat to life)

II. Field Response and Emergency Procedures Initiated

- A. First aid as necessary
- B. Fatality/serious injury protocol
- C. Maintenance of survivors

III. Program Management Notified of Incident

- A. Communication systems utilized
 - 1. Methods for field staff to notify management
- B. Procedures for notifying organization management
 - 1. Key personnel in order of priority
 - 2. Established procedures for contacting them
 - 3. Knowledge of whereabouts of key management personnel

IV. Incident Command System Initiated

- A. Appoint incident commander (leader)
- B. Follow pre-established task lists
- C. Assign duties as necessary
- D. Revise leadership as circumstances dictate
- E. Meet regularly with other team leaders
- F. IC may lead one of the primary functions, but priority is to maintain the big picture

V. Primary Response/Management Functions

- A. Field Operations
 - 1. Person responsible for management of the field situation. This should be personnel with specific knowledge of the field emergency pre-plans, evacuation systems, program routes and itineraries, program areas and logistics.

B. Family/next of kin notified

- 1. Assign appropriate manager (upper level manager/director) to be liaison with family
- 2. Ascertain victim/patients identity
- 3. Pre-determine how family/next of kin will be notified; by management, trustees, law enforcement?
- 4. Script statements
- 5. Coordinate family coming to organization's headquarters
- 6. Available for long term relations with family

C. Communications

- 1. Person(s) responsible for internal and external communication including formulation and release of information to news media (possibly two people; one internal, one external)

D. Documentation and reporting

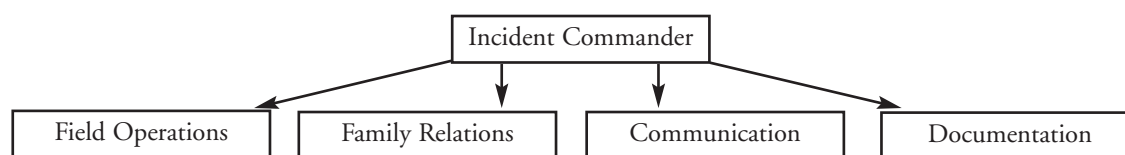
- 1. Person responsible for gathering and evaluating all incoming information and reports

VI. Investigation and Review

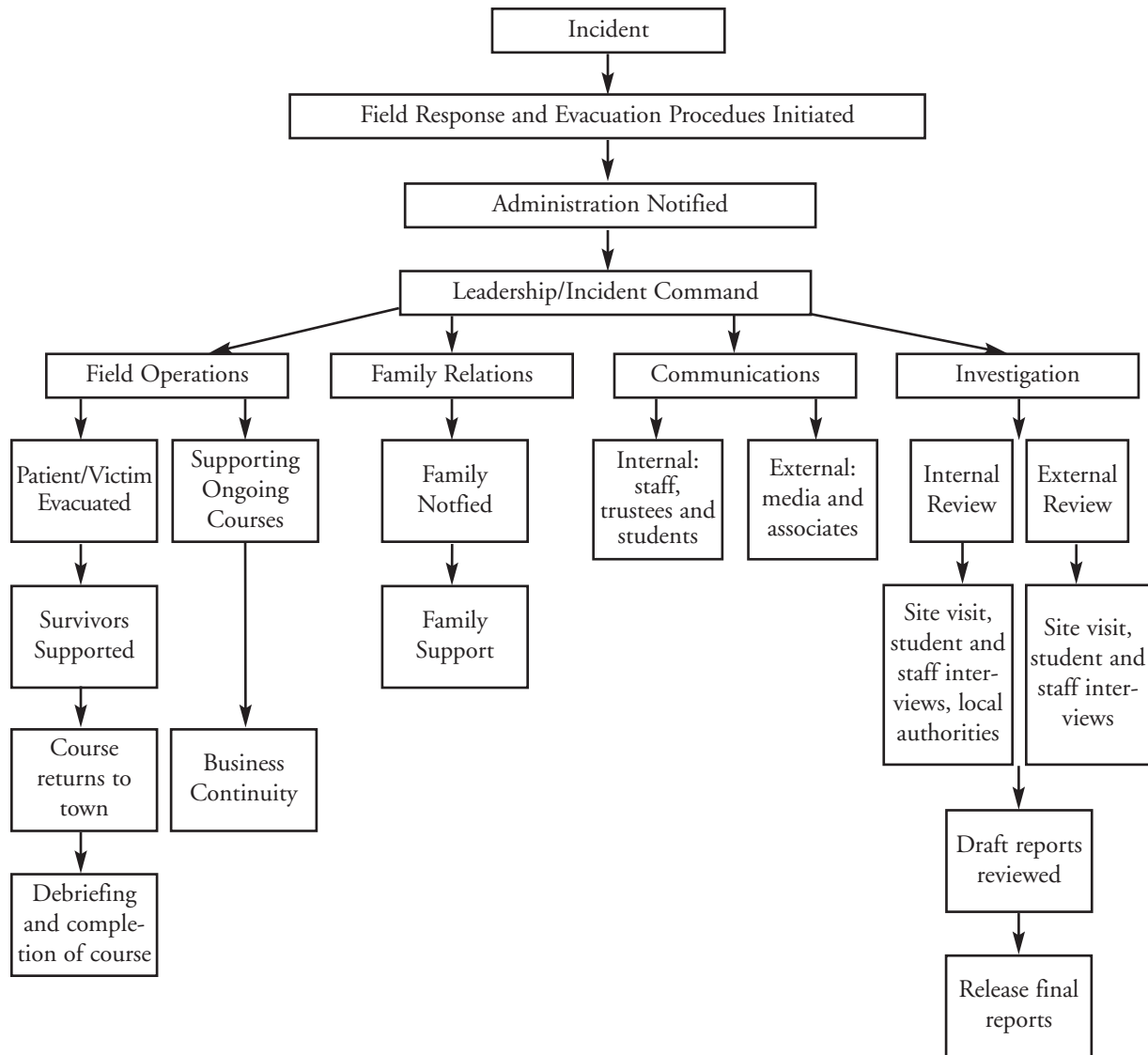
- A. May be the same person who led the documentation and reporting function
- B. Initial investigation steps
 - 1. Accident site visit
 - 2. Law enforcement accident reports
 - 3. Interview survivors/witnesses
 - 4. Interview staff/leaders
- C. Long term investigation steps
 - 1. Set up an external review team
 - 2. Write internal review report
 - 3. Review/respond to external review report
- D. Release review reports as appropriate
- E. Act on recommendations from reviews

VII. Long-term Follow Up

- A. Possible legal issues
- B. Continued family relations
- C. Monitor staff emotional health
- D. Periodic check in with participants/survivors
- E. Administrative/response team debriefing



Crisis Management Schematic



Drew Leemon, NOLS Director of Risk Management, began his career with NOLS in 1978. Drew has been a field instructor, a school branch director, and a variety of other administrative positions. Drew has been the NOLS director of risk management since 1996. He is a past two-term chairman and current member of the Wilderness Risk Managers Committee. He is the leader of the Adventure Program Incident Data Reporting Project and editor of the Adventure Program Risk Management Report. Drew is also a co-author of the Manual of Accreditation Standards for Adventure Programming and co-author of the book Risk Management for Outdoor Leaders.

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