

GEORGIA WORLD CONGRESS CENTER



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP & SKILLS CONFERENCE

2023

Crisis and Communications Plan

Atlanta Emergency Information

Emergency Assistance: 911

City of Atlanta Police: 404-614-6544

Fire: 404-546-7000

MARTA Police: 404-848-4911

MARTA “See Something Say Something” via Text: 404-334-5355

GWCC Department of Public Safety: 402-223-4911 or dial #4911 within building on red phones.

State Farm Arena: If medical assistance is needed, notify a State Farm Arena staff member or text a message and exact location to 404-878-3030. First Aid is located on the lower level of State Farm Arena next to Guest Services and on the upper level of the arena across from Section 220/221.

Atlanta Ambassadors (for downtown assistance or directions): 404-215-9600

Closest hospitals to downtown/convention facilities/hotels:

Grady Memorial Hospital

80 Jessie Hill Jr. Drive SE

Atlanta, GA 30303

Phone: 404-616-1000

Atlanta Medical Center

303 Parkway Drive

Atlanta, GA 30312

Phone: 404-265-4000

Emory University Hospital Midtown

550 Peachtree Street NE

Atlanta, GA 30308

Phone: 404-686-4411

Contact Us

On-site or in an emergency, call 911 or refer to your SkillsUSA Crisis Card for staff phone numbers. Prior to NLSC

SkillsUSA Customer Care: 844-875-4557

Email: customercare@skillsusa.org

www.skillsusa.org

This guide is intended for use by SkillsUSA national staff and SkillsUSA state directors and their team.

Updated May 2023

About This Guide

“In everything one must consider the end.” – Jean de La Fontaine

Unfortunate events can occur quickly and without warning. Planning is a crucial step in dealing with any crisis in a calm and effective manner. The welfare and safety of all SkillsUSA members and stakeholders is always the ultimate goal. This plan focuses on the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference (NLSC), but these tools and resources may be used for any state or local event. A crisis is any situation that threatens members or participants, or the integrity or reputation of the SkillsUSA organization. It may be an event that can be attributed to SkillsUSA, that affects SkillsUSA, or it can be the perception of the media, members or the public that our association did not react appropriately to circumstances. We are sharing this plan as a way to formalize how SkillsUSA will handle a critical incident at the national conference. This SkillsUSA plan covers the basics of crisis management and crisis communications following an incident.

This guide can help SkillsUSA staff and SkillsUSA state directors be ready to assist their delegations in the event of a critical incident. This guide can also be used as a framework to develop a state-level crisis plan. Your state plan should be tailored to the scope and size of your events and facilities, and should reflect your state or local school emergency policies. It is wise to review your plan annually and update it as needed. When hosting or attending any event conference, state leaders should appoint a crisis team of at least two individuals plus themselves to handle critical events.

This plan was prepared to establish policy and procedures and to guide staff during a crisis at our national conference. SkillsUSA staff and SkillsUSA state directors should be familiar with this resource and keep a PDF or a link to the guide on your computer or mobile device. This guide is not provided as legal advice nor as a mandate or directive but as a resource to guide your thoughts and actions in the event of a crisis.

What Is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is an emergency situation that takes place quickly and has long-lasting implications. Most critical incidents have these characteristics:

- Involves serious illness, injuries or fatalities of one or more persons
- Involves destruction or the displacement of groups of people
- Involves large-scale, sustained interruption of services
- Involves terrorism, threats or violence to others
- Involves evacuation of participants from a program site
- Involves an emergency situation with multiple victims

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3	Appendix	
Points to Remember	5	Develop Your Contact Lists.....	21
Health Guidance		Internal Contact Lists	
Steps to Follow in a Crisis		Service Suppliers	
SkillsUSA State Director Responsibilities		Emergency Services Lists	
Crisis Team Roles and Responsibilities		Reporting Incidents to SkillsUSA	
State Director Action Items: Delegation Communication			
Crisis Team Members		SkillsUSA NLSC Code of Conduct.....	24
Crisis Chain of Command		Incident Reporting Form	25
If an Event Involves Serious Injury or Death			
Continuity of Leadership		Forms	
Potential Emergencies		Submit SkillsUSA Incident Reports here. You	
		may attach documents as you complete the	
		form. A staff member will follow up with you.	
Severe Weather or Natural Disasters.....	10		
Weather Emergency Definitions			
Emergency Codes			
Safety and Security	12		
Hotel Safety			
Parking Safety			
Public Transportation			
Hotel Evacuation			
Major Issues and Cancellations			
State Director Action Item: Data Protection			
Communicating in a Crisis	14		
Communication Objectives			
Ways to Communicate			
Positioning the Story			
SkillsUSA Command Center			
Spokesperson Guidelines			
Tough Questions			
Media Inquiries			
Sample Statement			
Crisis Evaluation	20		

Points to Remember

In a crisis it is important to gather facts, respond quickly, notify others and to make careful decisions with the information that is currently available.

At national conference, state leaders are provided with Crisis Management Cards that are distributed with your registration materials. **The Crisis Management Card should be placed in the conference badge holder behind your name tag, or in your wallet, so it is easy to locate in an emergency.**

At in-person events, report any crisis to the Executive Director or Conference Manager. Anyone in the conference headquarters or SkillsUSA offices can assist to connect you to the right person.

If a SkillsUSA participant is removed from any conference facility due to a very serious illness or injury and taken to a doctor's office, hospital or urgent care center for medical treatment, report it to their advisor and SkillsUSA state director. Make note of where they are taken and what happened. Also write down what the names of anyone who witnessed the injury or illness (official reports can be filled out later). Be sure to notify a parent or legal guardian. If a student needs to go to the doctor from the conference hotel due to an illness such as strep throat or a cough, it should be treated, but do not report routine illness to national staff. For critical incidents, a crisis command center will be set up at SkillsUSA Headquarters in the convention center. If necessary, the SkillsUSA team will hold a crisis meeting. Staff and SkillsUSA state directors should defer to the executive director, the crisis team and the official spokesperson. This ensures we share correct information while also respecting the privacy of our members. Making remarks during a crisis can also have legal implications.

Health Guidance

SkillsUSA has continued to provide guidance around our ability to host in-person events and our decisions related to national conferences. Our primary concern is the health and safety of students and stakeholders. In the event one or more of your state delegation members becomes ill during national conference, it is important to have a health plan in place and to clearly communicate that plan to your delegation members before they travel including how and when to report illness.

Steps to Follow in a Crisis

1. In the event of an emergency, call 911 before taking action or contacting others.
2. If there is immediate danger, move participants out of harm's way and treat injured until help arrives.
3. If an event results in serious injury, a fatality or affects the health of two or more people, initiate the Crisis Plan as outlined in this guide and contact the Executive Director or Conference Manager.
4. Assess all situations carefully; don't ignore them, but do not overreact. Effective, calm action is critical.
5. Information from witnesses may be essential to share with emergency response personnel, authorities or the SkillsUSA crisis team. Be sure to get contact information from witnesses or have them remain on-site until assistance arrives.

SkillsUSA State Director Responsibilities

- SkillsUSA state directors must report all critical incidents to the Executive Director or Conference Manager.
- If national staff determines there is a crisis, the SkillsUSA state director will be called right after a 911 call
- SkillsUSA state directors become a member of the crisis team if your state delegation is involved
- SkillsUSA state directors will determine who contacts their families and schools. National staff can assist you with initial contact or follow-ups for your members, if assistance is desired
- All luggage, personal items and tool boxes should have ID tags. All participants should have a photo ID

Crisis Team Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director, Conference Manager and department directors must maintain a copy of this crisis plan, accessible from any location. The crisis team evaluates the crisis, takes corrective action and launches appropriate internal and external communications.

All staff and all SkillsUSA state directors should carry the crisis card with them at all times. If you don't have one, obtain one at SkillsUSA Registration Headquarters or in the PR/Media Room. Other individuals may be appointed to serve on the crisis team as appropriate including SkillsUSA state directors; members of the board of directors; individuals involved in the incident; national staff members; technical committee members; other volunteers; conference center, hotel or convention and visitors bureau staff; and legal counsel.

State Director Action Items – Delegation Communication

- 1. Keep your cellphone on and charged at all times.** SkillsUSA state directors must be reachable in an emergency. Give your cellphone number to advisors, state officers or others who may need to reach you, including the SkillsUSA national staff. Your state team should know your daily schedule. Maintain contact information for all delegation members. Meet with the hotel staff when you arrive to NLSC and make sure they know how to reach you. Establish a state crisis team. Review emergency plans and protocols with your team. Remember, you are in charge of your state plan and state crisis team.
- 2. Review the SkillsUSA Code of Conduct with the delegation** at your first onsite meeting, including the disciplinary actions to be carried out for any violations. It is on the NLSC Registration Form, page 23-24.
- 3. Have a process to confirm cellphone numbers for all delegation members** at your first on-site meeting and make sure these cellphone numbers are accessible to the state leadership team.
- 4. Review the hotel emergency plans,** Designate where members are to meet if evacuated and announce this at your first state delegation meeting (anticipate the needs of members with disabilities and assign assistance).
- 5. Ask delegation members to report suspicious activity** at the hotel or convention facilities.

Crisis Team Members

SkillsUSA Crisis Team Leader: Executive Director Chelle Travis

SkillsUSA Crisis Management Team: SkillsUSA Conference Manager Courtney Ferrell and Kelly Horton, Gayle Silvey, Brandon Hudson and Tom Kercheval. Other staff, partners, suppliers or vendors will be assigned as needed, depending upon the type of crisis and their areas of responsibility or expertise.

Crisis Communications Team: Office of Communication Director Tom Kercheval will work with Karen Kitzel, Jane Short, Craig Moore, Scott Price, Brooke Gatchell and media room volunteers to support the crisis team.

Role of the Executive Director

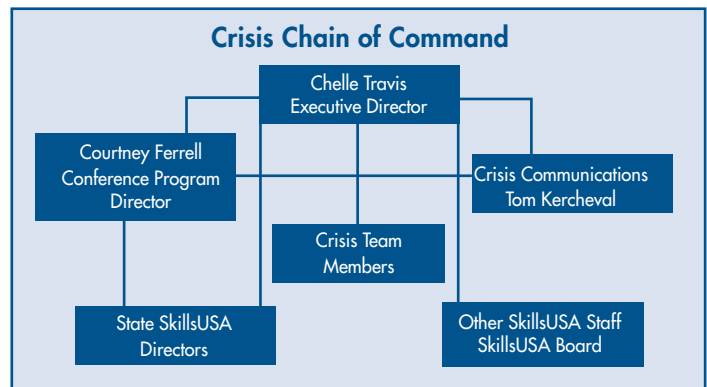
- Leads the crisis team and establishes a command post
- Makes all operational decisions
- Serves as official spokesperson for the association
- Consults with the SkillsUSA Board of Directors
- Assigns the crisis team and delegates authority

Role of the Crisis Management Team

- Helps establish the command post and roles
- Formulates a joint plan of action
- Supports Executive Director and Conference Manager
- Oversees and manages corrective actions
- Assesses the incident and helps gather information
- Coordinates with convention center, hotels and authorities

Role of the Director of Communications

- Establishes a communications plan of action, writes messages, statements and press releases, FAQs or posts



If an Event Involves Serious Injury or Death

As soon as the emergency becomes known, determine nature and extent of injuries, where victim(s) are being taken..

- Identify victim(s) or injured by full name, age, school and contact information
- Report the event to the SkillsUSA Executive Director or Conference Manager
- Write down all incident statements and contact information for any witnesses
- The SkillsUSA state director should notify the family and school or request SkillsUSA do so
- Always notify immediate family before releasing information to others
- Designate someone to stay at the hospital until family can arrive, if victim(s) have been transported

Continuity of Leadership

In the event the Executive Director is unable to perform her duties during national conference, the following temporary leadership succession is in place, listed in the order of succession. The Board of Directors will call an emergency meeting to designate leadership roles and responsibilities, if necessary.

- SkillsUSA Leadership Team working as a group
- SkillsUSA Board President, working with the Leadership Team
- Director, Office of Education
- Director, Office of Administration and Finance
- Director, Office of SkillsUSA Championships
- Director, Office of Business Partnerships/Development
- Director, Office of Communications

Potential Emergencies

Some emergencies will strike without warning, and some are highly unlikely. Other emergencies can be anticipated such as hurricanes and floods. Here are potential emergencies to consider:

Natural disasters: flood, fire, hurricane or earthquake

Illness: A viral outbreak or food poisoning

Member-related acts: injuries from tools; acts against people or property; sexual or physical assault; missing person; death; homicide; suicide; or active shooter

Transportation incidents: Accidents involving students and advisors while traveling to conference by car, bus, train or plane

Lost, stolen or missing goods: Substantial amount of missing or stolen tools, equipment, prizes, materials, money

Hotel or conference facility emergencies: Cancellations by hotel or conference facilities; prolonged loss of power at hotel or conference center; fire or flood; roof collapse; chemical spill; major vandalism; terrorism; or bombing at convention center, hotel or other site

Lost data; breach of computer systems; or damaged computers and printers: Loss or breach of data for registration and scoring. Lost or damaged computer systems

Association management emergencies: Unanticipated departure of a key employee due to quitting, firing, illness, accident or death; termination or unanticipated departure of a key volunteer; financial wrongdoing, theft or unanticipated loss of funding; protests by members or activists; lawsuits against the organization; substantial shortage of judges or volunteers; serious error in judgment by staff or volunteers.

Notifications in an Emergency

The Executive Director will initiate notification by phone call or text messages, email, NLSC app notifications, updates on the SkillsUSA website, social media or other communication as appropriate. Follow any instructions provided. Keep cellphones charged and powered on.

Conference Evacuation

- Remain calm, be quiet and listen for instructions
- If you see fire or smell smoke, call 911
- If there is a fire, an audible alarm will sound
- Leave the facility through the nearest exit; do not take the time to gather up personal property
- Do not use the elevators, instead take the stairs
- Assist disabled or any person who needs help
- Do not re-enter the building until instructed to do so

Medical Emergency

Getting help is never wrong in a potential emergency. Assess the situation and remove any hazards. Identify yourself and provide medical help if you can. Minimize or avoid contact with body fluids (wear gloves and wash with soap after exposure). Place blood-soaked bandages, gloves and clothing in a plastic bag.

- If in doubt, call 911 for emergency assistance and give your location and the nearest entrance
- Calmly describe the scene and the emergency
- Ask victims if you can provide help and identify yourself, then perform CPR if needed and you are trained
- If illness escalates quickly, take individual(s) to nearest hospital or request an ambulance
- Do not move injured people unless there is imminent danger but stay until help arrives
- If someone is mentally distraught, emotional or appears unwell, seek medical help

Bomb Threats or Other Threats to Persons

- Threats made on social media to people or places should be captured with a screenshot and reported
- For threats made by phone, save the phone number or record the conversation, and report it
- Listen for background noise or clues as to where the person is located
- Signal for someone to call 911 while you are still on the phone
- Follow the instructions of emergency responders

Suspicious Packages

- Alert authorities/conference personnel to the package and share the location and description
- Do not touch or move a suspicious package, but do move people away from it; follow instructions of authorities

Lockdown or Lock In Procedures

A lockdown or lock-in is a precautionary measure in response to a threat to a facility or student activity or in the surrounding community. In a lockdown, all activities are moved indoors. In a lock-in, people remain inside the building and exterior doors may be locked. In some circumstances, it is safer if you are already secured in a room to remain inside. In a lockdown, the main goal is to protect students and yourself.

In a Lockdown or Potential Lockdown Situation

- Remain calm, quiet and follow instructions
- Go to an interior room with few windows
- Close, lock and barricade the door, turn out the lights and remain quiet, staying low or hidden
- If using your cellphone be sure it is in silent mode
- Listen for “all clear” sign before leaving the room or the building

Severe Weather Events Or Natural Disasters

Severe weather events such as storms, earthquakes or tornadoes can have warning or can occur quickly. Be alert to weather warnings and announcements. Follow these guidelines for severe weather events.

Earthquake

- Stay where you are, get low and take cover
- Do not run outside
- Drop to the ground so you will not be knocked down
- Cover your head and neck with your arms
- Protect yourself from falling debris
- If there are falling objects, take cover
- Stay away from windows, outside doors and walls
- Move away from buildings, streetlights or utility wires
- If driving, stop your vehicle and stay inside it
- Avoid driving on damaged roads, bridges or ramps

Tornado

- Go the lowest level of building; don't open windows
- If there is no basement, go to a small interior room
- Stay away from windows, doors or outside walls
- Get under a table; use your arms to protect your head

Thunderstorms and Lightning

- Avoid driving or walking outside during bad weather
- If you are driving, exit the roadway and stay in vehicle
- Take shelter in hotel, convention center, arena or other building
- Stay away from windows, doors and balconies
- Use your cellphone for current weather updates
- Locate flashlights so you are prepared if the power goes out
- Avoid contact with metal, cords and electrical items
- Cellphones not plugged into chargers are fine to use
- Do not use sink or take a shower

- Do not lie on concrete floors or lean on concrete walls
- Avoid standing under tall trees in an open area
- Avoid hilltops, open fields, beaches or open water
- Avoid small structures in open areas

Weather Emergency Definitions

Watch: Atmospheric conditions are unstable. Severe weather is predicted. SkillsUSA staff monitors local weather and traffic and receives alerts 24 hours a day. Continue normal activities with no alert or announcement to the students. Monitor conditions and weather channels for deteriorating conditions.

Warning: Severe and dangerous weather approaching. The SkillsUSA conference team will engage a severe weather action plan. Quickly move students to designated areas, shelters or hallways without windows or wide overhead spans. Check to see that all students are in designated areas. Remove students from damaged areas and report injuries. Monitor until the danger passes and all-clear signal is given.

If conference participants are at an outside venue and the weather gets dangerous (heavy rain, lightening or hail) or is scheduled to do so, check radar and relocate your members. Those assigned to monitor conditions will use a weather app on mobile devices or computers. If cellular service is not available, they will monitor weather through observation and reporting from various areas.

Emergency Codes

Many school systems establish emergency status codes for use inside school buildings and these can also relate to student conferences. Because SkillsUSA is an education association, the codes are listed here as an additional reference point for SkillsUSA state directors.

Code Red

Code Red indicates an incident has occurred or a high level of threat has been detected. This includes (but is not limited to) threats to others, hostage situations, intruders, student unrest or large fight, a shooting, a stabbing, a suicidal person or a person with a weapon. Responses for a Code Red Alert are dictated by the type of incident. Groups should seek shelter in a meeting room, block the door, turn off lights, remain quiet and follow instructions. The appropriate emergency personnel and law enforcement officials will be notified, and communication with emergency dispatch will be maintained until emergency responders reach the scene. State staff and teachers should supervise students and ensure that they remain together and in secure areas.

Code Yellow

Code Yellow indicates that conditions exist for the occurrence of a major incident and that a heightened state of security is appropriate but no immediate danger is detected. This is a report of a potential incident or impending crisis. Be careful. Lock doors. Take students to a sheltered area. Staff may conduct an inspection of the entire facility and check all entrances. Law enforcement and site security are notified when there is suspicious activity.

Code Blue

Code Blue indicates a medical emergency. Call for medical assistance and provide the nature of the emergency and the location of the student(s) or others. All others should continue with their scheduled activities.

Code Green

Code Green is an “all clear” authorized by the conference management. An announcement may be made to inform members and to reduce rumors. A written statement may be distributed to attendees to explain what occurred and what was done to maintain safety.

State Director Action Items – Safety and Security

Take ample time to review hotel etiquette and safety at your state orientation and reinforce it through the week. Staying in a hotel can be exciting for students who haven’t traveled before, but they may need guidance.

Hotel Safety Plans

When you meet with hotel staff, get their emergency procedures and contacts. Locate the hotel security office and add the names and phone numbers for the security team and manager to your cellphone and crisis notebook. Here are a few general safety tips and emergency procedures to share with your members:

Hotel Safety

- Read the emergency information on the hotel room door
- Familiarize yourself with the hotel’s fire escape route
- Do not leave your hotel room door propped open
- Always use the dead bolt when inside the room
- Do not open the hotel door to anyone you don’t know
- Keep your room key with you at all times
- Do not say your hotel or room number out in public
- Do not leave valuables in hotel room (use room safe)
- Always let someone else know where you are going

Hotel Parking Safety

- Always lock your vehicle doors
- Do not leave valuables in view inside a vehicle
- Remove school signs from vehicles, if magnetic
- Do not store an extra key under the car fender
- Hide any valuables before you leave your vehicle

Safety Tips for Public Transportation

- If you ride the bus or train, know the cost and routes
- Do not wear a name badge on public transportation
- Have a system to account for all of your group members
- Don't fall asleep on public transportation
- Check for belongings as you exit an Uber, bus or train
- Don't have overly familiar conversations with strangers
- Share cellphone numbers (create buddy system)
- Have your cellphone charged and with you
- Be aware of emergency exits
- Follow the instructions of drivers or conductors

Hotel Evacuation

If evacuation is announced when students are sleeping:

- Call, text and knock on hotel room doors to alert students
- Avoid elevators and take the stairs to exit the building
- Meet in a predetermined safe area outside the hotel
- Advisors should account for all of their students
- Report any missing or injured students right away
- Advisors and students should stay together
- Following evacuation, conduct room checks
- Help students know what to convey to family at home

If evacuation is announced during meetings:

- Staff should help students to the nearest hotel exits
- Students and advisors should stay together
- Advisors should account for all students
- Report any missing or injured students

Conference Hotel Major Issues and Cancellations

The conference manager negotiates all conference hotels, convention space and arena. If something happens prior to NLSC that affects the conference as a whole or your assigned hotel, please speak to the SkillsUSA conference manager *before* contacting the hotel. The conference manager will know the status of your hotel block, the conference cancellation policy and what to do if your hotel cannot provide rooms and they will assist you.

State Director Action Item – Data Protection

SkillsUSA state directors should back up state registration lists, delegation cellphone lists, home contacts for members attending NLSC, school contacts, state winners lists or other data and forms that are critical to state operations. SkillsUSA protects against critical data loss by backing up all national computer data including registration lists and scoring documents. Please ensure that you and your state management team have quick access to your information at all times.

Communicating In a Crisis

The main purpose of a crisis communications plan is to protect an organization's integrity and reputation by managing public relations during and after an emergency.

The crisis management team is responsible for securing accurate information as quickly as possible. Timeliness is important, but statements must be accurate to the best of the spokesperson's ability.

One or more crisis team members will be assigned to work with the communications team to coordinate data, research or statements from primary sources (those involved), eyewitnesses, conference or hotel staff, security officers, authorities or others involved in the event.

Anticipate that police, fire department or health officials may have their own spokesperson. Meet such individuals as early as possible so official statements can be coordinated between the organizations and you can discuss who is speaking on what topics.

Staff, volunteers and others in areas of responsibility should defer to the official spokesperson rather than commenting upon a critical incident themselves. This is true when contacted by the news media but also when speaking with other students and teachers, staff, parents, partners, etc.

The crisis team will do everything in its power to be well-informed of the facts of what has happened and what actions are being taken. Comments by those who are less informed may cause uncertainty, anxiety or confusion among conference attendees, the news media and the public. Once a statement is made, it is difficult to correct. Make it accurate the first time.

Communications Objectives

1. The goal is for the critical incident to be resolved quickly, efficiently and fully.
2. Any damaging charges against SkillsUSA that are not true should be countered and put into proper perspective.
3. Members, the news media, sponsors and other key publics should view the SkillsUSA organization as responsive and responsible in carrying out the mission and in protecting our members.
4. SkillsUSA will carry out its mission and be minimally affected by the crisis.

Ways to Communicate

Public: Share announcements via the SkillsUSA NLSC app. Post official statements, press releases or news alerts on the SkillsUSA website or social media accounts. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn can be used to share major bulletins and to receive comments from members and the public. A voicemail message can help answer questions during non-business hours. If needed, set up a hotline with operators in a large-scale situation.

Stakeholders and staff: Call, email or group text the board of directors, SkillsUSA state directors and staff. Ask staff to place a message on their office phone and cellphone (provide a script of what to say). Share a prepared statement to staff so the message is consistent. Hold a staff meeting.

Positioning the Story

To decide on a position, the team has to step out of its role in the association and view the crisis from the eye of the public. The most pressing audience is the news media. Keep in mind that the association speaker knows more about the subject (the event and SkillsUSA) than they do. Plan carefully, but information must flow as soon as possible. We cannot control news coverage. We can control what we say. The sooner we speak to the media, the better.

Four Essential Ground Rules

Provide accurate information as soon as you can. This sets up a cooperative relationship with the news media and gives you control. Refusing to speak to the news media may cause problems later.

1. Never try to lie, deny or hide involvement.
2. Do not ignore situations that may only get worse.
3. Don't let lawyers make all the decisions; use common sense. A lawyer's role is to protect by limiting exposure.
4. People tend to remember what they hear first and last. In crisis communications, saying as much as you can (honestly and truthfully) is the most important thing.

Categories to Consider for Positioning

When considering the position, it is important to consider the wide range of consequences that may result from the position (e.g. legal, financial, public relations, effects on administration, effects on operations). This is a good time to speak to the association attorney who is on retainer.

SkillsUSA Command Center

The command center will be located in SkillsUSA Headquarters or the Media Room at the convention center, or another location as determined by the executive director. Command Center should have access to:

- Conference registration lists
- Contact lists for national staff and key volunteers
- Contact list for SkillsUSA state directors
- Contact information for local police and fire
- Contact information for contracted venues
- Individual hotel reservation list from housing system
- Contact information for suppliers and contractors
- Local maps and facility diagrams
- Contact information for local news media
- Copy of the current crisis plan for reference
- Cellphones, phone chargers and two-way radios
- Computers with internet access
- Data backups and data protection systems in place
- Printer and reams of white and colored paper
- Office supplies (pads, pens, pencils, tape, stapler)
- Water and food
- First aid supplies
- Megaphone
- Emergency radio



Categories that might need to be addressed:

- Human error or clerical error, errors in judgment
- Unauthorized procedures or inadequate supervision
- Inadequate quality control or operating procedures
- Misuse of confidential information

Message Guidelines

The following information should be made available:

- Nature of the critical incident; number hurt/involved
- Steps taken by SkillsUSA to resolve the situation
- Impact on SkillsUSA and its ability to deliver services
- How and where to reach the crisis team
- If safety precautions were taken, point those out.
- Emphasize the excellent safety record of SkillsUSA
- Correct inaccuracies in any news reports
- Turn the crisis into a “safety tip” story by reporters
- Do not discuss monetary estimates of damage
- Do not discuss insurance coverage or retribution
- Do not speculate about cause(s) of incident
- Do not speculate about injuries, or allocate blame

Spokesperson Guidelines

Inform staff of the incident through the crisis management team. Advise staff not to comment to ensure consistency of message. All statements should be made by the official spokesperson. Avoid saying, “I’m not supposed to speak about it.” This sounds as though something is being hidden. Instead say, “The spokesperson has the most up-to-date information and facts. Let’s connect you to him/her.”

Have all facts available, and verify all facts. Anticipate possible questions and answers. Be sure to express compassion and sympathy.

Speak with authority. Although anxiety is likely in any critical incident, try to speak slowly with a calming effect.

Close the communications loop quickly. Respond to the media fully and truthfully.

Avoid escalating issues. Avoid speculating or volunteering too much information. Only answer what is asked directly.

Don’t be defensive. If you don’t know the answer to a question, don’t give one. Answers are hard to retrieve.

Avoid responding with “no comment.” Instead say, “I don’t have enough information, let me get back to you on that.” Then be sure to do so.

Be proactive. Don’t wait for the news media to call. Think before you speak. Respect deadlines.

Practice the Tough Questions

A crisis situation raises tough questions from the news media and stakeholders. It's important, therefore, for the spokesperson to prepare with the communications team the kinds of questions that will be asked and that key audiences will want answered. At the onset of a critical incident, the spokesperson, backup and advisors should spend time rehearsing prepared statements and answers to possible tough questions. If possible, a rehearsal should be conducted prior to each media briefing or news conference. It is also important to anticipate and practice new questions as the story evolves. It is better to be prepared than surprised.

The communications team may prepare potential questions and answers for internal use only. Don't volunteer information unless it is a point SkillsUSA wants to make and the question hasn't been asked.

Don't speak off the record. There is no such thing. Here are some examples of the kinds of questions that may be asked:

- *"Who's to blame?"*
- *"Was this caused by bad management or by someone's incompetence?"*
- *"This was preventable. How did this get out of hand?"*

Handling Tough Questions

Remember first and foremost, the news media is your friend. Media exposure allows us to set the record straight. By answering tough questions, SkillsUSA is recognized as a responsible association. Sample answers to questions:

"We don't have reliable information at this time. We're working to gather it. If you want further information, please give us time to get it and verify it."

"The public wants information; that's what we're after."

"I understand your concern and I share it. Please give us a chance to get that information."

Press Releases and Prepared Statements

In some cases, a press release or prepared statement makes sense. Only provide facts from reliable sources that are confirmed. Never speculate about what happened.

- A short prepared statement should be used when making an initial general response to the media
- If not much is known, the spokesperson can express concern for SkillsUSA members and stakeholders involved in the critical incident
- Expressing concern and generating goodwill among members and stakeholders secures their loyalty
- If staff, members and stakeholders don't feel informed, they may feel like outsiders and a crisis may get larger
- As the crisis progresses and new information and facts are available, updated statements should be given by the spokesperson at the beginning of any interview, briefing or news conference
- A short statement can be posted to the website or on social media or emailed to stakeholders and reporters

Media Inquiries

It is essential to answer calls from the news media. Keep a record of who called, who they represent, what questions were asked, their contact information and deadlines.

As soon as possible after the initial report of the critical incident, a prepared statement should be given to communications support staff and/or all staff.

The statement should be simple:

“Facts are still being gathered. There will be a press conference at [time]. Please give me your name and number, and I will call you back to let you know where and when.” Or, “Facts are still being gathered. We will have a statement prepared by [time]. Please give me your name, number and email. I will contact you when the statement is ready.”

Keep Communications Confidential

This is simple but important: Be sure to take steps to keep information and communications confidential. When speaking to staff, remind them to hold information in confidence at the beginning of each meeting. Do not discuss critical incidents in a public place where you can be overheard. **Do not state names or the specifics of what happened without considering each individual’s right to privacy.** Lack of confidentiality can make a crisis worse.

Social Media Posts and Responses

Individuals in crisis situations can use social media in several different ways. While status updates are often associated with daily life updates, in the wake of a terror attack or natural disaster, taking a second to write “I’m OK” on social media is a quick way to relieve your friends and family from worry. Facebook has taken this to the next level by releasing Facebook Safety Check, an update that allows Facebook to ask if you’re OK when a natural disaster occurs in your city. If you are OK, it sends out a status update that says, “I’m safe.”

In some major situations, the police and FBI use social media to recruit the public’s help to find suspects by releasing photos, video or other information. The general public can crowdsource information and provide clues, tips or bits of information. Social media can also be used effectively to spread health and safety information during crisis, a power outage, a weather event or a contagious outbreak.

Social media can also have a negative impact during a crisis. Sometimes, people on social media say things that are not true. There is no truth filter, so if you rely on a stream of opinions and misinformation as your news source, it’s not always reliable. Despite this, studies have shown that while social media does spread both true and false information during a crisis, social media then quashes the false information and promotes the truth. It often rectifies itself.

SkillsUSA has a social media specialist and a web manager They will post messages to social media and monitor responses and provide feedback on all sites.

Sample Statements

Reporters may call before all the facts have been gathered. In such an instance, a short statement acknowledging the situation can be prepared. The statement acknowledges that SkillsUSA recognizes the need to cooperate with the media and inform the public. This statement will be the basis for all future communications. By following a few basic principles when writing the statement, SkillsUSA can meet the news media's needs.

1. Tell the important information in the lead paragraph.
2. Answer these four of the five W's of journalism: who, what, where and when. Explain **What** the incident is. Identify **Who** is involved in the incident as well as the resources and equipment involved. Tell **Where** and **When** the incident occurred. Explain **What** action SkillsUSA is taking to mitigate or respond to the incident. (Do not explain **Why** the event occurred unless complete information is available and has been approved. Attempting to explain **Why** without full information is speculation.)
3. Write remaining information in descending order of importance. Explain technical points in simple language. A direct quote can add a more human element to otherwise technical information and help explain a situation or event in layman's terms. Tell the real story. Avoid using language that is overly bureaucratic. Be concise.

Sample Statement

Incident at SkillsUSA Conference

An incident occurred [**when and where**] during a SkillsUSA event that, in turn, activated a comprehensive emergency response.

The incident was contained within one facility, although investigations and related follow-up activities will continue for several days or weeks. SkillsUSA's top priority is the safety and security of our members and stakeholders.

We know of the following fatalities/injuries: [**insert names**]. State and federal privacy laws limit our ability to provide any additional information.

The following programs and conference events were affected or cancelled [**insert program names, facility or event**].

Other information: [**insert additional information as appropriate**].

When the Crisis is Over, Take Time to Reflect and Evaluate

Following a crisis, take ample time to evaluate all plans and actions to improve the plan for the next time. No matter how well a crisis team performs, there is always room for improvement.

Questions to ask crisis team

- Did we restore and preserve the safety of members?
- Were critical incidents handled effectively?
- Was the crisis resolved?
- Does the news media view SkillsUSA as responsive?
- Will SkillsUSA continue to carry out its mission?
- Did the crisis team carry out its responsibilities?
- Did SkillsUSA speak with one voice during the crisis?
- Did SkillsUSA follow the crisis plan?
- Were all staff members prepared to participate?
- Did we recognize a potential crisis before it escalated?
- Did we restore normal operations quickly?
- Did we provide services as promised to members?
- Did we restore confidence of members, partners and stakeholders?
- Did we correct any problems in our systems?

After the crisis

- Send thank-you letters to staff, families or volunteers who assisted
- Communicate follow-up messages to key audiences using news channels or emails
- Distribute a final summary news release, if appropriate
- Hold a meeting to debrief the crisis team or staff and answer any questions
- Request feedback on the Crisis Plan and the staff actions
- Update the Crisis Plan, Chain of Command or other aspects of crisis response

Develop Your Contact Lists

One of the key aspects of a crisis plan is knowing ahead of time how to reach people in an emergency. Take the time to gather phone numbers and add them to your phone, clearly identified. Staff phone lists are distributed prior to conference and should be added to this crisis plan. **We suggest saving contact lists as you receive them to your devices or print them and place in a binder.**

Internal Contact Lists

- SkillsUSA staff cellphone numbers
- SkillsUSA state director cellphone numbers
- Convention Center staff and security contacts
- Board of Directors (cellphones, emails and hotels)
- SkillsUSA key partners (cellphones, emails and hotels)
- List of SkillsUSA Championships technical committees
- Key volunteers and program managers
- Vendors and suppliers

Service Suppliers

- Hotels, including front desk and security
- Conference center and arena facility managers
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Caterers or restaurants being used for events
- Contracted facilities management, center decorator
- Insurance agent
- Travel agent
- Banking or financial services

Emergency Services

- Police (emergency and non emergency numbers)
- Fire departments, hospitals and ambulance services
- On-site security (contracted by SkillsUSA)
- On-site EMT services (contracted by SkillsUSA)

Reporting Incidents to SkillsUSA

- CALL 911 first and then SkillsUSA staff in the event of an emergency that needs an immediate response
- Use the **SkillsUSA Crisis Card** to reach SkillsUSA staff and conference management staff in an emergency
- Complete the **SkillsUSA Injury Report Form** to report NLSC member injuries, accidents or major illness
- Upload the **SkillsUSA Injury Report Form** as directed on your Crisis Card
- Follow up by phone using the Crisis Card to be sure the report was received (and for further guidance)
- Other forms are available in the folder for reporting specific types of incidents at NLSC, if desired
- Use additional sheets of paper to provide supporting information, reports or further explanation as desired
- Use the **Bias and Harassment Report Form** in the NLSC App to report incidents of bias or harassment
- For non-crisis related concerns or suggestions, email Courtney Ferrell cferrell@skillsusa.org

Getting Help and Reporting Suspicious Activity

Emergencies of any nature can be reported to the **GWCC Department of Public Safety at 404-223-4911** and they will coordinate any required response from outside law enforcement and emergency response agencies. The GWCC Department of Public Safety is open 24 hours a day and routinely patrols all building perimeters, parking decks, exterior grounds and interior public areas.

If you are at the hotel, report your concerns to the hotel security team or the front desk staff.

What is Suspicious Activity and How do I Report It?

Suspicious activity is an observed behavior that could indicate that a crime or act of terrorism is taking place or may take place. This includes observing unusual situations or items (a car parked in an odd location for a long time, unattended backpacks, duffel bags or luggage in the convention center, someone asking unusual questions about the building's security procedures, someone carrying weapons or making threats to others. If you see suspicious activity, report it to the convention center staff or the nearest uniformed law enforcement or any person of authority. Describe what you observed, when and where you saw it and why it is suspicious.

Emergency Assistance: 911

City of Atlanta Police: 404-614-6544

Fire: 404-546-7000

GWCC Department of Public Safety: 402-223-4911 or dial #4911 within building on red phones.

State Farm Arena: If medical assistance is needed, notify any State Farm Arena staff member or text a message and your location to (404)-878-3030. First Aid is located on the lower level of State Farm Arena next to the Guest Service Center and on the upper level of the arena across from Section 220/221.

MARTA See Something Say Something via Text: 404-334-5355

MARTA Police: 404-848-4911





CONFERENCE REGISTRATION, PERSONAL AND LIABILITY RELEASE FORM

Please read over this entire form. Then, complete the *entire* form. Type or print clearly.

- Participants must wear their name badge *at all times* during the conference.
- They should also carry a copy of their medical insurance card *at all times*.

1 Complete this entire section.

Participant's HOME address is required. Do not use the school address as a home address.

Email address is required. Conference information will be sent electronically.

SkillsUSA State Association:			Parents' /Guardians' Names (if participant is under age 18):		
Check one:	<input type="checkbox"/> High School Division (Secondary)	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School Division	Parents' Telephone Number (area code required): ()		
<input type="checkbox"/> College/Postsecondary Division			Name of SkillsUSA Advisor for participant's occupational area:		
Participant's Name (First, Last) as it should appear on name badge:			School where participant's occupational training/trade area is taught:		
Participant's HOME Address:			Mailing Address of above school:		
City:	State:	ZIP Code:			
HOME Telephone (area code required): ()	CELL Phone (area code required): ()	City:	State:	ZIP Code:	
Age:	Date of Birth (MM/DD/YY):	Check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Undefined <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer Not to Say		School Telephone Number (area code required): ()	
EMAIL address (to receive important instructions/contest updates before conference):			Participant's T-shirt Size: <input type="checkbox"/> Small <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/> 1X <input type="checkbox"/> 2X <input type="checkbox"/> 3X <input type="checkbox"/> 4X <input type="checkbox"/> 5X		

2 Contestants *only*, complete this section.

All others, complete this section.

Check: <input type="checkbox"/> Contestant	Contest in which competing:	
Graduation Year:	Occupational Training/Trade Area in which contestant is enrolled:	
Check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Advisor (Teacher)	<input type="checkbox"/> State Association Director	<input type="checkbox"/> Observer (Student, Family, Child, Other, Etc.) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Voting Delegate	<input type="checkbox"/> State Office	

3 Complete this on-site emergency contact/ADA information.

Name of Teacher/Adult chaperoning participant at conference:	Check YES if participant has a disability that meets criteria specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): <input type="checkbox"/> YES Describe: _____
ON-SITE Telephone Number of teacher/adult chaperone (area code required): ()	Check YES if participant has dietary restrictions: <input type="checkbox"/> YES Describe: _____

4 Complete the signature to signify the participant's agreement to ALL statements on both sides of this registration form.

I have read and completely understand the Personal Liability and Medical Release Form, the Code of Conduct, the Release of Personal Information Through Lead Retrieval System statement, and the Photography and Sound Release agreement, and, by signing below, do hereby agree to abide by these in their entirety, accept the conditions of the agreements, and completely release SkillsUSA's national and state associations. I have provided all necessary medical information to the adult chaperon at this event so that this person may act on my behalf in case of a medical emergency.

PARTICIPANTS — PLEASE SIGN BELOW IF YOU ARE OVER AGE 18 AND ATTEST:	
_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Full Name (Please Print)	
PARENT / GUARDIAN / CHAPERONE — SIGN BELOW TO ATTEST (MANDATORY IF PARTICIPANT IS UNDER AGE 18):	
_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Full Name (Please Print)	

SkillsUSA Personal Liability and Medical Release Form

I hereby release SkillsUSA Inc., its representatives, agents and employees from liability for any injury to the named person, resulting from any cause whatsoever occurring to the named person at any time while attending this SkillsUSA conference, including travel to and from the conference, excepting only such injury or damage resulting from willful acts of SkillsUSA representatives, agents or employees. I voluntarily assume all risk and danger relating to the conference, whether occurring prior to, during or after the event.

I voluntarily authorize the SkillsUSA conference medical services coordinator or designees to administer and/or obtain routine or emergency diagnostic procedures and/or routine or emergency medical treatment for the named person as deemed necessary in medical judgment. Parents/guardians of participant will allow emergency medical treatment to be administered as needed. Any further treatment will require parental/guardian consultation.

I agree to indemnify and hold harmless SkillsUSA Inc. and its medical services coordinator and/or designees for any and all claims, demands, actions, rights of action, and/or judgments by or on behalf of the named person arising from medical procedures or treatment rendered in good faith and according to accepted medical standards.

I understand SkillsUSA cannot guarantee that conference attendees will not be exposed to or infected by COVID-19. As a conference participant, I acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19. By attending this conference, I voluntarily assume the risk and responsibility for any possible exposure or infection.

I have read and understand the SkillsUSA Code of Conduct. I agree to follow all policies, procedures and practices as stated. I understand that this is an educational activity and I will apply myself for the purpose of learning at all times and uphold the finest qualities of SkillsUSA members.

SkillsUSA is not responsible or liable for any issues related to my participation in any in-person, hybrid or virtual SkillsUSA contest including: technology issues or interruptions, malfunctions or failures; personal injury; illness; or damage to school property or individual property.

Adult supervision of student competitors is required at all times when operating power or hand tools; using cutting devices and knives; or handling sharp objects. SkillsUSA is not responsible or liable for any injuries or issues.

If you are age 18 or over, please check the box on the first page of this form to indicate that. Anyone under 18 must have a parent or guardian review this form and check the box on the first page. If a box is not checked, this form will be returned. All participants must submit this form to participate.

Release of Personal Information Through Lead Retrieval System

Participant name badges at any SkillsUSA national or state conference may include a barcode that includes personal information. I understand that by giving my verbal permission to vendors and staff associated with the conference, my information may be used for follow-up after the conference. Personal information may include my name, email address, mailing address, training program or contest area. By checking the box on the other side, I acknowledge my understanding of this statement and give consent for contact.

SkillsUSA Conference Code of Conduct Agreement

This SkillsUSA national or state conference is designed to be an educational function, and all plans are made with that objective in mind. SkillsUSA wants every participant to have an enjoyable experience with careful attention paid to both inclusion and safety. All conference participants are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is exemplary at all times and best represents SkillsUSA. For everyone to receive the maximum benefits from participation, SkillsUSA's "Code of Conduct," as established by its national board of directors, must be followed at all times. Note that attendance is not mandatory. By voluntarily participating, you agree to follow the official conference rules and regulations or forfeit your personal rights to participate. SkillsUSA is proud of its students and knows that by signing this "Code of Conduct" you are simply reaffirming your dedication to be the best possible representative of your state.

1. I will, at all times, respect all public and private property, including the hotel/motel in which I am housed.
2. I will spend each night in the room of the hotel/motel to which I am assigned.
3. I will strictly abide by the curfew established and shall respect the rights of others by being as quiet as possible after curfew.
4. I will not enter any hotel room other than the one to which I am assigned. I understand that I am assigned a hotel room for the sole purpose of overnight accommodation.
5. I will not leave the hotel/motel without the express permission of my advisor or state SkillsUSA director. Should I receive permission, I will leave a written notice of where I will be.
6. I will not use alcoholic beverages. I will not use drugs unless I have been ordered to take certain prescription medications by a licensed physician. If I am required to take medication, I will, at all times, have the orders of the physician on my person.
7. I will not have in my possession any firearms, dangerous weapons, explosive compound, or an object that can reasonably be considered and/or used as a weapon.
8. I will respect SkillsUSA attire and will not inhale or smoke cigarettes, e-cigarettes, use a vape pen or any other substances while wearing clothing bearing the name or logo of SkillsUSA, including outdoor venues.
9. I will not engage in bullying, harassment or acts of bias against others including threatening words or behavior;
10. menacing, hazing, taunting or intimidation; the use of lewd, profane or vulgar language; verbal or physical abuse of others; or other unwelcome behavior against others related to one's identity.
11. I will not engage in any behavior that might be deemed sexual harassment which includes, but is not limited to, verbal, written or physical statements or actions to or about others.
12. I will keep my advisor or state SkillsUSA director informed of my whereabouts at all times.
13. I will, as required, wear my official conference identification badge and not misrepresent myself by wearing the badge of another participant.
14. I will attend, and be on time for, all general sessions and activities that I am assigned to and registered for.
15. I will adhere to the specified conference dress code at all required times.
16. **Virtual Events:** I will be respectful and professional when attending any SkillsUSA virtual conference and will share only appropriate information. I will use the chat feature for questions and comments that are relevant to the event and will not use the chat feature for posting comments that distract from the conference activities. I will use my full first name and last name as listed on my conference registration when signing on to the virtual conference.

Reporting

Any individual who believes that they have experienced bias or harassment while participating in a SkillsUSA event may report the incident online using the SkillsUSA Report Form, or directly to a SkillsUSA national staff member. All reports will be addressed in accordance with SkillsUSA's related procedures.

Violations and Penalties

I agree that if, for any reason, I am in violation of any of the rules of the conference, I may be brought before the appropriate disciplinary committee for an analysis of the violation. I also agree to accept the penalty imposed on me. I understand that any penalty and reasons for it will be explained to me before it is carried out. I further realize that the severity of the penalty may increase with the severity of the violation, even to the extent of being immediately sent home at my own expense.

1. Violations of Items 1 through 11 of the "Code of Conduct" may be grounds for immediate removal from an elected office and possible relinquishment of awards and recognition. In addition, the violator will be sent home at his or her own expense. Notification of the violation and the action taken will be sent to the participant's state department of education and parents or guardians. The participant's misconduct or infraction could result in the disqualifying of his or her state delegation as well.
2. Violations of Items 12 through 15 will result in a warning and reprimand. Notification of the violation and the action taken will be sent to the participant's state department of education and parents or guardians. Repeated violations of Items 12 through 15 may result in the participant being dismissed from the conference (virtual or in-person) and sent home at their own expense.

I agree to all conference rules of conduct and releases as stated on this form. My consent is affirmed when I complete and submit this registration form to SkillsUSA as a participant of this conference.

Photography and Sound Release

By attending this conference, I grant SkillsUSA and its production companies permission to photograph me, videotape me or make audio recordings of my voice, separately or in combination, and give permission to SkillsUSA to use these photos, videos or sound recordings without seeking further permission. I understand that my name may not appear with my photo, video or sound recording when used. Further, I relinquish to SkillsUSA all rights, title and interest in any photographs, videos or sound recordings of me and I grant

SkillsUSA the exclusive right to exhibit, publish, give or transfer photographs, videotape or audio recordings to any individual, business and industry partner, publication, media outlet or governmental agency, or their assignees, without payment or other consideration to me. My agreement to participate or perform under camera, lighting and stated conditions is voluntary. I waive all personal claims, causes of action or damages against SkillsUSA and its employees or volunteers arising from such a performance or appearance. **NOTE:** I understand that audio or videotaping of conference speakers by conference participants is not permitted.



SkillsUSA[®]

SkillsUSA Customer Care

844-875-4557

Email: customercare@skillsusa.org

WWW.SKILLSUSA.ORG