

The “Cool Head, Warm Heart” Response to a Crisis

All institutions will face crises. How will administrators react when that time comes? United Educators (UE) recommends a “Cool Head, Warm Heart”™ approach, based on decades of compassionate claims handling.

To respond with a “Cool Head,” follow your crisis response policies and procedures. Keeping a cool head protects an institution’s reputation and financial stability. To demonstrate a “Warm Heart,” show concern for people first, liability second. Responding with a warm heart promotes healing and trust; simply put, it is the right thing for an institution to do.

Cool Head

To protect against liability or reputational damage after a crisis, administrators should:

- Activate the crisis response team and follow its crisis response plan
- Communicate effectively with campus, community, and the media
- Be cautious with expressions of responsibility and the release of private information
- If the crisis warrants, conduct an investigation, keep records, and cooperate with counsel



Warm Heart

To show an institution’s sensitivity during and after the crisis:

- Be generous with support and sympathy. Expressing sympathy is not the same as accepting responsibility. Never be afraid to comfort someone in a crisis.
- Communicate in a timely, honest manner. Withholding information and evading clear answers is not advised. If the crisis touches one family or group, facilitate communication by designating a liaison between the institution and those affected.
- Offer counseling to the campus and community. People need to talk after facing a crisis or tragedy. Professionals should be available to assist with the healing process.
- Offer assistance. Ask those affected what they need. Consult with religious or cultural advisors. Make recovery easier by coordinating or making travel arrangements.
- Avoid self-inflicted harm. For example, ensure families do not receive tuition bills or overdue library book fines after a tragedy.
- Stay in touch after the crisis subsides. Check in on families and the community. Plan campus memorials if asked to do so, or in consultation with families.