



## Crisis-Statement Tips

These are general guidelines to keep in mind in drafting a statement. As responsible case handling tends to be fact-specific, the following tips will not be relevant or appropriate for every situation. If you believe your organization needs to deviate from these guidelines, consider seeking guidance from experts in abuse-prevention and response or trauma-informed care (which is different than consultation from a crisis management firm).

### Your statement should include:

- A sincere public apology to all those who were directly or indirectly harmed.
- A timeline for institutional response and next steps.
- Recognition that the institution may not know all the facts and/or there may be more people in the institution or beyond who have faced trauma as a result of the incident(s).
- A plan for providing support to impacted individuals.
- A list of resources to support those harmed.
- Acknowledgment of the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of the communication.
- If relevant, information on how to connect with external expert investigators directly, so that individuals are not required to go through the institution.
- Link to institutional policy/procedures which guided internal decision-making processes.

### Your statement should avoid:

- Commentary; stick to the facts.
- Revealing identifying or personal information about involved individuals, unless necessitated by circumstances (e.g., serious safety risk or widespread public coverage that requires response).
- Blame, or the suggestion of blame, directed at complainants, whistleblowers, victims or their supporters.
- Speaking on behalf of those involved, including assuming intention (e.g., poor judgment).
- Stating that an incident is the first event of its kind within the institution and/or that there are no known/additional individuals harmed.
- Focusing on future-oriented policies and training you hope to invest in, while there is a current unresolved issue. It is okay to mention efforts underway, but stay focused on the issue at hand.

***Note:** A public statement or letter is but one opportunity for communication with the broader community. Continued transparency requires continued regular communications. In addition, it is important to emphasize that a public statement should supplement but never supplant a direct private apology with known victims and genuine attempts to repair harm done.*