

Healthcare crisis management checklist

Initial steps checklist

Assess facts quickly and objectively: Separate verified information from assumptions or emotions before acting

Acknowledge the issue early: Silence or delay erodes trust; timely recognition signals accountability

Align response with core values: Ensure actions and messaging reflect organizational principles and culture

Control the narrative with transparency: Share what is known, what is being done and when updates will follow — without overpromising

Demonstrate responsibility, not defensiveness: Focus on resolution and impact rather than blame or justification

Engage key stakeholders directly: Communicate thoughtfully with those most affected before making broad public statements

Document decisions and actions: Maintain a clear record to support consistency and learning

Use the moment to strengthen trust: Identify corrective actions and long-term improvements to prevent recurrence

Social media and public messaging checklist

Activate social media monitoring immediately: Assign a lead or partner, track mentions, hashtags and sentiment in real time using social listening tools

Create clear response protocols: Define what warrants a public response, private reply or no response; ensure legal and communications alignment

Centralize public messaging: Use one authoritative source (website statement or pinned post) to reduce speculation

Engage, don't escalate: Acknowledge concerns respectfully; avoid arguments; redirect complex exchanges offline

Coordinate with media relations: Monitor coverage for accuracy; request corrections; provide timely updates to trusted outlets

Evaluate need for hotline or dedicated intake channel: If issue affects community safety or services, ensure hotline/email is staffed, scripted and integrated into response plan

Track themes and feedback: Use insights from social media, media coverage and hotline inquiries to inform leadership decisions

Plan for sustained monitoring: Maintain oversight for weeks, not days; reputational issues often evolve over time

Social media response frameworks

Acknowledge and redirect (High emotion, limited facts)

Acknowledge concern without confirming unverified details

Reinforce that the issue is being reviewed or addressed

Redirect conversation to official channels

Clarify and correct (Misinformation present)

State facts clearly without repeating rumors

Maintain a neutral tone; avoid defensiveness

Link to official source of truth

Update and commit (Ongoing resolution)

Provide progress or completed actions

Demonstrate accountability and learning

Commit to follow-up with next steps

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