



EAB

Tabletop Exercise: Emergency Response

Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis: Part A

This situation belongs to [EAB's "Tabletop Exercise" Resource Center](#). There, you will find an explanation of the value of these exercises, guides for facilitators and observers, and an after-action report template.

We recommend this situation as the first of a multi-part tabletop exercise featuring Situations Part B and C, which can also be found in the resource center.

Responding to COVID-19 Crisis: Part A

Tomorrow, the media relations team discovers an article from the day prior announcing that a sophomore student named Jayden Thompson from your university has died.

This report in the small local paper quotes a county public health official saying the student “brought the virus back with him from [XYZ university] to our town.” (It is surmised that, when residence halls closed, the student returned to his hometown two hours away.) He was hospitalized before a test could be obtained to confirm his condition, but the symptoms are such that he was presumptively diagnosed as COVID-19. It would be this rural county’s first confirmed case. The article does not include any comment from family.

Jayden’s fellow student-athletes are posting the article on Facebook. Some are re-sharing a moving tribute posted by a student who says he was Jayden’s boyfriend, featuring a photo of them dated to two weeks earlier. That post is “geo-tagged”, featuring its location of origin: a residence hall where 70+ students who could not move home are staying.

Jayden’s school records are spotty. His home address at the time of application and his current address listed in the Student Information System for billing do not match, and neither are in the region of the state where the news was reported. One parent/guardian is listed, who has a different last name. His professors say that Jayden had not taken part in class in two weeks, noting that Jayden had sent an e-mail saying his area lacked high-quality Internet Access; one instructor says he assumed that was just an excuse.

Discussion Questions

After reading the situation above together, participants should endeavor to work through the following questions below in the time they have permitted and in the following order of priority. **We recommend 30 to 60 minutes.**

- How should the university respond to Jayden’s apparent death? Be specific: who should do what, and in what order? What departments, academic or administrative units, or teams should be involved?
- Issue-spotting: what challenges and sensitivities strike you about attempting to communicate with Jayden’s family? How will we make contact? What if we are not able to contact a family member after three days of attempting?
- What are our public health-related responsibilities? Who will be tasked with working with which government entities, and to do what?
- What are the implications if Jayden’s boyfriend interacted with him two weeks ago and is housed at the residence hall where 70+ students are currently living? What is our plan if a confirmed case turns up in that facility?

Post-Discussion Debrief

After working through the above exercise, the facilitator should lead the group through a shorter discussion exploring the below questions in the time they have permitted and in the following order of priority. **We recommend 15 to 30 minutes.**

Note: We recommend conducting a fuller debrief after the conclusion of a multi-part tabletop exercise, to aid in completion of an after-action report. These questions are designed to prepare the group to contribute more fully at that final stage.

- What is the consensus on how we would react to a situation like the above?
- Most institutions have a protocol for the death of a campus constituent. What is ours? How does COVID-19 and our students' distance from campus affect the way we would execute that protocol?
- Beyond determining how we would react to this specific case, how or to what extent does this situation inspire us to consider any proactive measures?