Title | Communication Plan: Medical Student Services (MSS) communication response to local, national, or international, tragedies and other troubling events.

Purpose | To provide guidance for student-directed, school-wide and student-specific communication in response to difficult, tragic, or disturbing events not directly involving students.

Office or person responsible for implementing | Office of Associate Dean for Students

Applies to | • This communication plan applies to events not directly involving students but with potential student impact.
  ○ Examples include but are not limited to: mass shootings; local protests or demonstrations; natural disasters; national and/or international politics; harm or death of a faculty or staff member.
• Guidance for communication in response to events directly involving students are discussed elsewhere.
  ○ Examples include but are not limited to: death of a medical student; medical students who experience severe injury.

Rationale | • There are a variety of difficult, tragic, and disturbing events that occur in our state, region, nation, and world that may impact medical students. It is impossible and inappropriate for Medical Student Services to identify and respond to all events of this nature.
• The decision to respond to such events must
  ○ Align with the mission of MSS to support medical students as they become physicians.
  ○ Consider that students within the UABSOM may respond differently to the same event.
  ○ Consider that responding to some events while not responding to others might be construed as a political statement or judgement about the event and may distract from the goal of supporting medical students.
  ○ Take into account whether communication should come from MSS or from the Department of Medical Education, the UAB School of Medicine, and/or the University of Alabama at Birmingham.
• The development of help-seeking behaviors is a necessary skill for physicians. MSS makes services available and expects students adversely affected by events to engage in support services. The primary purpose of communication in response to tragedies and other troubling events is to acknowledge that these events can have an impact and remind students of available resources that allow for individualized support.

Guidance | • Student-wide communication.
  ○ MSS will typically not respond to local, regional, national, or international events when they do not directly affect or are not directly related to student or the UAB School of Medicine.
  ○ When events occur inside or outside of UAB and do not involve students but may affect students as a whole and student-wide communication is necessary, MSS will
    ▪ Consult with the Department of Medical Education and the School of Medicine to coordinate communication.
    ▪ Focus on support, reminding students of available resources.
    ▪ Avoid political or other stances that could disenfranchise some students.
    ▪ Strive to communicate within 24 hours of the event (when MSS is leading communication).
    ▪ Note: In cases where the Department of Medical Education or the UAB School of Medicine wishes to send the primary communication, MSS may reach out to students via Learning Community faculty mentors or Learning Community student representatives to communicate reminders about available resources.
• Student-specific communication
  ○ When events occur outside of UAB and do not involve students but may affect a portion of students, MSS will reach out to the potentially affected students.
Example: A mass shooting or natural disaster occurs in a certain city where students are rotating. MSS will reach out directly to any students in that city or surrounding areas.

Example: An event affecting a certain city or region where students are known to have connections. MSS will reach out directly to students with known connections to that city or region.

In these cases, MSS will
- Focus on support, reminding students of available resources.
- Avoid political or other stances that could disenfranchise some students.
- Strive to communicate within 24 hours of the event.
- When there is potential for a natural disaster such as a hurricane, MSS will reach out proactively ahead of the event to assess student safety and recommend local resources.

When events occur at UAB and do not involve students but may affect a portion of students, MSS will reach out to the potentially affected students.

Example: A faculty, resident, or staff member who works closely with a portion of students or is in a department where the students are currently rotating or recently rotated is severely injured or dies. MSS will reach out directly to students working closely with or rotating in the faculty, resident or staff member’s department. Communication will be coordinated with departments and adhere to confidentiality requirements. Communication with students will be deferred when requested by family or the department of the victim(s).

In these cases, MSS will
- Focus on support, reminding students of available resources.
- Avoid political or other stance that could disenfranchise some students.
- Protect confidentiality of the victim.
- Strive to communicate within 24 hours of the event. When there is potential for a natural disaster such as a hurricane, MSS will reach out ahead of the event to ensure appropriate precautions are taken.

Additional Information
N/A

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