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Managing Special Events

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At Issue: The athletics department is responsible for providing a pleasant, safe experience for spectators and players at athletics events. The mission of event management is to provide an environment focused on customer service, while at the same time emphasizing sporting conduct and promoting a positive image for the college or university. Unfortunately, doing so requires planning for undesirable fan conduct and an attention to detail about the basic needs of spectators, (including those with disabilities) and items that could be carried into facilities that pose a danger or risk to others.

Besides athletic contests, special events include tournaments (depending on who has management responsibility) carnivals, parades, fundraisers, concerts, and festivals. These events bring mechanical and animal rides, arcade games, food vendors, and other activities. Most

all, they bring large crowds onto institutional grounds. This increase in facilities usage and the activities at these kinds of events generally translates into a greater likelihood of accidents and potential claims. Colleges and universities can safely sponsor a variety of special events with the establishment of adequate risk management safety plans that coordinate policies and procedures, management controls, and facility inspections.

Administrative controls require the adoption and enforcement of policies and procedures. Educational facilities that use an application permit system and insurance controls are in a better position to reduce the cost of litigation-related losses. Educational institutions should have in place adequate use of facility application processes that communicate the rules and conditions regarding facility use and evaluate information from a perspective user before a permit is issued. Included within these facilities use procedures should be hold harmless and indemnity language that contains wording in favor of the institution, and which has been reviewed by legal counsel. In addition, all applications should clearly identify all event

managers with emergency contact information and their responsibilities (set-up, security, site maintenance, etc.).

Liability exposures include:

- Public accommodations (e.g., restrooms, parking spaces, ramps)
- Access to recreational facilities
- Disruptive behavior
- Spectator liability
- Assaults
- Vandalism
- Cash management
- Bleacher and stadium access

Compliance with federal and, when applicable, local laws concerning access to facilities and required accommodations for disabled spectators and others are required.

Educational institutions face liability when spectators become unruly and fights and other disorderly conduct ensues. Litigation against an institution is probable if spectators, non-employee event workers or security personnel are injured. Lawsuits typically allege

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failure to manage and supervise sporting events, not employing sufficient staff and failure to establish and maintain a viable emergency management plan.

Periodically, unruly spectator behavior (fights and at times fan riots) occur at sporting events that are covered in the media on a regional or national level. Educational institutions face negative publicity when this occurs.

Although not a legal liability exposure, loss of funds from employee mismanagement or theft can occur. Cash control measures, with daily cash reconciliation, separation of duties, and management controls are in order. Theft by employees who handle cash at athletic events is not uncommon.

How is your institution doing?

This questionnaire should be completed by the administrator currently responsible for oversight of event management. Every question should be answered with a "YES". Be sure to address and remedy those items with "NO" responses.

With regard to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (and any local laws addressing disability and accommodations for the disabled) conformity, ticketing, and guest experiences at athletics events:

____1. An individual on the athletics staff has been designated as the department's "Event Management Director" [or similar title] who is responsible for the conduct of athletics events.

____2. A policy exists stating the department shall not discriminate on the basis of age, color, gender, national origin, physical impairment, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation and other protected classes in the application of all ticketing and event management policies and procedures.

____3. The event management policy outlines the responsibilities of all administrators working with event management.

____4. Event management and accommodations policies exist to ensure conformity with ADA regulations.

____5. Facilities conform to ADA regulations.

____6. The policy for accommodations allows reasonable, non-disruptive accommodations for patrons with disabilities.

____7. A policy for ticketing exists.

____8. Procedures for ticketing include guidelines for the purchase of event tickets, will-call, pass-list, and lost/stolen tickets.

____9. A policy and procedure exist for the revocation of ticket privileges for specific reasons.

____10. The procedure for the revocation of ticket privileges is progressive with regard to documentation and corrective action.

____11. A policy exists for items permitted in event venues.

____12. A policy exists for items

prohibited from event venues.

____13. A policy exists for behaviors prohibited from event venues.

____14. A policy and procedure exist for the confiscation of prohibited items.

____15. By policy, spectators engaging in disruptive behavior may be removed from events.

____16. A procedure exists for the removal of spectators engaging in disruptive behavior.

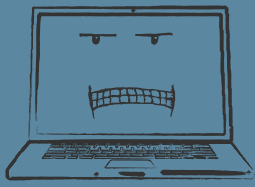
____17. A facility use and insurance management process exists.

____18. Facilities are pre-inspected prior to events.

____19. A policy exists for alcohol consumption.

____20. A tobacco use policy is in accordance with institutional, state, and federal regulations regarding tobacco use.

A sample event management policy can be obtained by contacting Jennifer Lemanis at 516-750-9458 or jlamanis@wrightrisk.com



Cyber-Bullying at Colleges and Universities

There is no doubt the Internet has transformed the education landscape; from online courses to cross-border collaboration, students have access to more information at an incredibly fast pace. However, technology has become yet another challenge for college and university administrators. While bullying has been an issue for school leaders for decades, recent headlines demonstrate that the internet has given school bullies a broader pulpit for harassment, and unfortunately the implications can be deadly.

As college students increasingly spend more time in and around access to the internet and social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, the bullying that historically took place in the dormitories, gymnasiums and classrooms has moved on-line – a venue vastly larger and more exposed than the confines of a college or university campus.

Cyber-bullying includes attacks such as electronic distribution of humiliating photos, dissemination of false or private information, or targeting victims in cruel online polls.

In September, we learned of the tragic suicide of a freshman student at Rutgers University in New Jersey, who jumped to his death off the George Washington Bridge after learning that an intimate act he had with another male in his dorm was allegedly videoed taped by his roommate and streamed live on the internet. The story has made international headlines and



a wide-spread call to action on cyber-bullying and digital ethics.

It is no secret that stress is a contributing factor in suicide among college students. Stressful life events, a sense of isolation and lack of a support system can also contribute. With college students, suicide often occurs on the day of a stressful event or within days thereafter.

Cyber Bullying

Preventing cyber-bullying at your college or university is a daunting and challenging task that should be addressed by a multi-disciplined team consisting of mental health professionals, representatives from the residential life staff, student representatives and others school administrators or deans.

Some points about cyber-bullying that have been raised include:

- **The “Net” is the “real world”**
Whether you agree or not, the Internet now is the primary means of communication for the majority of young adults. Intimate postings on a social network site

about another person are a volatile, serious invasion of privacy.

- **Our national political discord is not setting a good example**

Our national political leaders are not setting a good example of how to disagree and use technology in a civil manner.

- **The audience is unlimited**

Cyber bullies can inflict such emotional harm on their victims since there are virtually no limits to which the posting will reach online, and it can potentially follow victims for years.

- **Technology has changed the bully profile**

Bullies do not have to be the biggest, strongest, or most popular kids anymore. The increased access to technology (e.g. laptops in classrooms, dorms and libraries, internet browsing capabilities on a Smartphone, etc.) give young adults much greater power to embarrass, humiliate and harass than ever before.

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth are at greater risk**

A new study from Iowa State’s Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE) found that approximately one out of every two LGBT youths are regular victims of cyber-bullying. This is believed to cause psychological and emotional distress to victims – producing thoughts of suicide

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in some who are repeatedly victimized.

LGBT youth are more likely to feel isolated and without a support system. The study also noted that more than half of the 444 respondents feared telling their parents about the cyberbullying because they might restrict their use of technology -- often the "lifeline to the outside world" for many young LGBT

today are about 40 percent lower in empathy than counterparts of 20 or 30 years prior.

- **Students arrive at college after an overexposure to violence**

According to the Zur Institute, by the time a youngster reaches age 12, the average child has witnessed at least 8,000 murders and more than

addressing harassment, acceptable use of technology and student conduct to address cyber bullying and online behavior in some manner. The policies should have procedures to initiate complaints or report incidents. Ramifications for violations, retaliation and false reporting must also be addressed. Policies are one way in which rules can be enforced.



students who have been ostracized by their peers at school.

- **Are Today's Youth as Empathetic as those in the past?**

A recent meta-analysis study of 14,000 college students from the University of Michigan, combining 72 different studies over a 30 year period, finds that today's college students are not as empathetic as college students of the 1980s and 1990s, with the biggest drop after the year 2000. The study found that college kids

100,000 other acts of violence on television.

Risk Management

The court system has not yet established a clear pattern of rulings to act as a guide. In addition, state laws vary in terms of what they require and cover. Therefore, uniform risk control recommendations are difficult to make that apply universally. However, consider the following when addressing this problem:

- Institutions should have policies

- Most institutions have a waiting period before requests for roommate changes can be made. This is a good procedure, since it allows time for the students to work out differences and for staff to locate alternative room assignments. However, the waiting period should be waived if the complaints involve threats or criminal actions.
- Attorneys who defend educational institutions will often remark that well-meaning administrators often drop the ball when it comes to complaint handling. Staff should know how to handle both formal and informal complaints from employees and students.
- To the extent possible, resident advisors should beware of students (especially freshman) who seem to be at risk or are having a hard time fitting in.
- Professors, coaches and others in leadership roles must provide a positive example.



Fire Safety at Colleges and Universities

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 3,570 structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks from 2003-2006. Seven civilian deaths, 54 civilian fire injuries and \$29.4 million in property damage occur annually as a result of such fires. The majority of fatal fires do not occur on campus. The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) indicates that of the 139 campus-related fire fatalities that occurred from January 2000 to the present, 84% happened off-campus. Five students have died so far in 2010 in off-campus fires. This trend is confirmed by research done by the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), which indicates that the majority of fires that affect college students happen off-campus. However, regardless of where they are living, all students must be aware of the dangers related to fire and what to do in the event of a fire.

- There is a connection between alcohol consumption and fire-related deaths. Drinking alcohol impairs judgment and motor skills, and can hinder efforts by students and first responders to evacuate during a fire.
- Most victims die from smoke or toxic gas inhalation and not burns. Hardwired smoke and heat detectors should be used.
- To reduce the risk of injury and death, residence halls should have: (1) properly operating

self-closing doors (that are not propped open); (2) exits that are clearly marked; (3) clear and unblocked corridors.

- Regularly inspect heating and ventilation systems, fire alarm and suppression systems. Deficiencies must be repaired as quickly as possible.
- Students living in both on and off-



campus housing must be familiar with fire escape and emergency evacuation procedures. Compliance with mandatory participation in fire drills is essential.

There are many steps college administrators can take to prevent fires. Correcting common residential hazards, such as overloaded extension cords, power strips or outlets significantly reduce risk. Eliminating cooking equipment in dorm rooms is very difficult, but prohibiting open flames will reduce the risk of fire. Resident advisors and house managers should know how to operate a fire extinguisher,

fire alarms and smoke detectors.

ASSE provides free fire safety tips on statistics, prevention, fire escape planning, fire safety equipment for off-campus and Greek housing, information on recent incidents, a parent guide to fire safety, what you need to know when your child leaves home for college, a list of key resources and an on/off campus fire safety flyer. This article was based, in part, on information from the ASSE. Fire safety tips are available at www.asse.org/newsroom/safetytips under on/off campus fire safety tips.



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