



Public Entity

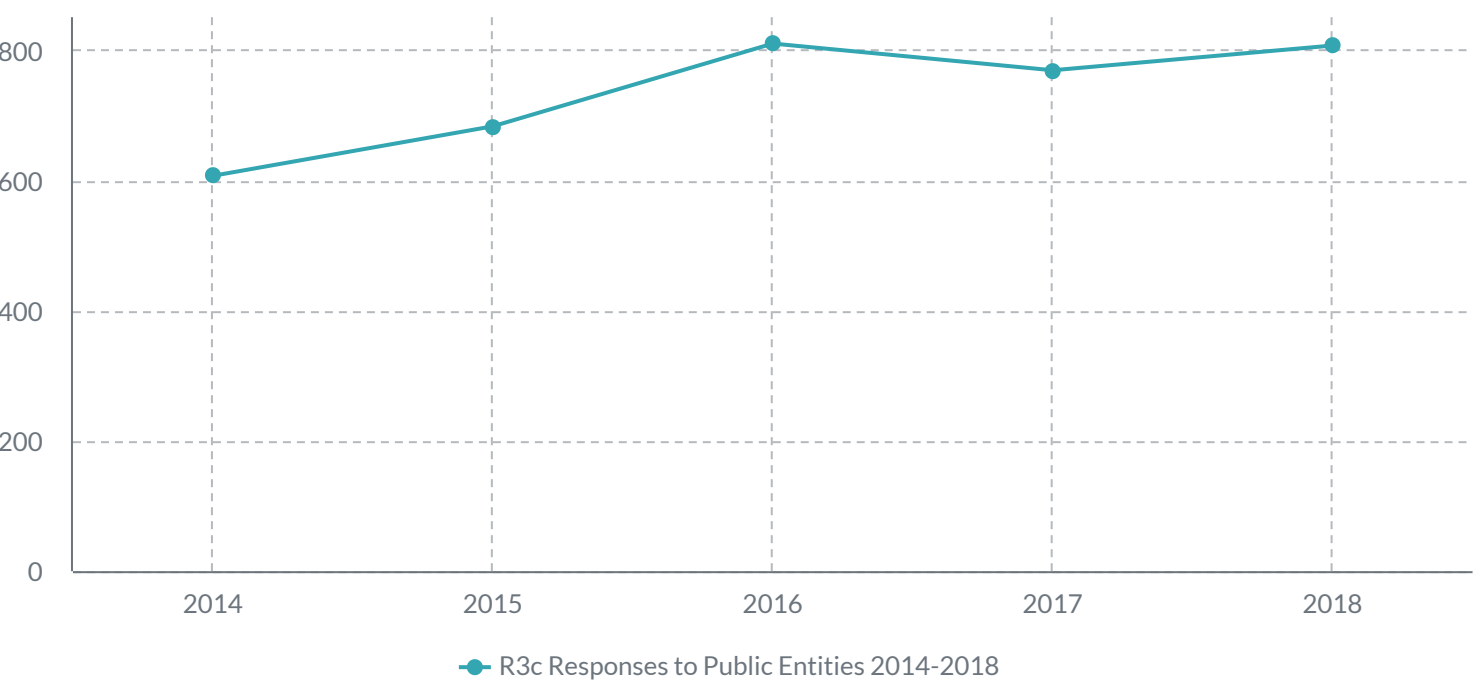
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R3 CONTINUUM

It was the Friday afternoon before Memorial Day when many of the 400 employees at the Virginia Municipal Center were wrapping up the day's work and making plans to enjoy the long weekend. But at 4:00, a disgruntled employee, armed with a .45 caliber handgun with a silencer, began shooting his co-workers.

These kinds of tragic situations, along with recent events of civil unrest at universities, radicalization, employee dishonesty, traveler disappearances, extortion attempts, and threats of violence have become all too common for public entities. Unfortunately, employees and students alike are grappling with the fear that when they set out for the day, they may not come home that night.



A crisis can occur anywhere, but public entities have additional concerns. By their nature, these organizations are continually in contact with the people they serve and cannot easily limit access or establish safety barriers in the way that private organizations can. When an event does occur in a public entity, it can feel more personal to the entire community, and therefore affect more individuals on a deeper level.

Naturally, leaders spend more time concentrating on propelling thriving organizations than considering what to do in the event of a crisis.

The question is: how can organizational leaders, especially those of public entities, minimize the risk of a violent event? Equally important: how can leaders champion recovery if an incident occurs?

Before A Crisis Occurs: Is Your Organization Ready?

Businesses, organizations and schools have emergency plans in case of fire, storms, evacuations and medical response. Others even have business continuity plans if the building, system or software becomes unusable, and some have enterprise risk management programs to view and approach risk holistically.

Few organizations, however, have strategically prepared crisis event plans. And for those that do, being fully equipped to effectively put those plans into action often poses difficulty. Crisis events by their very nature are shocking, stressful, confusing, chaotic, and traumatic. This lies in stark contrast to the way most organizations plan – which is to assume that people will do what you *want* them to do – rather than what they *will* do.

Combining all of these planning efforts in support of the human factor is one of the biggest challenges faced in security-related events and crisis management today.

Avoid Learning by Surprise

Most leaders are fortunate: they have not had to guide their organizations through a disruptive event. But this fortune also puts them at a disadvantage, because when immersed in a crisis situation, they have only their personal experience to rely on, which implies learning as they go in face of constant surprise. Naturally, because of its reactive versus proactive nature, this “learning by surprise” process increases errors, expands liability, extends the crisis timeframe, and slows recovery.

Meanwhile, despite developing crisis and business continuity plans, organizations often do not have enough information surrounding three key areas: 1) the cause and effect relationship of a disruptive event, 2) the decisions being made during an event, and 3) the ultimate return to work or campus outcomes.

Proactively leveraging expertise, best practices and data is the solution to overcoming these issues while generating better information, reducing the element of surprise, and improving outcomes.

Use a Holistic: Empirically-Driven Approach

When a crisis occurs, every level of the organization feels the impact *simultaneously*. Senior leaders are consumed with critical decisions, managers are pressed to provide direction, while those impacted (such as employees and students) struggle to cope and begin to speculate about the ramifications. An integrated, multi-level, and empirically-driven approach is essential to effective response throughout the following phases:

Acute Phase

An acute “surge” is typically needed to begin within hours of the event. Many organizations have little to no surge capacity and experience difficulty contracting support quickly. Therefore, without outside assistance from pre-determined resources and a budget to support them, insurance-based mechanisms are a valid solution.

Transitional Phase

At this time, people are returning, but are not as productive as before. Therefore, additional support is generally needed for another 30 days in the transitional phase.

Long Term Support

A long-term support model that focuses on return to work, re-triggering events, anticipation of litigation, legislative actions, etc. should extend for a minimum of a year.

The challenge for many organizations is that each part of the response becomes fragmented and actions are disconnected with a consolidated approach from the beginning with a focus on recovery. This can be overcome with a program that utilizes recovery metrics to defensibly plan for each transition by incorporating monitoring, engagement, utilization and level of disruption while collaborating with the claims processes to get a full picture.

Lessons Learned

- **Planning to Be Prepared:** Visible planning and support of programs reduces likelihood of occurrence, speed recovery and reduce liability. Most importantly, it increases trust in leadership.
- **Exercises and Drills:** Active shooter drills can be traumatic themselves. Appropriateness and pre-planned, on-site counseling during drills are beneficial in reducing disruptions, fear and liability.
- **Surge Capacity:** There is inherent difficulty in rapid transition and maintaining surge capacity in a response. Utilizing a coverage-based approach assists in avoiding complex, last minute contracts.
- **Response Phases:** Every organization is different, and every road to recovery is unique. A holistic and empirically-driven approach is crucial to effective response coordination throughout each transition.
- **Return to Campus/Work:** Students and employees may be fearful and reluctant to return, putting them at odds with organizations who are pressured to get back to normalcy. Proactive planning can help mitigate these complex issues should they arise.

Unfortunately, there are many examples of violence occurring on campuses, in the workplace and while traveling. Since 2014 alone, R3 Continuum has responded over 700 times to incidents of violence for public entities. These go far beyond what is seen in the news and include employee assault, kidnapping, hijacking or other forms of violence.

No one wants to think about these types of events occurring. But not anticipating one can now be seen as shortsighted. We are here to help.

About R3 Continuum (R3c)

R3 Continuum (R3c) www.r3c.com is an industry-leading, psychologically-based crisis management firm providing preventative and response services to organizations, large or small. We respond to approximately 18,000 crisis events per year, with 4000 of those events involving violence. In many cases, consultants can be on-site within two hours of a call to the Response Center. Our rapid, multi-level response ensures clients receive the fast, expert support they need at all organizational levels – *simultaneously*. Our unique, evidence-based methodology measures “disruption levels,” reliably charts the progress to normalcy, and provides a tool to effectively focus recovery efforts.

Contact Us

Contact us to request more information about this critical and innovative policy which combines risk transfer, prevention services, and proven crisis response to protect your organization in the event of a violence-related crisis.

