

Case Study 6: A Community Mental Health Event

Student notes

This case study is designed to give students some practice in considering issues associated with reporting and communicating about mental illness or suicide, so that they will be better prepared to deal with such situations should they arise, when they are working as a journalist or public relations practitioner. Mental illness and suicide are sensitive and complex issues and it is natural that some people may feel uncomfortable talking about them. Usually, these feelings are temporary and do not cause serious distress. However, if students do become distressed as a result of using these materials or because of other problems, and these feelings continue, they should talk to someone they trust such as a lecturer, tutor, or counsellor at their university. Students can also talk to a GP, health professional or call a crisis counselling service such as:

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (5-25 years)
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

For online information visit: www.headspace.org.au and www.reachout.com

The Scenario

You work for a mental health organisation that has been approached by a family who would like to hold an event to raise funds and awareness in memory of their wife/daughter, who recently lost her life to depression. The young woman was a music teacher and composer, so the family have decided that it would be appropriate to hold a free music festival to celebrate her life and to raise awareness about seeking help for depressive illness. They would also like to raise money to support the prevention of mental illness in the local area via sponsorship and donations. It is hoped that the festival will be an ongoing local event.

For the purposes of this exercise, the following should be assumed:

- The family have already secured a date, time and an outdoor location for the concert, as well as a licence from the council to hold the event;
- Through their contacts, the family have secured well-known local and touring music acts to play on the day and have organised staging, lighting, stage manager, crew and food vendors;
- The event has no budget and will therefore be relying on sponsorship to cover costs;
- The event date is three months from now.

The key messages for the event are:

- This is a local event that will promote wellbeing within the community by celebrating life, music and community spirit;
- The event aims to increase community understanding of mental health issues;
- The event aims to increase awareness of local and national services and encourage help-seeking behaviours.



The Task

The following Questions provide a guide for developing a plan for how you might manage the public relations elements of this community event. Your lecturer or tutor may ask you look at all of these questions or a selection only.

In considering the scenario and questions, you should refer to *Issues and Impact: Communicating mental illness and suicide* for an overview of key ethical and public relations issues involved in managing communication about suicide. This resource and further reference materials are available on the *Mindframe* for Universities website (www.mindframe-media.info).

A. Identifying and managing stakeholders and publics

1. List all the possible stakeholders you will need to engage and manage for this event?
2. How might you develop and manage relationships with these stakeholders:
 - a) Before the event?
 - b) During the event?
 - c) After the event?

B. Fundraising strategies

3. What strategies could you use to raise funds from this event?
4. How will you identify and attract potential sponsorship?
5. What kinds of sponsors would be most suitable and least suitable for this kind of event?

C. Event promotion and key messages

6. What strategies would you use to promote the event to the local community?
7. Would you involve the media in your promotions? If so, what issues may you need to consider?
8. Given the key messages in the scenario brief above, what strategies could you use to promote these messages:
 - a) Before the event?
 - b) During the event
 - c) After the event?
9. What are some of the language issues that need to be considered when promoting these key messages?

D. Branding and marketing

10. This event does not have a name or a brand. Write a brief that identifies key considerations for naming and branding this event. You may want to write down some potential names for the event.
11. Given that this is the first time the event has been held, what strategies could you implement to help make the event more sustainable?

OPTIONAL EXERCISE:

Handout 6A provides a brief description of an actual event which occurred based on the brief provided above. Once you have completed your discussion questions, you may want to compare and contrast your approach with the Local Mental Health Event described in Handout 6A. In particular, you may want to consider:

1. In what ways did your plans differ from that taken by the event organisers?
2. Did the list of stakeholders you identified differ from those identified by the event organisers?
3. What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies employed by the event organisers to promote the event and key messages?
4. What did you learn from looking at the event summary?
5. Were there things about mental health promotion you picked up through reading the event summary?